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# Implementation of Response to Intervention in an Urban Elementary School

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Carla Patrice Graham

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
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Walden University
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Abstract

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Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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## Abstract

In an urban Midwestern elementary school, the teachers and administrators were perplexed by the rise in special education referrals even with the implementation of response to intervention (RTI). The problem addressed in this study is the general education teachers' implementation of RTI to identify if there were any gaps in practice and, if so, to create a plan that could correct those gaps and potentially decrease the number of special education referrals and students identified for special education services. The conceptual framework for this study was the multitiered system of support, of which RTI is one component. Four research questions that guided this study examined how teachers were implementing RTI at the local level, how their strategies were selected, how they ensured the strategies were being implemented with fidelity, and how their strategies compared to the evidence-based strategies. Twelve school staff members participated in this study, including teachers, administrators, and an RTI coordinator. The data were collected via individual semistructured interviews. The data were analyzed using open and thematic coding. The findings of this study indicated that general education teachers did not clearly understand the significance of RTI and the importance of implementation fidelity. Thus, the students at the study site may not have received the optimal benefits of RTI due to the lack of implementation fidelity. This study may promote positive social change by assisting district leaders with strengthening their RTI programs, which may decrease the referrals for special education services and increase student achievement.

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# Dedication

I dedicate this project study to my family. I would like to thank my husband, Dr. Theodore Graham, whose steadfast support has encouraged me to pursue each and every goal I have wanted to achieve. I also would like to thank my two wonderful daughters, Dr. Alexis Graham and Dr. Jillian Graham, who both have supported, encouraged, and uplifted me during this long and often arduous journey. You both have given extensively of your time and for that I am extremely grateful and humbled. I love you!

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I want to acknowledge my committee members for their support. Dr. Derek Schroll, thank you for your guidance and wisdom throughout this process, you have been with me since the beginning and I am deeply grateful for your support. Dr. Cheryl Burleigh, thank you for your patience and understanding, which helped me know that I could complete this goal. Dr. Jonah Eleweke, thank you for your support and encouragement. Last, but definitely not least, Dr. James Miller, thank you for being a wonderful mentor, teacher, and friend, who inspired me every step throughout this doctoral marathon.

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Section 1: The Problem

## The Local Problem

The problem examined in this study was implementing response to intervention (RTI) by the general education teachers at a Midwestern urban elementary school, Mayberry Elementary School (MES) (pseudonym). The number of students referred for special education has grown over the past 10 years from 6.4 million to 7 million or 14% of the total public-school enrollment (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2019). Moreover, the number of students identified as needing special education services has grown. It is expected that the implementation of RTI should decrease the number of referrals (Armendariz & Jung, 2016). However, this is not the case in this local school district, and this paradox prompted this study. As the number of students receiving services increases, so has the cost of educating each child (Hoover, 2010). Nationwide, school districts spend two to three times more to educate a student with special needs than for a general education student (Srikrishnan, 2018).

The President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education was formed in 2001 to provide suggestions for the reauthorization of the Americans with Disabilities Act (1990). The President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education had several recommendations for improving special education. The main recommendations listed were the use of results-driven procedures and prevention models and that students with disabilities are general education students first, who receive special education services (IDEA, 2004). These recommendations resulted in the reauthorization. One of the most significant changes with the reauthorization of IDEA 2004 were the criteria used to

determine eligibility for specific learning disabilities (IDEA, 2004). Prior to IDEA 2004, the discrepancy model was used to identify a student with a specific learning disability (Preston et al., 2016). The discrepancy model's protocol compared students' IQ scores with their achievement test scores to determine if a significant discrepancy existed; if so, the student would most likely be eligible for special education services as a student with a learning disability. However, with the enactment of IDEA 2004, the previous discrepancy model used for identifying students with learning disabilities was discarded, and new criteria were implemented; it required the examiner to determine if a pattern of strengths and weaknesses existed within the assessments collected (Chandler, 2014). The change in the method used to identify students who may be at risk for referral was meant to identify the students early on and remediate the problem, thus decreasing the number of special education referrals. However, the special education numbers continue to rise (Hoover, 2010).

## Background of the Local Problem

I examined the implementation of RTI in one school setting. The school selected, MES, is an urban public school in a Midwestern school district, ABCD, a pseudonym, located in the United States. MES was nationally recognized in 2012 as a "School to Watch" by the National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades to Reform .To be considered for such recognition, a school must meet the following criteria: The school must be academically excellent, developmentally responsive, and socially equitable (National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grade Reform, 2012). MES was the only school in the county to receive such recognition. However, as the student population of the urban

district began to decline, many schools were half-empty, and the district could not afford to keep the schools open. The ABCD district decided to close schools, especially those in dire need of repair and consolidate the schools to remain open. Because MES needed multiple repairs, the school district located MES in another newer building but kept MES's name. MES had been an exclusive application school; however, due to the declining student population, MES could no longer be so selective with accepting only academically advanced students.

As a result of the closures, reorganizations, and the downward spiral of the local economy, many parents moved away or removed their children from MES. One reason parents decided to remove their children from MES was the fear that the current curriculum would not be as rigorous as in the past. Many new students had academic challenges, and the school that had once been nationally recognized as a "School to Watch" was now listed as a priority school in danger of being closed due to low academic performance on state assessments. MES's demographics indicated that in 2019 the enrollment was 307 students, a 41% decrease from 2012 when the enrollment was 740. The ethnicity of the current student population is as follows: 92% African American students, 5% Hispanic and Latino students, and 2% White students. The gender distribution is 54.1% male students and 45.9% female students. The total number of students receiving special education services is 21.73%. MES also receives Title 1 funds, as 79.5% of students receive free or reduced fee lunch.

The retention rate is low, as was indicated by the 41% decrease in student enrollment, which is part of the local problem. The mid-western state and the urban

districts, in particular, have an abundance of charter schools and schools of choice, resulting in the student population becoming nomadic (see Rumberger, 2015). Likewise, the retention rate for teachers is low. The urban mid-western school district, which included MES, had been taken over by the state due to poor student achievement and has been run by a series of emergency managers for over 10 years. However, the ABCD district emerged from having its local finances managed by the state government, as opposed to the local school board. On July 1, 2017, the Public School District was open for business with a new superintendent, Dr. Zachary Armani (pseudonym). Dr. Armani and the new school board developed a strategic plan to rebuild the ABCD district. The mission, vision, and core values of excellence, integrity, and tenacity are student-centered. In keeping the ABCD's pledge of excellence, there was an imperative need to improve student test scores on state assessments.

In the Midwestern school district, the state Department of Education mandated in 2005 that all district schools use RTI, a multitiered system of support (MTSS), to ensure early identification of students with educational struggles (Michigan Department of Education, 2015). However, many districts have not implemented RTI with fidelity, as the teachers may only employ a few components of the RTI system; even then, the intervention is inconsistent and lacks uniformity (Freeman et al., 2017). The failure of the districts to monitor and ensure that RTI is being implemented with fidelity in the schools could result in students not making academic gains or showing improvement (Freeman et al., 2017).

In 2015, the Michigan legislature approved revisions to the Michigan Teacher Evaluation System for all K-12 teachers and allowed a percentage of the teacher evaluation based on student achievement. The teachers receive effectiveness ratings based on their evaluations. Those ratings are reported to the state and are part of a public record under the Freedom of Information Act (2015). Furthermore, the issuance and renewal of certain professional education certificates require the teacher to present evidence of satisfactory teaching, as demonstrated by annual year-end evaluations under Michigan Statute M.C.L. 380.1249 (2015). In the 2018-2019 school year, Michigan mandated that 40% of the teachers' evaluations would be based on student achievement. As student achievement in Michigan is directly tied to teacher effectiveness, teachers have been more apt to make a referral for special education because they do not want to be saddled with a poor evaluation (Jennings & Beveridge, 2009). This practice results in an extremely high number of unnecessary referrals for special education evaluation because special education has become their intervention instead of following the guidelines outlined in the RTI process and mandated by the state Department of Education.

