

2020

Elementary Teachers' Perceptions of Needs to Implement a Response to Intervention Model

Michele Banks Carrera
Walden University

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Michele Banks Carrera

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Walden University
2020

Abstract

Elementary Teachers' Perceptions of Needs to Implement
a Response to Intervention Model

by

Michele Banks Carrera

EdS, Walden University, 2018

MA, Walden University, 2016

BS, Georgia State University, 1996

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Education

Walden University

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Abstract

The response to intervention (RtI) framework assists schools in identifying students who struggle to close achievement gaps. The problem examined for this study was lack of fidelity in the application of RtI, possibly leading to an increase in special education referrals. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to gain a better understanding of the perceived needs of teachers to implement RtI with fidelity. The goal was to use the results to create professional development (PD) for teachers to implement RtI with fidelity. The conceptual framework was based on Ely's conditions of change and Rogers's diffusion of innovation theory. The research questions focused on the implementation of RtI and the perceptions of teachers regarding fidelity in implementing RtI in the classroom. Participants were 10 elementary teachers from 6 different schools. Data were gathered through semistructured interviews of the 10 teachers using RtI in the classroom and were analyzed through a priori and open and thematic coding. Findings included common themes related to the need for PD, including knowledge, clear guidelines, resources, and coaching. Based on the findings, a project was created for a 3-day PD for teachers in the district, along with professional learning communities to support teachers after the training and individual coaching for specific teachers' needs to refine the implementation of RtI with fidelity. The analyzed data were used to provide recommendations and a project that could be used to address the fidelity of the ongoing application of RtI in the local setting. This study may contribute to positive social change by promoting early intervention of at-risk students, targeted interventions at students' instructional level, fewer referrals to special education, and success for students in the appropriate and least restrictive environment.

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Dedication

“She believed she could, so she did.”

This doctoral project study is dedicated to my family and friends for all the love and support they have shown me throughout the years. I have always loved learning and striving to succeed at everything I do, but sometimes it is those that say you can't that become the very ones that spark the voice inside of you that says YOU CAN! I am thankful that I listened to that voice inside me, which is my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. His faithfulness has carried me through all areas of my life and is my firm foundation.

To my parents: My mother always told me to get an education, because it is something no one can ever take away from me. Boy, was she right! As a single mother at one time, I went back to work as a teacher with my bachelor's degree, thinking every day about what my mother told me when I was young and thankful for her advice. My mother and father have always supported and helped me take care of my children so that I can achieve all my dreams and set an example for each one of them. To them, I owe much more than a “thank you.” I love you!

To my boys, David Scott, Jacob, and Joel: You are the reason I decided to go back to school. I always want you to know that you can achieve whatever you set your mind to, regardless of your circumstances or your age. Your dedication and determination will take you far in life. Reach for the stars! I love you!

To my husband, Jason: Thank you for all your support and being willing to take this journey with me not only to obtain my doctorate degree, but yours too! From our master's to our doctorate, it has been more exciting achieving them with you. The

competition has been fun but, in the end, you were my rock and support. I am so excited that we are Dr. Carrera². I love you.

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Table of Contents

List of Tables	v
List of Figures	vi
Section 1: The Problem.....	1
The Local Problem.....	1
Rationale	5
Definition of Terms.....	6
Significance of the Study	7
Research Questions.....	9
Review of the Literature	9
Conceptual Framework.....	9
Review of the Broader Problem.....	12
Fidelity of Application.....	13
Misidentification of Students.....	15
Lack of Knowledge.....	16
Lack of Professional Development.....	17
Time and Resources.....	18
Implications.....	19
Summary.....	19
Section 2: The Methodology.....	22
Introduction.....	22
Research Design and Approach	23
Description of the Qualitative Tradition.....	23

Rationale for Not Choosing Other Qualitative Research Designs.....	24
Participants.....	25
Data Collection	27
Data Analysis	28
Limitations	30
Data Analysis Results	31
Process for Data Collection	31
Findings.....	33
Theme 1: Teachers’ Lack of Understanding of Response to intervention.....	35
Theme 2: Complexity of Response to intervention	38
Theme 3: Unclear Guidelines	39
Theme 4: Professional Development and Coaching.....	42
Theme 5: Resources	43
Discrepant Cases.....	45
Accuracy and Credibility	46
Summary	46
Project Deliverable.....	48
Section 3: The Project.....	50
Introduction.....	50
Description of Project and Goals	51
Rationale	52
Review of Literature	54
Literature Search Strategy.....	55

Adult Learning and Communities of Practice	56
Professional Development	58
Virtual Professional Development and COVID-19	59
Continuous Professional Development.....	60
Professional Learning Communities.....	62
Coaching as Professional Development.....	64
Project Description.....	68
Existing Supports and Resources Needed.....	68
Potential Barriers	69
Proposal for Implementation and Timetable.....	69
Roles and Responsibilities of Researcher and Others.....	72
Project Evaluation Plan.....	72
Formative Evaluation.....	72
Summative Evaluation	74
Evaluation Goals.....	75
Project Implications and Social Change	76
Local Community	76
Larger Scale Change.....	76
Conclusion	77
Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions.....	79
Introduction.....	79
Project Strengths	80
Project Limitations.....	81

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches	81
Scholarship, Project Development, and Leadership and Change	82
Scholarship.....	82
Project Development.....	83
Leadership and Change.....	84
Reflection on the Importance of the Work	85
Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research	86
Conclusion	87
References.....	88
Appendix A: The Project	101
Appendix B: Invitation and Consent Form.....	199
Appendix C: Interview Questions.....	200

List of Tables

Table 1. Themes for Research Questions	34
Table 2. The Five-Step Process for Designing and Using Fidelity Protocols	65
Table 3. Proposed Timeline for Professional Development	71

List of Figures

Figure 1. Three-tiered response to intervention model.....	10
Figure 2. Theory of change for data-driven instructional coaching model.....	67
Figure 3. The Kirkpatrick model	73

Section 1: The Problem

The Local Problem

The problem that drove this study was lack of fidelity in the implementation of response to intervention (RtI) under the multitier systems of support (MTSS) framework in the local setting, possibly leading to an increase in special education referrals. RtI was intended to be a systemic process using a multitier approach to improve the identification of students with disabilities (SWD) through universal screening, intensive intervention, and progress monitoring of responses to evidence-based interventions (EBI; Individuals with Disabilities Education Act [IDEA], 2004). MTSS is a data-driven, problem-solving framework designed to improve student outcomes academically, behaviorally, and social/emotionally (Freeman et al., 2017; Stahl, 2016). MTSS integrated RtI and the Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) under a new framework to assist struggling students using a whole-child approach.

RtI, the focus of this study, is a three-tiered system of support for all students. Tier 1 involves a whole-class approach in which 80% of students are successful under teacher instruction using high leveraged practices (Stahl, 2016). All students are monitored through universal screening. If students begin to struggle, Tier 2 supports such as small-group differentiated instruction are added to Tier 1 instruction. Typically, 15% of students need Tier 2 instruction temporarily (Stahl, 2016). If a student continues to struggle, Tier 3, intensive intervention, may be added to Tier 1 and Tier 2 instruction. Tier 3 is focused on a specific deficit area at the student's instructional level and is provided in a small group of only one to three students, with progress being monitored

weekly at instructional level. Approximately 5% of students will need Tier 3 instruction (Stahl, 2016). Students who do not show growth at an adequate rate with Tier 3 supports may be referred for special education evaluation. The importance of RtI fidelity is that it enables correct identification of students who may have a disability based on the data at each tier (Armendariz, 2016).

Due to increasing referrals to special education and the adoption of MTSS in the State of Georgia, the local district recognized the need to adopt MTSS sooner rather than later. The district hired a team of MTSS facilitators with knowledge of the framework and how the implementation should take place within the district. During the initial implementation phase, a breakdown was observed as schools did not have resources they needed, time was not allocated in each school's master schedule, and incentives were not present. Due to the gap between current practices and how RtI should be implemented, participation and commitment from teachers were lacking.

According to the MTSS district coordinator, the district leaders determined, through records review, that RtI was either not implemented at all or was implemented with very little effort and no accountability throughout the process before the adoption of MTSS. The MTSS district coordinator also stated that, through a review of district student records, school personnel documented concerns that RtI had been implemented with little accountability and had continued with a lack of fidelity throughout the process. The compliance reviews at each school in the district revealed a trend of lack of EBI for students struggling below grade level. The trend revealed that it was unclear when, and if, the interventions were occurring, how often, and if progress monitoring was being

collected for individual students. The MTSS district coordinator also stated that the review of schools found that students were remaining in Tier 3 for several years before being reviewed for possible testing for special education services. When implemented with fidelity, RtI has been shown to decrease the number of students identified with a learning disability and to improve the appropriateness of referrals to special education (Barrett & Newman, 2018; Castro-Villarreal, Villarreal, & Sullivan, 2016). However, according to the special education director at the research site, there has been an increase in student referrals for special education services within the district, specifically at the elementary level, despite RtI being implemented within the county. Additionally, according to the director of special education services in the district, RtI has been viewed as a road to special education rather than as it was intended—as a prevention process using evidence-based interventions and progress monitoring to make decisions for individual students (Swindlehurst et al., 2015).

The local MTSS district coordinator stated that the implementation of RtI lacked fidelity, resulting in an increase of referrals to special education over the last 3 years. The district coordinator specified that the lack of fidelity involved not using EBI; not delivering interventions per the protocol, which specified the correct delivery of interventions, the number of times per week that interventions should be delivered, and the appropriate length for each session; as well as lack of documentation of progress monitoring. After a district examination of individual students' intervention plans, progress monitoring, and data at each school, the observation was made and stated by the MTSS district coordinator that there was a lack of fidelity in the implementation of RtI.

The district coordinator noted that without fidelity of RtI implementation, referrals to special education increase because of skewed data and inaccurate decision-making. The district review revealed that the number of referrals for special education testing by the local district's student support team (SST) has increased by 60% over 3 years in the elementary school setting, showing a trend that needed to be addressed. According to the MTSS district coordinator, implementation of the RtI process under the MTSS framework within elementary schools was inconsistent and ineffective for identifying students for special education services; thus, improvements needed to be made. A lack of fidelity in the RtI framework indicates a gap in practice between effective and ineffective intervention and can result in incorrect student referrals for special education testing (McKenna & Parenti, 2017).

Lack of fidelity of RtI is a problem in the broader education profession. Maier et al. (2016) found that although full implementation of RtI was applied in many states, there was a lack of fidelity and clarity with regard to the specific RtI process. Sanetti and Collier-Meek (2015) stated that the biggest obstacle to RtI in the states using the RtI framework was the fidelity of intervention delivery, resulting in inappropriate decision-making and less effective student outcomes. Cakiroglu (2015) explained that because RtI is utilized in many states as part of the process for special education services in identifying a student's disability, when RtI is not implemented and applied with fidelity, student outcomes will be poor, resulting in students being identified as nonresponders, possibly leading to special education referral. This indicates a gap in practice between

high-fidelity application of RtI in schools by teachers and what many school demonstrated in the district review of RtI implementation.

Rationale

IDEA (2004) requires that schools implement EBI to students who are struggling academically or behaviorally prior to referral to special education (Brendle, 2015; Hudson & McKenzie, 2016; McKenna & Parenti, 2017). IDEA also lifted the requirements of using only achievement and intellectual ability to determine the identification of students with a specific learning disability (SLD; Hudson & McKenzie, 2016; Maier et al., 2016). Unless implemented and applied with fidelity, RtI decreases the effectiveness of positive student outcomes, which may lead to inappropriate referrals to special education (Alahmari, 2019; Barrett & Newman, 2018; Brendle, 2015; Preston, Wood, & Stecker, 2016; Sanetti & Collier-Meek, 2015).

This study was conducted because, at the local site, there had been an increase in special education referrals due to lack of fidelity in the implementation of RtI, possibly leading to misidentification of SWD. Since 1975, students identified with a learning disability have increased by 200%, with research suggesting that the increase has been due to misdiagnosis (Cakiroglu, 2015; Preston et al., 2016). Fidelity of implementation and application is a critical issue for schools and districts during the initial implementation of RtI and during the ongoing process (Brendle, 2015; Khoury, McIntosh, & Hoselton, 2019). Researchers have suggested that schools utilizing RtI as a failure-prevention system have yet to adequately apply the framework to its full potential, noting a lack of positive outcomes and skewed data for interpretation (Arden, Gandhi,

Edmonds, & Danielson, 2017; Ruffini, Lindsay, Miskell, & Proger, 2016). Positive outcomes in RtI consist of closing the achievement gap, showing adequate growth for learning although the student is behind, and determining the appropriate rate of acquisition for a student to close the gap. Without fidelity, positive outcomes are not always apparent. Often, when the data for interventions are viewed, the progress monitoring is often on grade level, the progress monitoring is not consistent with the intervention, or the baseline and goal may not coincide with one another. Fidelity is crucial for correct data analysis and positive student outcomes.

The fidelity of RtI at the district and school level is a problem. After the adoption of the MTSS framework in 2018, the MTSS district coordinator stated that the district noted a lack of fidelity of the application of RtI in the past through assessing individual student intervention plans, progress monitoring, and data analysis. Students were being found eligible for special education without appropriate data documented in intervention plans such as EBI, intervention time, and progress monitoring. The district was using psychological testing and school recommendations; however, many students were not documented as receiving tiered interventions to support students and gauge the growth rate of the students. After the adoption of MTSS, district leaders began looking into RtI and the problems associated with overidentifying and misidentifying students for special education and sought to begin proper implementation of RtI under the new framework.

Definition of Terms

The definitions that are used in the MTSS framework are listed below to provide clarity to the readers of this study.

Evidence-based interventions (EBI): Practices for which there is documented empirical evidence of effectiveness in producing results and improving student outcomes when implemented (Freeman et al., 2017).

Fidelity: The degree to which interventions are provided to students as intended per an intervention protocol (McKenna et al., 2014).

Implementation: Implementation is not an event; it is a process that takes 2 to 5 years to complete in many school districts (Khoury et al., 2019).

Multitiered systems of support (MTSS): A framework of intervention and supports for the whole child, including academic, behavior, and social/emotional supports (Pierce & Mueller, 2018).

Response to intervention (RtI): A multitier system of support to meet the academic and behavioral needs of all students as a preventive measure prior to failure (Hougen & Eberhardt, 2017).

Specific learning disability (SLD): A disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes needed for understanding language, written or spoken, that may manifest itself in the areas of listening, thinking, speaking, reading, writing, spelling, or performing mathematical calculations.

Significance of the Study

The results of this study could be used to deeply understand the current implementation and the ongoing application of RtI in the research setting and the teachers' perceived needs to implement RtI within the district better. Often, teachers are not aware of how and why RtI must be implemented and what factors ensure its success

(Alahmari, 2019; Preston et al., 2016). A better understanding of why there is a lack of fidelity of RtI could lead to more effective implementation, thus improving the results of special education identification through RtI at the local level. The results of the study provide insight into the current barriers that teachers face when delivering EBI to struggling students and the process of identifying those students who are and are not responding to interventions (McKenna & Parenti, 2017). MTSS specifies that EBI are critical for the fidelity of RtI. The interventions should have empirical support that suggests a high effect size, meaning that they have been proven to work when implemented with fidelity and aligned with the student's specific need (Freeman et al., 2017). Identifying struggling students before failure and providing appropriate, intensive EBI may decrease the number of special education referrals through the RtI process when progress monitoring shows adequate student growth. Preston et al. (2016) stated that applying RtI with fidelity and proper implementation will yield appropriate referrals to special education. Improved application of RtI can assist students with academic deficits and identify students who may have a SLD. RtI, when practiced with fidelity, can prevent the over identification and misclassification of students to special education (Barrett & Newman, 2018). The results of this study provide a better understanding of teacher needs for successfully utilizing RtI with fidelity for struggling students and appropriate decision making concerning students receiving additional testing for special education or continuing Tier 3 interventions over a period of time if progress is adequate.

Research Questions

The problem at the research site was a lack of fidelity in the implementation of RtI, possibly leading to an increase in special education referrals. At the local site, there has been an increase in referrals for special education testing for struggling students. The purpose of the study was to examine teachers' perceived needs to better implement RtI at the project study site and explore how teachers were utilizing RtI for struggling students. The research questions were used to help understand the implementation of RtI in the local setting and to understand the perspectives of general and special education teachers regarding their perceived needs for implementing RtI appropriately and with fidelity.

RQ1: How are teachers in one southeast suburban school district implementing RtI to assist struggling learners and reduce referrals to special education?

RQ2: What are the perceived needs of teachers to better implement RtI with fidelity?

Review of the Literature

Conceptual Framework

The framework for this study was based on Ely's (1990) conditions of change and Rogers's (1983) diffusion of innovation theory. The State of Georgia has adopted the national model of the MTSS framework, which includes the three-tiered RtI model, as shown in Figure 1, to support students and properly identify students in need of special education services. The research district quickly adopted the framework for a 5-year implementation to bring consistency and fidelity to a lacking RtI process. In the district, there continues to be a lack of fidelity with the implementation of RtI at the school and

classroom level. District change is difficult, and ensuring the fidelity of change is challenging.

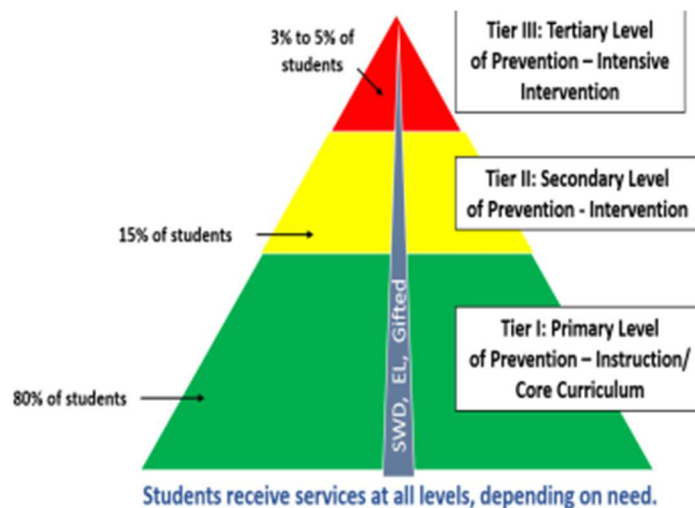


Figure 1. Three-tiered RtI model adopted from Georgia Department of Education. From *Georgia's Tiered System of Supports for Students: Implementation Step-By-Step Guidance* (p. 4), by Georgia Department of Education, 2019 (<https://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Special-Education-Services/Documents/MTSS/GA%20MTSS%20Implementation%20Step%20By%20Step%20Guidance.pdf>). In the public domain.

Ely found that when organizations adopt changes, certain influences occur within the environment (Ellsworth, 2017). For change to occur, Ely found that the environment of the innovation is as important as the characteristics of the change itself (Ellsworth, 2017). The eight conditions needed for change to take place are (a) dissatisfaction with the status quo, (b) sufficient knowledge and skills for implementation, and availability of (c) resources, (d) time, (e) incentives, (f) participation, (g) commitment, and (h) leadership, although not all may exist in every environment of change (Ely, 1990). Ely's theory applies directly to the implementation of RtI within the district. For RtI to be effective and implemented with fidelity, the goal is for each condition specified within

Ely's theory to be satisfied (Ellsworth, 2017; Ely, 1990). The current study was designed to focus on the conditions for change that teachers perceived as not currently being provided within the district.

Also grounding the study was Rogers's (1983) diffusion of innovation theory, which involves the internal characteristics of change in an organization. The theory was developed to explain how, over time, an idea or concept gains momentum and spreads throughout an organization when implemented using the attributes of the theory (Rogers, 1983; Sahin, 2006). The attributes for adopting a change include relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability (Ellsworth, 2017; Rogers, 1983). Diffusion of innovation focuses on the evolution of a concept rather than on changing people—in this case, teachers. With the adoption of MTSS, RtI has been monitored more closely by the district for compliance when students are referred for special education testing.

In the adoption of a new concept, the first attribute is relative advantage. Relative advantage involves whether an innovation is better than the practice it replaces (Ellsworth, 2000; Rogers, 1983). The second attribute, compatibility, refers to the need for the innovation, as well as its consistency with existing values and past practices (Ellsworth, 2000; Rogers, 1983). The third attribute of Rogers's theory is complexity. Change is difficult in itself; therefore, the chance of an innovation being diffused and completed with fidelity is greater if the innovation is easy to understand (Ellsworth, 2000; Rogers, 1983). The final two attributes are trialability and observability. Trialability is the ability to adopt the innovation a little at a time, over time (Ellsworth, 2000; Rogers,

1983). MTSS has a 5-year implementation timetable within the district and is being infused within schools in stages. Observability, the final attribute, refers to the ability to see the innovation being used by others and to observe the successes and failures of early adopters (Ellsworth, 2000; Rogers, 1983). The attributes suggested by Rogers can assist districts when introducing new innovations to schools. This study focused on the teachers' perceptions of each attribute within the implementation change of RtI.

Review of the Broader Problem

RtI was intended to be a systematic process to improve the identification of SWD through screening, intervention, and monitoring to determine how children respond to EBI (IDEA, 2004). The rationale for the adoption of RtI throughout the United States was to assist in correctly identifying students with disabilities alongside the discrepancy model and to assure accountability for student outcomes as a result of IDEA (2004) and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 (Alahmari, 2019; March, Castillo, Batsche, & Kincaid, 2016). Researchers have found that RtI is not occurring as intended, finding that less than 10% of districts provide guidelines and sufficient support for sustainability (Arden et al., 2017; Maier et al., 2016; Zumeta, 2015). Without fidelity of implementation, RtI may not show sufficient improvement in student outcomes (Goodman & Bohanon, 2018). Additionally, a lack of fidelity may lead to inadequate decision making regarding whether or not a student has a disability (Regan, Berkeley, Hughes, & Brady, 2015). At the local site, there is a concern regarding the fidelity of RtI, which may lead to an increase in special education referrals. As a social change agent, I aimed to understand each teacher's needs for implementing RtI with fidelity and barriers

that may hinder the process within the classroom setting. Understanding the needs and concerns of the teachers can help the district in making best practice recommendations for supporting teachers through the implementation and with the sustainability of RtI and, in return, assist in positive student outcomes and proper identification of those in need of special education services.

To locate material for the literature review, I implemented a thorough search strategy using several platforms. The search for literature on the broader problem involved ERIC, ProQuest, Google Scholar, Walden Library, and Taylor & Francis. Terms for searching peer-reviewed journals included *response to intervention*, *fidelity of response to intervention*, *response to intervention and referrals to special education*, *MTSS*, *multitier systems of support*, and *fidelity of RtI within MTSS*. Each key term was searched in the databases listed, and scholarly, peer-reviewed articles were selected that were published within the past 5 years.

Fidelity of Application

Lack of fidelity regarding the RtI process at the local site has been a concern as the district has observed an increase in special education referrals. The fidelity of the ongoing RtI framework is critical to the proper identification of SWD, as well as student outcomes (Khoury et al., 2019; McKenna et al., 2014). Based on school evaluations of RtI, schools struggle to apply the framework with fidelity and integrity as intended (Arden et al., 2017). Schools continue to encounter problems with the fidelity of RtI, which impact the effectiveness of the framework and its outcomes (Sanetti & Collier-Meek, 2015). Rogers's (1983) diffusion of innovation theory shows the need for

reducing uncertainty when introducing innovation for social change (Sahin, 2006).

Uncertainty and lack of understanding can result in problems with fidelity and treatment integrity (Marrs & Little, 2014). Poor student outcomes result from a lack of fidelity at the district, school, and classroom levels, resulting in one of the biggest hurdles seen throughout the country in the RtI framework application (Sanetti & Collier-Meek, 2015). Without treatment fidelity using EBI, students may not show an increase in academic growth, resulting in a negative trend line that may lead to an inappropriate referral for testing (Sanetti & Collier-Meek, 2015). With the use of EBI and the provision of intervention with integrity based on the protocol of the intervention, student outcomes may show adequate growth to eventually close the achievement gap.

In an effort to reach positive student outcomes, fidelity must occur at all tiers in the RtI process. Positive student outcomes include an increase in academic growth during the intervention and progress monitoring at an appropriate rate of acquisition for a student to exhibit learning, but not need for specialized instruction through special education. If the student learns at an appropriate rate based on the intervention protocol, then a referral for special education testing would not be needed. IDEA (2004) indicated that schools would no longer use the discrepancy model only to identify SWD, but rather would analyze a lack of response to intervention as a requirement for special education eligibility (Alahmari, 2019; Maier et al., 2016). Because RtI is used as a referral tool for the identification of special education eligibility, fidelity is a crucial piece of the referral process. Without fidelity, it is not appropriate to make decisions regarding special education services (Sanetti & Collier-Meek, 2015). However, RtI continues to lack

clarity and consistency within schools and school districts, and decisions are occurring without treatment fidelity (Cakiroglu, 2015; Maier et al., 2016). Assessments of fidelity are needed but are lacking, for continuous improvement, as well as for the challenges for each school's implementation of RtI (Arden et al., 2017). Schools continue to fall short of full implementation of the RtI framework with fidelity due to treatment integrity and follow-up systems to assess the fidelity of intervention delivery (Maier et al., 2016; Sanetti & Collier-Meek, 2015). When implementation occurs with fidelity, not only do student outcomes increase, but students are correctly identified for special education testing and services as a natural part of the framework (Khoury et al., 2019). When interventions are not implemented with fidelity, their effectiveness is adversely impacted by the teacher and the student (McKenna et al., 2014). McKenna et al. (2014) also stated that factors directly related to lack of fidelity include the complexity of interventions, access to resources, effectiveness, and characteristics of the intervention provider.

Misidentification of Students

Over the years, students were identified for SLD using the discrepancy model. Between 1975 and 2000, students identified with a learning disability (LD) doubled, largely due to misdiagnosis and lack of interventions (Preston et al., 2016). Some students who were found to have LDs were later identified as poor readers who did not receive early interventions with consistency (Preston et al., 2016). In 2004 under IDEA, RtI was added as a component of a prevention system for identifying SWD, rather than waiting for students to fail (Armendariz, 2016; Brendle, 2015; Cakiroglu, 2015; Stahl, 2016). Ely's (1990) conditions of change indicate that in order for sustainable change to

take place, there must be dissatisfaction with the status quo or a need for change (Ellsworth, 2017). In the district, there is a need to implement RtI with fidelity to reduce the misidentification of students as requiring special education. Over several years, minority students identified with an SLD have increased, although many do not manifest characteristics of a disability, but instead may not have received intensive interventions with consistency and fidelity (Cakiroglu, 2015). Not only are minority students being misidentified as at risk, but students are not receiving interventions with fidelity and appear to be unresponsive to intervention if not implemented with fidelity. When students are not provided with fidelitous interventions prior to referral for special education testing, they may be misidentified as disabled (Polcyn, Levine-Donnerstein, Perfect, & Obrzut, 2014). Prior to the development of the RtI framework, assessment data were not always used to match student needs with interventions, resulting in misidentifying students in need of special education services (Fan, Bocanegra, & Ding, 2016). Implementing RtI with fidelity not only reduces referrals to special education, but also helps to avoid the misidentification of students as disabled when no disability is present based on exclusionary factors (Polcyn et al., 2014).

Lack of Knowledge

Ely (1990) found that for change to take place, the adopters must have sufficient knowledge and skills to effectively implement change within a system (Ellsworth, 2000; Ely, 1990). Zumeta (2014) explained that school district leaders continue to struggle to understand effective ways to implement RtI for sustainability. Although teachers have some knowledge of RtI, their understanding is not sufficient to implement the practice

with fidelity (Castillo et al., 2016). When schools and teachers do not understand all of the components of RtI, the system will not be sustainable. Teachers state that not understanding EBI, progress monitoring, and data analysis tend to be issues within schools that require knowledge for appropriate decision making for students (Alahmari, 2019). Many schools struggle with identifying students in need of intensive support in lieu of special education referrals (Zumeta, 2015). Teachers also report difficulty in distinguishing between small group intervention and more intensive interventions for a full-scale model for all students (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Vaughn, 2014).

Additionally, schools face challenges when implementing various subcomponents of RtI, such as Tier 3 interventions to an ELL student (Ruffini et al., 2016). Research has shown that lack of knowledge is a barrier to fidelity when implementing a new innovation (Brendle, 2015). Rogers (1983) explained that if a new innovation can be observed, the likelihood of understanding will begin to emerge. Many teachers feel inadequately prepared to work with diverse groups of students, much less while implementing a framework not fully understood (Alahmari, 2019). Observability is a component needed for teachers to understand RtI and its effectiveness better.