According to the special education director at the study site, the special education population was 21.73%. This was almost twice the state average of 12%. The state cited the district for overidentifying African American students classified as cognitively impaired and specific learning disabled in special education. The special education director also shared that the ABCD was cited for over-identifying White students being classified as having autism spectrum disorder. The state required the submission of a

corrective action plan from the district that indicated the measures the district planned to take to bring the special education population down to be commensurate with the state percentage as well as a plan to decrease the overidentification of targeted groups being classified as needing special education services. Although the Michigan Department of Education mandated that all districts within the state implement RTI by 2005, the special education director of MES acknowledged that the RTI process within the schools fell short, which they felt was evidenced by the unsuccessful results of student achievement, especially regarding how RTI was being implemented. The special education director believed that proper implementation and continuous monitoring of RTI would increase fidelity, resulting in a reduction of inappropriate student referrals for special education. The special education director's premise was that early intervention services would target low-performing students, and their deficits could be remediated. Hence, they explained that the need for inappropriate special education referrals would become moot.

## Rationale

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to examine the MES's general education teachers' implementation of RTI to discover why there is such a high percentage of special education students. The Michigan Department of Education has mandated that all schools within the state use Michigan's Integrated Behavior and Learning Support Initiative (MiMTSS) (Michigan Department of Education, 2017). According to the special education director at the study site, MES had been cited by the State Department of Education for overidentifying students for special education. The special education director was aware of the effectiveness of RTI when implemented with

fidelity, decreasing the number of students referred for special education. RTI programs have effectively closed the achievement gap by promoting early intervention (Salinger, 2016). The philosophy of RTI is the earlier students are identified and receive evidence-based interventions, the less likely they are to be referred for special education services (Hunter et al., 2016). Thus, based on examining the MES teachers' experiences with the RTI implementation process, this study could identify gaps in practice regarding the implementation of RTI. Furthermore, the RTI process maydecrease the number of students referred for special education.

## Definition of Terms

The terms used in this study are specific to the content of this project study. While the terms used in this study may have multiple meanings, the terms are defined in this section to prevent ambiguity.

*Adequate yearly progress*: An official term to describe annual student performance meeting the state minimum standard for student achievement (Ziswiler et al., 2013).

*At-risk students*: Individuals who have been identified through screening and assessments as having a greater chance of developing educational difficulties (Cuticelli et al., 2015).

*Differentiated instruction*: A model that considers the diversity of the student. Because all students do not process information in the same manner or at the same speed, differentiated instruction requires instructors to be flexible in their teachings, adapt their

syllabus and teachings to learners, and not adjust the learners to the syllabus (Ismajli & Imani-Morina, 2018).

*Fidelity of implementation*: A term used to inquire if the program's application occurred as originally intended (Hyesook et al., 2018).

*Progress monitoring*: This process occurs when students who do not meet the norm-referenced expectations are deemed at risk. Students must have their progress frequently monitored to determine if the interventions were effective (January et al., 2018).

*Response to intervention (RTI)*: RTI is an educational model that relies on evidence-based and data-driven decisions. RTI comprises three tiers, each increasing with intensity. The students are selected based on universal screening and ongoing progress monitoring decisions. The assessments identify students who are at risk for academic problems as well as those students who may have a specific learning disability (Hudson & McKenzie, 2016).

## Significance of the Study

The number of students identified for special education has been on a steady rise since 1990, with the special education population increasing from 11% to 14% in 2005 (NCES, 2017). There was a decline between 2004 and 2012, but by 2015, the national percentage of students receiving special education services rose to 13% (NCES, 2017). The increase in the number of students identified as needing special education services is not just a national problem but a local one. One of the reasons that IDEA provided funding for RTI, a general education initiative, was that if the students were identified

early as being at-risk, early intervention of intense instruction could prevent a referral to special education (Hunter et al., 2016).

The results of this project study may assist the district leaders in recognizing the gaps in practice regarding implementing RTI and providing additional professional development (PD) training needed for implementing RTI with fidelity. My aim is that the study results may benefit the students as they receive appropriate research-based, high-quality instruction and intervention strategies designed specifically to remediate any deficits they may have. My goal was for this study to be beneficial for the MES teachers because they may witness the success of their students who would receive the assistance they require as opposed to being inappropriately placed in a program that would not address their needs. The MES general education teachers would be able to use the best evidence-based strategies and interventions to enhance their students' progress. Lastly, MES students receiving the appropriate educational services would have their deficits remediated and experience academic success.

## Research Questions

Research Question (RQ)1: How are the teachers at MES implementing the RTI strategies at the local setting?

RQ2: How are the intervention strategies implemented by the MES teachers selected?

RQ3: How are the MES teachers ensuring that the RTI strategies are being implemented with fidelity?

RQ4: How do the strategies implemented by the teachers at MES compare to the evidence-based practices in the literature?

## Review of the Literature

To review the most current peer-reviewed literature on the RTI process, I searched the Walden University library database for journals, books, and government documents from the last five years. My search included the literature on the historical background of special education, RTI, universal assessments, progress monitoring, and the fidelity of implementation of RTI.

### Conceptual Framework

The literature review presents a historical view of RTI and its inception. RTI is one of the components of the MTSS. The MTSS is the model and the framework for the two systems that comprise the model—RTI and positive behavioral intervention supports (Pierce & Mueller, 2018). The MTSS provides the conceptual framework for identifying students who require support and allows for data-driven decisions regarding the implementation of research-based interventions that are specifically aligned with student needs, progress monitoring, and the involvement of stakeholders (Pierce & Mueller, 2018). The MTSS framework focuses on improving academic and behavioral student outcomes. The MTSS framework has three main features: baseline assessment, evidence-based practices, and implementation fidelity (Freeman et al., 2017). The first feature is data because all instruction, interventions, and strategy decisions are data-driven. The second feature is evidence-based practices; all strategies and interventions must be evidence-based, tried and true intervention methods. The third feature is implementation

fidelity, which means that the program is being implemented as intended (Freeman et al., 2017).

According to the National Center on RTI (2018), RTI's framework meets the requirement of a research-based framework because it includes the following components: data-based decision making, screening, progress monitoring, and a multilevel prevention system. RTI is a multitiered prevention system that uses data-based decision-making, universal screening, and progress monitoring data to design individual interventions to meet the needs of struggling students who do not respond to the core curriculum (Clarke et al., 2015). In the RTI system, there are usually three tiers that are not finite, but each tier creates a continuum of interventions that increases in intensity as the student ascends the RTI pyramid (Toste et al., 2014). Tier 1 requires universal screening and core academic instruction for all students with an evidence-based core curriculum. The curriculum should incorporate concepts of universal design for learning so that all students have an opportunity to incorporate concepts and can progress with the general education curriculum (Toste et al., 2014). The data derived from the universal screening are used to identify which students are at risk, as this will enable the students to benefit from early intervention (Catts et al., 2015). If sufficient progress is not made, the students will move on to Tier 2 interventions (Arden & Benz, 2018).

The general education teachers access students' academic progress to determine their responsiveness to supplemental interventions. The more progress is monitored, the quicker students can receive appropriate instruction. The four components of the RTI process provide a research-based framework for delivering high-quality instruction and

interventions customized to individual student needs (Arden & Benz, 2018). Thus, the RTI framework related to this study because it allowed for the examination of how the process is being implemented within MES, how the students are responding and progressing with the RTI tiers, and the referral process for special education (see Smith, 2014).

**History of RTI**

Fuchs and Fuchs (2017) explained that the George W. Bush administration cited RTI in the early 2000s as a program that could be used to identify students with a specific learning disability. In the IDEA of the 2004 Amendment, RTI emerged as a program that could identify students with specific learning disabilities earlier than the discrepancy model that had been in use. The discrepancy model was first introduced in 1960 and became the traditional model used to ascertain eligibility for special education services. Under the discrepancy model, a student must perform at least 2 years below grade level in reading, writing, or math to be considered for special education evaluation (Cramer, 2015). However, the RTI process allows a student to receive immediate intervention to remediate deficits early on.

The Education for All Handicapped Children's Act of 1975 mandated that all eligible children and youth between the ages of 3 and 21 are entitled to a free and appropriate public school education with minimal restrictions (Lloyd & Lloyd, 2015). The children and youth considered eligible were individuals identified as having a disability that adversely impacted their academic performance and required them to receive specialized services (Lloyd & Lloyd, 2015). The Department of Education Office

of Special Education began to collect data in 1976 to monitor compliance (Lloyd & Lloyd, 2015). Subsequently, the Education for all Handicapped Children's Act was changed to the IDEA in 1990. During the Bush Administration, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 mandated schools to identify and teach at-risk students in ways that they could best learn based on screening, assessments, and classroom-based instruction (No Child Left Behind of 2001, 2011). Subsequently, in December 2015, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (2015). replaced the No Child left Behind Act but allowed for the continuation of RTI (ESSA, 2015). The primary reason the ESSA continued to use RTI was that it had shown that students were receiving the necessary support to close the achievement gap and increase student performance (Gilbert et al., 2013).

A review of the U.S. Department of Education demographic data and the special education census indicated that the number of students receiving special education services from 1990-91 through 2004-05 increased from 4.7 million to 6.7 million (Samuels, 2016). The number of children and youth receiving specialized services declined from 2004-05 to 2011-12 (Samuels, 2016). This number went back by the 2014-15 school year to 6.6 million, or 13% of the total student enrollment (Samuels, 2016). The disability area with the highest percentage of students was a specific learning disability at 35% (Samuels, 2016). Not only has the number of students receiving special education increased but the cost of educating these students has grown significantly. The number of students with autism increased by 165% between 2005-06 and the 2014-15 school years (Samuels, 2016). Conversely, the number of students identified as having a specific learning disability decreased after IDEA reauthorization in 2004. This decrease

was attributed to the emergence and implementation of RTI (Samuels, 2016). Although the numbers rose slowly in 2013-14 and 2014-15 (Samuels, 2016), I aimed to discover if RTI was being implemented with the same fidelity with which the RTI process began.

RTI, a multitiered instructional framework, was a replacement for the discrepancy model previously used to determine students' eligibility with specific learning disabilities (Bjorn et al., 2016). The model emerged in the 1980s, consisting of three tiers involving the application of interventions and progress monitoring to determine their effectiveness (Bjorn et al., 2016). In Tier 1, all students receive a universal screening assessment to discern performance levels and receive high-quality instruction and behavioral support (Al Otaiba et al., 2014). Students who move on to Tier 2 have been identified as performing below grade level, and this usually encompasses about 10 to 15% of the general education students. These students receive intensive remediation (Reschly, 2014). Their individualized instruction plan is designed based on the data collected, and it is explicit and targeted to best meet the needs of the struggling student (Cho et al., 2014). However, if the student does not show improvement in Tier 2, they are moved on to Tier 3, where there is a meeting with the parents, teachers, and interventionists to strategize what next steps will benefit the student. At that meeting, a discussion regarding special education and a referral for evaluation may be addressed (Jennings et al., 2015). One of the benefits of the RTI model is that instructional interventions are provided as soon as the student begins school, as opposed to the older discrepancy model, in which the student had to fail before they received help (Spencer et al., 2014).

**Universal Screening**

An essential element in the RTI framework is the use of a universal screening tool that is able to identify at-risk students effectively and efficiently. In the following studies, the researchers have acknowledged the benefit of a universal screening assessment. Dever et al. (2016) acknowledged the long-standing problem of the disproportionality of minority students in special education. Dunn (1968) addressed the issue of removing students from the general education environment and placing them in special education schools or self-contained special education classrooms because they were deemed slow learners. Most of these students, 60 to 80%, were minority students who did not speak English as their first language in the home and came from poor, disenfranchised communities. Hence, their learning deficits may have been environmental due to a lack of educational exposure, as opposed to neurological or cognitive deficits. As a result, Dunn perceived that these students were disproportionally placed in special education to appease the general education teachers, who did not know how to instruct these children. Dever et al. (2016) reviewed the student referral process for special education and found that many referrals were based on teacher perception rather than on data. The researchers found that, in many cases, referrals led to placement. However, Smolkowski and Cummings (2015) found that the universal screening assessment, as used in RTI, would provide hard data needed to support the student and was much more reliable than teacher perceptions.

Van Norman et al. (2017) indicated that schools must be deliberate in identifying their universal screening tool and practices. The researchers noted that schools could

improve screening outcomes by selecting tools that mirror the material covered in the statewide assessments (Van Norman et al., 2017). A universal screening tool is essential for the early identification of students who may need additional academic or behavioral support. Thus, the correct tools to identify at-risk students must be selected for successful early intervention (Salinger, 2016).

Klingbeil et al. (2017) examined the effects of universal screening, as it has been adopted by many districts that use MTSS because it identifies students who need support quickly and accurately. Universal screening produces data that allows for progress monitoring, which is essential when students participate in RTI (Turse & Albrecht, 2015). While most screening assessments are used in the lower elementary grades (K-2), there is a great need for an assessment in Grades 3 to 8. For these grades, the scope of the intervention is remediation rather than prevention. Therefore, the tool or tools selected must complement the characteristics of the designated student population (Hunter et al., 2015). Furthermore, King and Coughlin (2016) cautioned about being inflexible when considering using only one specific screening assessment when the district may be best served by using population and skill-specific needs in selecting the universal assessment.

According to Card and Giuliano (2016), there has been a concern about why low-income and minority students are underrepresented in gifted education programs. Gifted and talented programs fall under the special education classification, and parents and teachers refer students. However, Card and Giuliano found that with the use of a universal screening assessment, there was a significant increase in the number of poor and minority students identified for the gifted program. Hence, the universal screening

assessments can not only identify students who need support for academic deficits but can also identify gifted students and could use support to enhance their academic growth and development.

Lakin (2016) addressed the gaps in Card and Giuliano's (2016) study. While Card and Giuliano focused on poor and minority students underrepresented in gifted and talented programs, Lakin included students from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and Lakin compared the referral process with the universal screening process. The referral process is quick and cost-effective because the parent or the teacher makes the referral, and fewer children are assessed, as opposed to the universal screening process in which all students are evaluated. However, the referral process is subject to bias and lacks the data to support it. While districts may have concerns about the cost of universal screening, the benefits outweigh the concerns because the school receives data that allows them to identify and differentiate instruction according to the needs of their students.

**Progress Monitoring**

An amendment to IDEA emphasized the need for data-driven instruction and progress monitoring to determine the effectiveness of instruction (IDEA, 1990/2004, 2010). As districts began to embrace MTSS, a change was created in how educators collected, reviewed, and analyzed data. The shift to MTSS affected teachers, administrators, ancillary service providers, and technical support, particularly because MTSS is a data-driven framework (Dougherty Stahl, 2016). The technical assistance staff must also receive MTSS training because technical support is vital in promoting new

initiatives (Morrison et al., 2014). As progress monitoring is an integral component of RTI, schools and districts need a tool to measure the data collected. Many school districts have used formative assessment to determine the rate of student progress during instruction. Curriculum-based measurement (CBM) is a popular formative assessment used by school districts because it aligns well with RTI and has a well-established history of reliability and validity (Crawford, 2014). CBM is easily administered and provides teachers with clear, comprehensive data in a shorter time (Crawford, 2014). CBM has also been effective as a problem-solving methodology because it allows for the frequent monitoring of student progress when determining the effectiveness of an intervention (Fan & Hansmann, 2015). Once the type of assessment used to measure progress has been established, the length of time needed for data collection needs to be established. It has been recommended that research should be collected for at least 6 weeks, and the data should be graphed and visually analyzed when possible (Van Norman & Christ, 2016).

**Implementation Fidelity**

While RTI has emerged as an effective program that can provide early intervention for struggling students (Keller-Margulis, 2012), the assessments are linked to instruction and intense intervention programming. RTI is only as good as it has been implemented. Keller-Margulis noted that the results would be unreliable unless RTI is implemented with fidelity. To increase implementation fidelity, fidelity checks, which monitor the accuracy with which the strategy is being implemented, should occur regularly. To maintain consistency and fidelity with the implementation of RTI, March et al. (2016) examined the effect of regular PD and coaching on implementation fidelity.

The results indicated that regular PD and coaching positively affected implementation fidelity.

RTI became popular during the reauthorization of the IDEA in 2004. However, there was reluctance from some districts to embrace the program even though, when implemented with fidelity, RTI continued to produce positive results (Preston et al., 2016). Fuchs and Fuchs (2017) critiqued the findings of the Institute of Education Science's national evaluation of RTI. The investigators reviewed 146 schools and discovered that many schools were not implementing RTI at all, or if they were, it was without fidelity. The program is very effective when correctly implemented (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2017). Therefore, this study of program effectiveness was skewed because the programs were not properly administered (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2017). The researchers concluded that perhaps a simpler framework would be easier to implement and foster compliance.