Lack of Professional Development

One of the biggest challenges shown in research is that PD is needed but not adequate (Castillo et al., 2016). When provided PD, educators are more likely to buy in to RtI and the positive student outcomes provided when done with fidelity (Preston et al., 2016). There is a gap between implementing practice in the classroom and PD experiences (Brown, 2016). State educational agencies (SEA) report that fewer than 10%

are providing guidelines and PD or coaching for the framework's implementation in school districts (Arden et al., 2017). In research, teachers state that PD is critical for understanding what RtI encompasses in all areas (Sanetti & Collier-Meek, 2015). Because teachers are responsible for ensuring that intervention and progress monitoring are done with fidelity for valid decision making, they believe that ongoing PD is essential for the effectiveness of RtI (Alahmari, 2019; Cakiroglu, 2015). Without PD, the fidelity of implementation for a large-scale innovation significantly decreases (Castillo et al., 2016). PD will equip teachers with the necessary skills not only for implementation, but also for appropriate decision making (Fuchs et al., 2014; King-Thorius, Maxcy, Macey, & Cox, 2014). A significant challenge of implementing RtI with fidelity as a problem-solving process is teacher knowledge and lack of training (Brendle, 2015). The diffusion of innovation theory demonstrates that teachers need opportunities to understand, examine, and observe an innovation, which come through professional learning and support throughout the implementation phase and beyond (Ellsworth, 2000; Rogers, 1983).

Time and Resources

When implementation of a new framework occurs in a school district, time and resources must be available for teacher and student support. Alahmari (2019) found that schools lack resources and even personnel to assist with the implementation and fidelity of RtI. Brendle (2015) also stated that time, staffing, and lack of resources are barriers to effectively implementing RtI with fidelity. Without proper resources, Rogers's attribute of complexity becomes apparent when teachers must find and use resources not provided

to them for implementation. The cost to hire staff to assist with smaller groups and increase intervention time is high, as staff need to be knowledgeable and experienced in RtI and its components (Fuchs et al., 2014). According to Ely (1990), resources are a necessary component and must be accessible to teachers for change to be effective and sustainable (Ellsworth, 2017; Ely, 1990). In addition to resources, finding time to implement interventions with fidelity is a challenge within classrooms (Polcyn et al., 2014).

Implications

This study focused on teachers' perceived needs to better implement RtI at the local research site. The project was based on a current review of the literature and the findings from the study. Findings from the participant interviews included PD and coaching for teachers to more effectively implement and sustain RtI. PD may include, but not limited to, improving understanding of RtI and special education, the effectiveness of RtI, the procedures, and the importance of the fidelity of RtI. The findings of the research will be used to improve the implementation and fidelity of RtI in the research district to improve student success and proper identification of SWD.

Summary

In summary, RtI was intended to be a systemic process to improve the identification of students with disabilities through screening, intervention, and monitoring to determine how a child responds to EBI (IDEA, 2004). The rationale for the adoption of RtI throughout the United States was to properly identify students with disabilities and to assure accountability for student outcomes as a result of IDEA (2004) and No Child

Left Behind (2002; March et al., 2016). Lack of fidelity may lead to inadequate decision making regarding whether or not a student has a disability (Regan, Berkeley, Hughes, & Brady, 2015). Although RtI has been viewed as a path to special education, it is meant to be a prevention before failure process, instead of a reaction to failure process, or as a tool to appropriately identify students in need of special education services through intensive interventions (Swindlehurst et al., 2015).

The local research site has experienced an increase in referrals to special education thus leading to the need for a study understanding teachers' needs to better implement the RtI framework. The study was designed as a basic qualitative study to examine the needs of teachers for implementing RtI effectively through interviews by understanding how the RtI framework is implemented and the barriers that prevent the fidelity of RtI. Ely's conditions of change and Rogers's diffusion of innovation theory will be a lens through which the study is conducted.

The literature review that was conducted revealed barriers in the implementation of RtI on a broader scale. The themes throughout research regarding barriers to the success of the framework included fidelity of application, misidentification and overidentification of SWD, lack of knowledge, lack of PD, and time and resources. Based on the concise review of literature, the need for research and to understand the problem at the local level was confirmed. Throughout the literature review, themes were identified that may lead to a better understanding of the problem at the research site.

Research is needed to understand teachers' perceived needs in an effort to assist and support teachers through the implementation and application process of RtI at the

local level. Through the project study, there was an aim to understand barriers that impede the fidelity of the framework and ways to assist teachers for successful application. By understanding the barriers, PD, coaching, and ongoing support may be provided for the success of the RtI framework.

Section 2: The Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this doctoral project study was to examine teachers' perceived needs to better implement RtI at the project study site. Through examination, I gained a better understanding of the needs of teachers in an effort to enhance the fidelity of RtI. The results of the study will be used to assist teachers and administrators with the implementation of RtI for fidelity and effectiveness. The results may lead to collaboration for problem solving, PD, or coaching to ensure a more fidelitous application of the RtI model in the district. To better understand the perceptions of the teachers, the following questions were used for assessment regarding the fidelity of RtI in the local setting:

- How are schools in one southeast suburban school district implementing RtI to assist struggling learners and reduce referrals to special education?
- What are the perceived needs of teachers to better implement RtI with fidelity?

The interview questions were directly related to each research question and supported by the theories of Rogers and Ely (see Appendix C). Each interview began with demographic information on each teacher. To gain a better understanding of RtI in the local setting, I developed open-ended interview questions that allowed teachers to focus on the strengths and weaknesses of the framework based on their experiences within their classroom. Several questions were specific to Tiers 2 and 3 of the RtI process regarding students who are not making adequate progress in the classroom. It

was imperative to understand how RtI is designed within the school and the classroom in an effort to gain a better understanding of the teachers' perceptions of RtI and the lack of fidelity of the framework.

Research Design and Approach

I used a basic qualitative study design, which was appropriate to the effort to better understand how the participants interpreted their current experiences with RtI and the meaning they attributed to their experience (Babchuk, 2017). A qualitative approach allowed me to investigate, through interviews, the problem in a natural setting (Burkholder, Cox, & Crawford, 2016). A basic qualitative study permitted me to thoroughly investigate the problem using a small sample size, examining participant experiences, how those experiences were viewed by the participants, and the examination of the RtI process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Description of the Qualitative Tradition

This project study utilized a basic qualitative approach. Yin (2015) defined a qualitative study as representing various views and perspectives, occurring in a natural setting, and involving purposeful or random selection of participants as well as the collection of data that assist in explaining social behaviors. Qualitative studies may be used to research experiences of people, emotions, social movements, and organizational functioning (Rahman, 2016). The guiding research questions assisted me in understanding how teachers were implementing RtI in the classroom to assist struggling learners and the needs of the teachers to better implement RtI with fidelity with their students. The basic qualitative approach allowed me to gather information from a small

group of participants via interviews to better understand the problem occurring at the research site.

Rationale for Not Choosing Other Qualitative Research Designs

There are various types of qualitative research. Of these types, I chose the basic qualitative research design, which was the best fit for my study based on the problem at the research site, how I would be investigating the problem, and the possible outcomes. Qualitative designs not chosen included grounded theory design, phenomenological research design, and ethnographic research design.

A researcher using grounded theory design aims to develop a new theory due to a lack of theories that support, or ground, the existing problem (Tie, Birks, & Francis, 2019). Researchers using phenomenological research design seek to gain an understanding of a phenomenon through immersion over a period of time (Neubauer, Witkop, & Varpio, 2019). Ethnographic research design also requires the researcher to become immersed in the setting and interact with participants in the setting over time. Additionally, in an ethnographic study, the participants typically belong to a specific cultural group (Yin, 2015). Due to COVID-19, it was not feasible for me to observe and participate in this type of study.

A quantitative study was not chosen due to certain limitations. With a quantitative study, the researcher cannot dive deeper into meanings and explanations of participants' perceptions; instead, a quantitative study provides a snapshot of the phenomenon while measuring variables (Rahman, 2016). In this study, I aimed to understand teacher perceptions of the implementation of RtI in the local setting. I wanted

to gain an improved perspective on what might be missing in relation to RtI in the district and how the district could better support and assist teachers in implementing RtI with fidelity. A quantitative study would not have been appropriate for meeting this need, as a quantitative study would not have accounted for how people interpreted behaviors, perceptions, or actions (Rahman, 2016).

In this project study, I intended to use a limited number of participants without becoming a part of the environment being studied. Further, I was not trying to develop a new theory, but rather to investigate a problem by collecting and analyzing data to reveal various themes and possible explanations. A basic qualitative study was the best choice for this project study.

Participants

Participants in this study were 10 elementary teachers in a small suburban district in Georgia who used the RtI framework to assist struggling learners in achieving academic success or to facilitate appropriate identification of students with learning needs. Using email, I invited individuals to take part in the study by sending a written letter and a consent form (see Appendix B). Inclusion criteria applied to any teacher who had experience with RtI and was currently implementing RtI at each level within the classroom.

I had existing professional relationships with the participants that I had established prior to the study. I was an employee of the district as an MTSS facilitator at the time of the study; however, I had no direct supervisory relationship with the participants. Before taking on the role of MTSS facilitator, I had served as a special

education self-contained teacher, a special education collaborative teacher, and an in-school coordinator over special education.

Prior to each interview, I provided information about myself, and my time as an educator, both in the classroom and as a district MTSS facilitator, in an effort to gain trust from the participants, who were currently classroom teachers. I also explained my passion for working as a change agent in this study, through which I hoped to support and assist teachers with better implementing RtI in their classrooms. By offering more information about myself and my passion for this study, I sought to create a sense of trust and understanding with the participants. As a result of this effort, I felt that each participant was more willing to share and that lines of communication were opened.

Before beginning participant recruitment, I requested permission to conduct this research from the district's special education director. I chose various elementary schools within the district that I did not oversee in my current role as district MTSS facilitator. Once I had been granted permission to conduct the study by the district leader and Walden University's Instructional Review Board (IRB), potential participant names were provided to me by the district, with help from the school administration. An invitation was then sent to 12 individuals requesting their voluntary participation in the study. Ten of these individuals agreed to participate. The invitation and informed consent form were sent to all potential participants, informing them of their role in the study and indicating that participation was voluntary. If an invitee agreed to participate, a reply of "I consent" was obtained via email. After 7 days, I checked my Walden email for responses. I had received all 10 responses at that time, and I began contacting teachers to

set up a date and time for each interview. After a date and time was agreed upon, I sent out an invite with a link for Google Meet.

Once the interviews began, I wanted to ensure trust and maintain positive relationships for this study. To build rapport, I began with a general introduction of myself and welcomed each participant. I assured each participant that confidentiality would be of the utmost importance in each interview regarding the concerns and perceptions of each teacher. To protect participants' rights, including confidentiality, I explained that names of participants or schools would not be included in the study. I clarified to each participant that I would use alphanumeric coding to identify teachers, such as T1 for Teacher 11, T2 for Teacher 2, and so on. I also reviewed the purpose of the study and reiterated the voluntary nature of participation for each participant. Finally, before the interview began, I disclosed the participant's responsibilities, procedures, and risks and benefits of participating in the study. All participants were informed that they would receive an electronic copy of the interview via email within minutes after their interview was complete. Each participant was also informed that all interviews and data would be secured and destroyed after 5 years.

Data Collection

The purpose of a research design is to support the research through evidence that addresses the problem. The problem examined was the lack of fidelity in the ongoing application of RtI, possibly leading to an increase in special education referrals. As an MTSS facilitator for the district, it is my job to ensure that RtI is implemented with fidelity at the school. Data for the study were collected through semistructured

interviews with participants. The questions were open ended, with follow-up questions to gain a deeper understanding of how teachers were implementing RtI in the classroom and the teachers' perceived needs to implement RtI with fidelity better. Creswell (2012) stated that an interview is a reliable tool for gaining insight on a specific topic and assists the researcher in the exploration of phenomena in a one-on-one environment. Interviews are a means of acquiring data from participants through their perceptions and interpretations of the world around them—in this case, the classroom.

I chose interviews as the primary means of data collection over other methods because I sought to gain a more in-depth view of teachers' perceptions of RtI. Interviews were conducted one on one with each participant, with guiding questions that pertained to each research question. Each interview lasted approximately one hour. The interviews were recorded via video or audio recording through Google Meet. After the data were collected, I conducted member checking by sending the data to each participant to check for accuracy. The data were then transcribed to begin data analysis.

Data Analysis

To ensure accuracy during data analysis, various methods were used. Creswell (2012) stated that multiple sources of data analysis in a qualitative study include summarizing, interpreting, and validating the information as an ongoing process to ensure accuracy of the findings. Data analysis included a priori and open coding, categorization, and thematic analysis. I used codes to translate the data for pattern detection and categorization (Saldaña, 2016). Due to the small sample size, I did not use data analysis software. I used a spreadsheet for my research log to assist with identifying the

categories and themes and noted how themes emerged at different levels (Boyatzis, 1988). I also used a reflective journal as I listened to each interview several times in an effort to explore the themes that emerged.

Rogers and Ely outlined a priori codes within each of their theories. Based on Ely's conditions of change, several codes anticipated prior to the study included dissatisfaction with the status quo, lack of knowledge of RtI, resources, time, and support. Rogers's diffusion of innovation theory included a priori codes such as advantage of the change, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability that might be observed throughout the project.

The results of this study can be used by district leaders to develop PD and coaching programs to assist with the ongoing, successful application of the RtI process. Once barriers are identified, PD is necessary to address them; such PD should be high in quality as well as ongoing for positive student outcomes (Swindlehurst et al., 2015). Coaching can be used to further assist teachers with real-time support to overcome the barriers that occur when implementing RtI in the classroom. Coaches are valuable supports throughout the RtI process (Brown, 2016), and they also bridge the gap from PD to practice. By shedding light on barriers and gaps in practice, this study increased the depth of knowledge for further research on the problem and ways to implement appropriate PD and coaching opportunities to support teachers. As the lack of fidelity of the RtI process was understood, opportunities to support teachers through PD and coaching began to evolve, which may increase student success and assist in the understanding of how to make informed decisions regarding special education referrals.

Researchers have shown that when RTI is understood and applied with fidelity, there is a reduction in special education referrals (Kauffman, Hallahan, & Pullen, 2017).

Limitations

Qualitative research is not free of limitations, and researchers must be aware of those limitations when conducting a qualitative study. By being cognizant of limitations throughout a study, a researcher can reduce threats to the internal validity of the study. An understanding of the limitations of a study also provides protection to participants.

Limitations of a basic qualitative study include the possibility of misinterpreted answers during interviews, as well as the possibility that participants will provide answers that they believe the researcher wants to hear (Rumrill, Cook, & Wiley, 2011). Additionally, Creswell (2012) stated that researcher bias is a limitation that can be avoided by utilizing and following a protocol. Researcher bias can be prevented in various ways (Creswell, 2012). First, the researcher should include all data and information that were collected. The researcher should interpret the data objectively and follow the protocol set forth in each interview. In a study with a small sample size, the ability to transfer findings across settings is also reduced.

Although there are limitations in any study, researchers can take measures to reduce these limitations. The limitations noted were applicable to this study, as the sample size was small and interviews were conducted. To account for these limitations, I listened to each interview multiple times and used member checking throughout the interviews to ensure accuracy and understanding. Member checking is a technique used in research to explore the credibility of results through respondent validation (Birt et al.,

2016). In this study, the member-checking process included sending written results of the interview to each participant to ensure the accuracy of the participant's answers, as well as pausing during the interview as needed to ensure that my interpretation of what the participant stated was accurate. I used member checking to safeguard participant responses in an effort to assist in eliminating any biases that might arise due to my current position in the district, as well as any biases related to the topic.

Data Analysis Results

Process for Data Collection

A qualitative case study is conducted in an attempt to understand a phenomenon within a natural setting by reflecting the meaning that people make of their experiences (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The purpose of this qualitative study was to gain a better understanding of the perceived needs of teachers to better implement RtI with fidelity. Data collection included semiformal interviews with 10 teachers at the project site.

After receiving IRB approval from Walden University (approval #04-28-20-0520720), I emailed the teachers invitations to voluntarily participate in the study. After volunteers were accepted, a consent form was generated for each participant with a request for consent to participate. The consent form explained voluntary participation, confidentiality, and procedures for the interview. After consent was signed, teachers were emailed to set up interview times and dates.

Due to COVID-19 pandemic and social distancing restrictions, the interviews were conducted via Google Meet, a virtual meeting platform. Interviews were completed on a one-on-one basis, with a high level of confidentiality. During each interview, I took

notes and verified with immediate member checking to ensure accuracy and understanding of each answer provided. The interviews consisted of open-ended questions to allow all participants to elaborate on their concerns and the strengths of RtI based on their perceptions of the RtI framework.

Questions were constructed by the researcher prior to submission to the district's MTSS coordinator (See Appendix C). The MTSS coordinator reviewed the questions to ensure each question was appropriate prior to beginning the process. Each question was aligned with the research questions, conceptual framework, and guided by the literature review of the problem. Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes to one hour to ensure time to adequately answer the open-ended questions and note taking by the researcher. Each interview was either audio recorded or video recorded using the virtual meeting platform for documentation and ongoing analysis. After each interview, participants received a confidential copy of their statements to ensure accuracy and reliability.

Upon completing each interview, I began organizing the data using the a priori codes identified prior to data collection as well as open coding throughout the analysis. The data were transcribed, and I reviewed each interview several times while coding. Each participant was automatically emailed a copy of the interview per the agreement of recording in Google Meet for member checking. A robust research study depends in large part on the quality of coding (Saldaña, 2015). Coding takes time and repetition to accurately encompass the teachers' perceptions for quality research and the intended project outcome.

Findings

The findings from this basic qualitative study emerged from one-on-one interviews with 10 elementary school teachers in a southeast suburban district. Demographic information was collected prior to each interview. Each teacher was asked their current grade level, numbers of years they have been a teacher, and the number of students they currently have receiving Tier 3 interventions. The 10 teachers represented six elementary schools in the district and grades kindergarten through fifth. The purpose of each interview was to answer the research questions:

- How are teachers in one southeast suburban school district implementing RtI to assist struggling learners and reduce referrals to special education?
- What are the perceived needs of teachers to better implement RtI with fidelity?

Each interview was used to provide a deeper understanding of teachers' perceived needs to implement RtI with fidelity at the local project site. The analysis of data was continuous throughout the study. The data were coded alpha-numerically as follows: Teacher 1: T1, Teacher 2: T2, and so on for each teacher interviewed to ensure confidentiality throughout the study. The goal was to understand teacher perceptions of RtI and what may be needed to implement the framework better within the district.

The data from each interview was arranged based on the research questions and prompt questions thereafter. The data developed from a priori codes and open coding, which led to categorizing and, finally, themes that emerged from the data (Table 1). Based on the data that developed from each interview, I was able to understand the

teachers' perceptions of RtI in the classroom, along with the barriers and needs of teachers to better implement RtI with fidelity. The perceptions of each teacher aligned with the purpose of this basic qualitative basic qualitative study.

The themes that emerged from the data collection and analysis were in alignment with the two guiding research questions.

Table 1

Themes for Research Questions

Research questions	Theme
RQ1: How are teachers in one southeast suburban school district implementing RtI to assist struggling learners and reduce referrals to special education? RQ2: What are the perceived needs of teachers to better implement RtI with fidelity?	1. Lack of understanding of RtI 2. Complexity of RtI 3. Unclear guidelines
RQ2: What are the perceived needs of teachers to better implement RtI with fidelity?	4. PD and coaching 5. Resources

The themes were developed from the responses to interview questions after data was analyzed multiple times. Member checking was utilized immediately during each interview to clarify any answers of the participants, as well as after the interview. Each participant received a copy of the interview via email and was asked to review it for accuracy. Each teacher stated that the questions and answers were accurate, and there were no further comments or additions to any of the interviews. The final themes were then constructed for each research question.

Theme 1: Teachers' Lack of Understanding of Response to Intervention

The first theme, teachers' lack of understanding of RtI, offered information regarding the prior knowledge that teachers had of RtI and how the framework was being used in the classroom currently. Despite having regularly scheduled meetings for Tier 2 and Tier 3 students of concern, teachers still seemed confused regarding the process. When asked what types of differentiation are used for students, T4 and T7 stated that they used differentiated instruction on grade level for all tiers, adjusting the level and amount of work to the students. The participants described varying implementation procedures based on their understanding of RtI at the local site. Teacher 4 stated, "I am just doing what I am told to do as far as interventions go and what interventions I should be using." Teacher 4 also shared that she was not always sure how long students should stay in each tier, as well as how to formally progress monitor, as opposed to monitoring progress for understanding for Tier 2 as it has changed several times. Another concern of T4 was not understanding how many students could receive support in Tier 2 and Tier 3. T4 stated that currently, Tier 2 students receive support through Early Intervention Program (EIP) and not in the classroom. According to the research district, Tier 2 instruction should be 4-8 students with support in addition to and aligned with the core academic and behavior curriculum as designed by the state and district.

To better understand how teachers are implementing RtI in the classroom, teachers were asked how they assisted struggling learners in the classroom. Teachers 1, 2, 5, 6, 8, and 10 stated they used flex grouping, which includes leveling all kids in the

classroom into low, middle, and high groups. When expanding on the groups, T1 and T5 related them to high is Tier 1, the middle is Tier 2, and the lower is Tier 3.

Teacher 7 stated that changes occur every year and, with those changes, gaining knowledge and being proficient with RtI seems to be “a waste of good instruction time because another change will be implemented soon enough.” Teacher 7 also commented, “I believe struggling students need help, but we are now told how to help and what interventions to use without the understanding of why we can’t do what we have always done to help students.” Teacher 7 also stated that she continues to help any student that struggles by moving the student to Tier 2 and differentiating instruction based on the student’s ability level. Currently, teacher 7 stated she uses computer-based interventions that level students and move them through levels as they progress. She also explained that to assist struggling learners, she creates interventions based on what has worked in the past. Understanding a new concept is essential for the buy-in of teachers and for the success of the implementation. When teachers do not understand why or are not bought into a new concept, change within an organization is difficult (Ely, 1990).

Teacher 9 voiced her frustrations of not understanding Tier 3 in regards to interventions. She did not fully understand the process of if a student was not showing progress during Tier 3 why, for some students, interventions were changed, and for others, a referral to special education was recommended at the meeting. T9 explained that she gave the interventions and progress monitored with fidelity using the interventions given to her. She expressed the lack of understanding when it came to Tier 3 meetings, who was invited, how often to meet, and what was on the agenda. Teacher 9

stated, “It was my understanding at Tier 3 that we would explain to the parents our grave concerns and recommend the student be tested for special education services.” She also stated that RtI in the past looked much different. The meetings had fewer people, and there was more discussion on the student’s struggles and how we could “get more help” for the student through services within special education.

Teacher 6 voiced concerns that she did not clearly understand differentiation at each tier under RtI. She stated:

It was never clearly explained, specifically for Tier 2, how to choose interventions and how to record the progress. I like to do right by my students, but when I do not understand the process, it makes it difficult. It is like I am checking boxes. I believe that RtI is intended for good and for helping struggling students succeed. I do not want to be the one that assists in misidentifying a student because I did not follow protocol correctly.

Each teacher shared their understanding that RtI was for struggling students and that instruction should be differentiated within the classroom; however, T4, T6, T7, and T9 continued to discuss the “next steps after Tier 3 being special education services.” Not understanding RtI in its entirety is confusing for teachers, and without sufficient knowledge, fidelity is compromised (Sanetti & Collier-Meek, 2015). When teachers understand why there are changes, the context of the change, and positive student outcomes, their perceptions begin to change (Preston et al., 2016).

Theme 2: Complexity of Response to intervention

Although RtI is not new to education, revamping it under the MTSS framework and holding teachers, schools, and districts accountable for the fidelity has been viewed as more complex and harder to implement than in the past. Rogers (1983) stated that if an innovation that is introduced is perceived as too complex, then it is more likely not to gain momentum and lose fidelity of implementation. T1, T3, T5, T6, T8, and T10 indicated concerns about the complexity of RtI. The teachers were asked several questions in an effort to understand how they implement RtI for struggling learners in the classroom. All of the participants felt that they were in some way, implementing RtI in terms of differentiated instruction and providing extra help for students, even if it was not being recorded or documented. Presently, the teachers are serving T2 and EIP students, also called “bubble students,” in the same way, stating that the complexity of RtI creates the misunderstanding in the difference in Tier 2 and EIP. The complexity also created some confusion as to the location students were served. T1, T3, and T6 explained that Tier 2 students received interventions outside of the general education classroom in EIP.

Teacher 1 shared that providing instructions at different tiers, documenting the instruction time, and inputting progress monitoring in the computer was difficult with so many students and so little help. T1 stated, “Between keeping up with standards, so much testing, students in tiers, and meetings, I wish RtI was so complicated so I would I have a clear picture, or map, of how to organize instruction.”

Teachers 3 and 6 stated they are frustrated with the amount people at meetings and the complexity of the meetings, noting that, not only are they confused, but parents

but be also. T3 and T6 also stated that they feel unprepared and unsure of what is expected of them at meetings. T6 specifically said, “There are so many moving parts, that I get confused what each meeting consists of such as team meetings, Tier 3 meetings, special education meetings, and so on.” T3 stated that she “feels unsure about RtI because it seems so complex and has many layers and moving parts.”

T5, T8, and T10 specified the complexity of RtI concerning outcomes. Each teacher showed concern that the process was too complex and takes too long to identify students for special education services. The understanding of RtI as a reactive framework was apparent as each teacher stated phrases like, “move them through,” “fast track to special education,” and “get the student more help.” Teacher 10 said, “getting students to special education for the help they need is too difficult now and takes a lot of work.” With RtI being viewed as a complex system, the fidelity is compromised when the teacher does not understand each piece and how each piece fits together to assist struggling learners and truly identify those needing special education services. The chances of an innovation sustaining are increased when the innovation is easy to understand and is compatible with the past practices (Ellsworth, 2000; Rogers, 1983).

Theme 3: Unclear Guidelines

When implementing a new idea or concept, the guidelines must be communicated clearly through certain channels and concise for understanding and implementation (Rogers, 1983; Wani & Ali, 2015). T1, T2, T4, T6, T7, T8, T9, and T10 expressed their concern regarding the guidelines put forth by the district and the lack of communication from the district to the teachers. Alahmari (2019) stated that implementing RtI is

challenging for general education teacher, and clear expectations and guidelines are essential. The participants indicated that when RtI was reintroduced under the MTSS framework, the guidelines were unclear and did not seem consistent throughout grade levels and even from school to school. The theme of unclear guidelines identified teacher misperceptions regarding the process, time, duration, frequency, and progress monitoring of interventions. The school district held monthly MTSS meetings and training sessions for school coordinators representing each school in the district. Not all schools were represented at each meeting, leaving some schools missing information regarding the implementation of RtI under the MTSS framework. The participants stated that when coordinators returned from monthly MTSS meetings at the district, they were not always given the training or new information. T3, T4, and T10 specifically stated that guidelines regarding Tier 2 and Tier 3 groups and protocol were not consistent and were not clear when given by the district to the coordinators. When asked how students are identified as need more support for Tier 2, T4 and T10 stated that they would consider grades and meet with the assistant principal to inform her the students were struggling. Both teachers did state that they did not understand Tier 2 guidelines for supporting students. District guidelines state that Tier 2, as described in the Georgia RtI three-tiered model, is a group of four to eight students receiving 15 minutes of additional instruction 3-5 days per week for 9-12 weeks, with progress monitoring on a bi-weekly basis. The district guidelines also explain that at Tier 3, there should be no more than three students per group receiving intervention on the instructional level of the student for targeted areas. The instruction should be provided five days a week based on the intervention protocol

for duration time and progress monitored weekly. T2, T3, T4, T6, T8, T9, and T10 all expressed concerns regarding the guidelines at each tier and how interventions should be chosen, taught, and monitored at each tier.

Teacher 2 noted that, before the new implementation of RtI, most of her students on Tier 3 “ended up in special education” however, she communicated that she is not seeing the amount of referrals as in the past with the new system. She stated, “even if we are not doing RtI completely right, we are seeing students grow and able to move back to Tier 2 and even Tier 1, at times.” T2 also quantified that “the procedures and expectations need to be clear to ensure that, not only are we helping students, but we are following the guidelines and expectations of the GADOE.”

Each participant was asked what barriers, if any, were observed that would affect the fidelity of providing RtI in the classroom. All teachers referenced the unclear guidelines as a factor. T1 stated, “I have friends at other schools, and it seems that we are doing and understanding different procedures when it comes to most of the process.” T5 indicated that she was not clear concerning the appropriate interventions for students, the time for interventions, and progress monitoring. T5 stated, “I am confused about where to find interventions that are approved and how to appropriately progress monitor to show exactly where my students are academically or behaviorally.”

While all participants express concern for the guidelines and expectations, it was evident that the teachers were implementing the process based on their best understanding of RtI. Administration and district leaders are instrumental in ensuring guidelines are clear and easy to understand to better support teachers and their concerns.

Teachers need a substantial amount of support and clear guidelines when implementing RtI (Hudson & McKenzie, 2016).

Theme 4: Professional Development and Coaching

Themes 4 and 5 strictly relate to research question two, although the other themes tend to overlap research questions one and two. All participants indicated that PD and coaching were needed to understand all components of RtI better, including but not limited to choosing interventions, administering interventions, data collection, progress monitoring, and analyzing the data for the appropriate rate of acquisition. T1, T2, T4, T5, T7, and T10 stated that ongoing PD session is needed, but emphasized the need for coaching from the district, observation of other teachers, and being able to try various interventions for better understanding. Rogers (1983) diffusion of innovation theory verified that opportunities for training, observing, and experimenting are necessary components for change to take place. These opportunities for teachers come via PD and coaching during and beyond the implementation phase (Ellsworth, 2000).