Ross and Lingnugaris-Kraft (2015) conducted a study that evaluated the effectiveness of a nontraditional teacher certification program. The study involved a 2-year residency program that placed undergraduate education students in high-need schools full-time. The students were taught how to use Positive Behavior Support and RTI with the students. The study results indicated that by successfully implementing the MTSS, the preservice residency students outperformed the district's new teachers and some veteran teachers. The preservice teachers felt that their training had been invaluable. Kuo (2014) examined the necessity of incorporating RTI in teacher education programs. As RTI has become an integral part of the school system, preservice teachers

must be trained to be familiar with the program when they move on to their professional employment. Kuo found that providing PD in RTI for preservice teachers increases the integrity of RTI and the likelihood that it will be implemented with fidelity when administered.

Kelley and Goldstein (2015) were interested in examining the RTI programs in early childhood programs, such as preschool programs. The researchers selected an urban environment with a high poverty rate and began a five-year study. During those five years, they created two curricula for tier 2 interventions for the early years. Kelly and Goldstein created Story Friends, which homed in on oral language, comprehension, vocabulary, and path to literacy focused on alphabet knowledge and phonological awareness. The researchers found that the differences in teaching philosophy determined whether the implementation was successful. They found that the following criteria must be met to ensure success; the classroom should have between 12 and 24 students who attend school at least 4 days per week, and preschool teachers and aides must be committed to providing intentional instruction skills to promote school readiness. The preschool rooms need schedules allowing small group instruction for 10 to 15 minutes per group. These recommendations will promote a successful learning environment in early childhood programs.

## Implications

The results of this study may reflect the gaps in practice regarding implementing RTI. The data derived from this study may indicate how or if RTI falls short in identifying or addressing the needs of at-risk students. The evidence from this project

study will be used to develop a PD workshop for MES. The PD workshop will train the staff on effectively implementing RTI to identify and remediate our at-risk students' deficits to prevent them from moving on to special education.

## Summary

RTI has been effective in the early identification of at-risk students and in providing the requisite intervention to remediate deficits when administered with fidelity. It is the goal of this project study to replicate the successful results found in the literature at MES to decrease the number of referrals for special education.

Section 2 will include the methodology of the project study, including the research design and approach, a description of the participants, a justification of the research design, data collection, and a discussion of data analysis. Section 3 will describe the project, a project plan, and project implications. Section 4 will include project strengths and limitations, recommendations for alternate approaches, a discussion about what was learned through the process, and a reflective analysis of what I learned about myself as a scholar, practitioner, and project developer. This section will also include implications and recommendations for future research.

Section 2: The Methodology

## Research Design and Approach

The purpose of this study was to examine the implementation of the RTI process at an urban elementary school. The study used a basic qualitative study design, and data were collected from one urban Midwestern school using teacher and staff interviews, reflective notes, and researcher observations. The data analysis included open coding, followed by thematic analysis to answer the following RQs:

RQ1: How are the teachers at MES implementing the RTI strategies at the local setting?

RQ 2: How are the intervention strategies implemented by the MES teachers selected?

RQ 3: How are the MES teachers ensuring that the RTI strategies are being implemented with fidelity?

RQ 4: How do the strategies implemented by the teachers at MES compare to the evidence-based practices in the literature?

I interviewed 12 participants: two special education teachers, seven general education teachers, an RTI coordinator, a curriculum instruction specialist, and the principal. Each participant of the study received an individual structured interview that was approximately 1 hour.

### Description of the Qualitative Tradition

I selected a basic qualitative study design because the study took place in a naturalistic setting in a single school district, which bounded the study and the

phenomenon of interest and did not have to be manipulated (see Yin, 2015). The study took place at MES, an urban elementary school. The teachers were interviewed using open-ended questions in environments and under conditions with which they were comfortable and familiar (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the MES general education teachers' implementation of RTI to identify if there were any gaps in practice and, if so, to create a plan that could correct those gaps to potentially decrease the number of special education referrals and students identified for special education services. Questions could be examined comparing the staff's implementation of Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 interventions to the literature-based practices. After collecting and analyzing the data from the MES, the results were reviewed for alignment with the RQs.

**Justification for Basic Qualitative Design**

A basic qualitative design was selected for this study because it involved studying contemporary real-life events (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). To ascertain that the basic qualitative approach was the correct choice for this study, I examined quantitative research, action research, ethnography, narrative, phenomenological, and grounded theory. The basic qualitative design proved the best choice, allowing the collection and examining the staff interviews (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The quantitative research design was inappropriate because the study involved the participants' perceptions, and it is difficult to quantify them (see Rahman, 2016). The narrative design was not appropriate for this study because it was not telling a story (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016), nor was the ethnographic design appropriate because the study did not address cultural or

anthropologic patterns (see Yin, 2015). This study was not attempting to develop a new theory or investigate a phenomenon; hence, the grounded theory and phenomenological designs were inappropriate (see Neubauer, 2019). Furthermore, the basic qualitative design was the most appropriate choice as it allowed for the data to be explored over time and multiple data sources (see Rahman, 2016). To align with the basic qualitative design and approach, the teachers who provided RTI were specifically selected for this study.

## Participants

The setting for this basic qualitative study was the ABCD school district, an urban public school district in the Midwest. The district currently has 106 schools, educates 50,000 students, and engages 6,300 employees. The sample for this study was selected from MES, with a current enrollment of 307 students. MES represents similar demographics and a population of 70% of schools in the ABCD district. While 25 members of the MES staff were invited to participate in the study, the number of staff members who participated in the study was 12. According to Creswell (2014), one of the benefits of qualitative research is that it only requires a small number of cases to yield extensive, rich, descriptive data from the natural setting.

### Criteria for Selecting Participants

This study consisted of the following MES staff: seven general education teachers from Grades 3, 4, and 5; two special education teachers; a curriculum instruction specialist; the RTI coordinator; and the MES principal. Ravitch and Carl (2016) noted that homogeneous samples are selected based on the similarity of characteristics that were of interest to the researcher. The participants selected for this study were a

homogeneous sample of teachers and staff members who comprised the RTI program. The 12 staff members were selected by the process of purposeful sampling. Patton (2002) indicated that the reason for using purposeful sampling is to select cases with a plethora of information whose study highlights the hypothesis. The criteria for selecting the participants for this study were that the participants must have received training in the RTI process and have served on MES's RTI team for at least 2 years to ensure that the participants have had experience with the implementation of RTI with the students.

**Justification for the Number of Participants**

The staff participating in the study served on the RTI team at MES. The study's sample size was intentionally kept small to allow me to understand the participants' perspectives thoroughly. My objective of the sampling was to collect data from the MES staff regarding how RTI was being implemented at the school and how this school's implementation compares with the research-based practices in the literature. Pursuant to Creswell (2014), a qualitative sampling method centered on the specialized knowledge of the subject and the ability and willingness to participate in the study is a type of purposeful sampling.

**Procedures for Gaining Access to Participants**

In order to obtain permission to begin a research project with the ABCD school district, I submitted a formal letter to the superintendent requesting approval to conduct research within the district. I also submitted a proposal for my research study to Walden University, and upon their approval, I notified the superintendent's office and received final approval. I did not contact any MES teachers, staff, or administration before

receiving approval from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the district to conduct the study. After receiving IRB approval # 12-15-20-0658146, I selected the staff from the MES. I gained access to the participants after receiving permission from the district administration and the consent of each participant. Each potential participant received a letter outlining the study's purpose emphasizing that participation was voluntary and that participants were not obligated to participate and a consent form. Participants could withdraw their participation during the study without penalty or retribution. The letters were emailed to the participants' private email addresses to prevent the appearance of impropriety over the potential participants.