When asked what additional needs would support the teachers with the fidelity of RtI, all stated that PD was at the top of the list. Throughout the data analysis of each interview, the participants expressed a strong desire for PD and coaching to understand better and implement RtI as it was intended. Effective training for pre-service teachers, paraprofessionals, and in-service teachers is needed to effectively implement RtI and improve student outcomes (Brock & Carter, 2019). Therefore, ongoing PD and coaching are critical to the success of RtI.

Theme 5: Resources

Rogers's diffusion of innovation theory (1962) described the attributes needed for change within an organization to succeed. Rogers's (1983) explained that it is not the people that change, but the innovations. Teachers need resources to make necessary and effective changes that are required of them. Ely's conditions of change (1990) demonstrate that innovation without necessary resources to support the implementation will be unsuccessful.

When asked what resources were available to assist with the implementation of RtI, the answers were limited, vague, and all were very different. Teacher 1 explained that one of her resources is staff; however, due to limited time, she trains her paraprofessional to do the interventions. She also stated she is fortunate to have a full-time para in her classroom. As far as materials, resources are limited unless the school purchases supplies and interventions using Title 1 funds. She admits that often, teacher-made games or technology are utilized to provide extra support for students.

Teacher 2 stated that she does not have many resources unless she purchases them with a grant that she received for her classroom, and even then, she is not sure if they are acceptable under MTSS guidelines. She said, "The county website is helpful, but we need PD in all areas for the website, choosing the intervention, intervention delivery, and so on." T2 also detailed that time is a valuable resource, which teachers do not have much of for everything that is required of them for state standards and RtI. "Having a resource such as trained staff for RtI would help with the process, but the extra help would need to be fully trained to help with RtI for the fidelity piece of the process," T2

articulated. Teacher 2 also explained that she enjoys seeing struggling students learn and taking ownership of their learning. Still, in an effort to implement what is asked of each teacher, resources are needed desperately.

Regarding resources, Teachers 4 and 6 replied that both see a lack of multiple resources such as interventions, materials, staffing, and PD. Both also stated that finding the time to work with the students individually is difficult while continuing Tier 1 and Tier 2 instruction, as well. Teacher 4 explained if she had the materials to conduct the interventions, she would feel more prepared for the student during intervention time and the RtI team during meetings. T4 explained, “We have a very supportive administration within our school, but they can only provide so much.” She also stated that with appropriate materials and training, that time would be better spent on instruction. Teacher 6 also explained during her interview that she understands there is a 5-year rollout for this framework, and under the circumstances now with COVID-19, things may take longer and look a little different.

Teachers 7, 9, and 10 all stated that time, staffing, and materials are major barriers for effectively implementing RtI. T7 explained that she does the interventions for her students herself without assistance. She stated that “at times it becomes very frustrating if I have 3-4 students in Tier 3 because then time becomes an issue. Having staff to help with interventions would be a blessing.”

T9 had the same concern of staffing but stated that the Early Intervention Program (EIP) teacher helps her with interventions when she can. However, there is no set time or day that the EIP teacher does the interventions, only when she has free time. Although

grateful for the help, T9 explained that students need the consistency and routine for success, and teachers need the consistency for the fidelity of data. Teacher 9 also explained that she comes up with materials for the intervention, as well as the intervention itself, when a student is moved to Tier 3.

Finally, teacher 10 expressed her concerns regarding staffing and lack of materials to perform RtI at the Tier 3 level successfully. “Because the students are so far behind, I do not always have materials several grade levels back. Also, as an upper-grade level teacher, I do not have support, such as a para to assist with interventions when I have multiple students at Tier 3,” stated T10. With some Tier 3 students being so far behind grade level, T10 stated concern for the amount of time needed for individualized instruction and interventions. Having materials readily available does assist with supporting teachers; however, time is always hard to find when teachers do not have support and students need in-depth instruction.

Resources such as materials, time, and staff are needed to successfully implement and sustain RtI with fidelity (Brendle, 2015; McKenna et al., 2014). When given the appropriate resources, the fidelity of RtI is improved, and teachers are better prepared to support students (Buckley et al., 2017). Even with little resources, it is important for teachers to know the resources available and how to use them effectively.

Discrepant Cases

Throughout the data collection process, no discrepant cases were identified. I ensured that the data collection was valid and was an accurate representation of the findings during the data analysis. Steps were taken, such as interview transcription, to

safeguard against any discrepancies throughout the study. Interviews were video recorded and sent, along with transcription, to each participant for review and confirm of accuracy to minimize any bias. Throughout the interviews, member checking was also used to confirm and understand each teacher's perception of RtI and how it is used to assist struggling students in the classroom. Member checking involved stopping as needed to clarify what a participant stated, as opposed to assuming the statement was heard correctly. I also sent the responses back to each member after transcription as a form of member checking to ensure that all responses were accurately transcribed.

Accuracy and Credibility

The information gathered throughout the data collection process must establish accuracy through validity (Creswell, 2012). All data were carefully collected and analyzed multiple times to ensure validity and accuracy. Interviews were recorded and transcribed via Google Meet, and then each recording and transcription was sent to each participant to check for accuracy. In addition, the use of member checking during each interview, when needed, and after transcription, also confirmed accuracy. Member checking was used to assist in eliminating researcher bias. Member checking is the method of returning participant response for validation and to assess the trustworthiness of the study results (Birt et al., 2016). There were no changes made during the member checking by any participant or myself.

Summary

When a new system is implemented, teachers face many challenges, including learning what may be a complex system, lack of PD, lack of knowledge, lack of

resources, and unclear guidelines. In order to effectively implement a new system, such as RtI under the MTSS framework, teachers need knowledge and ongoing coaching for fidelity throughout the entire process (Alahmari, 2019; Brown, 2016; Castillo et al., 2018). To ensure program and student success, teachers must be provided with necessary resources, including interventions, time, materials, staff, and PD (Goodman, 2017). The findings from this basic qualitative study provided valuable information regarding the teachers' perceived needs to implement RtI with fidelity at the study site. The findings revealed that teachers need PD, ongoing coaching, a better understanding of the procedures and guidelines, and resources to implement RtI more effectively.

The problem that drove this study is the lack of fidelity in the implementation of response to intervention (RtI) under the multitier systems of support (MTSS) framework in the local setting, possibly leading to an increase in special education referrals. To better understand the problem and offer possible solutions, information was needed regarding how schools were implementing RtI and what did teachers perceive as needs to better implement RtI with fidelity. The findings showed a need for support in terms of PD for teachers. In greater detail, the participants shared the need for (a) consistent expectations regarding the process of RtI and the specific components of RtI, (b) clear guidelines for each tier of RtI regarding moving students between tiers and what the supports look like, (c) PD for understanding interventions and progress monitoring of students and how to understand the data from the progress monitoring over time, (d) ongoing coaching in the classroom for intervention delivery, and (e) resources such as scheduling time for interventions, staffing, intervention choices, and materials to execute

the interventions per protocol. Each teacher expressed the need for support from their administration and the district regarding RtI. When supported by administration and the district, along with consistent expectations, teacher buy-in has been shown to increase and reduce confusion in the RtI process (Fan et al., 2016).

The conceptual frameworks of Ely (1990) and Rogers (1983) both applied directly to the finding of this study. Teacher participants exhibited, through the data collection, that they did not have sufficient knowledge and skills to implement the RtI framework with fidelity. The participants also stated that concerns regarding fidelity were time to implement interventions, resources needed, and leadership support, all of which Ely found is needed for change within an organization. For the change to take place and become sustainable, the findings revealed that complexity, trailability, and observability are important areas when expecting change to take place and the change to become sustainable as well. Based on Ely's (1990) conditions of change and Rogers's (1983) diffusion of innovation theory, along with the findings of the study, a PD was needed to assist teachers with understanding the RtI framework and how to implement the framework with fidelity to support struggling students in effort to close the achievement gap and for appropriate decision-making regarding special education testing.

Project Deliverable

The problem examined by this qualitative study was the lack of fidelity in the application of RtI, possibly leading to an increase in special education referrals. The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the perceived needs of teachers to better implement RtI with fidelity. The district where the study was conducted

adopted the MTSS framework in 2018, thus re-evaluating and implementing RtI. For this basic qualitative study, I interviewed 10 elementary teachers. Section 2 of this study explains, in-depth, the research design and procedures used to collect and analyze the data. The findings of the study clearly showed the perceived needs of each participant regarding their lack understanding of RtI, the complexity of RtI, a need for clear guidelines, the need for PD, and lack of resources to implement RtI with fidelity.

The research findings resulted in the development of PD for the district. The project will include training on the components of RtI, including understanding RtI and its components under the MTSS framework, the process of RtI and supporting students, understanding interventions, analyzing data, and resources that are available to assist them when supporting students. The PD training sessions will include the findings and evidence from the literature on the RtI process, Tiers 1, 2, and 3, decision making, data and data analysis, and resources. The expectations and guidelines from the district will be included for a better understanding of what is expected from teachers, administration, and the district support staff in each school. This will be included at the conclusion of this doctoral project study.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to examine teachers' perceived needs to better implement RtI at the project study site. After the data for this project were analyzed and themes were evident, I developed a 3-day PD training session for teachers titled *The Success of RtI: It Takes a Village*. The project is included in Appendix A and was developed from the themes found through data analysis presented in Section 2, as well as from the literature reviews presented in Sections 1 and 3. In this section, I explain the rationale for why the genre was chosen, present a literature review, and provide a description of the project and its goals, plans for evaluation, and social change implications of the study.

The findings of this study indicated a need for ongoing PD with ongoing coaching regarding the RtI process in the areas of understanding RtI and its components, the resources available from the district, and ways to implement RtI with fidelity. By offering ongoing PD and coaching to teachers, the district will support the teachers' needs for the effective implementation of RtI. By engaging in the PD sessions, the teachers will gain a better understanding of RtI and its components. Participants in this study advised that faculty need PD to better understand the resources available, the guidelines of RtI as given by the district, the framework or layout of RtI, and the concept of RtI. The participants suggested that they would like to understand how to implement RtI with fidelity better and that they wanted a better understanding of the framework. My

review of the findings indicated that the teachers lacked understanding regarding RtI and its components.

This PD project addresses the needs of the teachers in the district for implementing RtI with fidelity based on the data collected. The project addresses teachers' questions concerning why we use RtI and the importance of the framework for assisting struggling learners, as well as the correct identification of those needing specialized instruction. The project also addresses needs stated by the participants, such as the need for resources, the need for a better understanding of the tiers of RtI, the need for coaching, and the need for ongoing PD for further understanding. The project will provide teachers with a better understanding of RtI as a whole.

Description of Project and Goals

A 3-day PD project was created based on the findings of this study, which indicated a specific need for PD focusing on increasing teacher self-efficacy through collaboration during training, with follow-up coaching and professional learning communities (PLCs). The purpose of the PD is to deliver targeted sessions, most of which will be in a collaborative format to promote dialogue among teachers. The PD will include K-5 teachers within the district via virtual learning (Google Meet) due to COVID-19. If, and when COVID-related restrictions are lifted, the PD will be implemented face to face. The purpose of the PD and training is to increase teacher knowledge of RtI, provide clear guidelines regarding the process, and offer support services to teachers on an ongoing basis.

The goals for this project are as follows:

- Goal 1: To improve clarity and understanding of RtI under the MTSS framework.
- Goal 2: To provide teachers with clear expectations of the RtI process at each tier.
- Goal 3: To increase understanding of the benefits of RtI for the success of students and referrals to special education.
- Goal 4: To enhance the fidelity of the implementation of RtI through ongoing PD, PLCs, and coaching.
- Goal 5: To assist teachers with the implementation of RtI at each tier and during the decision-making process.

Rationale

Based on the findings of the basic qualitative study presented in Section 2, I determined that a 3-day PD for teachers was an appropriate project for this study. The study revealed the need for PD on RtI to assist and support teachers regarding the fidelity of the model. The project will address the gap between current practice and how RtI should be implemented. Based on the interviews with each participant and the data analysis in Section 2, it was evident that ongoing PD is needed. Additionally, the review of district records in 2018 indicated a need for PD on the implementation and application of RtI. Although some training, on an as-needed basis, has been completed, the consistency of PD is lacking within the district.

This qualitative study addressed the perceived needs of teachers to implement RtI with fidelity. The data in Section 2 revealed that teachers were unsure not only about the

process, but also about MTSS/RtI itself. The data analysis showed the need for PD in the areas of what RtI means, Tier 1, Tier 2, Tier 3, intervention selection and delivery, entering and analyzing data, and the decision-making process, as well as clear guidelines and expectations. Participants shared that they lacked knowledge of EBI, the RtI process, the fact that RtI is not a road to special education, and progress monitoring for interventions. The concerns revealed were found in Theme 1: Lack of Knowledge, regarding the processes of RtI. In relation to Theme 2: Complexity of RtI, the participants shared their apprehensions regarding the meetings at Tier 3, the length of time, the complexity of identifying a student for special education, and the complexity of what is asked of teachers. In relation to Theme 3: Unclear Guidelines, participants revealed that teachers' perceived needs included communication from the district, clear guidelines for Tiers 2 and 3, more consistent guidelines between grade levels and schools, and guidelines for interventions. The teachers seemed to have a desire to implement RtI with fidelity when given the guidelines and PD to do so, which was indicated by all participants, thus generating Theme 4: PD and Coaching. Another consideration of the data is Section 2 was identified as Theme 5, Resources. The teachers expressed a need for resources such as time, materials, staffing, coaching, and PD. Together, the themes from Section 3 indicated a need for PD regarding the process of RtI under the new rollout of MTSS.

A 3-day PD session, along with ongoing coaching/PD, is needed for a better understanding of the framework in its entirety. The problem will be addressed through the content of direct training and collaboration through breakout sessions during the 3-

day period. The PD training will address the results found in the data analysis in Section 2. The training will provide teachers with clear guidelines regarding the implementation of RtI and will be designed to provide clarity concerning misconceptions of the implementation of RtI at the local site. Because the success of RtI depends on teachers engaging in collaborative PD, the PD will be collaborative, in the hope of improving instructional practices (Castillo et al., 2016). The content of the PD will focus on the history of RtI, the importance of RtI, the components of RtI, and the decision-making process for students. Teachers need sufficient knowledge and resources, such as PD, to implement a new concept effectively (Ely, 1990).

The overall goal of the PD will be to provide support for teachers to build knowledge and self-efficacy concerning RtI in the classroom. The purpose of the PD will be to form robust collaborative work environments that will advance the capacity for change and gain buy-in from participants to facilitate change (Brown, 2016). As stated earlier, there is a gap in the implementation of RtI that will be addressed through the PD series and well beyond with the use of coaching and PLCs. PD in the form of training essential to the effort to bridge the gap from research to practice (Gaumer Erickson et al., 2017). Going farther than the 3-day PD will be critical in the application and the fidelity of RtI.

Review of Literature

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the perceived needs of teachers to better implement RtI with fidelity. The literature review for this section of the study provides the research foundation for the project, which consists of

PD on the implementation of RtI. Teachers need to stay abreast of and understand the changes rapidly being made in their profession, and staying abreast of current changes is the critical enabling factor for transformation (Chai & Kong, 2017). Ongoing PD is vital to the success of education and keeps teachers informed of current practice.

In this study, teachers indicated a need for ongoing PD to better implement RtI. The findings presented a gap between high-fidelity application of RtI and current practices. By using the research results in Section 2, a 3-day PD course was developed for teachers in the research district. PD, as the genre of the project, is appropriate because it can address the needs of teachers based on the problem of the study. PD will provide teachers with the training they need to understand and better implement RtI with fidelity.

Literature Search Strategy

To conduct the research, I used Google Scholar, EBSCO, Walden University Library, Semantic Scholar, Science Direct, and ERIC to locate literature on PD in education. The literature review was conducted to justify the appropriation of ongoing PD for teachers regarding the process of RtI. The following keywords were used to drive my search: *professional learning communities, communities of learners, adult learning theories, PD in education, PD teachers, virtual PD, PD RtI, PD teacher efficacy, PD elementary teachers and RtI, PD education and training, coaching teachers RtI, MTSS PD, professional development and self-efficacy, professional development and collective efficacy, and RtI teacher training*. I used a Boolean search to narrow my search findings to articles from the last 5 years that were peer reviewed and available in full text.

Adult Learning and Communities of Practice

RtI is a multitier system of support used to improve instruction for all students by providing high-quality instruction and interventions corresponding with student needs, progress monitoring, and data analysis for making educational decisions (Benedict et al., 2016; Vollmer et al., 2019; Wood et al., 2016). As a result of IDEA (2004), schools across the United States are adopting RtI due to the shift in methods, such as RtI using EBI and progress monitoring at instructional level, that are used to quality students with learning disabilities replacing the criteria of the discrepancy model (Vollmer et al., 2019; Wood et al., 2016). The research district adopted the MTSS framework in 2018, and, along with this change, revamped RtI using the MTSS framework for fidelity and compliance. Through the process of implementation, it was noted, through district record review, that the fidelity of the framework was being compromised. The findings indicated a need for PD in the district.

The theories used to plan for ongoing PD included Knowles's (1980) adult learning theory of pedagogy and Wenger's (1998) communities of practice. Knowles (1980) coined the term *andragogy* to refer to the art and science of helping adults learn (Chametzky, 2016; Loeng, 2018). Knowles believed that adults learn differently from children and that learning should be a lifelong goal, extending through all stages of life (Kelly, 2017). The main tenets of Knowles's theory of andragogy are as follows: (a) adults are motivated to learn as they experience needs, (b) learning is self-centered through life experiences, (c) experience is the best resource, (d) adults have a need to be self-learners, and (e) adult learners need individualized learning (Kelly, 2017).

PD, PLCs, and coaching are important for ongoing teacher learning and sustaining change. Each relates to Knowles's theory of andragogy by allowing teachers to experience learning through PD, share their learning and experiences with a PLC, and utilizing coaching as part of individual learning. The theory of andragogy can be applied to instruction in a face-to-face, virtual, or blended environment (Chametzky, 2016). Chametzky (2016) also stated that andragogy is a significant component of virtual or online learning. In PLCs, adults can learn from one another's struggles and wins while supporting one another and building self-efficacy and collective efficacy (Kelly, 2017).

Wenger's (1998) theory of communities of practice indicates that people learn through social interaction (Cuddapah & Clayton, 2011; Swanson et al., 2018; Warr Pedersen, 2017). By participating in PLCs, teachers can interact with other teachers and draw from their experiences and support. Wenger (1998) found that significant learning occurs when groups of people interact informally over a shared interest (Warr Pedersen, 2017).

The communities of practice model has four components: community, practice, meaning, and identity. The *community* is formed through a mutual interest. Members share *practices* and collaborate on initiatives to support the educational environment. In so doing, members make *meaning* of experiences and thus experience *identity* through participation (Cuddapah & Clayton, 2011; Swanson et al., 2018; Warr Pedersen, 2017). PLCs can assist and support teachers by encompassing the four components of communities of practice.

PLCs can occur in person or in virtual formats. The goal in a PLC is for teachers to support teachers, learn from one another, and collaborate to improve student achievement. PLCs also improve collective efficacy and pedagogy through engagement and interaction of teachers (Warr Pedersen, 2017).

The two frameworks, andragogy and communities of practice, helped in the construction of the PD by offering a better understanding of how teachers learn in various settings. PD trainings allow teachers to improve skills building on what they already know, what they want to learn, while utilizing collaboration and modeling for a hands-on experience. In PLCs, teachers have the opportunity to learn more informally, discuss strengths and weaknesses, learn new ways of teaching, and form relationships with other teachers. Ongoing PD, PLCs, and coaching help increase self-efficacy and collective efficacy. By increasing their self-efficacy and collective efficacy, teachers become more confident with their teaching and student achievement, and learning increases (Durkson et al., 2017; Prenger et al., 2019; Voelkel & Chrispeels, 2017; Yoo, 2016).

Professional Development

PD is a meaningful, lifelong learning process to enhance teacher learning and to assist teachers in developing new practices for improved performance (Hairon et al., 2017; Makovec, 2018; Osman & Warner, 2020; Prenger et al., 2019). PD is essential systems-level training needed to implement and facilitate the RtI process (Castillo et al., 2018). When effective, high-quality PD is known to increase teachers' knowledge and skills to increase self-efficacy and student outcomes (Gaumer Erickson et al., 2017). Opportunities for PD in school systems are designed to provide support to educators to

increase knowledge and skills for professional growth and enhancement (Flynn et al., 2016). By participating in PD, teachers can transfer what they have learned to enrich and increase their professional and instructional practices in the school and the classroom.

The PD developed for this project was based on the teachers' perceived needs to better implement RtI with fidelity and to receive support to provide RtI in the classroom. The conceptual framework guided the project's development, and the review of literature related to the PD needed to increase the fidelity of RtI at the local research site. Both Ely (1990) and Rogers (1983) found that for innovations to take place, change must occur within the environment and the organization. For change to take place, teachers must have a clear understanding of the innovation, why the change is occurring, and the best practices for implementing the change.

Virtual Professional Development and COVID-19

Due to the current COVID-19 pandemic and associated school closures, virtual learning environments, and social distancing rules, the PD training for this study was created for synchronous and asynchronous delivery. Technology allows for PD to be presented virtually while meeting the needs of teachers (Bates et al., 2016). Given the uncertainty of when COVID-19 restrictions will end, the PD will initially be presented virtually. It is my hope that in the future, participants may choose a face-to-face or virtual option. Bates et al. (2016) stated that virtual and in-person professional learning may be equally influential. The change to remote teaching, given the constraints of COVID-19, required new models of PD and support for teachers while maintaining the same important content of ongoing PD (Hartshorne et al., 2020). Even if presented

virtually, PD should be ongoing, rather than a one-time event that does not lead to changes in practice (Parsons et al., 2019).

The PD created for this project will include collaboration between teachers in breakout sessions for real-time participants and discussion boards via Google Classroom for participants in the recorded session. Collaboration can support school initiatives and encourage teachers to view innovation as a continuous change process rather than an additional task (Muckenthaler et al., 2020). Not only is virtual PD created due to COVID-19, but research indicates that by utilizing PD virtually, it protects a teacher's most valuable resource, time (Salley & Bates, 2018). Time was a concern of the finding in Section 2. The teachers stated that finding time for anything outside of lessoning planning and instruction was difficult. By employing virtual PD, teachers also save time traveling, it is convenient, the material can be accessed as needed, teachers can collaborate with teachers from other schools, and take part in the specific PD that pertain to them (Archer & Max, 2018; Bates et al., 2016; Parsons et al., 2019). Virtual PD can be customized to meet teachers where they are in their pedagogical practice, specifically RtI (Hartshorne et al., 2020). While the initial motive for virtual PD was COVID-19, the benefits of online PD may be such that alludes to more synchronous and asynchronous learning for teachers.

Continuous Professional Development

MTSS is structured as support tiered for all students through RtI and PBIS using a whole child approach (Sailor et al., 2020). This study focused on RtI under the MTSS framework, and teachers' perceived needs to implement RtI with fidelity. To effectively

implement RtI with fidelity, teachers must possess knowledge and skills on the continuum of supports via RtI (Sailor et al., 2020). PD plays a vital role in ensuring that teachers obtain the knowledge and skills to implement RtI and positively impact student learning for all students, ultimately reducing the number of referrals to special education (Gaumer Erickson et al., 2017; Vollmer et al., 2019). Effective PD should include (a) focused content, (b) active learning, (c) collaboration, (d) modeling, (e) coaching, (f) feedback and reflection, (g) be ongoing (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Desimone & Pak, 2017; Thurlings & den Brok, 2017). The PD designed for this study included the characteristics for an effective PD to provide training in a large group and continuing ongoing PD as needed via modules. Each PD session and module encompassed the characteristics of a high-quality PD on RtI. A well-designed PD will state clear learning objectives and incorporate assessments of participant learning (Gaumer Erickson et al., 2017). Assessments and self-reflection will assist me in understanding what went well and where I can do better as I develop ongoing PD for the district. When PD is ongoing and meaningful and offers multiple opportunities for learning, there is a greater chance of renovating teaching practices and student learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Self-efficacy and collective efficacy have been studied as an important factor that influences student achievement (Durkson et al., 2017; Yoo, 2016). Ongoing, high-quality PD research has shown to positively affect self-efficacy (Yoo, 2016). Researchers have stated that when PD is effective, teacher self-efficacy and collective efficacy will increase (Yoo, 2016). Collective efficacy, or shared beliefs, can help schools gain momentum of implementing RtI with success, as Rogers (1983) believed. Collective efficacy of

teachers can help spread shared beliefs of RtI and its success throughout a school and positively influence teachers' beliefs regarding the framework (Voelkel & Chrispeels, 2017). Research suggests effective PLCs enhance teacher collaboration and student achievement. Some studies indicate that these communities also predict greater collective efficacy, while others suggest teacher efficacy is predictive of teachers working together. Although studies have identified effective, research-based PLC practices, how these specific practices effect collective efficacy has not been thoroughly studied. This study, using structural equation modeling (SEM), investigated the relationship between PLCs and teachers' collective efficacy drawing on 310 surveys from 16 schools in one district that had systematically implemented PLCs. Our findings showed that higher functioning PLCs predict higher levels of teacher collective efficacy (TCE). This suggests that engaging and supporting teachers in PLC work, as this district did, can lead to enhanced collective efficacy, which in turn can contribute to improved student achievement (Voelkel & Chrispeels, 2017). If teachers understand and have sufficient knowledge of RtI, the fidelity of implementation will increase. PD opportunities help increase teacher confidence thus making adopting a new practice easier (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). A teacher is more likely to utilize instruction that he or she is comfortable implementing and has the knowledge and skills of the content (Yoo, 2016). To implement EBI within RtI, teachers should be confident and possess the knowledge of the RtI framework.

Professional Learning Communities

PLCs have also, through research, been linked to student achievement and teacher collaboration and commitment, all of which are important aspects of RtI (Burns et al.,

2018; Hairon et al., 2017; Mundschenk & Fuchs, 2016; Prenger et al., 2019; Voelkel & Chrispeels, 2017). Although there is no universal definition of a PLC, there is an agreed-upon description of what a PLC consists of. A PLC is described as a group of teachers collaborating and learning from one another to advance knowledge and skills for valued outcomes, including increasing student outcomes while removing barriers (Hairon et al., 2017; Mundschenk & Fuchs, 2016; Prenger et al., 2019; Voelkel & Chrispeels, 2017). PLCs are also identified with the increase of collective efficacy among teachers, where during collaboration, the shift is from “my students” to “our students” (Mundschenk & Fuchs, 2016; Voelkel & Chrispeels, 2017). PLCs can assist teachers with the implementation of RtI by collaborating with one another to problem solve why specific students may not be making gains and the next steps in the process. The higher the collective efficacy of a group, the more effort the group will put towards reaching the goals set forth and enhance teacher engagement (Durkson et al., 2017; Voelkel & Chrispeels, 2017). With maximum effort from team members, we are better equipped to bridge the gap from research to practice (Gaumer Erickson et al., 2017; Mundschenk & Fuchs, 2016).

After PD training is complete, implementing PLCs for supporting teachers during RtI implementation will be critical. While PD training is important and necessary, PLCs offer support to teachers from other teachers and even from school and district leaders. Common practices within a PLC include (a) shared vision and values, (b) focus on student learning, (c) collaboration, and (d) sharing practice and supporting each other (Hairon et al., 2017; Voelkel & Chrispeels, 2017). The common practices can boost

teacher morale, enthusiasm, and a feeling of success when implemented, within a PLC and, in turn, can influence student achievement (Durkson et al., 2017). PLCs can help with problem-solving within RtI, identifying students in need of supports, assist each other with choosing EBI, observe one another implementing interventions with students, and assist with analyzing data for further decision making (Prenger et al., 2019).

Coaching as Professional Development

After PD training sessions, coaching is an essential part of implementing RtI with fidelity for assisting teachers with choosing interventions, implementing interventions, progress monitoring, and data analysis. Instructional coaching allows teachers the opportunity to observe and receive feedback in real-time for an optimal learning experience (Desimone & Pak, 2017). The different methods of coaching include virtual, one-on-one setting, grade-level meetings, or school-based PD (Desimone & Pak, 2017; Hartshorne et al., 2020). Coaching is also effective for improving academic instruction, supporting RtI, increasing fidelity, and increasing student achievement (Wood et al., 2016). The role of coaching is to provide individual support to teachers following PD to assist teachers with new instructional practices (Wood et al., 2016). Because the fidelity of RtI is critical, teachers may need one on one training, in the form of coaching, virtually or in person, to gain an even deeper knowledge and understanding of the components of RtI. If interventions are not utilized per protocol, student performance declines (Hartshorne et al., 2020; King-Sears et al., 2018). Coaching gives teachers the opportunity to practice skills with immediate feedback to improve teaching practices and increase the fidelity of RtI (Dunst et al., 2019). In the findings in Section 2, most

teachers stated they would benefit greatly, not only from PD but also from individual coaching for intervention delivery from the district, whether in person or virtually for support with interventions. When coaching teachers on using EBI, it is beneficial to follow the five-step fidelity process (King-Sears et al., 2018). Table 2 gives a step-by-step explanation for coaching teachers through processes of intervention delivery.

Implementing coaching with teachers engages them in active learning and increase the effectiveness of PD while offering frequent opportunities to practice and receive feedback (Desimone & Pak, 2017). The perceived needs of teachers in Section 2 was to also have one-on-one time with an intervention specialist to better understand the process from selecting the intervention to the data analysis stage. Coaching also can be individually tailored to a teacher or a small group of teachers, utilizing prior knowledge and personal goals as a focus (Desimone & Pak, 2017). Teachers expressed a desire to learn and better understand the RtI process through PD and coaching as needed.

Table 2

The Five-Step Process for Designing and Using Fidelity Protocols

Step	Description
1. Model intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I show. I do. I tell. • Talk as if with students. • Model (talk aloud about thinking process) what is being done and how decisions about what to do are made. • Know what steps will be featured in the fidelity protocol; model each step. • Sequence steps during modeling the same as will be shown on the fidelity protocol, if sequence makes a difference. • Attend to nuances of an intervention when modeling, such as tone of voice, nonverbal behaviors, or other verbal behaviors.
2. Share fidelity protocol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasize rationale for specific parts. • Ensure all on fidelity protocol are the essential parts that must be done.

- Be clear if fidelity parts are yes/no responses about what behaviors = yes and what behaviors = no.
 - Be clear if fidelity parts are ratings about what specific behaviors = which rating.
3. Coach
- Role play with practitioner prior to use in real situation.
 - Coach until practitioner is doing / saying things (+ using materials, etc.) with high degree of fidelity (e.g., 80%, 100%).
 - Consider rationale for needing high fidelity: If low fidelity prior to using in real situation, then why would one expect higher fidelity in real situation?
4. Observe for fidelity
- Use fidelity protocol when observing.
 - Calculate for fidelity.
5. Reflect with practitioner; fade to self-reflection
- Share results per fidelity protocol, including the calculations (e.g., 85% fidelity for that observation; 60% fidelity for that observation).
 - Discuss what to maintain; what needs to improve.
 - Begin the five-step process again if low fidelity emerges.
 - Continue to observe and reflect, even when high fidelity occurs.
 - Fade fidelity sessions, but caution on eliminating fidelity altogether. Shift responsibility to practitioner for self-reflections (when possible—depends on intervention and corresponding fidelity).
 - Retain a focus on the intervention's impact on the desired student's behavior.

Note. Adapted from “Measuring Teachers’ Intervention Fidelity,” by M. E. King-Sears, J. D. Walker, and C. Barry, 2018, *Teachers’ Intervention in School and Clinic*, 54(2), p.91.

As with PD training sessions and PLCs, coaching is known to improve teacher self-efficacy, leading to improved practices, and finally, improved student outcomes (Glover, 2017). Figure 2 shows the connection between coaching, teacher outcomes, and student outcomes.

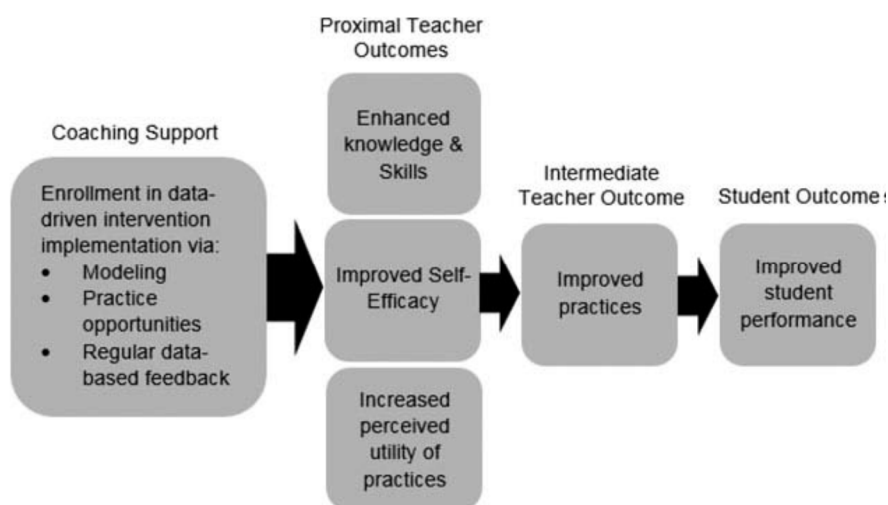


Figure 2. Theory of change for data-driven instructional coaching model. From “A Data-Driven Coaching Model Used to Promote Students’ Response to Early Reading Intervention,” by T. A. Glover, 2017, *Theory Into Practice*, 56(1), p.14. In the public domain.

Structured opportunity for practice and ongoing feedback to the teacher increases teacher knowledge in a specific content area such as RtI (Dunst et al., 2019; Glover, 2017; Wood et al., 2016). The primary components of coaching to increase teacher outcomes include (a) emphasis on the learning environment, (b) modeling, opportunities for practice, and feedback, and (c) the use of a formalized data-driven implementation framework such as RtI (Glover, 2017). Ongoing PD and coaching are needed to support teachers with a better understanding of RtI and how to effectively implement the platform at every tier, especially Tier 3. The process of change for any innovation does not occur instantly, but rather over time (Makovec, 2018). RtI under that MTSS framework is a three to five-year rollout, and with ongoing PD, can be sustainable for years to come.

Project Description

The project will be presented during the time allocated by the district for PD sessions for teachers. Based on the literature review in this section, the PD will be a 3-day collaborative presentation followed by the incorporation of PLCs and coaching throughout the year on the RtI framework. From the findings in Section 2 of this study, the PD will include the reason for RtI implementation, all components of Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3, data-making decisions regarding testing for special education, and leadership teams. Due to COVID-19, the PD will be live and recorded on the Google Meets or Zoom platform. During the live presentation, there will be time for collaboration in small groups. If teachers utilize the PD in the recorded session, discussion boards will be used for collaboration. PLCs will be in the form of Google Classrooms set up by the district, and coaching will be virtual one-on-one or small group sessions for teachers at this time.

Existing Supports and Resources Needed

Implementation of the PD project would require the support of school-based administration and district support. Instructional coaches would also be an essential component of the training, as they are sometimes involved with intervention delivery. As an incentive and depending on the professional learning units (PLU) of the district, PD hours may be given to each participant, if approved. Ely (1990) stated that incentives are one of the conditions that assist with change within an organization. Teacher buy-in will be essential to promote future PLCs and coaching to sustain the changes. At this time, the training will be virtual. The participants and the researcher will need computers, cameras, and Google Chrome to participate in the training. If face-to-face is an option in

the future, the training could be held at the district office in the PD room. Additionally, PLCs with modules will be created to support teachers by breaking down the components of RtI into sections. This will be implemented in a Google Classroom created by the district. Finally, virtual coaching will be offered to teachers for any individual needs.

Potential Barriers

Potential barriers that could affect the execution of the project could be the 3-day timeline required to attend. Scheduling during the school year and COVID-19 with asynchronous teaching in place may be a potential barrier as substitute teachers are not readily available as in the past, nor have they had the training of COVID-19 in the classroom. Another potential barrier could be that teachers may have attended previous RtI trainings that were not beneficial, which may lead to the resistance of attending a 3-day training despite the rich content. The key to success of the project is dependent upon the buy-in from the district, administration, and the teachers. The project would also need to be fully implemented for success, including the 3-day PD, rollout of PLCs, and coaching for teachers in an effort to meet the needs of the teachers.

Proposal for Implementation and Timetable

The implementation of the 3-day training would take place during the 2020/2021 school year. The training would take place, possibly beginning in March with PLC groups rolling out in April and coaching following in May. Prior to January, the purpose and findings of the study and an overview of the project would be presented to key stakeholders, our district MTSS department, and the curriculum department. Once approved, the PD dates and times would be chosen by the stakeholders collaboratively. I

would like to implement the PD again in late July for new hires and those that could not attend the first training.

Table 3

Proposed Timeline for Professional Development

Date	Task	Person	Deliverable
December 2020	Meet with stakeholders, MTSS, and curriculum	School MTSS school coordinators, superintendent, MTSS district dept, curriculum dept, researcher	PowerPoint presentation
January 2021	Create invitation, send to schools to distribute to teachers via emails with response to researcher	Researcher, MTSS school coordinator	E-mail
January/February 2021	Develop master list of participants	Researcher	E-mail
	Obtain start date from district	Researcher, superintendent, MTSS district dept	E-mail
	Share presentation and all components with stakeholders, school MTSS coordinators, superintendent, MTSS dept., curriculum dept.		
March 2021	Begin PD on dates acquired from district	Researcher	Virtual (during COVID-19), face-to-face when given permission
April 2021	Begin rolling out PLCs using master list from PD sessions.	Researcher	Virtual through Google Classroom (during COVID-19), face-to-face when given permission
May 2021	Send out Google Survey to teachers for individual coaching and begin scheduling coaching sessions.	Researcher	Google Survey, virtual through Google Classroom (during COVID-19), face-to-face when given permission

Roles and Responsibilities of Researcher and Others

As the researcher, it is my responsibility to implement the PD effectively and, in its entirety, supporting schools and teachers, as needed. It is also my responsibility to communicate with the district, school MTSS coordinators, and teachers with information regarding the project such as dates, meeting platform (virtual or in-person), and location. The responsibility of the teachers is to be open-minded and actively engaged throughout the PD. Teachers should commit to apply the RtI process with fidelity after the PD and participate in the PLCs offered and coaching to further enhance self-efficacy. District leaders and school leaders are asked to attend and support the PD, PLCs, and coaching throughout the process. As I would like to implement the PD once per year, preferably at the beginning of the school year, it is my responsibility to gain permission from the district and school administrators for permission and dates for training.

Project Evaluation Plan

Formative Evaluation

Formative assessments are utilized to gauge the learning of a student during the lesson while giving feedback to help students with future learning (Houston & Thompson, 2017). The evaluations, both formative and summative, will follow the Kirkpatrick Evaluation Method. The Kirkpatrick Model suggests a framework that instructors can use to assess and evaluate PD (Turnbow, 2014). The model consists of four parts: (a) participant reaction, (b) participant learning, (c) behavior, and (c) results (Moldovan, 2016). Figure 3 shows the four levels of assessment, what each level assesses, and at what point to administer the assessment.

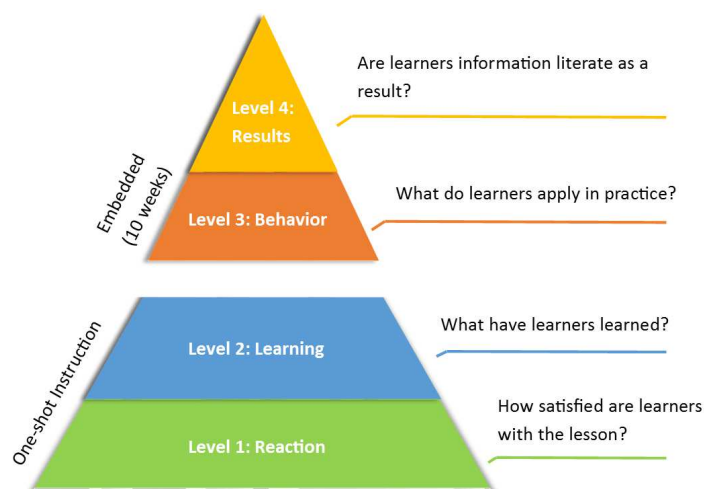


Figure 3. The Kirkpatrick model. From “Kirkpatrick Levels 3 & 4: They Know It, But Are They Doing It?,” by D. Turnbow, 2014 (<https://learningservicesucsd.wordpress.com/2014/12/03/kirkpatrick-levels-3-4-they-know-it-but-are-they-doing-it/>). In the public domain.

Throughout the PD sessions, a Kahoot game will be used as a short, fun formative assessment to measure the knowledge of teachers at various points. Exit tickets will also be used at the end of each day for immediate feedback to help determine if the learning goals of the day were attained. The Exit Tickets via Google Forms will complete level 1 and 2 of the Kirkpatrick Model. The exit tickets will include four questions, as follows:

1. What is one important thing you learned in training today?
2. What is one thing you would like to know more about?
3. What would help make today’s lesson more effective?
4. Overall, were you happy with the presentation?

The tickets will be distributed via Google Forms for each participant to complete. The tickets will be used to guide the instruction for the next day and re-teach any misunderstandings.

Summative Evaluation

Summative assessments are used to link the end of a learning experience with student achievement (Houston & Thompson, 2017). At the end of the 3-day PD training, participants will be asked to complete a summative evaluation. This evaluation will reflect levels 1 and 2 but with open-ended questions for further feedback. Participant reaction and learning will be assessed after the PD is complete, PLCs, and coaching are in place. The assessment will take place approximately ten weeks after the initial PD session. The summative assessment will be distributed via Google Forms with open-ended questions to better to understand the application and results of the PD. The 10-week time frame will give teachers the opportunity to be back in the classroom and have had the time to apply what was learned during the PD and through the PLC and coaching sessions. The summative evaluation for levels 3 and 4 will include the following questions:

1. Have you put any of the skills acquired to use? If so, how?
2. How has the PLC supported you regarding the RtI process?
3. Have you received coaching from a district facilitator? If so, on what specific area of Tier 3?
4. Was the coaching effective? If so, do you feel more confident having received coaching?
5. As a result of PD, PLC, or coaching, are you experiencing more informed decision-making practices?

6. Also, as a result of PD, PLC, or coaching, do you notice student growth, even if the growth was not what we expected?
7. Would you say overall, your perceptions of RtI has changed because of PD, PLC, or coaching? Please explain.

Houston and Thompson (2017) found that formative and summative assessments should be intertwined for a quality learning experience for participants and opportunities for improvement or worth of the activity for the presenter.

Evaluation Goals

The evaluation goals for this project are to use the information collected to increase best practices of RtI, increase teacher self-efficacy, increase collective efficacy, and increase student achievement. The formative evaluations will be used to gauge if the PD was effective and the goals were reached each day, as well as any changes that need to be made. The summative assessment questions are directly related to the goals of the entire training and will be used to measure the usefulness of the training as a whole. The summative and formative evaluations will be used for the betterment of future trainings. This evidence may lead to the increased fidelity of RtI at the research site. The district MTSS facilitators and school administrators, as key stakeholders, will be responsible for supporting the implementation of the PD, PLCs, and coaching. Also, it is important for the stakeholders to support the trainings that may enhance the fidelity of RtI while improving students achievement and decreasing special education referrals.

Project Implications and Social Change

Local Community

This project has the potential to positively influence social change at the local research site. The goal was to examine teachers' perceived need to implement RtI with fidelity. As a result of the study, the potential for increased student achievement and a decrease in special education referrals may exist. This project study may impact administrators, instructional coaches, teachers, students, and parents positively with a better understanding of RtI. The project may provide a deeper understanding of RtI by providing PD, PLCs, coaching, and resources to implement RtI with fidelity in the district. By providing PD, the hope is to increase teachers' self-efficacy and collective efficacy among teachers within the district. Greater fidelity and a better understanding of RtI may increase student achievement and decrease referrals for special education testing. Based on the findings in Section 2 of the study, teachers' perceptions of the fidelity of RtI detailed the need for PD and coaching in regards to the entire RtI process. Ongoing PCL and coaching will be an impact on positive social change as well. Teachers need support from one another, as well as from their leaders.

Larger Scale Change

In a broader context, I am excited to share the project with the district; however, I believe the project has great potential for delivery in other districts and at private schools. Walden University is committed to social change both locally and far-reaching. I believe, since the national adoption of MTSS that many school districts could use this project to increase the knowledge of RtI that may have been put on the backburner or not

properly understood by teachers. With the adoption of MTSS, RtI has been brought more attention than in the past few years and, with the use of RtI in the decision-making process, the fidelity of RtI is great. The project study certainly has implications for change in other districts that not only see an increase in special education referrals but see a need for greater knowledge and understanding of RtI as a prevention system and to increase data decision making for student achievement.

Conclusion

By implementing RtI with fidelity, districts may see growth in student achievement and fewer referrals to special education (Barrett & Newman, 2018; Castro-Villarreal et al., 2016; Kauffman et al., 2017). By having the opportunity for PD, teachers can enhance their knowledge of RtI, improve self-efficacy, thus improving educational practices to increase student achievement. This section of the study addresses the finding of Section 2 as teachers needing PD for implementing RtI with fidelity. Section 3 extensively explained the plan to implement PD via a 3-day training, followed by PLCs and coaching for an even deeper understanding of intervention implementation. An extensive review of literature on various types of PD was conducted. Due to the current pandemic, a review of PD during COVID-19 was also conducted to prepare for a virtual learning environment in an effort to gain the same outcome as a face-to-face PD for teachers. The PD will require support from the the district and school administration throughout, and after, the PD concludes to ensure teachers have the support needed to better implement RtI. Although the PD is presented as a one-time training in May, I would like to present it each year prior to the start of

school for new hires and teachers that were not able to attend the first session. After the PD training, PLCs will begin with teachers, followed by coaching sessions. The PD will be collaborative whether the teacher attends the live session or recorded session.

Collaboration will be a key factor for the momentum swing of RtI. By creating PD and PLCs, this project aims to improve self-efficacy and collective-efficacy of teachers in effort to educate the in the successes of RtI when implemented with fidelity. Further, this project can be used, not only by the research district but by other districts to help improve the implementation and sustainability of RtI for successful student outcomes.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to gain a better understanding of the perceived needs of teachers to better implement RtI with fidelity. The findings of the data analysis showed the need for PD for teachers implementing RtI. The PD was designed to increase teachers' knowledge of RtI, self-efficacy, and collective efficacy. The training focused on RtI at each tier, focusing on Tier 3 for selecting EBI, implementing the intervention, progress monitoring, and data analysis. I designed a training session titled *The Success of RtI: It Takes a Village* after assessing the data in Section 2 of this study. The PD will be followed by PLCs and coaching for continued support of teachers.

In this section of the study, I review and reflect on my findings, including the project's strengths and possible limitations, recommendations for future changes, and directions for future research. The findings indicate the importance of using the information obtained as a tool to increase the fidelity of RtI, self-efficacy, collective efficacy, and student achievement to decrease referrals to special education, as well as the value of implementing the RtI framework. In addition, I endorse the importance of PLCs and coaching as ongoing PD to increase best practices for the fidelity of RtI. Finally, I reflect on my responsibility as a scholar-practitioner concerning what I have learned as a social change agent and a leader of PD.

Project Strengths

A lack of fidelity in the implementation of RtI can lead to poor student achievement and inappropriate referrals to special education (Regan et al., 2015; Sanetti et al., 2019). The local research district displayed challenges with the implementation of RtI. Participants in the study stated that the guidelines were not clear and the understanding of RtI was lacking, especially at the Tier 3 level. One strength of this project is that it was developed to provide teachers with a better understanding and clarity concerning RtI at every level.

The importance of this project resides in its clear explanation of RtI and how the decision-making process critically depends on the fidelity of the intervention and data. Because Tier 3 is a legal requirement prior to referral to special education and IDEA (2004) requires EBI as part of the decision-making process, fidelity is crucial. It is important to note that PD must be ongoing through PLCs, coaching, and other PD trainings. A variety of trainings were revealed in the literature review that are effective and can help sustain changes in education. The various types of PD discussed are the most supportive provided for teachers to ensure learning, collaboration, and application within the classroom. The ultimate goal for this project is to establish consistency of RtI in the county while increasing the fidelity of the framework. Another strength of this project was the willingness of the participants to be interviewed and openly reveal their perceptions toward the implementation of RtI in the district. The findings from the interviews, along with the literature review, were of great assistance in developing this training.

Project Limitations

Research is not without limitations. This project was designed to change the practices and perceptions of teachers. For teachers, changing current instructional practice is not always easy, and in some cases, change is not welcome. The hope is that through PLCs and coaching, those who are skeptical will see the benefits through collaborating with other teachers and seeing intervention delivery through modeling.

Additional limitations may include the time frame of the PD. The training was constructed for 3 days at 8 hours per day. Currently, as faculty are teaching both in person and virtually, asking teachers to leave the classroom for 3 days may not be feasible. Leaving a classroom for 3 days also brings up the possible issue of funding for substitute teachers, as well as asking a substitute to teach asynchronously without proper training. Finding time in a county calendar that may already be proposed several years out could also pose a limitation. A 3-day PD would need to be implemented in the county calendar several times a year in an effort to reach all teachers. Many school systems propose and vote on the calendar 2-3 years in advance. Finally, because this study had a small sample size, the data may not align with other districts, and the PD may not be transferable across settings. Although there are limitations, the strengths of the training outweigh them. By increasing teacher knowledge and self-efficacy, it is possible to increase student achievement.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

This qualitative project study was designed to gain a better understanding of the perceived needs of teachers to better implement RtI with fidelity. Based on the findings

and literature review, a 3-day PD was developed to train teachers on the RtI framework.

An alternative approach to the training could be to create a webinar set up as virtual classrooms where teachers view the lesson, respond to the instructor, and collaborate with other teachers over the course of a week. Each training-day session could span the course of a week, with discussion board posts throughout the week. Participants could view the seminar as grade levels or individually and then post on the discussion board. Feedback from the facilitator would be important in maintaining the personalization of the training.

Another alternative could be to implement a guide or manual for teachers that could be included as an appendix in the county's MTSS manual. Teachers would have access to the guidelines, timelines, and resources of RtI on hand. Coaching would be beneficial to ensure that teachers understood the content of the PD and the manual to ensure the fidelity of RtI. Although the PD would be most beneficial as written, alternatives can be applied in cases where PD cannot be delivered.

Scholarship, Project Development, and Leadership and Change

Scholarship

Having been a student at Walden University for my master's degree, specialist degree, and now doctorate degree, I have learned the value of being a lifelong learner. My journey at Walden University has made me a better student, writer, and researcher. Through this basic qualitative study, I have learned several qualities that I possess as a scholarly researcher. First, my research skills and understanding of quality research have not only improved, but have been fostered by a desire to continue learning and researching educational changes to improve student learning. Second, through the

process of completing my doctorate degree, I have developed a desire to teach at the collegiate level in the future. Finally, I have a genuine desire to become a change agent for my district and, hopefully, for others as well. I believe in my research and project study and want to support other teachers in understanding RtI and the importance of the framework. Scholarship is about being confident in oneself. Throughout the process, I would second guess myself and wonder if I was conducting my study correctly. My chair offered great encouragement and always supported me when I had questions or concerns. My second chair, the University Research Reviewer (URR) member, and the IRB committee ensured that I achieved a high quality of work and followed standards and procedures.

Project Development

This project was developed based on the perceived needs of teachers regarding the fidelity of RtI. My desire to make a difference in my district and to assist teachers and struggling students fueled my desire to create a project that I could implement within my district, and hopefully beyond. Knowing that this project could benefit my district, I began to grasp the importance of quality research and quality PD. I believe that my study will provide teachers with improved practices and a better understanding of why RtI is important for appropriate decision making.

When I began my doctoral classes, I did not understand the magnitude of the project from development to delivery. Understanding alignment throughout the study was new to me and was not always easy. The feedback that I received from my instructors helped me understand how to align a study and why the process is important.

I am proud of this study and the project that was created because of it. I have also learned a lot about my job in the district by reading scholarly articles for this study. I feel more confident and equipped to not only do my job better, but also train teachers to improve their practices. My experience throughout this project study has better prepared me to create future PD or modules to assist teachers in the RtI process as needed. I look forward to presenting this project to my district now and in the future.

Leadership and Change

Change is inevitable, especially in education, and great leadership makes change easier. I have learned throughout my years at Walden, as well as in my career, that teachers are more inclined to make changes when they feel supported. My goal is to become a leader who influences and inspires others. As a servant leader, I enjoy supporting teachers by listening to their concerns and their achievements, working alongside them, and collaborating in all areas, including the problem-solving process. My passion is to ignite passion in others, as I recognize that our careers change the future and we must not take that lightly. With that passion, I desire to be a better leader within my district. As an MTSS facilitator, I have the honor of supporting nine elementary schools with the RtI framework. Walden University has prepared me to be a leader and social change agent now and in the future. I want to be a leader who inspires others in their work and their personal life. If implemented with fidelity, I believe teachers will see improvement and the importance of decision making for students. RtI is important work in educating students. I believe in this framework and intend to teach, inspire, and support teachers throughout the process.

Reflection on the Importance of the Work

My doctoral experience has required me to take ownership of my learning. I had to dig deep to research and write in an effort to produce a scholarly project for supporting teachers. I had to make sense of and connect theory, learning, and practice to create a project that would support teachers with RtI. As a result, I have become a scholar-practitioner with the goal of enriching the world around me, beginning with my community. The goal of my research and work was to make a positive impact on teachers and students. I believe that this project will make that impact for teachers in my district.

Prior to attending Walden University, I had been out of school for 18 years. I had very little knowledge of scholarly research and how to approach it with current technology. I had to learn the correct way to perform research and make sure that it was legitimate. I learned what search engines to use and how to find scholarly, peer-reviewed articles. I learned how to write in a scholarly fashion, and I learned what makes a MEAL plan paragraph. The way of learning online was new to me, but I persevered. I have gained an appreciation for qualitative research and the detail and research that go into each study. The importance of this study, as with any study, is to inform and teach people about current changes and making those changes for the educational benefit of students. It gives me great confidence to know that I am part of the field of researchers, and I have created a PD that can be used by my district, and hopefully beyond.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

The findings of this project study and review of the literature revealed a need for PD in the implementation of RtI. Based on the project created, I believe that the fidelity of RtI will improve for those who participate in the training. The implications of the project also include the improvement of the RtI framework as a whole and appropriately identification of students who may need special education testing. The findings in this study revealed a gap between the current practice of RtI within the district and the method of RtI as it should be implemented under the MTSS framework. The PD will provide teachers with multiple levels of support, including PLCs and coaching after the training.

One of the applications is to implement this project in the research district. I would like to train teachers in other districts and possibly speak at the state level. Additionally, the PD could be broken down into modules at each tier for teachers to use when needed. If a teacher needed to move a student to Tier 2, that teacher would watch the module pertaining to Tier 2 and the processes that occur at that level. If a student needed Tier 3 support, the teacher would then use the module for in-depth training on Tier 3 and all it requires.

The findings in the study and the noted limitations heighten the need for future studies on the implementation of RtI. Due to COVID-19 and school closures, I was not able to employ classroom observations in the study. The potential follow-up research could provide better insight by observing teachers implementing each tier of RtI, and at Tier 3, the process of interventions and decision-making. Further research could also

include larger sample sizes of elementary, and adding to that, middle, and high school to investigate the fidelity and implementation of RtI within the district at all grade levels.

Conclusion

The problem examined in this basic qualitative study was the lack of fidelity in the ongoing application of RtI, possibly leading to an increase in special education referrals. This basic qualitative study examined teachers' perceived needs to better implement RtI with fidelity. As a result, a PD project was created to train teachers on the implementation of RtI and support teachers with ongoing PD through PLCs and coaching. Reflecting on the development of this project and the writing thus far, I realize that I have become a scholar, practitioner, researcher, and project developer. I am honored to say that I am a graduate of Walden University, and I appreciate the importance that Walden places on social change. Becoming a social change agent has inspired me to continue finding out what teachers need in terms of support and assisting them in any way I can. My goal is to make a difference for teachers, and most importantly, in the lives of children.

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Appendix A: The Project



A Few Reminders:

- Please silence cell phones
- Restroom locations
- Refreshments are provided and are welcome at your table
- Please be cognizant of break and lunch times in effort to stay on schedule
- Reflective Journaling
- Importance of Evaluations

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Agenda for Day 1

8:00-8:40	Welcome/Introduction Goals/Objectives
8:40-8:45	Ice Breaker Opening with Kahoot
8:45-9:45	RtI Overview: What and Why?
9:45-10:00	Breakout
10:00-10:15	Break
10:15-11:35	Tier 1
11:35-11:50	Breakout
11:50-1:00	Lunch
1:00-2:15	Tier 2
2:15-2:30	Break
2:30-3:10	Tier 2 cont'd
3:10-3:30	Q&A/Exit Tickets

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Goals and Learning Outcomes

Goals:

1. To improve clarity and understanding of RtI.
2. To provide teachers with clear expectations of the RtI process at each tier.
3. To increase an understanding of the benefits of RtI for student success and lower referrals.
4. To enhance the fidelity of the implementation of RtI through ongoing PD, PLCs, and coaching.
5. To assist teacher with the implementation of RtI at each tier and during the decision-making process.