**Methods for Establishing a Researcher-Participant Working Relationship**

To establish a rapport and build a researcher-participant relationship, I met with the potential participants for a virtual informational session to discuss the study's purpose, the participants' responsibilities, the data collection process, the voluntary status of the participants, and the confidential nature of the study. The potential participants also received an informed consent form, and they had 48 hours to review and respond to the email. During the meeting, I gathered each participant's basic demographics (email addresses and phone numbers). The participants' demographics were needed to schedule interviews. Each participant received an email to schedule the date for the interview and to schedule a member check after the data was transcribed. According to Ravitch and Carl (2016), the role of the qualitative researcher is pivotal in the data collection process as well as in the area of ethical issues in the researcher-participant relationship. While the participants selected for this study work in the same school district as me, none of the

participants had ever worked with me. I am a special education teacher in a center-based high school within the ABCD school district, and I had no authority over the participants in this study. I had no conflicts of interest or ethical issues as the researcher. The MES staff members were not identified by name in the research, nor was any information released that allowed their identity to be revealed. All the information regarding the project study was kept confidential and was only discussed with the ABCD school district representative and faculty of MES, including the principal, the special education director, the participants of the study, and the Walden University committee members. The data collected were for the use of this study and were not released to others. I kept the research data in a locked file cabinet in my home office. The research data will be destroyed upon completion of the study, after five years and in accordance with Walden University's IRB protocol.

**Ethical Protection of Participants**

I submitted my certificate from the National Institute of Health Office of Extramural Research to Walden University's IRB department as documentation that I understood the ethical protection of all participants in the research studies. In this research study, there was a low level of risk for the participants because participation in this study was voluntary, and I did not have a relationship with any of the participants. There was a meeting with the MES principal and special education director to discuss the purpose of the study and the voluntary nature and to answer any questions or concerns the administrators may have had. The study had 12 participants. An alternative list of potential participants was developed in case any initial participants could no longer

continue the study. The safety, well-being, and confidentiality of the participants of this study were of the utmost importance. Alphanumeric coding, S1 to S12, protected and maintained the confidentiality of the participants' identities throughout this study. All electronic data retrieved from each participant were kept secure by being stored in a password-protected file on my personal computer. All nonelectronic data were securely stored in my home office. I will continue storing these data for five years, as Walden University protocol requires.

The Walden University IRB was an integral part of the study because the study addressed specific areas that concerned the IRB, such as privacy, safety, and ethical issues of concerns regarding MES and the ABCD school district. An IRB application containing information about the data collection and analysis section was submitted to the Walden University IRB department. The informed consent form for the study was provided to the ABCD school district and the MES principal before the form was provided to the participants (see Creswell, 2014). The project study participants received information addressing ethical concerns, risks, and informed consent forms. Each participant had the right to withdraw from the study at any time, reiterating this.

**Data Collection Procedures**

According to Ravitch and Carl (2016), the data generated during a qualitative study include interviews, observations, field notes, focus groups, reviews of documents and archival data, questionnaires, and participatory data collection methods. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to examine the general education teachers' implementation of RTI to discover why there is a high percentage of special education

students at MES. I selected one-to-one, virtual, semistructured interviews, reflective notes, and researcher observations as the primary data collection sources. After IRB approval and the ABCD school district, MES principal, and participants provided consent, the study began. The data collection process took about 8 weeks. I diligently tracked the data collection process. The goal of this basic qualitative study was to understand the RTI process at MES and the fidelity of implementation. Interviews can provide valuable data from the teachers' personal experiences that would otherwise not be derived from any other source (Creswell, 2014). The relevance of the interview occurs through the researcher's capability to establish a tone for the interview through structured questions. Creswell (2014) noted that one disadvantage to the interview process is the incertitude of the credibility and reliability of the data collected. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) contended that an interview is appropriate when there are past events that are difficult to reproduce. Ravitch and Carl maintained that using multiple participants increases the accuracy of the research findings because the information is received from more than one person.

The interviews were conducted virtually via Google Meet and not during instructional hours over 8 weeks. The interviews were semistructured, 60-minute, one-on-one, virtual, face-to-face interviews that allowed me to observe the actions and perceptions of the participants. The information obtained from the interview was transcribed verbatim and typed into a research log to categorize the data into a coding system (see Creswell, 2014). Organizing the information consisted of gathering data from

the interviews, reflective notes placed in research logs, and my observations. Member checks occurred after the findings were transcribed and shared with the participants.

**Role of the Researcher**

According to Creswell (2014), the interview process can provide valuable data regarding the teachers' personal experiences that would otherwise be difficult to retrieve. However, the interview process does have drawbacks, such as the reliability and credibility of the collected data. Using multiple participants increases the accuracy of the data because the information is generated by more than one source (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Upon receiving consent from Walden University's IRB, I requested two administrators to review the selected interview questions for relevance, clarity, and alignment with the study. The interviews were conducted virtually via Google Meet in a nonthreatening environment over 8 weeks. The interviews lasted about 60 minutes. They were virtual due to COVID-19 precautions, which allowed me to observe the participants' actions and how they viewed the world around them (see Patton, 2002).

The project study participants met with me virtually at the agreed-upon time. I began with the standard interview protocol, not related to the study, to put the participant at ease and establish rapport. I reviewed the purpose of the study, the interview procedures, and the measures in place to protect the participant's confidentiality. I also reviewed the voluntary nature of the study and the participant's rights to withdraw at any point during the study. The interview setting allowed the participants to respond to the 10 questions and share descriptive information about their experiences and perspectives on the RTI process and the fidelity of its implementation. I also explained to each participant

that they would be asked 10 questions, the interview duration would last about 1 hour, the interview would be recorded by Google Meet, and I would take notes during the interview.

## Data Analysis Results

The findings of this qualitative study were derived from a one-on-one semistructured interview with 12 MES school staff comprised of seven general education teachers from Grades 3, 4, and 5; two special education teachers; a curriculum instruction specialist; the RTI coordinator; and the principal. The staff selected to participate are currently serving on the RTI team for the school.

The rationale for the interview was to answer the following RQs:

RQ1: How are the teachers at MES implementing the RTI strategies at the local setting?

RQ2: How are the intervention strategies implemented by the MES teachers selected?

RQ3: How are the MES teachers ensuring that the RTI strategies are being implemented with fidelity?

RQ4: How do the strategies implemented by the teachers at MES compare to the evidence-based practices in the literature?

The interview was designed to provide an in-depth survey of each staff member's perspective regarding the actual implementation process of RTI in the local school setting. The data collected were coded alphanumerically as follows: Staff 1: S1-Staff 12: S 12, to ensure confidentiality throughout this project. During the interview, I would

restate the participants' responses and then question the participant to ascertain accuracy. This allowed the participant to confirm, verify, or modify the data collected during the interview. The participants received a transcript of their interview via email to review for accuracy and return it within 72 hours. Each participant indicated that their responses to the questions were accurate and had no additional comments.

The data from each interview were organized according to the RQs. I developed codes from the interview data to allow me to look for patterns and place data into categories and then themes (see Saldaña, 2021). The final themes were derived from the responses to the interview questions. According to the data generated from each interview, I was able to examine the implementation process of RTI at the local school, MES, as well as identify obstacles preventing the strategies from being properly implemented.

**Accuracy and Credibility**

Ravitch and Carl (2016) contended that credibility is taking all the information into account and considering the difficulties that a researcher may encounter during a study. Methods used to ensure credibility include member checks and peer debriefing. I employed both techniques to ascertain there were not any misrepresentations or inaccuracies during the interview process.

Merriam and Tisdell (2015) maintained that it is essential to ensure that the collected data is accurate and a valid representation of the information collected. To complete a detailed inquiry, the following components must occur: organization of the data, summarizing the data as codes, and interpretation of the data for patterns (Merriam

& Tisdell, 2015). The purpose of the member checks is to determine the accuracy of the interviews and to code the interview information to identify any bias or misunderstandings of the researcher (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The participants were emailed a transcription of their interview during the initial data analysis phase. To increase the validity and credibility of the study, I used the triangulation of multiple sources of information: interviews, reflective notes taken during the interviews, and the researcher's observations.

**Discrepant Data**

According to Creswell (2014), discrepant data represents the data collected that provides an alternate perspective of an emerging category or pattern inconsistent with other data. Data collection, analysis, and data triangulation are critical for the project study's credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Creswell, 2014). My goal for data analysis was to present a clear picture of the data collected so the reader could understand the participants' perspectives and perceptions. There were not any discrepant data. However, if any discrepant data had occurred, I would have reevaluated the information and provided additional descriptions of patterns or themes.

## Assumptions, Limitations, Scope, and Delimitations

This study assumed that all the participants would provide honest information without fear of reprisal and that their responses to the questions would not be based on the interviewer's expectations. The participants were limited to the teachers and staff at MES. Thus, these results may not be generalized to other schools in the state or country.