Learning Outcomes:

- Understand the importance of RtI
- Identify the differences in each tier
- Understand the components of each tier

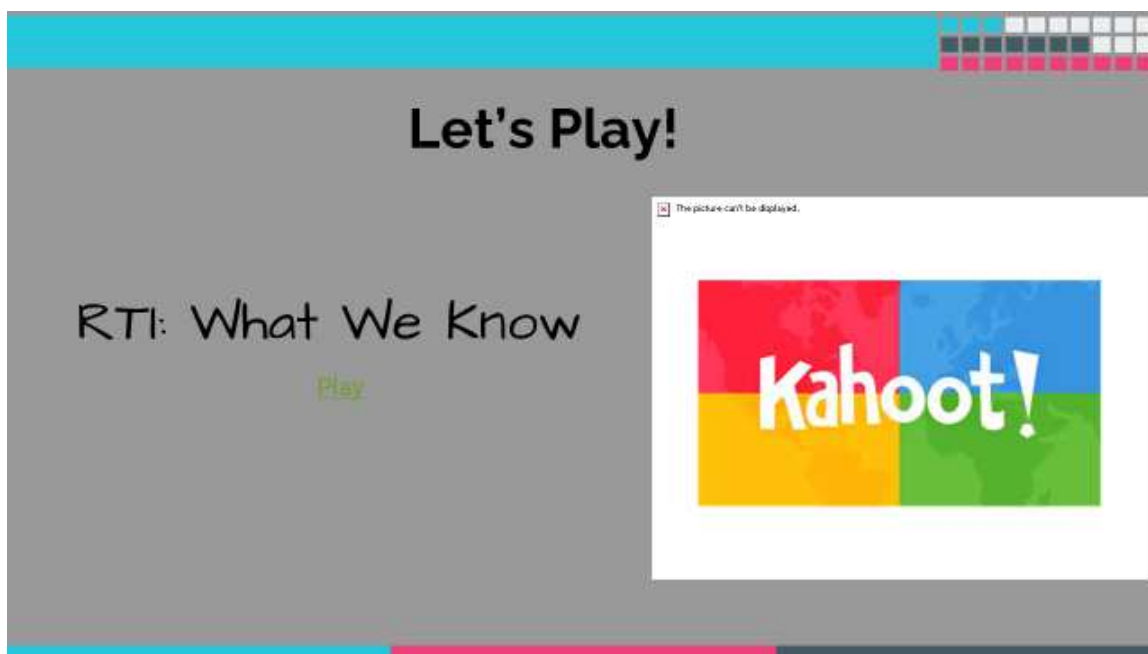


What teachers are saying about RtI



Based on teachers' perceptions within the district regarding the fidelity of RtI, it was concluded that to ensure fidelity, RtI requires the following components:

- **Ongoing Professional Development**
 - Understanding all components of RtI
 - Clear guidelines and expectations
- **Coaching**
 - Modeling interventions for teachers
 - Assisting teachers with feedback on interventions
- **Resources**
 - A better understanding of what resources are available and where to go for help



Kahoot Link

Kahoot! Home Discover Kahoots

RTI (Response To Intervention)

Response to Intervention (Rtl)

0 favorites 0 plays 0 players

[Play](#) [Edit](#) 🔗 ☆ ⋮

A private kahoot

To assess peer knowledge and understanding of presented recommendations and implementations of Rtl.

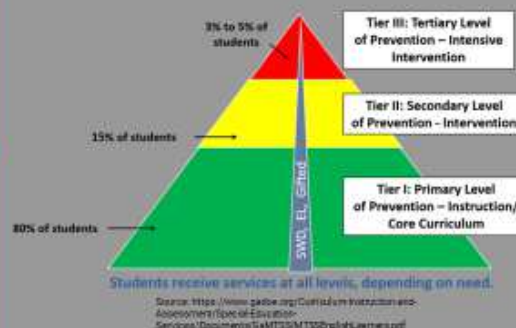


Components of MTSS

What is RtI?

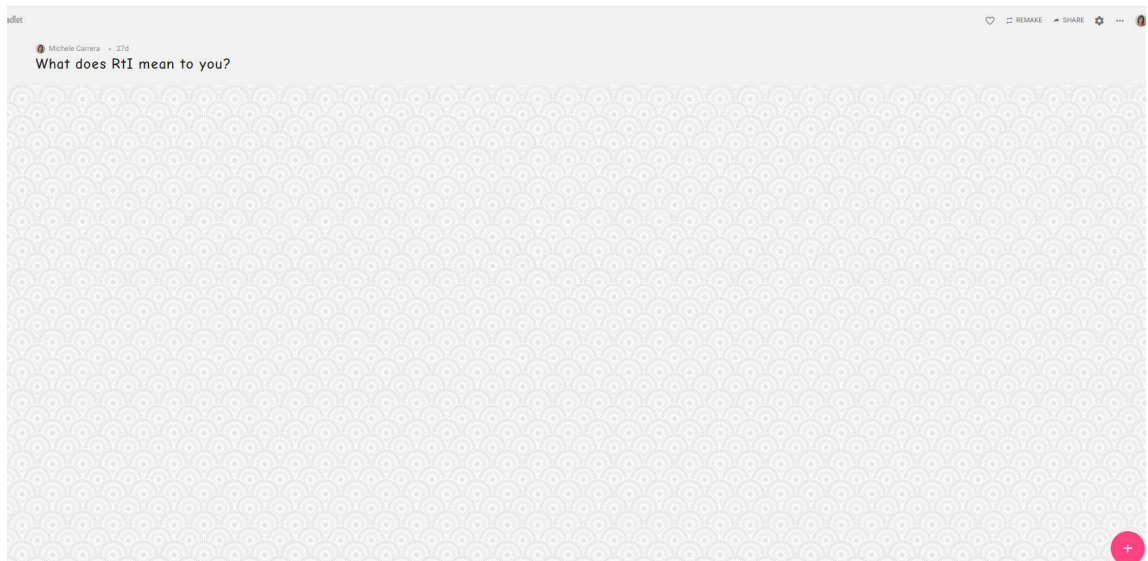
RtI is part of the MTSS Framework that:

- incorporates 5 essential components:
 - data-driven
 - team-driven shared leadership
 - approach for problem-solving and decision-making
 - supports ALL students in learning
 - Incorporates High-Leverage Practices (HLP)
- It is a multi-tiered system of support for ALL students.
- It has 3 tiers:
 - Tier I: Primary level- Instruction/Core Curriculum
 - Tier II: Secondary level- Small group intervention
 - Tier III: Tertiary Level- Intensive intervention





Padlet: Link



The History of RtI

- Public Law 94-142
- Education of All Handicapped Children (1975)
- The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA, 2004) defines requirements for LD eligibility
- Discrepancy Model: 3 categories
- Discrepancy Model Argument
- Possible over identification and misidentification



Things Changed...

- Reauthorization 2004 of IDEA
 - Identification procedures use results driven data, not process driven
 - Use of prevention models, not models that promote failure
 - SWD are general education students FIRST
 - Eliminated the requirement of the Discrepancy Model
 - Identification should include response to early intervening services for students not in Special Education

Thus was born **Response to Intervention**



Source: <https://www.pbis.org/pbis-framework>

Rti Defined

Response to Intervention is a prevention model of multi-tier instruction for early identification and support of struggling students.

Struggling learners are provided evidence-based interventions (EBI) beginning at their instructional level and increasing as they meet goals to accelerate the rate of learning.



Research and the Fidelity of Rti

- Without fidelity, the effectiveness of positive student outcomes decreases which may lead to inappropriate referrals to special education (Alamahari, 2019; Barrett & Newman, 2018; Brendle, 2015; Preston, Wood, & Stecker, 2016; Sanetti & Collier-Meek, 2015).
- RtI has been shown to decrease the number of students identified for special education services (Barrett & Newman, 2018; Castro-Villarreal, Villarreal, & Sullivan, 2016).
- RtI has also been shown to improve the number of appropriate referrals to special education (Barrett & Newman, 2018; Castro-Villarreal, Villarreal, & Sullivan, 2016).
- In years past, RtI has been viewed as a road to special education rather than a prevention system (Swindelhurst, Shepherd, Salembier, & Hurley, 2015).
- If not applied with fidelity, student outcomes will be poor and possibly leading to misidentification (Cakiroglu, 2015).
- When applied with fidelity to the fullest potential, RtI is a prevention system with positive student outcomes and correct data for decision making (Ruffini, Lindsay, Miskell, & Proger, 2016; Arden, Gandhi, Edmonds, & Danielson, 2017).

Why do we do it?

- Positive Student Achievement
- Student Success
- To Help Students
- Correctly Identify Students

Our job is not finished
when we have taught,
our job is finished when
the student has learned

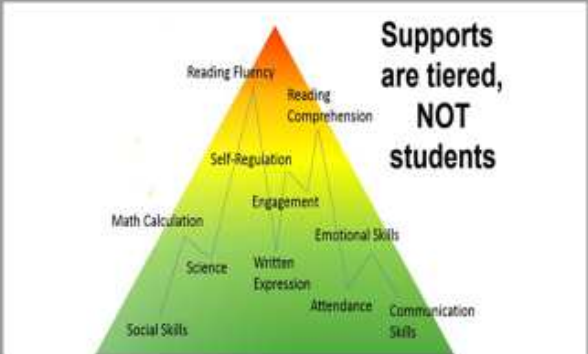
*RtI should be the off ramp, not the road to
special education. "*

Jason Byars, Project Aware/PBIS Coordinator

RtI is for ALL students
Whole Child Approach

Including:

- ESOL Students
- Students with a 504 plan
- Students with Disabilities
- Gifted Students



Supports are tiered, NOT students

Source: <https://www.gkde.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Special-Education-Services/Documents/SMART%20RTI%20EnglishLearners.pdf>

When implemented properly,
RtI is a gift to classroom
teachers that allows them to
do what they do BEST!

-Pat Quinn, RTI Guy



Tier 1

Tier 1 supports survey

What tier 1 supports do you use in your classroom?



Padlet: Link

padlet

Michele Carrara · 22d

What tier 1 supports do you use in your classroom?



Tier 1: Green

Focus: ALL STUDENTS

Instruction: District Curriculum and instructional practices that are evidence-based; aligned with state and district standards; and incorporate differentiated instruction; flexible grouping.

Setting: General education classroom

Assessments: Screening, continuous monitoring for progress (formative assessments), and outcome measures or summative assessments.

*approximately 80% of students will be successful in Tier 1.



Tier 1: Responsibilities

- Monitor through Universal Screener (STAR)
- Monitor Grades (IC)
- Monitor Attendance (IC)
- Monitor Behavior (PBIS: school level)
- Build relationships with students and families
- Differentiate Instruction
- Flexible Grouping

Tier 1

- Tier 1 is for all students, including SWD, ESOL, and gifted.
- Tier 1 is the foundation for success; a strong core.
- Instruction is not one size fits all; it is differentiated.
- High Leverage Practices (HLP) are used in the classroom.

When done with fidelity, we see decreased inappropriate referrals to special education, decreased time in special education, and reduction in grade retention (Barrett & Newman, 2015).

What are HLPs?

- High-leverage practices (HLPs) are a set of strategies used across all content areas that are necessary to support student learning.
- HLPs are ideal for implementing a multi tiered support system.
- Critical for delivery of evidence-based practices (EBP) in tier 1, 2, and 3.
- Domains:
 - Collaboration
 - Assessment
 - Social/Emotional/Behavioral
 - Instruction

[Handout](#)

Retrieved from <https://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Special-Education-Services/Documents/GaMTSS/High-Leverage%20Practices.pdf>

HLP: [Link](#)



Georgia Department of Education
Georgia's Tiered System of Supports for Students
Essential Components



High-Leverage Practices

The success of a Tiered System of Supports for Students is dependent upon the use of High-Leverage Practices (HLPs).

High leverage practices (HLPs) are a set of practices that are necessary to support student learning, and that should be learned and implemented by preservice and in-service teachers. HLPs provide precision and clarity to teaching and the expectations for the teachers. HLPs are appropriate for all students and should be used by all teachers. These practices can be helpful across different content areas, grade levels, and domains. HLPs are necessary for implementing evidence-based practices (EBPs) effectively. Evidenced-based practices are effective educational strategies that are content specific. When HLPs are coupled with EBPs, they provide a continuum of supports that result in a rapid response to academic and behavioral needs.

Criteria

There are 22 high leverage practices. Each of these practices meet the following criteria:

- Focuses directly on instructional practice
- Occurs with frequency
- Research based and known to foster student engagement and learning
- Broadly applicable and useable in any content area or approach to teaching
- Skillful execution is fundamental to effective teaching

Domains

Four domains have been identified for High-Leverage Practices. These domains are Collaboration, Assessment, Social/Emotional/Behavioral, and Instruction.

➤ Collaboration

This domain calls for collaboration among professionals, families, and caregivers. Collaboration allows for varied expertise and perspectives about a student to be shared and discussed among the individuals responsible for the student's learning and well-being. The purpose of this collaboration is to assure that students receive what they need through educational programs and related services that are adequately designed and implemented. Three HLPs have been identified for the [Collaboration Domain](#).

➤ Assessment

The use of HLPs in this domain requires that education professionals have assessment literacy. This means that they are knowledgeable regarding assessment and are skilled in analyzing, interpreting and using data. Having this knowledge will help to understand students' needs, design and implement instruction, and make necessary changes to improve student outcomes. Three HLPs have been identified for the [Assessment Domain](#).



DISCLAIMER: The contents of the reference document developed under a grant from the US Department of Education, #H323A170010. However, these contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the US Department of Education and should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.



Georgia Department of Education Georgia's Tiered System of Supports for Students Essential Components



➤ **Social/Emotional/Behavioral**

Providing a supportive learning environment is essential for successfully implementing all other HLPs. This is possible when teachers establish a consistent, organized, and respectful learning environment. This environment is characterized by positive feedback and instruction on social behaviors. Additionally, this environment is impacted using assessments to select or develop behavior support plans that meet the needs of students. Four HLPs have been identified for the [Social/Emotional/Behavioral domain](#).

➤ **Instruction**

The implementation of HLPs in this domain leads to instruction that is well designed, strategic, and adaptable. These practices will support a coherent instructional system and should lead to improved student learning outcomes. HLPs in this domain require that teachers use content and pedagogical knowledge, evidence-based practices, and data to design, deliver, and evaluate the effectiveness of instruction. Example practices for this domain are goal setting, adapting curriculum tasks and materials as needed, providing scaffolds, promoting engagement, and providing feedback. Twelve HLPs have been identified for the [Instruction Domain](#).

HLPs and Tiered System of Supports for Students

HLPs are ideal for implementing a Tiered System of Supports for Students. HLPs are critical in delivering evidence-based practices (EBPs) when providing Tier I (Primary Level – Instruction/Core Curriculum), Tier II (Secondary Level - Intervention) and Tier III (Tertiary Level - Intensive Intervention). HLPs and EBPs complement each other in a Tiered System of Supports for Students to assure academic and behavioral needs of all learners are addressed.

To learn more about High-Leverage Practices please see online and print resources listed below:

- [High-Leverage Practices – Flyer List](#)
<http://cedar.education.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/HLP-flyer-list.pdf>
- [High-Leverage Practices – Evidenced-Based Practices](#)
<http://cedar.education.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/HLPs-and-EBPs-A-Promising-Pair-FINAL.pdf>
- [Teaching Works](#)
<http://www.teachingworks.org/work-of-teaching/high-leverage-practices>


Note: This is not an exhaustive list.



DISCLAIMER: The contents of the reference document developed under a grant from the US Department of Education, #E123A1706010. However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the US Department of Education and should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.

What are HLP's?

What HLP's do you use at tier 1 to improve student outcomes?



Examples:

- Data analysis and instructional practice analysis to make adjustments to improve student outcomes.
 - Is what I am doing working? Reflect!
- Provide constructive feedback to students.
 - Academically and behaviorally
 - Oral and written
- Use active student engagement strategies.
 - Be creative, rewards for engagement, open communication
- Build relationships with students.
 - Positive attitude, make learning fun, show an interest, get to know your students
- Analyze your instruction for improvement purposes.
 - Reflective journaling, share with PLC, peer review

Padlet: Link



Where Do I Start?



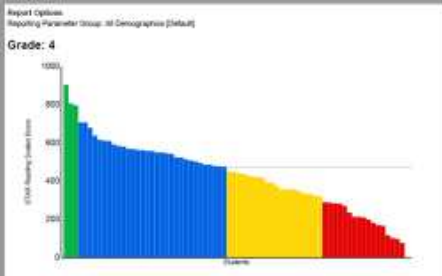

- Explicit Instruction
- Student Engagement
- Multiple Opportunities for Practice and Feedback
- Teach Cognitive and Metacognitive Strategies
- Design and Scaffold Instruction
- Use Assistive and Instructional Technology






Universal Screener Report



What do I do with this information?



Category / Levels	Current Benchmark?	Number	Percent	Benchmark At Time of State Test
Proficient				
Disorganized Learner	Above 723.00	3	4%	Above 844.00
Proficient Learner	Above 472.00	35	44%	Above 564.00
Category Total		38	48%	
Less Than Proficient				
Developing Learner	Below 471.00	30	38%	Below 564.00
Beginning Learner	Below 299.00	17	21%	Below 407.00
Category Total		47	52%	
Students Tested		77		

How questions to ask based on this and other information: Are you satisfied with the number of students at the highest level of performance? How, consider the level or score that indicates proficiency. Which students just above proficiency are you "worried about" and what support will be required here (intervention is warranted)? What support is needed for students performing? Do all students represented by your scores that need urgent intervention?

- The screening report gives the percentage of students meeting benchmarks for proficient & less than proficient learners for each grade level.
- The report also identifies specific skills that more students struggled with.
- Additionally it identifies which students are in each proficiency range.

Handout Link:

School:

Grade:

School Year:

Tier 1 Grade Level Screening and Strategy Summary

Meeting Attendees	Position	Meeting Attendees	Position

It is expected that 80% of students should meet the cut score on Universal Screeners at Level 1. Review Universal Screening scores and record data below: STAR Screening Report will indicate proficient level percent at Level 3 and 4.

Indicate the percentage of students at the proficient level based on Universal Screeners in the following areas. (B=Behavior, R=Reading, M=Math)

	Aug - % proficient	Oct - % proficient	Jan - % proficient	March - % proficient
B				
R				
M				

Discuss grade level areas of need based on the Universal Screening results and other available data.

The goal for Next Quarter: Indicate the goal for the percentage of students that will be at the proficient level (Levels 3 and 4) based on Universal Screening results in each area at the next screening period (B=Behavior, R=Reading, M=Math)

	Sept. (goal for Oct)	Oct. (goal for Jan)	Jan (goal for March)	March (end of year goal)
B				
R				
M				

Indicate what specific research-based strategy/high leverage practice will be used to reach this goal.

Strategies Selected for Implementation (Tier 1) Strategies should be specific and updated as needs change, based on screening results.
(B=Behavior, R=Reading, M=Math)

Differentiated Instructional Strategy:	
B	
R	
M	

Logistics for Implementation of Strategies Selected (“To-do’s”)

Indicate here who, what, when, and where strategies will occur. Update as appropriate at quarterly meetings.

B	
R	
M	

Meeting Notes: List any additional data reviewed, methods for evaluation of the effectiveness of core instruction, discussion or instructional strategies, etc. below:



In your group, discuss what you would use to make your tier 1 instruction stronger. What barriers do you currently see in your school or classroom impeding with a solid tier 1 foundation?





11:50-1:00



Tier 2

Tier 2 supports

What tier 2 supports do you use in your classroom?



Padlet Link:



Tier 2: **YELLOW**

Focus: Students identified through screening and other data sources *who exhibit levels of academic achievement or behavior that pose a risk for poor learning and behavioral outcomes*

Instruction: Targeted to the area of need, supplemental instruction and/or intervention delivered to small groups (6-8 students); and with fidelity

Setting: General education classroom

Assessments: Progress monitoring every 2 weeks.

***approximately 15% of students will need tier 2 support**

Tier 2: Responsibilities

The goal of Tier 2 is to remediate academic skill deficits with the idea that in doing so, students will be successful in the Tier 1 program without support.

- Small group (6-8) students
- Teaching a skill gap
- Progress Monitor at grade level
- Data collection is minimum bi-weekly

Handout

Handout Link:

Tier 2 Grade Level Intervention Teams

The MTSS process is a collaborative problem solving procedure that is vital for many students' academic and behavioral achievements. To ensure that the process is implemented with fidelity, every school needs grade level Intervention Teams. These teams should be comprised of administrators, teachers, and other personnel who are involved with student achievement and learning at the school level. The primary responsibility of these teams is to identify students who need additional supports either behaviorally, academically or both in order to be successful in the general education setting.

The mission of the Tier 2 Intervention Team is to:

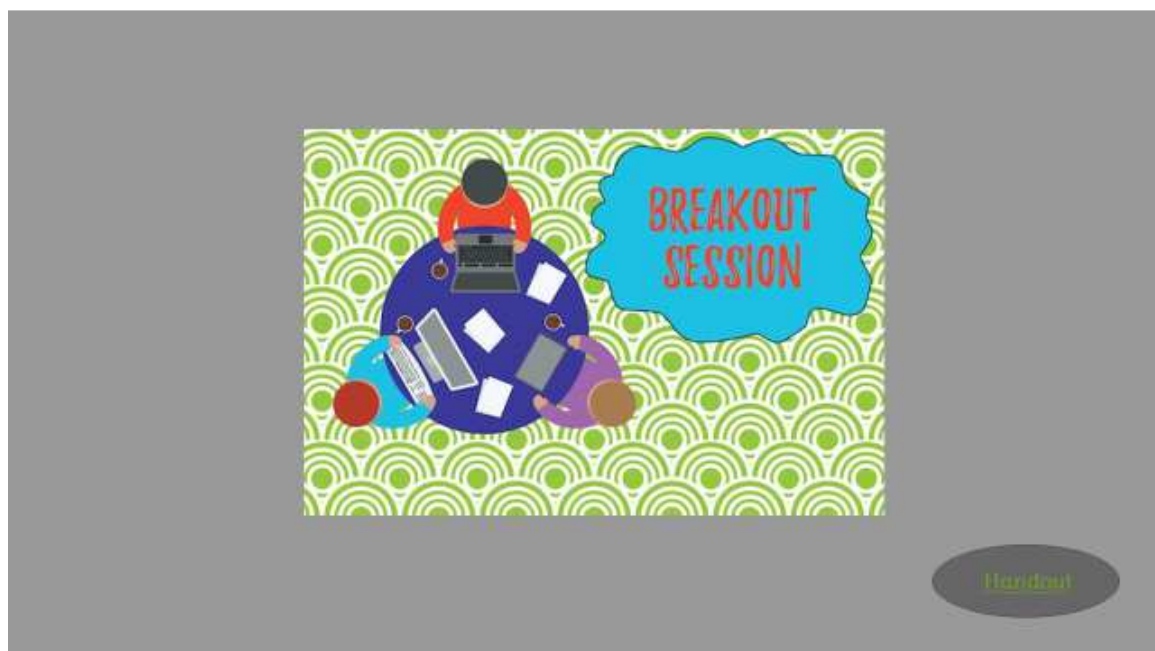
- Identify students needing additional supports in the form of targeted small group interventions
- Evaluate Universal Screening data and formative assessments to determine student group strengths and weaknesses
- Identify if the concern is a curricular, instructional, or student specific issue
- Conduct a records review and complete the [records review spreadsheet](#) (or school designed similar form) for all identified students needing level 2 support.
- Design, implement and monitor evidence based interventions to small groups of students
- Determine students needing additional Level 3 support or students no longer needing level 2 support
- Document meetings using Level 2 Screening and Intervention Summary Form (school designed)
- Meet quarterly to review data/progress

Team Members and Responsibilities

The Grade Level Data Analysis Teams are composed of various personnel with an array of expertise. In addition to members assisting with the problem solving process the following descriptions provide examples of the traditional roles and responsibilities, types of data, and expertise, participants might contribute to the team's collaboration process.

Classroom Teacher - Tier 2 Responsibilities

- Administer and analyze Universal Screening data
- Provide quality Core Instruction with fidelity
- Identify student groups for targeted Tier 2 interventions
- Collect baseline data
- Review interventions and progress monitoring data at MTSS team meetings
- Ensure students receive interventions with fidelity from assigned personnel as indicated
- Complete the [Tier 2 Records Review Spreadsheet](#)
- Contacts parents either by phone or parent conference to discuss student concerns



Choosing Interventions

Here you can showcase and explain your app, website or software. Here you can showcase and explain your app, website or software. Here you can showcase and explain your app, website or software.

Handout Link:

National Center on
INTENSIVE INTERVENTION
at American Institutes for Research

Taxonomy of Intervention Intensity: Academics

The *Taxonomy of Intervention Intensity** was developed based on existing research to support educators in evaluating and building intervention intensity.

Dimensions*	Description
Strength	How well the program works for students with intensive intervention needs, expressed in terms of effect sizes. Effect sizes of above .25 indicate an intervention has value in improving outcomes. Effect sizes of 0.35 to 0.40 are moderate; effect sizes of 0.50 or larger are strong (preferred).
Dosage	The number of opportunities a student has to respond and receive corrective feedback. It refers to the size of the instructional group, the number of minutes each session lasts, and the number of sessions provided per week.
Alignment	How well the program (a) addresses the target student's full set of academic skill deficits, (b) does <i>not</i> address skills the target student has already mastered (extraneous skills for that student), and (c) incorporates a meaningful focus on grade-appropriate curricular standards.
Attention to transfer	The extent to which an intervention is designed to help students (a) transfer the skills they learn to other formats and contexts and (b) realize connections between mastered and related skills.
Comprehensiveness	The number of explicit instruction principles the intervention incorporates (e.g., providing explanations in simple, direct language; modeling efficient solution strategies instead of expecting students to discover strategies on their own; providing practice so students use the strategies to generate many correct responses; and incorporating systematic cumulative review).
Behavioral support	The extent to which the program incorporates (a) self-regulation and executive function components and (b) behavioral principles to minimize nonproductive behavior.
Individualization	A validated, data-based process for individualizing intervention, in which the educator systematically adjusts the intervention over time, in response to ongoing progress monitoring data, to address the student's complex learning needs.

*Fuchs, L.S., Fuchs, D. & Malone, A.S. (2017). The Taxonomy of Intervention Intensity. *TEACHING Exceptional Children*, 50(1), 35–43.

This document was developed under U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) Grant No. HH326Q160001. Celia Rosenquist is the OSEP project officer. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Education.

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

[Visit us at www.intensiveintervention.org.](http://www.intensiveintervention.org)

What Does Tier 2 Look Like?

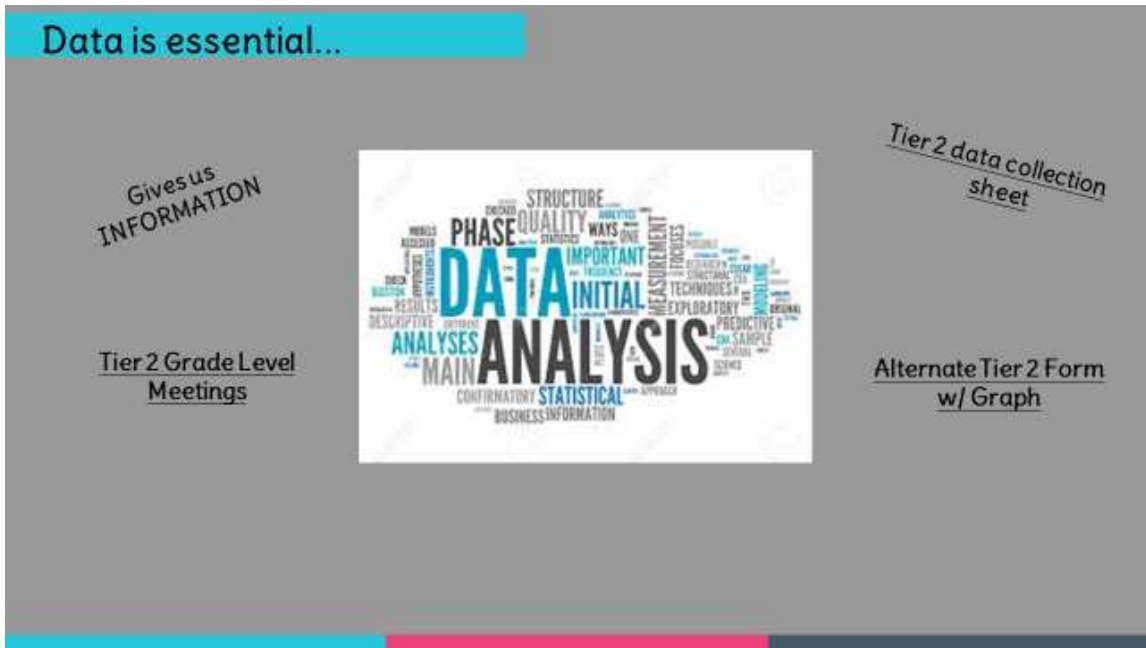
1. Use the data and tier 2 process for identifying students at-risk.
1. Alignment of instruction with the students' needs, building on tier 1.
1. Small group instruction (6-8 students).
1. Focus on the big ideas of grade-level standards for intervention.
1. Tier 2 is simply "extra instruction" for some students.

Goal: The goal of tier 2 is to remediate academic deficit areas in a small group with fidelity and, in doing so, students will be successful in Tier 1 without support.

Tier 2 takes planning!



Before we dig into data analysis...



Tier 2 Grade Level Meetings Link:

Tier 2 Master Copy

Tier 2 decisions are driven by data. Data sources should include STAR Math & Reading, current grades, attendance history, current work samples, observations, SWIS data, classroom behavior data, office referrals, & any other data the team feels is relevant.