These results may not apply to other RTI models that may use a different number of tiers or other schools that may have a different demographic makeup of students.

The scope of this project study included the teachers and staff at MES that were selected as participants. The purpose of this study was to examine MES's implementation of RTI to understand if the fidelity of the interventions may be the reason RTI was not working to decrease the number of special education referrals. Teachers and staff within ABCD School District that teach at other schools within the district were excluded from this study.

## Data Analysis Results

### Theme 1: Selection of Strategies

The first theme selection addresses how the strategies used for RTI at MES were chosen. The process used to assess which intervention strategies will be selected for RTI is determined by the district's curriculum instruction team, which works closely with the principal to compare programs with effective data-driven results. However, there appeared to be some confusion among the teachers as to how RTI worked.

S11 and S12 thought there was no specific process. Some staff members thought the Special Education department chose the strategy. S4 and S6 continued to view RTI as a Special Education program despite being stressed throughout the local district and the state that it is a general education initiative. S4 commented that they look at a student's IEP goals and consider the student's learning style, "I choose strategies which match their learning style and break things into small steps with many opportunities to practice." S6 stated that they use the expertise of the team, consult the Michigan Administrative Rules

for Special Education administrative manual based on what was told by parents/teachers. S1 and S2 were clear on how the process for strategy selection occurred. S2 plainly articulated that the process for selecting intervention strategies was to utilize research-based programs that allow the teachers and paraprofessionals to scaffold learning. S2 also indicated that it was important that the program selected had a progress monitoring component attached to it because it would allow the staff to determine if the strategy was effective or not. While some staff could articulate the strategy selection process, the vast majority did not understand it. Many staff thought the interventions were selected by either the special education department or the individual teachers. S6 thought the intervention was selected by the parent. This confusion regarding the selection process of interventions used during the RTI process also indicates a lack of understanding among many staff members regarding what RTI is and how it should be implemented.

**Theme 2: Training and PD**

In order for RTI to be effective, it must be implemented with fidelity (Cowan & Maxwell, 2015). The implementation process requires that the teachers are properly trained on the intervention strategies being administered. The staff was asked questions regarding the process the school uses to address challenges with training, progress monitoring, and the quality and frequency in which the interventions were implemented.

S1, S5, S6, S7, and S12 all agreed that the process used to address challenges with progress monitoring, training, and quality and frequency in which the interventions were to be implemented in regular meetings (weekly, monthly, and quarterly) as well as PD. S 2, S3, and S4 provided detailed accounts of the process. S3 indicated that team meetings

are held six weeks apart to make decisions regarding the disposition of a student, and the teachers meet weekly to discuss progress monitoring and any challenges. However, S3 felt that there should be weekly check-ins to ensure proper documentation of intervention strategies, as opposed to waiting 6 weeks down the road to evaluate the strategy's efficacy. S11 felt that the school's process to address challenges with training definitely needed some work.

The staff was also asked what additional support is needed to ensure that the interventions are being implemented with fidelity and documented consistently. Most of the staff responded that more PD was required. S3 suggested that PD should include sessions in which the actual intervention strategies are modeled to ensure they are implemented precisely. Several participants, S1, S4, S5, S6, and S11, felt that more resources and intervention strategies were needed. S2 commented that teacher buy-in was essential so that the interventions are not perceived as one more piece of time-consuming work in a world overflowing with paperwork. S2 also stated, "Teachers must be encouraged to use the strategies, and there must be accountability and checks to ensure the work with the strategies is being done." S7 stated that administrators could possibly provide teachers with some form of incentive to follow the RTI program as it is designed. Yet S9 and S12 stated they did not need additional support, as they had a good program.

The staff was asked what additional training or skills would benefit them at this time, and the responses included more training on best practices for student growth with RTI from S2, S3, S4, S7, S8, S9, and S10. S5 stated, "Intensive training on understanding RTI and the benefits of RTI, especially in urban settings," was needed. S6 remarked no

skills or training was required, only additional time to work with students. S11 and S12 stated that they did not need additional training or time.

**Theme 3: Strategy Effectiveness**

When implementing an RTI strategy, the teacher must determine if the intervention strategies are effective. The question of "How do you determine if a particular strategy is effective?" was answered by S1 and S3, S4, S5, S6, S7, S8, S9, S10, S11, and S12 as being accomplished by observing the data comprised of logs and assessments for growth. However, S2 stated,

> I determine a strategy to be effective by understanding the student (whole child), create an objective, and at least three strategies to identify which one works best for the student. If the interventions are done with fidelity, a teacher can usually identify which strategy is not working.

The participants were then asked what they did once they determined that a strategy was ineffective. Responses varied, with S6 and S12 replying that they would meet with the team and recommend a new strategy. S9 said they "would use my arsenal of teaching protocols to re-teach the personal skill."

S1, S3, S5, S7, S8, and S10 responded that they would try to find out the problem with the strategy and determine if it could be modified before moving on to another strategy. S1 stated that he would ask questions to determine why the strategy was ineffective and if it was even implemented. The RTI team could then determine whether to continue the strategy or attempt something different. As the saying goes, "Almost anything will work if you are willing to put in the work and be consistent," and a critical

part of the work is to document and analyze to determine the situation and if a change is required.

S4 and S11 suggested that if the strategy was ineffective, a new plan should be developed with new goals and objectives. However, S2 stated that another strategy should be utilized. At least three strategies should be identified for use at the beginning of this process to ensure time and effort are not wasted. Interventions and strategies should always be documented.

In response to whether the interventions assigned were appropriate to meet the needs of the specific academic challenges of the students, 10 of the participants agreed in the affirmative. S6 related that while the students' reading needs were met by the interventions assigned, their math needs were not. S12 commented that while the interventions were appropriate, they were not implemented with fidelity, leading to student progress stagnation.

The participants were asked what process could be implemented to improve the assignment of the interventions; S7, S8, S10, and S12 felt it was unnecessary to have a measure or method to correct or improve this process because everything was satisfactory.

S1, S3, and S5 felt that receiving additional data: work samples from students, previous and current test scores, school history, attendance records, behavior reports, and parent and student interviews to ascertain their points of view on the learning and teaching experience would be invaluable. S2 and S4 felt that adding staff, teachers, academic coaches, tutors, and paraprofessionals would be helpful in the RTI process.

S6 and S11 felt that ongoing, intense training on RTI and teacher buy-in would improve the situation.

**Theme 4: Challenges During Tier 2**

This theme resulted from the data analysis, and it specifically lists the challenges the participants experienced while attempting to implement Tier 2 interventions. While S12 stated that there were no difficulties, S8 and S9 indicated a lack of sequential, packaged materials for the students to use. S6, S7, and S10 related that their challenge was time, as they felt the time allocated was insufficient to provide the interventions with fidelity to each student effectively. S2, S4, and S11 remarked that a lack of findings was a major obstacle, as there were not enough certified teachers employed to implement RTI interventions for Tier 2 students. S3 and S5 commented that lack of parental support in the matter of attendance, lack of consistency in intervention implementation, and inadequate documentation were major challenges.

The staff was asked what components of the RTI process prevented the smooth implementation of Tier 2 interventions, with varying responses provided. They included a poor system of identification, lack of staff, insufficient time, poor attendance, scant resources, lack of funding, lack of available data, and a lack of consistency in implementation.

## Summary

In 2005 the Michigan Department of Education mandated that all schools state-wide implement RTI as a general education initiative to ensure the early identification of students with educational challenges (MIBLSI, 2015). The rationale behind early

identification with RTI was preemptive remediation of performance deficits to avoid a referral for special education. RTI's framework encompasses data, evidence-based interventions, and implementation fidelity (Freeman et al., 2017). After reviewing the results of this study, there appeared to be a lack of understanding about the purpose, guidelines, and procedures for implementing RTI. Many staff members were unaware that RTI was a general education initiative, believing instead that it was a special education-specific program. Thus, they were not aware of their responsibilities regarding progress monitoring. The staff agreed that they had regular progress monitoring meetings to discuss the challenges with the Tier 2 strategies, yet they could not agree on the frequency of these meetings. The responses of the participants ranged from weekly, monthly, and quarterly.