Date	Teacher	Student First Name	Student Last Name	Grade	Reading	Math	Behavior	Speech	Has Tier 2 Data Been Collected for a minimum of 4 weeks and reviewed?	Remove Tier 2 Continue Tier 2 Add Tier 3	Notes

ProK KK 1st 2nd 3rd 4th 5th Schedule Tier 3 Meetings

Tier 2 Data Collection Sheet Link:

Level II Reading

(For students who do not respond to Tier I grade level interventions)

Teacher Name:

Grade:

Subject:

Dates:

Area of Deficit:

Intervention focus for the group (What intervention will you use with this group of students based on what you know about their deficit? Include EFFECT SIZE):

Materials Needed:

Objective:

When/where will data be collected:

How often will data be collected:

What will you use to measure if it is working?

EIA Progress Monitoring									
First name	Last Name	9/9	10-10	11-13	12-20	2-4	3-13	4-22	5-22

*increase on STAR Reading

Level II Math

(For students who do not respond to Tier I grade level interventions)

Teacher Name:

Grade:

Subject:

Dates:

Area of Deficit:

Intervention focus for the group (What intervention will you use with this group of students based on what you know about their deficit? Include EFFECT SIZE):

Materials Needed:

Objective:

When/where will data be collected:

How often will data be collected:

What will you use to measure if it is working?

Math Progress Monitoring									
First name	Last Name	9-6	10-10	11-13	12-20	2-4	3-13	4-22	5-22

*increase on STAR Math

Alternate Tier 2 Form with Graph Link:

Intervention Plan Tier 2 ☆ Saved to Drive

File Edit View Insert Format Data Tools Add-ons Help [Last edit was on September 11](#)

100% \$ % .0 .00 123 Times New... 18 B I S A

fx INTERVENTION PLAN

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
1	INTERVENTION PLAN										
2	Student: _____					Date: _____					
3	School: <u>Elementary School</u>					Grade/Tier _____					
4	Completed By: <u>Mrs. Brown</u>					Title _____					
5	Identify Goal (What do you want the student to be able to accomplish?)										
6	Kason will increase his words per minute to 80 wpm on a third grade level text by December 18, 2020.										
7											
8	Instructions Enter the date and results for each monitoring session.										
9											
10		Date	Score	Goal							
11	Baseline			80.00							
12	1			80.00							
13	2			80.00							
14	3			80.00							
15	4			80.00							
16	5			80.00							
17	6		80.00	80.00							
18	7			80.00							
19	8			80.00							
20	9			80.00							
21	10			80.00							
22	11			80.00							
23	12			80.00							
24											
25											
26											
27											

*Description of intervention, progress monitoring, and score definition

*Intervention:

*Progress Monitoring:

*Definition of credit earned:

In addition...

- After 12 weeks, analyze tier 2 data. At this point, there should be a minimum of 6 data points. (not delay extreme cases)
 - If a student has mastered the content, remove tier 2 support.
 - If a student is in progress, flag the student tier 2 in Infinite Campus and continue interventions on deficit areas.
- Prior to adding Tier 3 supports:
- Ensure that new interventions have been tried or revised at tier 2
 - Data shows inadequate progress
 - Team determines the need for tier 3

To be continued...

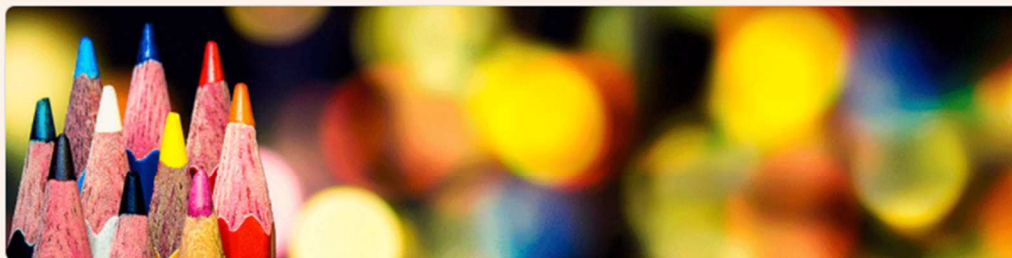
Exit Ticket

Please take a moment to complete the exit ticket on today's professional development. This will assist with future professional development, as well as tomorrow's lesson.

[Exit Ticket](#)

Exit Ticket Link:

Questions Responses



Exit Ticket



Before you leave the training today, please answer the following questions.

What's one important thing you learned in training today?

Long answer text

What is one thing you would like to know more about?

Long answer text

What would help make today's lesson more effective?

Long answer text



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Agenda Day 2

8:00-8:30	Kahoot/Q&A for Day 1 review
8:40-8:45	Our Infrastructure
8:45-9:45	Tier 3 overview
9:45-10:00	Break
10:00-11:35	Tier 3 Specifics and Hands-on
11:35-11:50	Breakout/Padlet/Discussion
11:50-1:00	Lunch
1:00-2:15	Tier 3 Results
2:15-2:30	Break
2:30-3:10	Resources to Support Teachers
3:10-3:30	Q&A/Exit Tickets

Decorative elements: lightbulb icon, thumbs up icon, and various colored circles.



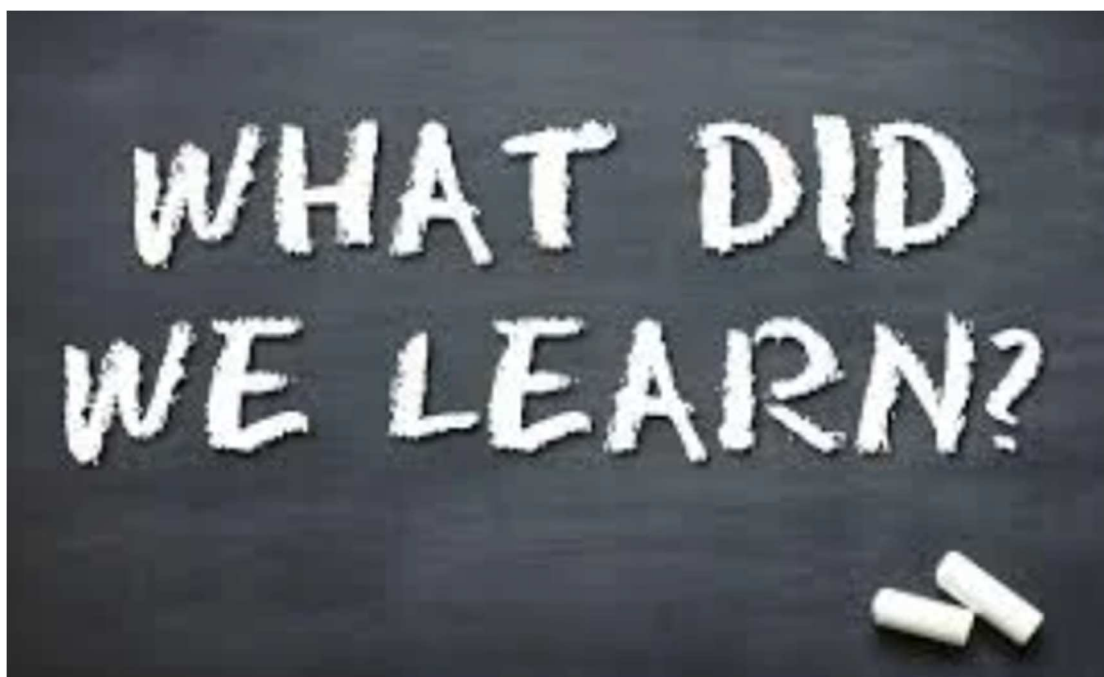
Kahoot!

What Do We Know?
What Did We Learn?

Kahoot!

Decorative elements: lightbulb icon, thumbs up icon, and various colored circles.

Kahoot Link:



What do we know? What did we learn?

0 favorites

0 plays

0 players

Play

Edit



A public kahoot



michele2206

Created 40 minutes ago

Our Infrastructure



The illustration shows a red school building with a central dome. On top of the dome is a circular logo with 'MTSS' in the center, surrounded by 'PROGRESS MONITORING', 'DATA-BASED DECISION MAKING', 'MULTI-TIERED SYSTEMS OF SUPPORT', and 'EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES'. Four cartoon superheroes are flying around the building. The building has four columns with labels: 'PROGRESS MONITORING', 'DATA-BASED DECISION MAKING', 'MULTI-TIERED SYSTEMS OF SUPPORT', and 'EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES'. The word 'INFRASTRUCTURE' is written at the base of the building.


Tier 3:
RED

Focus: Students who have not responded to primary or secondary level of prevention or who are in need of enrichment or acceleration

Instruction: Intensive, supplemental, evidence-based instruction delivered to small groups (1-3 students) or individually

Setting: General education classroom

Assessments: Progress monitoring weekly





Tier 3 Responsibilities

- Small group (1-3) students
- Specific deficit area
- Intervention at instructional level
- Progress Monitor at instructional level, weekly

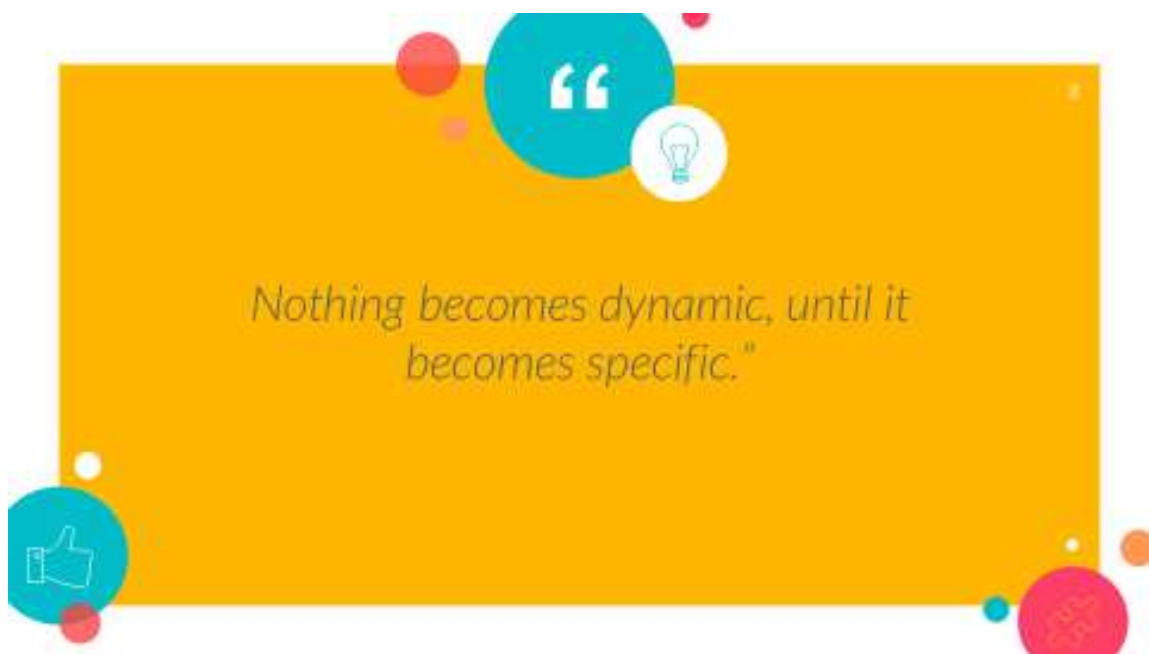
*In addition to tier 1 and tier 2

This slide features a teal background with a light blue rectangular area containing the text. It is decorated with several colorful circles (yellow, red, orange) and icons, including a lightbulb in a yellow circle and a thumbs-up icon in a white circle.



Tier 3: Intensive Supports

This slide has a teal background with a large white circle in the center containing the text. It is decorated with various colorful circles and icons, including a lightbulb in a yellow circle and a thumbs-up icon in a red circle.

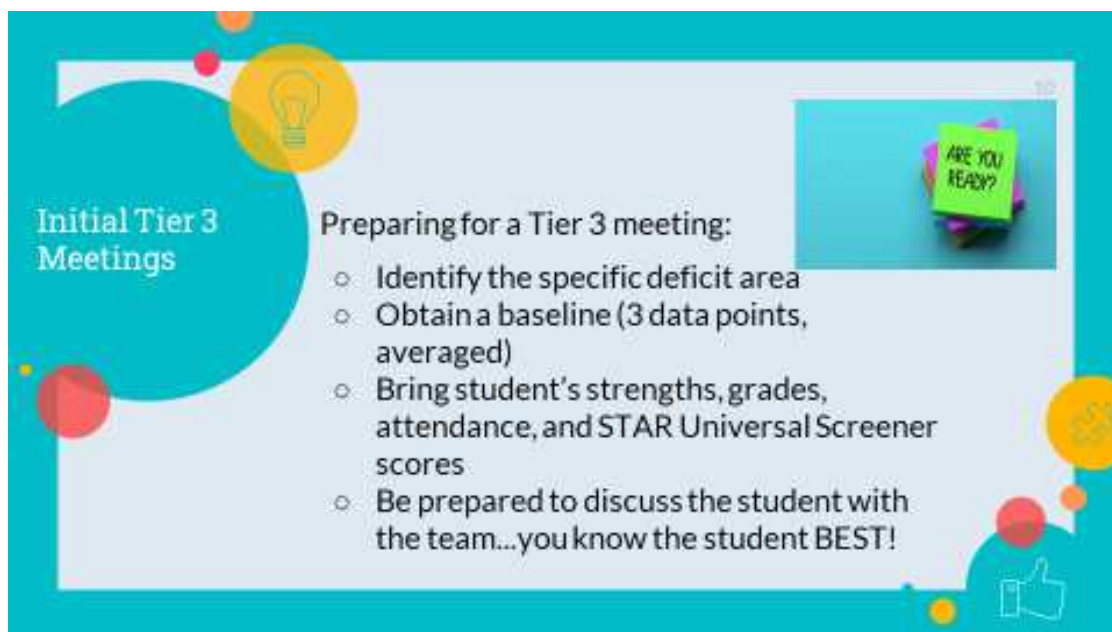


Identifying Students for Tier 3

After analyzing tier 2 data with the team, students who do not show adequate progress may be identified needing tier 3 supports.

- Request a tier 3 meeting by contacting the school MTSS Coordinator.
- The coordinator will schedule a meeting with parents, teacher, school psychologist, and the MTSS Facilitator assigned to your school.
- The coordinator will request a consent for a hearing/vision screening and obtain a parent questionnaire.

THUMBS UP



Initial Tier 3 Meetings

Preparing for a Tier 3 meeting:

- Identify the specific deficit area
- Obtain a baseline (3 data points, averaged)
- Bring student's strengths, grades, attendance, and STAR Universal Screener scores
- Be prepared to discuss the student with the team...you know the student BEST!

ARE YOU READY?


The slide features a teal background with decorative elements including a lightbulb icon in a yellow circle, a thumbs-up icon, and a sticky note with the text 'ARE YOU READY?'. The text is presented in a white speech bubble-like shape.



The Team

- Parent
- Teacher
- MTSS Coordinator
- MTSS Facilitator
- School Psychologist
- Counselor (if needed)

The slide features a teal background with decorative elements including a lightbulb icon in a yellow circle, a thumbs-up icon, and various colored circles. The text is presented in a white circle.





The Flow of a Tier 3 Meeting

12

Someone will be assigned to take minutes at each meeting such as, the coordinator, facilitator, or school psychologist.


- Introductions
- Student information
- Hearing and Vision Screening Results
- Attendance
- Services currently provided to the student
- Purpose of the meeting
- Parental input
- Student strengths
- Medical information
- Behavior
- Grades, Milestones, STAR results
- Discussion




13

Discussion should be a rich conversation regarding the specific area of concern, evidence-based interventions, and data analysis.

Communication is key!



All team members hold a piece of the puzzle.



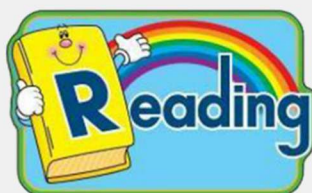


County Website Link (created by me):

Multi-Tiered System of Supports



Content Areas



Georgia Department of Education Link:

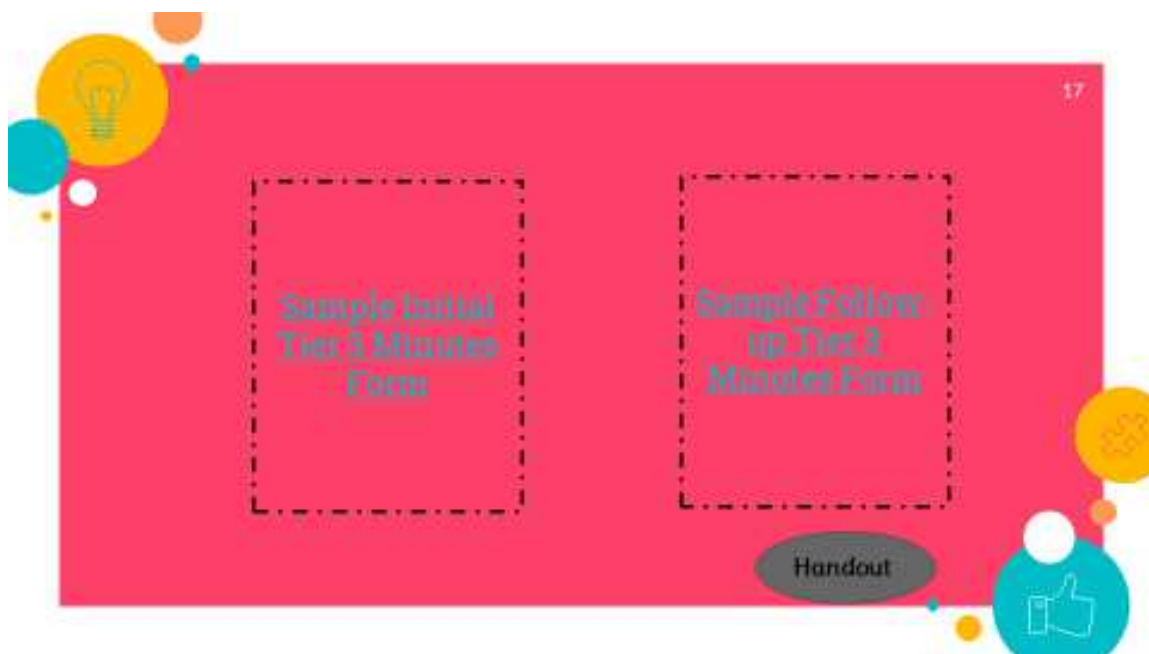


Selecting Evidenced-Based Interventions

Local Educational Agency (LEA) Guidance

Revised 12-18-2018





Initial Tier 3 Minutes Form Link:

Initial Tier 3 Meeting Minutes

Date:

Student Name			Teacher			
Grade Level		Has Student ever been retained?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Year/Grade Level _____		
Has the student passed a hearing screening?		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Has the student passed a vision screening?		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Does the student have excessive absences or tardies? (10 or more per semester?)			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	#absences _____ #tardies _____		
Is the student currently served in any of the following areas:	ESOL	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	EIP	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	SpEd (Speech Concerns)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
	Speech	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Gifted	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	504 Plan	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

Purpose of Meeting	
Reason for adding Tier 3 interventions: <i>Identify areas of concern.</i>	

Parental Input	<i>***Upload any outside reports provided by parents into IC.</i>

Student Strengths

Medical Information
Does the student have a medical diagnosis? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes _____

If so, please list:	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the student currently take any medication? If so, please list:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes _____ <input type="checkbox"/> No

Behavior	
Does the student have office referrals? If yes, explain:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes How many? _____ <input type="checkbox"/> No What is the nature of the referrals? <i>(Check all that apply)</i> Physical Aggression Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Bullying Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Student Incivility Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Theft Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Obscene Gestures Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Defiance Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Does the student have any behaviors that negatively impacts learning? If yes, explain:	<i>Check all that apply:</i> Off task Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Fidgeting Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Blurts out Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Out of area Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Missing assignments Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Disruptive Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Defiance Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

Grades				
	1st Nine	2nd Nine	3rd Nine	4th Nine
Language Arts				
Math				
Reading				
Science				
Social Studies				
Spelling				

Georgia Milestones	
Summarize GMAS ELA Data	
Summarize GMAS Math Data	

Assessment Results					
	August	October	January	March	May
STAR Reading Level					
Scale Score					
Lexile					
STAR Math Level					
Scale Score					

Tier 2 data should be summarized in the discussion below and uploaded in IC.

Discussion
<i>What deficits did the team identify? What interventions were developed? What is the frequency?</i>

MTSS Coordinator	_____	MTSS Facilitator	_____
Parent	_____	Parent	_____
Teacher	_____	Teacher	_____
School Psychologist	_____	Teacher	_____
	_____		_____

Tier 3 Follow Up Meeting Minutes Link:

Tier 3 Follow-Up Meeting Minutes

Student Information			
Student Name		Date	
Grade Level		Teacher	

Purpose of Meeting: To analyze current tier 3 progress monitoring data, discuss current interventions, and utilize the problem-solving process for student success.

Hearing, Vision, & Medical	
Has the student passed Hearing Screening?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Date: .
Has the student passed Vision Screening?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Date: .
Are there any changes in medical?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> If yes, explain:

Parental Input	
Parent Questionnaire Sent: _____	Parent Questionnaire Received: _____

Student Strengths

For each area of concern, discuss the interventions that are currently implemented, and the progress that has been made as indicated by the graph.

Current Interventions		
Deficit Area 1: Specific Weakness: Current Intervention:		
Adequate <input type="checkbox"/> (Continue current intervention)	Adjust Intervention <input type="checkbox"/>	Change Intervention <input type="checkbox"/>
Positive <input type="checkbox"/> (On track to meet goal.)	Positive <input type="checkbox"/> (Not on track to meet goal.)	Neutral/Declining <input type="checkbox"/> (Not demonstrating progress towards goal.)

Deficit Area 2: Specific Weakness: Current Intervention:		
Adequate <input type="checkbox"/> (Continue current intervention)	Adjust Intervention <input type="checkbox"/>	Change Intervention <input type="checkbox"/>
Positive <input type="checkbox"/> (On track to meet goal.)	Positive <input type="checkbox"/> (Not on track to meet goal.)	Neutral/Declining <input type="checkbox"/> (Not demonstrating progress towards goal.)

Deficit Area 3: Specific Weakness: Current Intervention:		
Adequate <input type="checkbox"/> (Continue current intervention)	Adjust Intervention <input type="checkbox"/>	Change Intervention <input type="checkbox"/>
Positive <input type="checkbox"/> (On track to meet goal.)	Positive <input type="checkbox"/> (Not on track to meet goal.)	Neutral/Declining <input type="checkbox"/> (Not demonstrating progress towards goal.)

Deficit Area 4: Specific Weakness: Current Intervention:		
Adequate <input type="checkbox"/> (Continue current intervention)	Adjust Intervention <input type="checkbox"/>	Change Intervention <input type="checkbox"/>
Positive <input type="checkbox"/> (On track to meet goal.)	Positive <input type="checkbox"/> (Not on track to meet goal.)	Neutral/Declining <input type="checkbox"/> (Not demonstrating progress towards goal.)

Intervention Discussion: (Summarize the team discussion of the interventions for each deficit area. If the team is discontinuing or adding an intervention, provide data to support the team decision)

--

STAR DATA					
	August	October	January	March	May
STAR Reading Level					
Scale Score					
Lexile					
STAR Math Level					
Scale Score					

Current Grades					
Reading		Social Studies		Conduct	
Language Arts		Science			
Math		Spelling			
Are grades accomodated? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>					
If yes, please explain:					

Behavior Information		
Does the student have behavior referrals? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> If yes, how many referrals (total for year) has student received?		
What is the nature of the referrals? (Check all that apply)		
Physical Aggression Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Bullying Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Other Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Student Incivility Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Obscene Gestures Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Theft Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Defiance Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Describe the patterns of concern? Discuss trends, changes, (include social/emotional concerns)		

End of School Year Recommendations
The student has been <input type="checkbox"/> promoted <input type="checkbox"/> retained <input type="checkbox"/> placed in the _____ grade for the _____ school year.
Discussions for Interventions for next school year:

Team Members

MTSS Coordinator

Parent

Teacher

Parent

Teacher

School Psychologist

MTSS Facilitator



Tier 3 Intervention Plan

We will walk through this together:

1. Log into Infinite Campus
2. Go to your specific school
3. Select "Sample Student"
4. Under the RtI tab, select create new plan

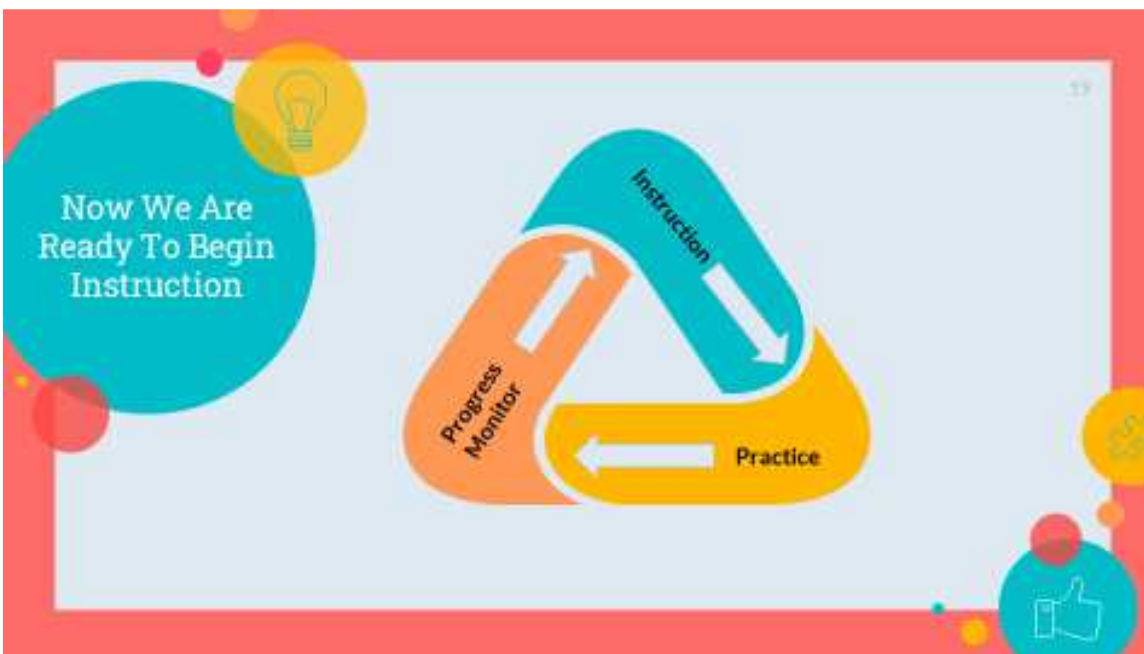
From here, we will walk through writing plans together.

Goals:


- Develop a well written plan
- Understand baseline and goal score
- Understand entering intervention time and progress monitoring (per protocol)



step
by step



Now We Are Ready To Begin Instruction



Instruction

Progress Monitor

Practice



Intervention Delivery

Prepare for intervention delivery by using the following checklist:

- Specific time
- Materials needed
- Intervention protocol

21



Coaching Request Form Link:

Intervention Coaching Request

Facilitators: M. Carrera, A. Langholz, & M. Trammell

* Required

Name *

Your answer _____

Email address *

Your answer _____

School *

Choose ▾

<p>Grade Level *</p> <p>Choose ▾</p>
<p>With what intervention do you need support? *</p> <p>Your answer _____</p>
<p>Priority *</p> <p>Very high 1 2 3 4 5 Very low</p> <p><input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/></p>
<p>What day of the week works best for you?</p> <p>Choose ▾</p>
<p>Would you prefer after school or during your planning time?</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Planning Time</p> <p><input type="radio"/> After School</p>
<p>Is there anything else we need to know?</p> <p>Your answer _____</p>
<p>Submit</p> <p>Never submit passwords through Google Forms.</p>

27

Entering Plans and Data

(follow up from breakout session)

Enter the plan
After the team has met and determined an appropriate plan, write the plan for "stranger eyes." It should be a clear and concise plan.

Provide the Intervention
Provide the intervention per protocol with fidelity. This includes specific directions, intensity, and duration. Record the date and time spent in Infinite Campus.

Progress Monitor
Progress monitor once per week on student's instructional level. Enter the progress monitoring score in Infinite Campus.

We now have data and a graph to make decisions!




Let's Practice!