The MES staff, S1, S3, and S5, related that more consistent follow-up was needed to ensure the accuracy and method of data collection, the thoroughness of documentation, and fidelity of implementation of RTI strategies. Many staff members were uncertain about the guidelines regarding the length of time a strategy was to be implemented before it was deemed ineffective. There were also concerns by some participants about the additional paperwork required with the program; it was thought to be "overwhelming." Overall, the staff felt they required more resources, teachers, funding, time, and extensive PD. The staff related that the PD should include actual modeling of the proposed strategies and be held annually.

The purpose of this study was to examine the MES general education teachers' implementation of RTI to determine why numerous students were being referred for

special education. Based on the results of this study, there appears to be a disconnect with the project study participants about how and why the strategies are selected and implemented. Since the success of RTI lies in the implementation fidelity of RTI strategies, the participants' lack of understanding regarding RTI and the implementation process may have contributed to less-than-optimal results. Although the MES staff may have been utilizing evidence-based strategies, if their procedures were inaccurate, the students did not benefit from the programs.

## Project Deliverable

This study was prompted by the high percentage of special education students at MES, even though the staff had been implementing RTI for years. I conducted a basic qualitative study with 12 staff members who were part of MES's RTI team. In Section 2 of this study, I described in-depth the research design and procedures used to collect and analyze the data. The findings of this project study suggested a lack of understanding on the part of the staff regarding the process, procedures, and protocols required to implement RTI strategies with fidelity. The participants' failure to understand what they were to do and how it was to be done possibly negatively skewed student achievement. Thus, there is a need for PD for the staff at MES to correct any misinformation about RTI. A PD workshop will be developed to address the discrepancies and issues highlighted during the study.

The PD workshop proposed will include the purpose of MTSS: what it is and how RTI fits in; the framework of RTI and Tiers 1, 2, and 3. The PD workshop will also

provide available resources, modeling of strategies, interventions, progress monitoring, and results from the literature on RTI.

# Section 3: The Project

## Introduction

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to examine the implementation of RTI at MES to reveal any implementation problems and, if found, to create a plan to correct those deficits. Doing so could increase the effectiveness of RTI and potentially decrease the number of special education referrals. As I collected and analyzed the data, a few themes emerged, and a few misconceptions required clarification. The project study findings addressed these themes and misconceptions in the PD workshop. The proposed PD workshop is included in Appendix A and highlights the themes that emerged during data analysis in Section 2 and the literature reviews in Section 1 and Section 3 of this study. This section includes a rationale for the genre selected, a literature review, a description and goals for the project, plans for evaluation, and the implications for social change.

This study's results indicated a need for PD and a continuous coaching of teachers on the RTI process. The findings suggested that teachers require more training to understand the purpose of RTI, interventions, the implementation process, and how to ensure the interventions are being implemented with fidelity. This PD and teacher coaching is a continuous program that can allow the district to provide support for their teachers as they implement RTI. This study's participants indicated a need for a more comprehensive understanding of RTI, how interventions were selected, and how they should have been implemented. The participants of the project study specifically expressed a desire to understand the guidelines dictating the length of time a strategy is to

be implemented before being deemed ineffective. Based on the findings of this study, there appeared to be a lack of clarity regarding the purpose and implementation of RTI at MES. This PD workshop will provide teachers with a complete understanding of the RTI process, tiers, and how to implement the strategies with fidelity.

## Description of the PD and Goals

A 3-day PD workshop was designed based on participant feedback, indicating a need to clarify and review the RTI process. The PD workshop also includes an opportunity for follow-up coaching and support through professional learning communities held four times throughout the school year. The PD workshop will provide sessions targeted to address the needs identified by the teachers in this study. The PD will be delivered via Google Meet due to concerns regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. The goals of this PD workshop are as follows:

- Goal 1: To provide a clear understanding of the MTSS framework.
- Goal 2: To provide a clear understanding of RTI and its tiers.
- Goal 3: To provide information on how to implement tier interventions with fidelity.
- Goal 4: To improve documentation and progress monitoring during Tier 2 intervention.
- Goal 5: To assist the teachers in the decision-making process based on RTI results.

## Rationale

Based on the findings covered in Section 3, a 3-day PD workshop was created to address the needs of MES's staff. The PD will introduce MTSS, as well as RTI, the process, and how it should be implemented. The participants proffered responses in the interview indicated that some confusion exists about RTI. According to the findings detailed in Section 2, multiple participants acknowledged their uncertainty regarding some specific aspects of RTI as well as when and how interventions should be implemented. Some interviewees indicated that they were unaware that RTI was a general education initiative and not a special education-specific program. The themes identified in the findings were strategy selection, how the interventions were selected, and training and PD: The participants indicated that they lacked clarity on RTI and its strategies, strategy effectiveness, and progress monitoring. The participants related that they needed consistent coaching to ensure fidelity of implementation. The participants also suggested that examples of modeling strategies would be helpful.

Given the concerns noted by the participants, the genre selected for this project was PD. The PD was selected because it can provide the participants with a comprehensive overview of RTI and ongoing quarterly coaching during their professional learning communities (PLCs). The PD will last 3 days and address the concerns identified within each theme.

## Review of the Literature

The impetus for this project study was a desire to examine the implementation of the RTI process at MES. The literature reviewed in this section provides the basis for this

project. According to the findings of this study, participants lacked clarity on some aspects of RTI, with these knowledge gaps potentially explaining difficulties with the implementation process. In an effort to address the areas of concern raised, a 3-day PD workshop was created to support the staff at MES. The PD genre is appropriate, as it expressly addresses the issues raised by the participants. The PD workshop is designed to provide teachers with a thorough understanding of RTI and its tiers and training to implement the model properly.

**Literature Search Strategy**

I used the Walden University Library, ERIC, EBSCO, and Google Scholar to locate peer-reviewed research on PD in education. The literature review was conducted to find evidence supporting the selection of PD as an appropriate genre for this project.

I made use of several keywords and phrases to carry out my search, which was as follows: *professional development in education; PD teachers; virtual PD, PD RTI; PD elementary teachers and RTI; coaching teachers RTI; RTI teacher training; professional development and self-efficacy; adult learning theories; professional learning communities; summative assessment;* and *formative assessment*. I also used the Boolean search function to filter results to yield peer-reviewed, full-text articles from the last 5 years.

**Adult Learning Theory and Communities of Practice**

The two theories that served as the foundation of this PD workshop were Knowles's (1988) adult learning theory and Wenger's (1998) communities of practice (CoP). In an attempt to distinguish between the learning styles of children and adults,

Knowles coined the term *andragogy*, meaning the art and science of helping adults learn (as cited in Kapur, 2019), as opposed to pedagogy, or the art and science of teaching children (Franco, 2019).

Knowles's (1988) theory of adult learning posits that adults learn by task performance, and instruction should be centered around practical application instead of memorizing content. Adults are natural problem-solvers who perform best when given realistic tasks to complete (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020). Knowles provided recommendations for creating an ideal learning environment for adults, which include the following:

1. A cooperative climate for learning.
2. Determining the interests and needs of the learner.
3. Designing goals and objectives that will meet the needs, skill levels, and interests of the learner.
4. Providing sequential tasks that will meet the objectives.
5. Selecting the methods, resources, and materials needed for instruction (as cited in Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020).

Upon completion of the learning environment, an assessment of the learning experience should be included, and modifications can be made as needed (Arghode et al., 2017; Kapur, 2019).

Wenger's notion of CoP is characterized by groups of like-minded individuals who meet regularly to perfect their craft (Smith et al., 2017; Wenger, 1998). To constitute a CoP, three elements must be present:

1. The domain: There must be a shared domain of interest.
2. The community: The members must interact with each other, help each other, and share information.
3. The practice: The members are practitioners, and they provide a shared repertoire of resources to help each other resolve problems (Bissessar, 2021).

I selected Knowles's adult learning theory and Wenger's CoP as the foundation of my PD as both address the population for which the PD was created. As with Knowles's andragogy, the learners are adults with an identified need and interest to learn the RTI process. Goals and objectives have been identified to meet the needs of the staff. The PD workshop will also include sequential tasks developed to meet the objective and resources selected accordingly. Wenger's theory of CoP is also applicable as MES meets the criteria required for a CoP. There exists a group of like-minded individuals in the MES's teachers who wish to learn a task and will work and interact with one another to perfect this skill.