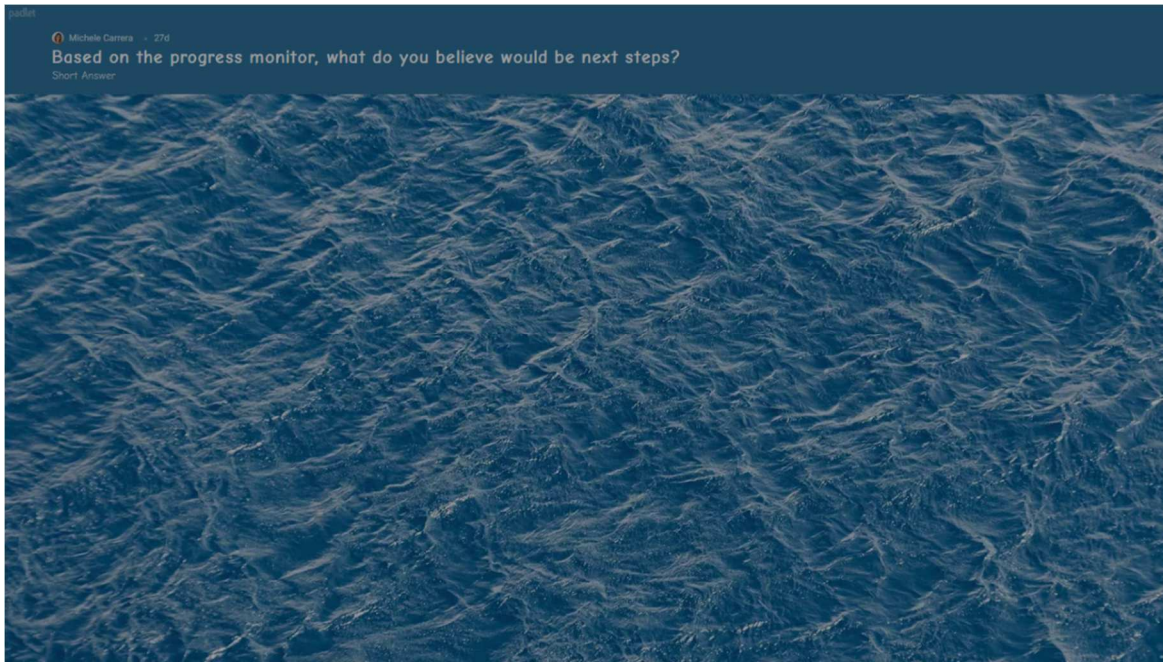
Let's enter sample progress monitoring data on a student and view the graph.

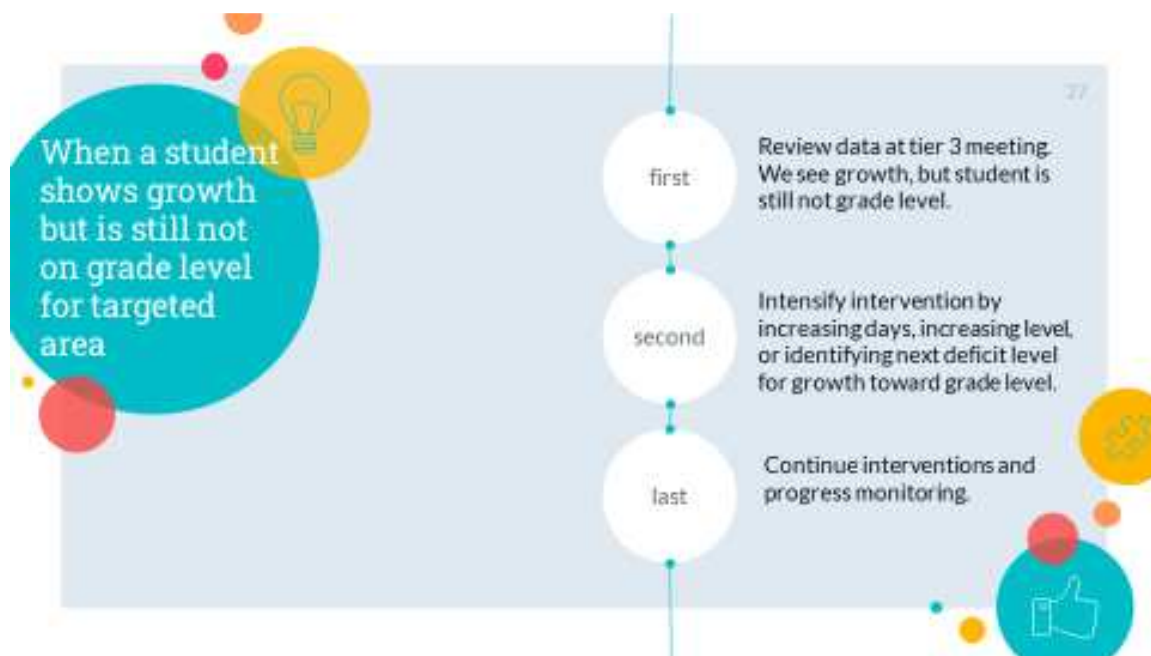
Breakout and discuss the graph to determine next steps. Click on the Padlet to record your response.

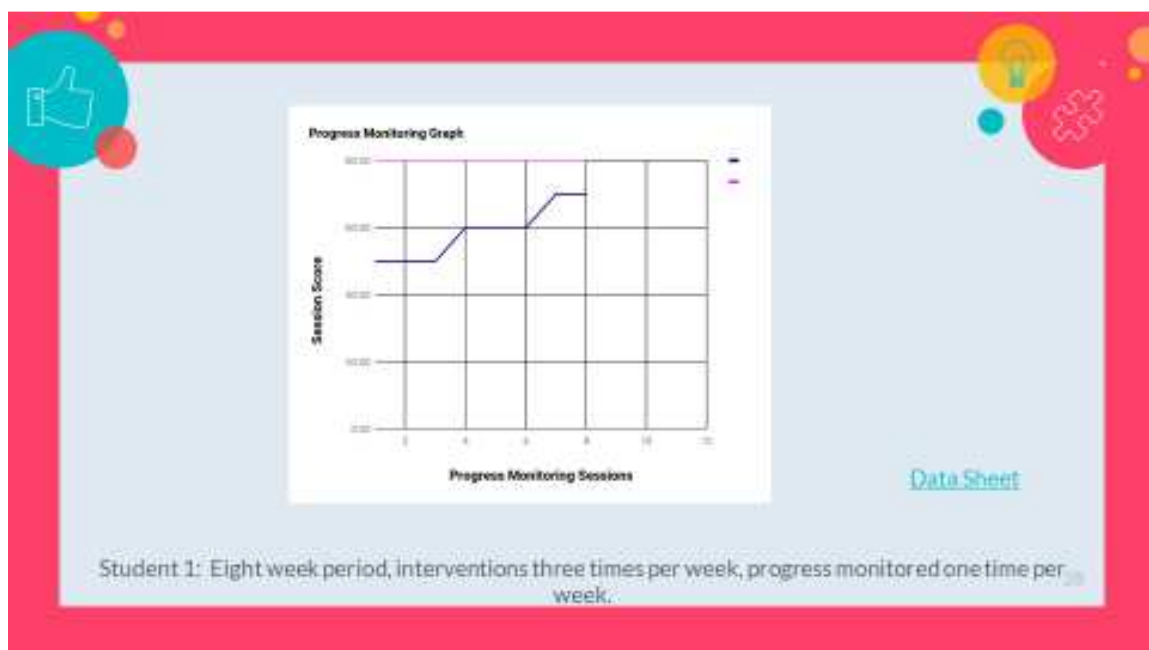





Padlet Link:







Student 1 Data Sheet Link:

INTERVENTION PLAN

Student: Student 1 Date: _____
 School: _____ Grade/Tier _____
 Completed By: _____ Title _____

Identify Goal (What do you want the student to be able to accomplish?)

Student will increase his mastery percentage to 80% in comprehending a third grade level text. The student will work with the teacher and use Close Reading strategies (including reciprocal teaching) to increase comprehension of both literary and informational texts, 15 minutes per session, three times weekly.

Instructions Enter the date and results for each monitoring session.

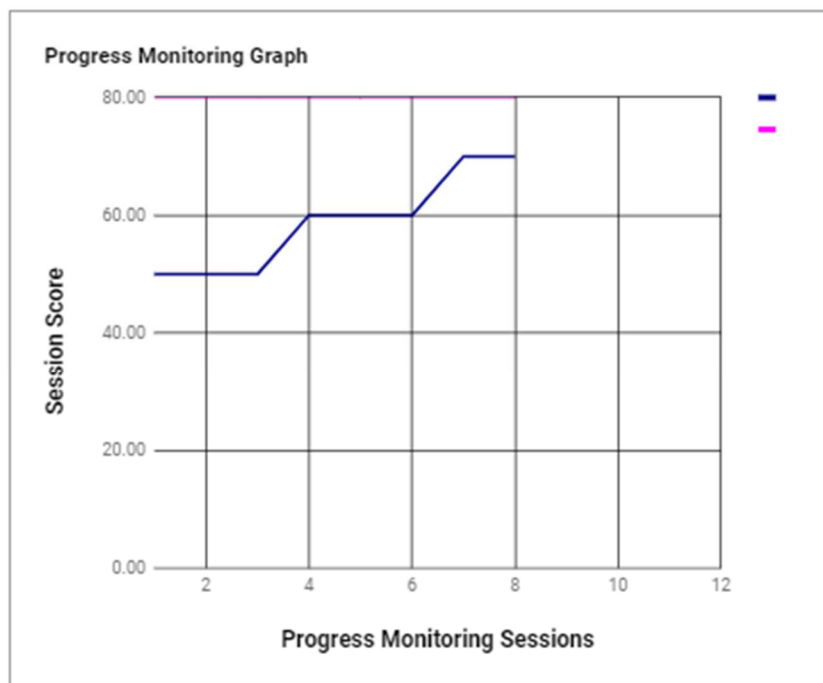
	Date	Score	Goal
Baseline	9/1/2020	40.00	80.00
1	9/6/2020	50.00	80.00
2	9/13/2020	50.00	80.00
3	9/21/2020	50.00	80.00
4	10/1/2020	60.00	80.00
5	10/7/2020	60.00	80.00
6	10/15/2020	60.00	80.00
7	10/20/2020	70.00	80.00
8	10/25/2020	70.00	80.00
9			
10			
11			
12			

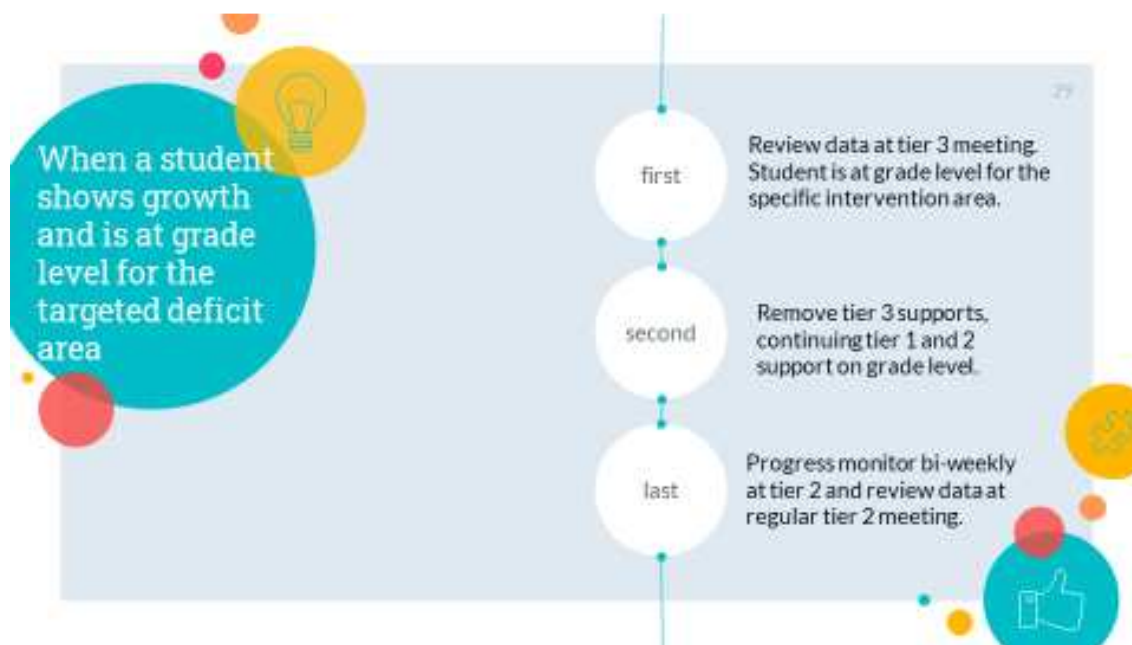
*Description of intervention, progress monitoring, and score definition

*Intervention: The student will work with the teacher and use Close Reading strategies (including reciprocal teaching) to increase comprehension of both literary and informational texts, 15 minutes per session, three times weekly.

*Progress Monitoring: He will be assessed with a Readworks passage every week.

*Definition of credit earned: Percentage (80%) of questions answered correctly out of the total amount of questions





Student 2 Data Sheet Link:

INTERVENTION PLAN

Student: Student 2 Date: _____
 School: _____ Grade/Tier _____
 Completed By: _____ Title _____

Identify Goal (What do you want the student to be able to accomplish?)

Student will increase his mastery percentage to 80% in comprehending a third grade level text. The student will work with the teacher and use Close Reading strategies (including reciprocal teaching) to increase comprehension of both literary and informational texts, 15 minutes per session, three times weekly.

Instructions Enter the date and results for each monitoring session.

	Date	Score	Goal
Baseline	9/1/2020	40.00	80.00
1	9/6/2020	50.00	80.00
2	9/13/2020	50.00	80.00
3	9/21/2020	60.00	80.00
4	10/1/2020	70.00	80.00
5	10/7/2020	70.00	80.00
6	10/15/2020	80.00	80.00
7	10/20/2020	80.00	80.00
8	10/25/2020	90.00	80.00
9			
10			
11			
12			

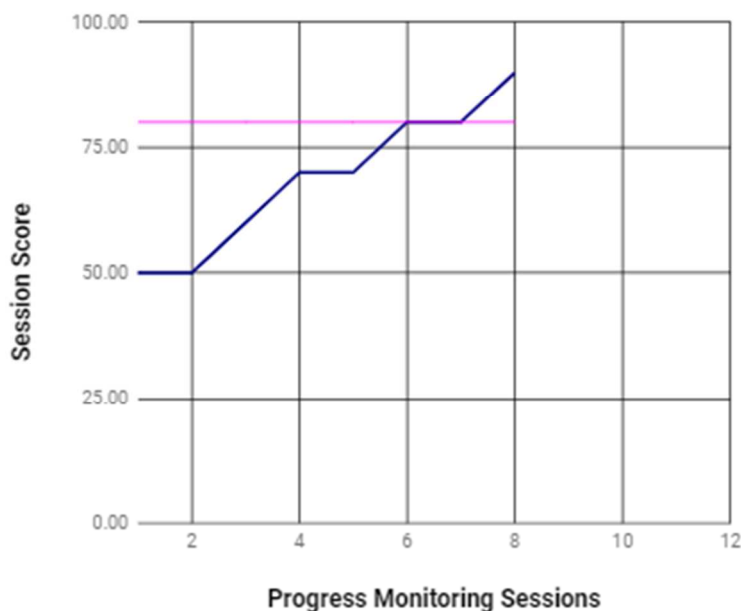
***Description of intervention, progress monitoring, and score definition**

***Intervention:** The student will work with the teacher and use Close Reading strategies (including reciprocal teaching) to increase comprehension of both literary and informational texts, 15 minutes per session, three times weekly.

***Progress Monitoring:** He will be assessed with a Readworks passage every week.

***Definition of credit earned:** Percentage (80%) of questions answered correctly out of the total amount of questions

Progress Monitoring Graph



When a student does not show growth for targeted deficit area

- first** Review data at tier 3 meeting. Student is not showing growth.
- second** Have other interventions been implemented?
- last** If no, change intervention. If yes, student is referred to Quarterly Review Team.

[Data Sheet](#)

Student 3: Eight week period, interventions three times per week, progress monitored one time per week.

Student 3 Data Sheet:

INTERVENTION PLAN

Student: Student 3 Date: _____
 School: _____ Grade/Tier _____
 Completed By: _____ Title _____

Identify Goal (What do you want the student to be able to accomplish?)

Student will increase his mastery percentage to 80% in comprehending a third grade level text. The student will work with the teacher and use Close Reading strategies (including reciprocal teaching) to increase comprehension of both literary and informational texts, 15 minutes per session, three times weekly.

Instructions Enter the date and results for each monitoring session.

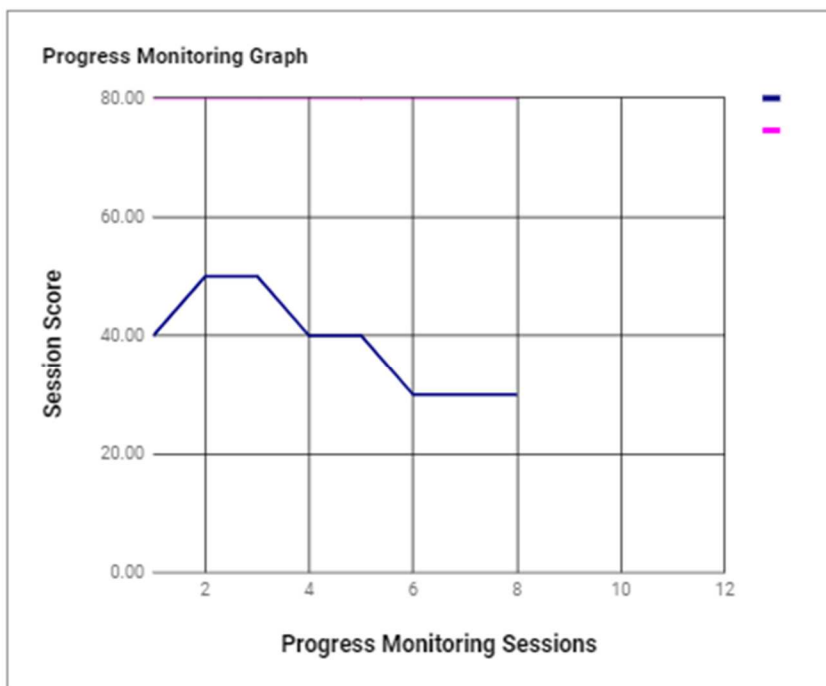
	Date	Score	Goal
Baseline	9/1/2020	40.00	80.00
1	9/6/2020	40.00	80.00
2	9/13/2020	50.00	80.00
3	9/21/2020	50.00	80.00
4	10/1/2020	40.00	80.00
5	10/7/2020	40.00	80.00
6	10/15/2020	30.00	80.00
7	10/20/2020	30.00	80.00
8	10/25/2020	30.00	80.00
9			
10			
11			
12			

***Description of intervention, progress monitoring, and score definition**

***Intervention:** The student will work with the teacher and use Close Reading strategies (including reciprocal teaching) to increase comprehension of both literary and informational texts, 15 minutes per session, three times weekly.

***Progress Monitoring:** He will be assessed with a Readworks passage every week.

***Definition of credit earned:** Percentage (80%) of questions answered correctly out of the total amount of questions





Quarterly Review

Quarterly Review Team:

- MTSS Coordinator
- School Psychologist
- MTSS Facilitator
- School ISC
- Special Education Support Specialist

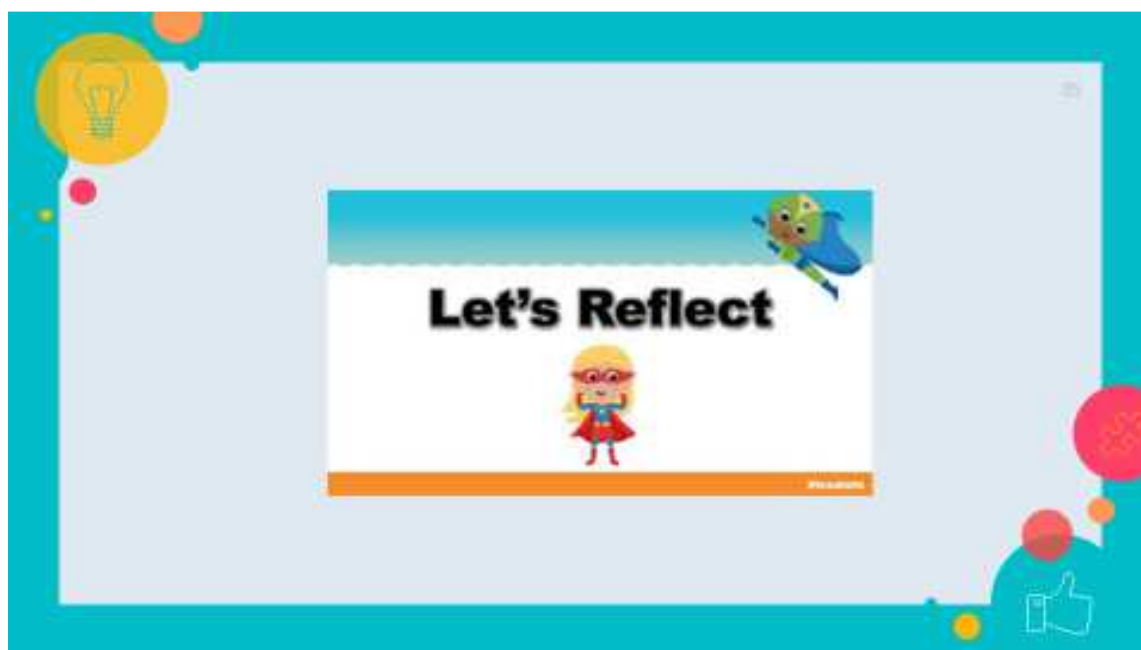
Reviews:

- All information from tier 3 meetings regarding grades, attendance, etc
- Data from tier 3 interventions
- Parent Questionnaire
- Work Samples
- Student Data Review from teachers

*At this time, a referral decision will be made regarding further testing.

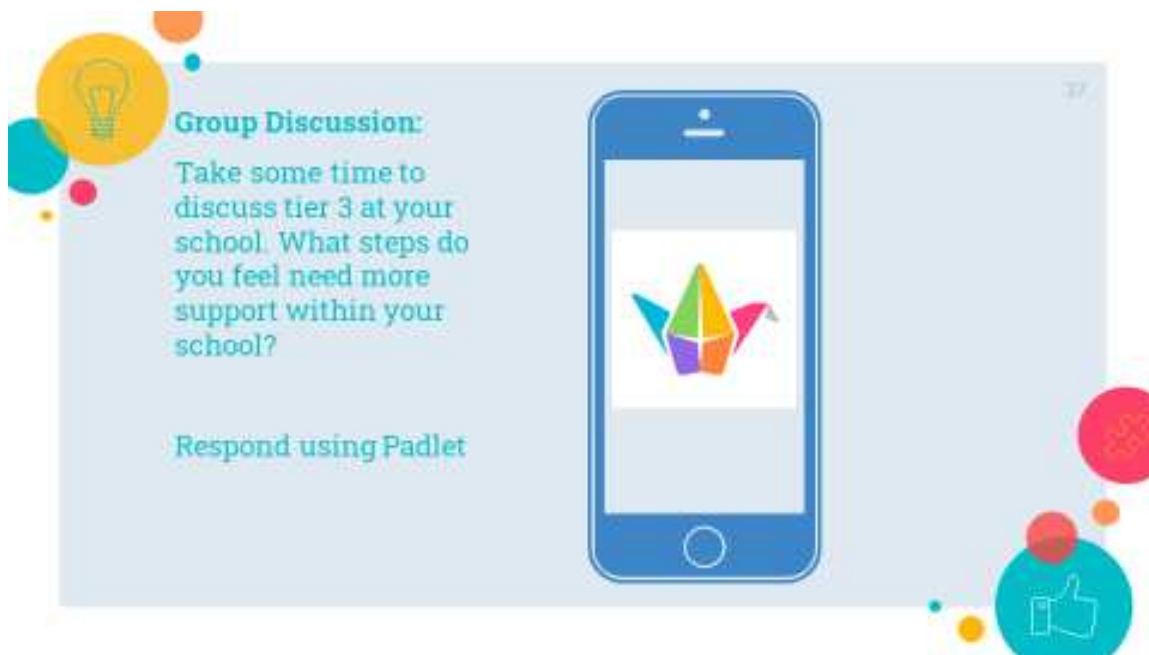


Break TIME



 A presentation slide with a teal border. On the left, a large teal circle contains the text "Let's review some concepts" in white. To the right, there are three columns of text, each representing a tier of intervention. The slide is decorated with various colored circles (yellow, red, teal) and a thumbs-up icon in the bottom right corner.

Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
Tier 1 is for ALL students. Approximately 80% of students will show success at tier 1.	Tier 2 is for some students; approximately 15%. Tier 2 is remediation on grade level with progress monitoring every 2 weeks.	Tier 3 is for few students; approximately 1-5%. Tier 3 is remediation at instructional level with progress monitoring every week.
Meetings All team members are important! Problem-solving discussion is critical for selecting EBI to match deficit areas and student success.	Interventions & Data Interventions with fidelity are critical for a true picture of the student. Data is also critical to understand the progress of the student and decision-making.	Resources Please use the resources provided to assist you! If you need extra help always reach out to your MTSS Facilitator.



Group Discussion:
Take some time to discuss tier 3 at your school. What steps do you feel need more support within your school?

Respond using Padlet

Padlet Link:



padlet

Michele Carrera · 27d

What steps in the RtI process do you feel need more support within your school?

Short Answer



Part of the Step by Step Guide for All Tiers Link:

MTSS Step by Step Guide

Brief Overview

1. Administer universal screener, Review data, Document, Adjust Tier I Instruction
2. Identify Tier II students using multiple sources of data, Group students by deficit/intervention, Monitor progress, Document interventions
3. Identify Tier III students, Tier III meeting w/parent invitation, Implement intensive individual interventions, Document interventions with progress monitoring



County Website

The website will be available for teachers Winter 2020. The picture is linked to the website.

Multi-Tiered System of Supports



41

Let's take time to explore the county website!

Please log on to the website now. Take about 10 minutes to explore and then we will discuss.



42

Coaching

Need help with an intervention?

You can find me by using the [coaching link](#).



Coaching: What teachers say

- In the study, teachers stated they would benefit greatly from coaching for intervention delivery and progress monitoring.
- Teachers also stated that they would like coaching to be available virtually or in person.
- The perceived needs of teachers in the study was to have one-on-one time from an intervention specialist for a better understanding of the entire process of choose and progress monitoring EBI.
- Teachers expressed a desire for improving self-efficacy and student outcomes

Coaching: What research shows

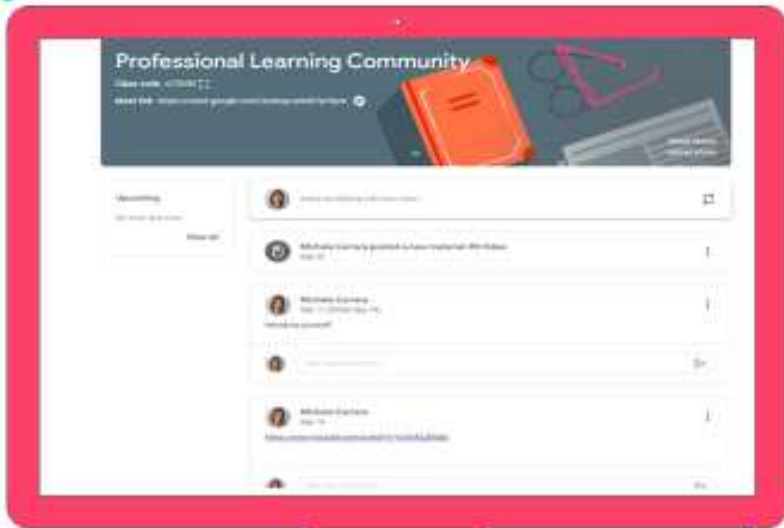


- Coaching is effective for academic instruction, supporting RtI, increasing fidelity of RtI, and increasing student achievement (Wood et al., 2016).
- Coaching provides individual support to teachers assisting in new instructional practices (Wood et al., 2016).
- Coaching gives teachers the opportunity to practice skills with immediate feedback to improve practices and increase fidelity (Dunst et al., 2019).
- Coaching allows teachers the opportunity to observe and receive feedback in real-time for an optimal learning experience (Desimone & Pak, 2017).
- Coaching engages teachers in active learning and increases the effectiveness of PD while offering feedback and opportunity to practice (Desimone & Pak, 2017).
- Coaching can be individually tailored to a teacher or small group, utilizing prior knowledge and personal goals (Desimone & Pak, 2017).



Professional Learning Community

Let's support each other!
Join our Virtual PLC today!!

[Link](#)



Professional Learning Community

46

47

PLCs: What teachers say

- In the study, teachers stated a need for observing other teachers implementing various parts of the RtI framework.
- The teachers stated that interacting with other teachers from different schools may assist in new ideas.
- Ongoing PD, such as a PLC were a strong desires of teachers in the study.
- When asked what additional needs would support teachers with the fidelity of RtI, all stated that support from the district and one another in the form of ongoing PD would benefit them greatly.


48

PLCs: What research shows

- A PLC is a group of teachers collaborating and learning from one another to advance knowledge and skills for valued outcomes, including increasing student outcomes while removing barriers (Hairon et al., 2017; Mundschenk & Fuchs, 2016; Prenger et al., 2019; Voelkel & Chrispeels, 2017).
- PLCs have been linked to student achievement and teacher collaboration and commitment (Burns et al., 2018; Hairon et al., 2017; Mundschenk & Fuchs, 2016; Prenger et al., 2019; Voelkel & Chrispeels, 2017).
- PLCs create higher collective efficacy, which creates more effort a group is to put towards reaching goals (Durkson et al., 2017; Voelkel & Chrispeels, 2017; Warr Pedersen, 2017).
- PLCs assist in problem-solving within RtI such as helping each other choose EBI, observing each other, and assisting in data analysis (Prenger et al., 2019).



Exit Ticket Link:



Exit Ticket

Before you leave the training today, please answer the following questions.

What's one important thing you learned in training today?

Your answer _____

What is one thing you would like to know more about?

Your answer _____

What would help make today's lesson more effective?

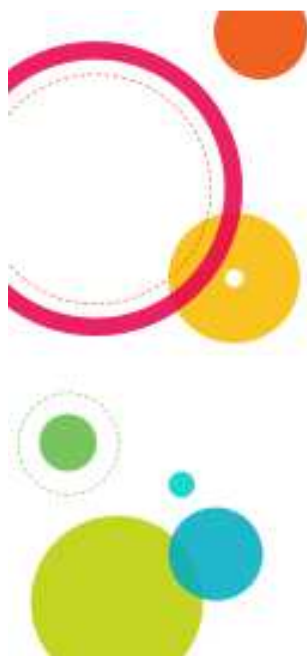
Your answer _____

Submit






RtI: It Takes a Village Day 3



Day 3: Agenda



8:00-8:15	Kahoot
8:15-9:00	Tier 3 Follow up Meetings
9:00-10:00	Leadership Teams
10:00-10:20	Break
10:20-11:50	Breakout Session Rotations
11:50-1:00	Lunch
1:00-2:00	Taxonomy of Intervention Intensity (Diving Deeper)
2:00-2:30	Final Q & A/Exit Tickets



Kahoot Link:

The screenshot shows the Kahoot! website interface. At the top is a purple navigation bar with the Kahoot! logo and links for Home, Discover, and Kahoots. Below the navigation bar is a diagram illustrating Tier 3 Intervention. The diagram features a central yellow oval labeled "Tier 3 Intervention" with two arrows pointing down to two other ovals. The left oval is red and labeled "Increased Intensity: more instructional time, smaller group size". The right oval is teal and labeled "Increased Explicitness: more focus on teaching specific skills". Below the diagram, the quiz title "What do we know? What did we learn?" is displayed. Underneath the title, there are statistics: "0 favorites", "0 plays", and "0 players". There are two buttons: a green "Play" button and a blue "Edit" button. To the right of the buttons are icons for sharing, a star, and a menu. At the bottom, it says "A public kahoot".



Tier 3 Follow up Meetings



Using the Graph



Follow up Meetings for Tier 3



- ③ Student Data Review
- ③ Data collection uploaded in IC with a printed copy of the **graph** to review and analyze. This step will determine whether to continue the intervention, intensify the intervention, or change the intervention based on progress or lack of
- ③ Work Samples

It's all about the GRAPH!!!

Let's explore why....

Teacher: He's really not showing any progress, his performance is inconsistent.

Data: 33, 38, 42, 46, 42, 44




Graph: ...





Graphs provide visuals that give us perspective.

- © Is the student responding to the intervention?
 - © If so, is it adequate progress?
 - © What should we do from here?
- 



Remember the function of RTI is to progress monitor if a student is responding to an intervention and if so, the rate at which he/she is responding.

Showing progress indicates that you've identified an accurate deficit and an intervention that is working!!!



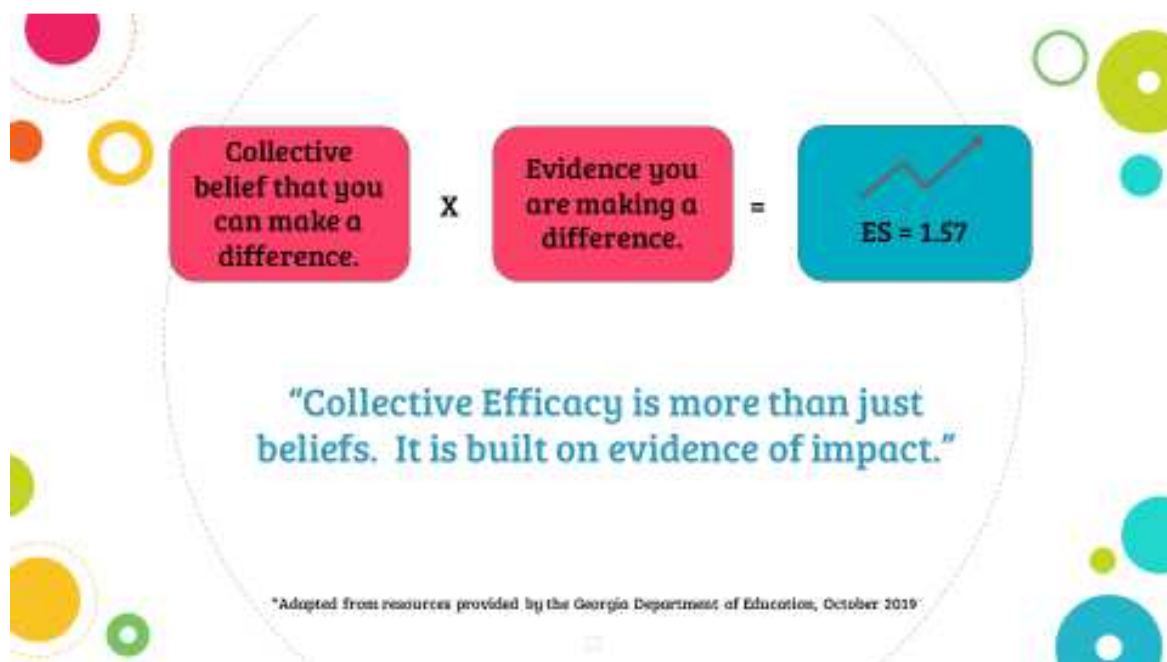
Don't be afraid for a student to show progress!

Guiding questions at all tiers

- What have you tried?
- Is it working?
- How do you know?



RtI Leadership Teams
Supporting Teachers

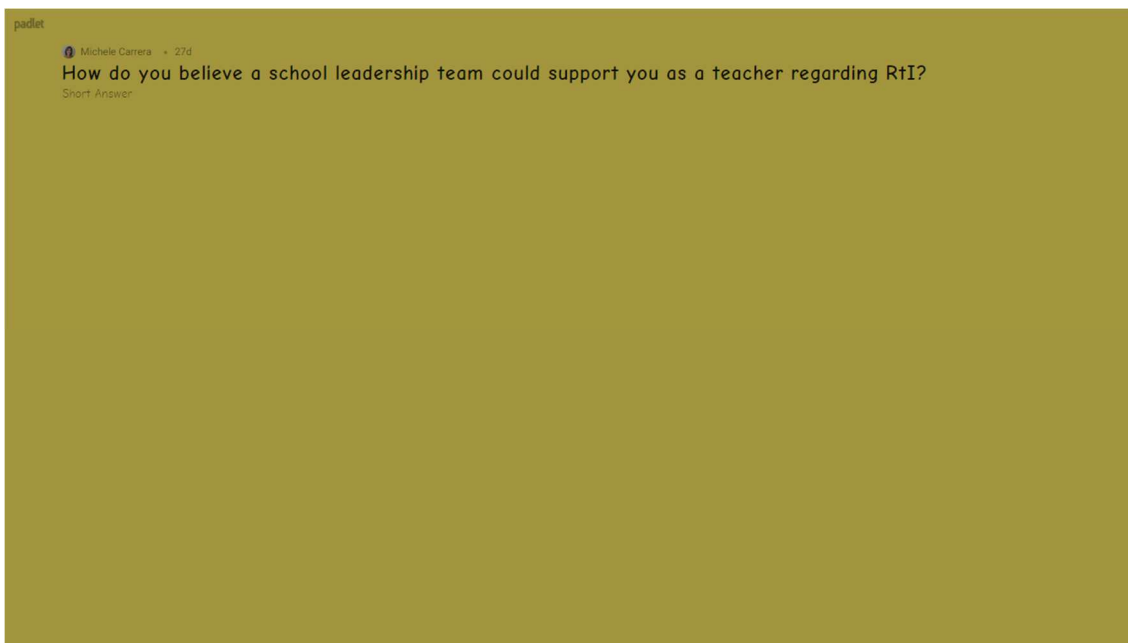


How do you believe a school leadership team could support you as a teacher regarding RtI?

Padlet: Click the link and share your thoughts.

The slide features a central question in black text: "How do you believe a school leadership team could support you as a teacher regarding RtI?". Below the question is a colorful logo of a paper airplane with wings in shades of blue, green, yellow, orange, and pink. Underneath the logo, the text "Padlet: Click the link and share your thoughts." is displayed in a smaller font. The slide is framed by a large, faint circular outline and decorated with colorful circles in shades of blue, green, yellow, orange, and pink.

Padlet Link:



Purpose of a Leadership Team

The purpose of a school-based leadership team is to assist in the problem-solving process regarding best practices, evidence-based interventions, and decision-making to ensure the success of all students.



Leadership Teams Solve Problems

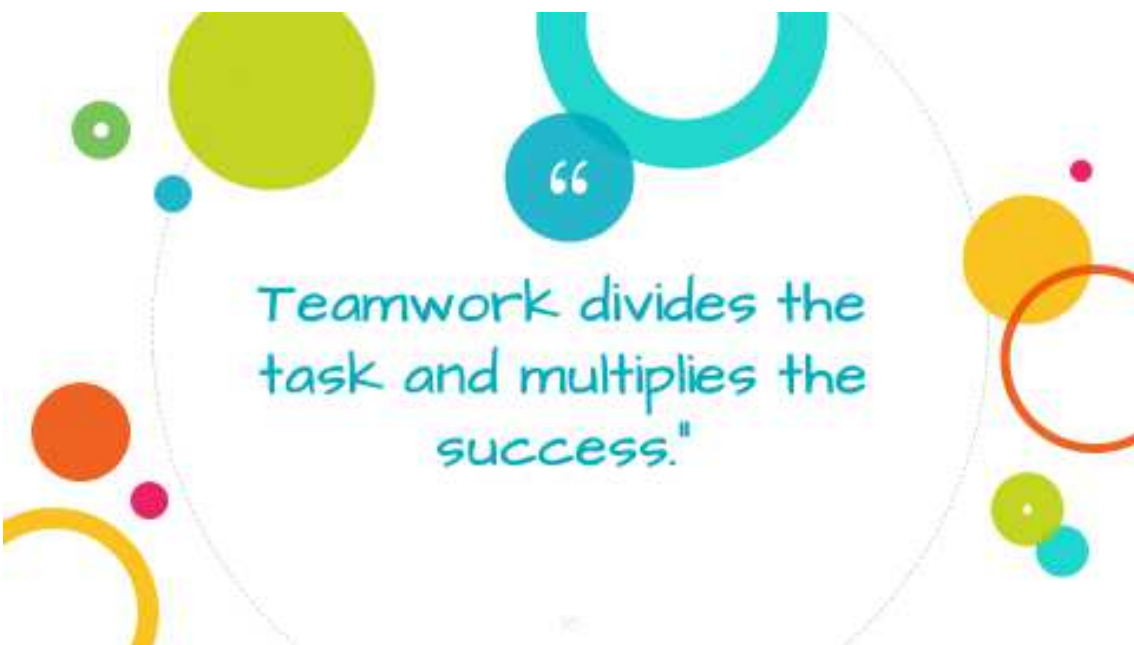
Being part of the leadership team means that, collectively, you listen to concerns of teachers, analyze data to help support and guide teachers, and you strive to assist teachers in the decision-making process.



"None of us is as smart as all of us."

—Michelle Garcia

—Lindsay



“
Teamwork divides the
task and multiplies the
success.”



Team Members

- MTSS Coordinator
- MTSS Grade Level Leads
- MTSS Facilitator

Additional Member to Consider:

- ISC
- REACH
- ESOL
- Speech
- EIP
- Administration
- Counselor



17



Roles and Responsibilities

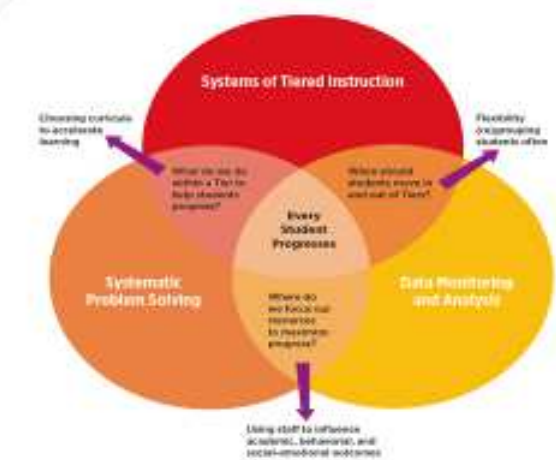
- ⊗ Support teachers
- ⊗ Problem Solve
- ⊗ Lead Discussion at Tier 1/2 meetings
- ⊗ Determine school-wide learning needs by analyzing data
- ⊗ Ensure tiered instructional support at every grade level
- ⊗ Monitor fidelity

18

Leadership Team Meetings

- Teams should meet quarterly, prior to grade level meetings.
- Utilize a structured problem solving process to plan, implement, and monitor instruction/intervention.
- Work with a sense of urgency.
- Proactive not reactive

The team is "the engine that makes the system work."



The Problem-Solving Process



Action Plan

Monitoring Core Instruction:

- Is grade level content appropriately paced?
- Are teachers well supported in adopted programs?
- Is there evidence of differentiated instruction?
- Is level instruction provided multiple days each week?

Monitoring Intervention Integrity

- Are interventions implemented with fidelity?
- Are fidelity checks being completed by administration?
- Are teachers supported by offering PD and coaching?



Leadership Team Meeting Example:

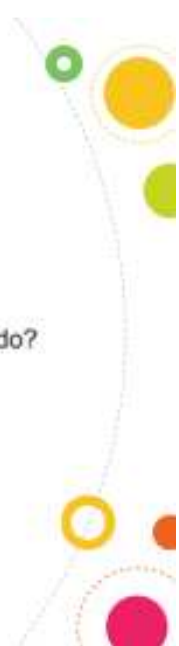
1. Review any concerns of teachers and/or grade level.
2. Analyze STAR Data by grade level and compare to the previous quarter.
 - a. Was there a growth or decline?
 - b. Identify student at level 1/2 that did not show growth.
3. Identify instructional needs.
 - a. Adjust HLPs as needed.
 - b. Select any EBPs that need to be implemented based on whole grade level data.
 - c. Select EBI for specific students that are below grade level.

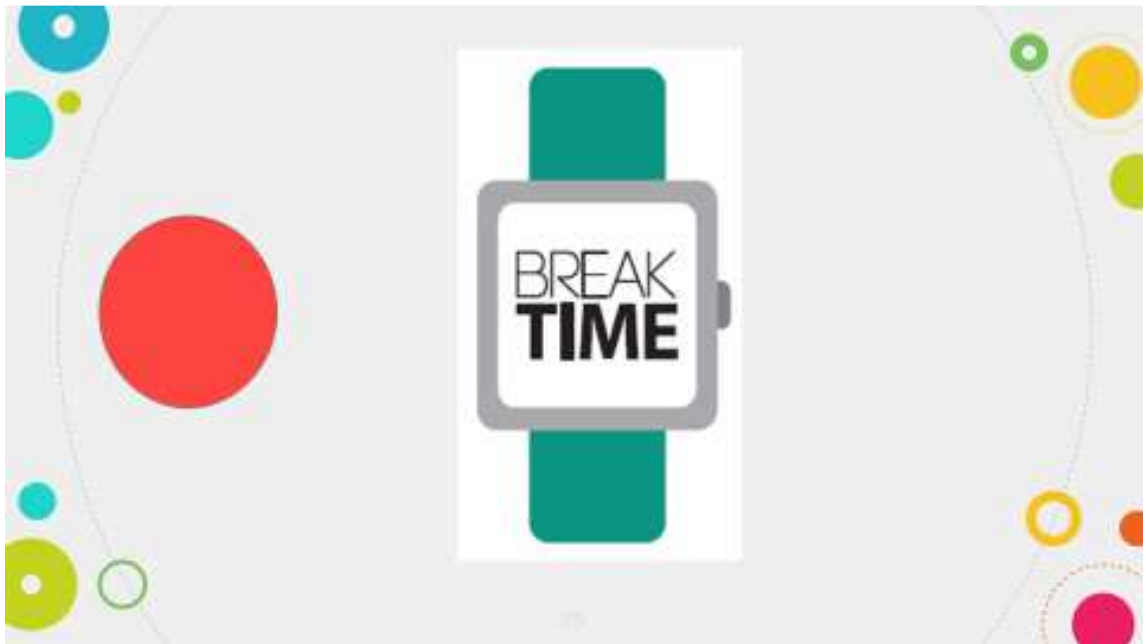


Leadership Team Meeting Example (cont'd)

The leadership team should continue to evolve based on individual school needs.

When problems arise, there should be rich discussion for developing a plan based on evidence, the plan should be implemented with fidelity and monitoring, and the plan should ALWAYS be evaluated.

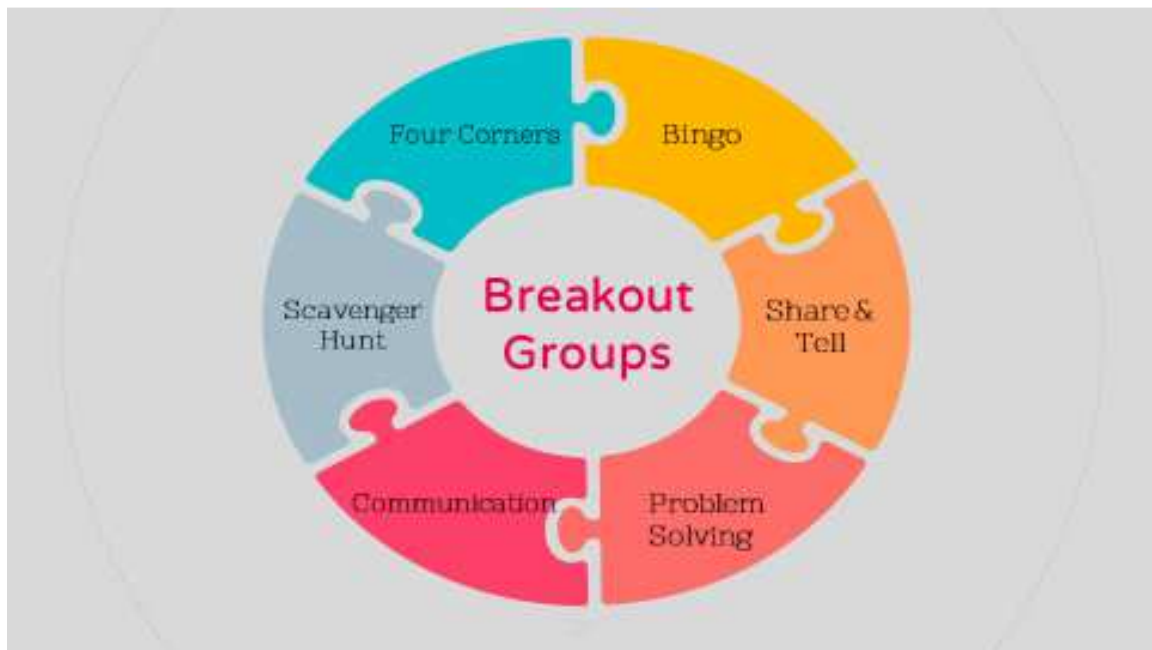




Breakout Rooms

Next, you will be going to six breakout rooms in rotation. The directions for each activity will be in the room when you arrive.

A decorative graphic featuring a large, light blue 'C' shape on the right side. The background is white with scattered colorful circles in shades of orange, yellow, green, and pink, some with dashed outlines, matching the style of the first image.



Whole Group Discussion about Breakout Room Activities



Guiding Questions:

- What is one thing new you learned?
- What is one thing new you would like to try?
- What is one thing you shared with your group?
- If there were any disagreements, please share how you handled the situation in your group?





National Center on INTENSIVE INTERVENTION
a Division of the U.S. Department of Education

Taxonomy of Intervention Intensity: Academics

The *Taxonomy of Intervention Intensity*[®] was developed based on existing research to support educators in evaluating and building intervention intensity.

Dimension [®]	Description
Strength	How well the program works for students with intensive intervention needs, expressed in terms of effect sizes. Effect sizes of above .25 indicate an intervention has value in improving outcomes. Effect sizes of 0.25 to 0.40 are moderate effect sizes of 0.40 or larger are strong (superior).
Dosage	The number of opportunities a student has to receive and attend corrective feedback. It refers to the size of the instructional group, the number of minutes each session lasts, and the number of sessions provided per week.
Alignment	How well the program (or activities) addresses the target student's full set of academic skill deficits. It does not address with the target student has already mastered (extraneous skills for that student), and (2) incorporates a meaningful focus on grade-appropriate curricular standards.
Attention to transfer	The extent to which an intervention is designed to help students (a) transfer the skills they learn to other formats and contexts and (b) make connections between mastered and related skills.
Comprehensiveness	The number of explicit instruction principles the intervention incorporates (e.g., providing explanations in simple, direct language; modeling efficient solution strategies instead of expecting students to discover strategies on their own; providing practice as students use the strategies to generate truly correct responses; and incorporating systematic cumulative reviews).
Behavioral support	The extent to which the program incorporates (a) self-regulation and executive function components and (b) behavioral practices to increase on-task behavior.
Individualization	A student data-based process for individualizing interventions, in which the educator systematically adjusts the intervention over time, in response to ongoing progress-monitoring data, to address the student's complex learning needs.

[®]Harris, J.L., Barth, S., & Malone, A.J. (2017). The Taxonomy of Intervention Intensity. *TEACHING Exceptional Children*, 39(1), 39-64.


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Taxonomy of Intervention Intensity


- A method for systematically selecting an intensive intervention and a guide for teachers for modifying the intervention based on student need.
- The tool helps educators identify best-match interventions for student deficit areas.

- **Strength**- how well the intervention works for students. Look at effect size of the intervention.



Strength	Effect Size
Small (minimum)	0.25 - 0.34
Moderate	0.35 - 0.49
Strong	0.50 or larger






- **Dosage**-size of group, number of minutes per session, & number of sessions per week.
- **Alignment**-addresses the student's deficit area, addresses a specific skill the student has not mastered
- **Attention to Transfer:**

Generalization



- **Comprehensiveness**- the number of explicit instruction principles included in the intervention. The more explicit the instruction, the more intense the intervention. Feedback, modeling, etc.
- **Behavioral Support**-self-regulation, executive functioning components, principles to minimize non-productive behavior
- **Individualization**- Refers to progress monitoring. Adjust intervention over time in response to analyzed data to maximize student learning.






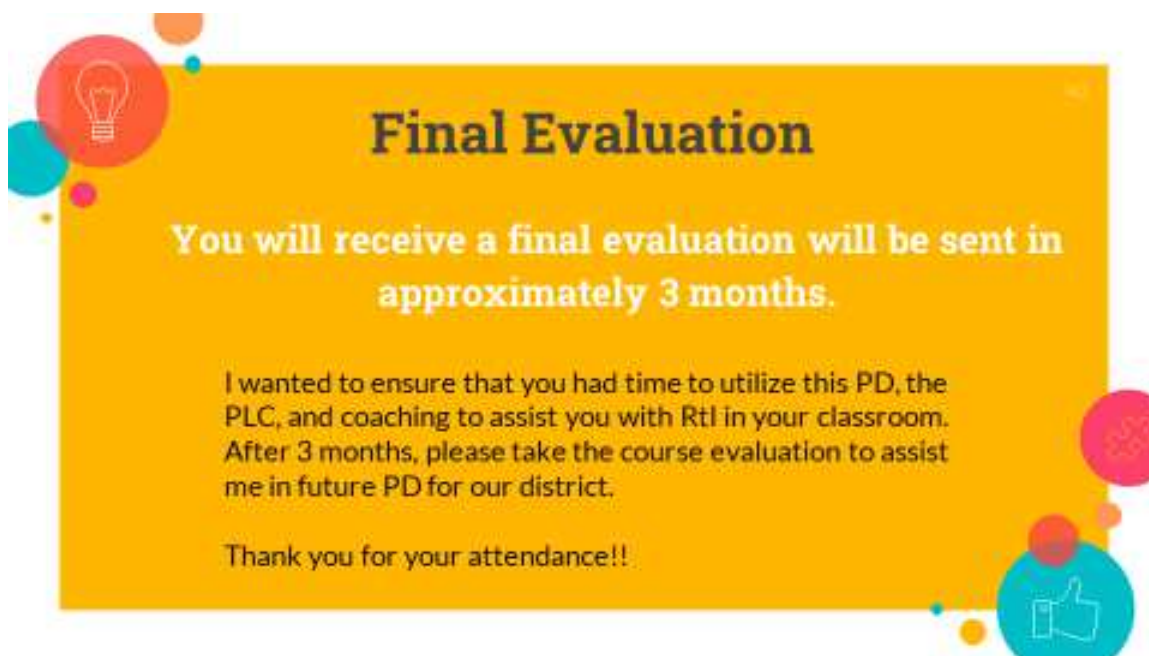
An ounce of **PREVENTION** is worth a pound of cure.



Whole Group Afternoon Discussion

1. What is stopping you?
2. Would you be interested in being on the Leadership Team at your school?
3. What are the driving forces influencing the implementation of each tier at your school?
4. What was your views of Rtl prior to this PD?





Appendix B: Invitation

Dear Invitee,

My name is Michele Carrera. I am a doctoral student at Walden University. I am kindly requesting your participation in a doctoral research study that I am conducting titled: Examining Teachers' Perceived Needs to Better Implement Response to intervention in a Southeast Suburban District. The intention is to gain a better understanding of the RtI process and the fidelity of the framework for properly identifying students with disabilities.

The study involves one 30-45 minute interview in a one on one setting with each participant. Participation is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time. The study is completely anonymous; therefore, it does not require you to provide your name or any other identifying information. If you would like to participate in the study, please read the Informed Consent letter below, sign, and send back to me at the following email: michele.carrera@waldenu.edu.

Your participation in the research will be of great importance to assist in social change in ensuring that our district is properly identifying students while closing achievement gaps for struggling students in the RtI process.

Thank you for your time and participation.

Sincerely,

Michele Carrera, Doctoral Student, Walden University

Appendix C: Interview Questions

Interview Protocol for K-5th Grade Teachers

Date of Interview

Time Interview Began

Time Interview Ended

Demographic Information:

- Current Grade Level
- Number of Years as a Teacher
- Number of students receiving Tier 3 support

RQ1: How are teachers in one southeast suburban school district implementing RtI to assist struggling learners and reduce referrals to special education?

- Describe how you implement RtI to assist struggling learners in your school setting.
 - You mentioned you implement different tiers. What does support look like at each tier?
 - You mention you use interventions. Can you describe what those interventions are and how you determine what interventions you will use? How do you know if the interventions are working?
- How is RtI structured at your school regarding staffing and support for meetings, intervention, and progress monitoring?
 - Who is responsible for structuring staffing for interventions?
- How are students identified for needing more intensive support?

- You mentioned Tier 1 and Tier 2 meetings for identification. What factors contribute to identifying students needing more support?
- What data is considering for adding Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports for students?
- What types of differentiation is used to meet the needs of students for Tier 2 support?
 - You mentioned leveled groups. How often are groups leveled?
 - How many students are in each group?
 - How are the interventions chosen for Tier 2?
- Who provides intervention at Tier 2?
- What types of differentiation is used to meet the needs of students for Tier 3 support?
 - You mentioned a very small group. Typically how many students are in each group?
- Who provides intervention at Tier 3?
- How does data drive the decision making for individual students at Tier 2?
 - You mentioned the universal screener. What universal screener is used to assist the decision making?
 - You also mentioned MARS reports? What data does MARS give and how is it used for decision making at the Tier 2 level?
- How does data drive the decision making for individual students at Tier 3?

- You mentioned Tier 3 meetings. Who is responsible for scheduling meeting?
- You mentioned a team at each meeting. Who members does the team consist of?
- You mentioned a quarterly review for students who continue to struggle. What data is considered at the review?
- What outcomes, good or bad, do you observe utilizing RtI within your school?

RQ2: What are the perceived needs of teachers to better implement RtI with fidelity?

- What supports are provided to assist you with interventions in the classroom?
 - You mentioned there is a lack of time and staff to assist you for students needing individual and intense intervention? What supports do you feel could assist you to ensure the interventions are done per protocol?
- What resources are available to assist you with interventions for RtI?
 - You mentioned a website provided by the county with interventions. How do you utilize the website? Are the interventions helpful?
 - You mentioned purchased interventions are minimal. What are some of the purchased interventions you currently have available to you? What interventions would you like to see purchased?
 - You mention a lack of resources. What resources do you believe are needed to successfully implement and sustain RtI that will support teachers and benefit students?

- What advantages do you experience using RtI for struggling students?
 - You mentioned when students are successful at Tier 3. When students are successful, how are they monitored to ensure success?
 - You mentioned that you notice a decrease in parent requests through the process. Why do you believe there is a decrease in parents requesting special education testing?
- What barriers do you observe or experience that affect the fidelity of RtI in your classroom?
 - You mentioned time is a factor. Time related to what specific factors? Planning, preparing, implementing interventions, entering data, or analyzing data? Please expand on any and all areas.
 - You also mentioned lack of understanding the process. What do you feel would be the most educational way to assist you in a better understanding? School-wide PD? Grade level PD during planning? Individual coaching from a district coach?