**Professional Learning Community**

Wenger's CoP model has given rise to PLCs (Swanson et al., 2018). While there is no formal definition of PLCs, the term has been used to describe a group of individuals with a shared interest collaborating in a reflective, learning-oriented manner (Kelly, 2017; Prenger et al., 2019). PLCs have become a mainstay in contemporary education. As the field constantly evolves, educators must remain current on relevant research. School districts are given the herculean task of sifting through multiple curricula and varied technology to select the most appropriate option for their population. Once a

curriculum has been selected, the means of delivery to the staff must be chosen. PD is the most efficient method of disseminating new programs and training (Chai & Kong, 2017). PLCs encourage teachers to collaborate and foster professional learning to galvanize school improvement (Prenger et al., 2019).

PLCs have demonstrated the ability to improve teacher collaboration and student achievement (Prenger et al., 2019). The most important elements of PLC implementation include setting collective goals and data utilization. It is essential to analyze the data and let it serve as a guide to reveal the teachers' PLCs' strengths and weaknesses and make appropriate modifications. PLCs have been linked to increased student achievement, reform implementation, and parental satisfaction (Diehl, 2019). They may also be viewed as a tool to improve educators individually and as a group, ultimately benefiting school-wide benchmarks (Hairon et al., 2017). In this project, the PLCs would provide an excellent channel through which the teachers receive ongoing coaching in implementing an intervention, progress monitoring, and decision-making.

**Effective PD**

The participants in this study indicated that the PD they received at MES was ineffective. Survey responses suggested that current practices did not sufficiently inculcate an understanding of RTI to enable the faculty to administer the interventions with fidelity. Research has shown that the practitioner's effective implementation and practice of RTI require continuous PD (Greenwood & Kelly, 2017). Thus, if RTI requires that the practitioner be trained in how to implement the program, but that training is inadequate, they will not be able to carry out the intervention successfully. In summary,

for RTI to be effective, there must be a high fidelity of implementation (Berkeley et al., 2020).

PD, a term with widespread and varying use in education, supports teachers' growth (Parsons et al., 2019). Sancar et al. (2021) defined it as a lifelong process that commences when a teacher enters college and proceeds through their career; it is impacted by the teacher's traits, teaching subjects, methods, and interventions. PD is not a 1- or 3-day seminar but an ongoing learning process for the professional. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) outlined the important characteristics of effective PD, including focused content, active learning, collaborative process, modeling, coaching and support, assessment and evaluation, and continuous process. PD is essential to improving the quality of education students receive (Thurlings & den Brok, 2017).

When designing an effective PD, it is also important to understand the school context, define the role of the school administrator, and provide a cohesive and aligned program that meets the needs of the educators in their efforts to impact student growth effectively (Martin et al., 2019). The PD designed for this project consists of focused content, active learning about the RTI process, and breakout sessions to facilitate collaboration among participants. There were also opportunities for modeling strategies with coaching and support available during breakout sessions and PLCs. An assessment and evaluation will take place to provide feedback and reflection to ascertain any improvements that may be required. The PD workshop will be held annually with ongoing quarterly coaching for teachers in their PLCs.

According to McMaster et al. (2021), when implementing an intensive multisystem program, teachers were more successful when the PD included an initial workshop followed by subsequent training sessions.

**Training and Coaching**

RTI is the process of providing research-based instruction through the use of interventions matched to the student's needs, involves progress monitoring to evaluate the need for any changes in instruction or goals, and uses the child's response data to guide educational decision-making (Vollmer et al., 2019). The study participants at MES indicated a lack of understanding regarding the purpose and process of RTI. For RTI to positively affect student achievement, as the literature overwhelmingly demonstrates, it must be implemented with fidelity (see Castillo et al., 2018). The teachers must be trained in implementing the RTI framework through PD and instructional coaching, and the close examination of student work through PLCs is also beneficial (Thorne, 2020).

The MES study participants were concerned about their ability to implement the strategy effectively. According to Sanetti and Luh (2019), billions of dollars have been invested in research and development interventions that have been slowly adopted and implemented poorly to uninspiring results. As a result, the intervention is only as effective as its implementation process. Hence, implementation science is the study of this process to encourage the systematic use of research findings and other evidence-based practices in RTI. This is a methodical means of determining if the interventions are being implemented with fidelity (March et al., 2020). For the interventions to be

implemented effectively, the teachers not only need to receive high-quality PD, but they also need to receive ongoing coaching.

Systematic coaching has been used to support the implementation fidelity of evidence-based interventions (March et al., 2020). The systems coach models practices and observes teachers implementing a new skill and providing feedback for ongoing improvement (March et al., 2020). The coach plays a critical role in sustaining teachers' implementation and intervention within the classroom long-term by providing ongoing support throughout the intervention process (Glover, 2017).

Numerous studies (Castillo et al., 2016; Castillo et al., 2018; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2017; Sanetti & Luh, 2019) have demonstrated the effectiveness of RTI in increasing student achievement. Students benefit from evidence-based interventions, but this outcome is predicated upon the proper implementation of RTI. Research has revealed that student performance declines when an intervention is not properly administered (King-Sears et al., 2018).

To achieve RTI implementation fidelity, many schools are utilizing school-based RTI coaching. This practice assists teachers in the proper execution of evidence-based coaching. This is part of a continuous process that has been shown to increase the fidelity of new strategies employed (March et al., 2020).

To ensure the fidelity of implementation, King-Sears et al. (2018) have identified a 5-step process that is beneficial in introducing new protocols effectively. The steps are to model the intervention, share the strategy's fidelity protocol, coach the teacher before

the intervention, monitor for fidelity during the intervention, and provide feedback for the teacher using fidelity data.

This 5-step process effectively ensures that teachers understand the practice and how to implement the strategies. An intervention can only be effective when administered properly; therefore, teachers must be correctly coached with continual supplementary instruction (Sailor et al., 2021).

### Summary

The literature review in this section focused on areas of concern identified by the study participants. The literature review highlighted the importance of PD when training teachers to implement a school-wide RTI program. The literature also acknowledges that adult learners learn differently from children; therefore, learning programs should be cognizant of that fact during the design process. The literature stresses the importance of implementation fidelity because it does not matter how wonderful a program is, if it is not implemented properly, the desired result will not be obtained. It is also important to have ongoing coaching provided to reinforce the implementation process and offer regular feedback to monitor progress. Once the teachers can correctly implement the program interventions, they will be better able to meet the needs of the students and ideally see a decrease in special education referrals.

## Project Description

The project will be completed during the MES staff's scheduled PD time. The PD workshop will occur over the course of 3 days, with additional quarterly coaching during their PLCs. The PD covers what RTI is and how it works, as well as its tiers,

implementation of interventions, progress monitoring, and fidelity of implementation. It will be offered virtually due to ongoing COVID concerns imposed by the pandemic. A recording of the Google Meet session will be made available to those unable to attend. The PLC sessions will also be held virtually on the Google Classroom platform at a predetermined time and set up by the teachers and coach.

**Existing Supports and Resources Needed**

The ABCD school district and MES administration support are required to provide this PD for the MES staff. Instructional coaches from the ABCD district are also needed to support the delivery of the interventions and ensure participants receive their PD credits from the state for attending PDs. Cameras, computers, and the Google Chrome browser are additionally needed for virtual training.

**Potential Barriers**

The most important potential barriers encountered in this project are the length of time required to carry out the PD and the funding needed to hire substitute teachers for those 3 days of instruction, as well as for each quarterly coaching session. The sessions will be recorded live on the Google Meet platform, allowing any teacher unable to attend the virtual instruction to review the session later.

**Proposal for Implementation and Timetable**

The implementation of the 3-day training will commence in August 2023, with the PLC coaching held in October, February, and May. The timetable will be as follows:

1. Present the findings of this study to the district, administrators, and teachers where the PD will occur to provide a rationale for the PD.

2. Receive a commitment to participate from all stakeholders.
3. Meet with the district representatives and school administrators to establish the schedule for the 3-day PD.
4. Arrange to meet with administrators to reserve rooms and technology (e.g., Smart Boards, projects, laptops, PowerPoint remotes/clickers, and audio equipment) needed for the PD.
5. Provide the district office with the training materials that will need to be copied. Each trainee and administrator will receive one packet of materials.
6. Present the PD schedule for the 3 days and set up the monthly coaching sessions.
7. Have the participants complete an evaluation at the end of the PD and after each coaching session.

**Roles and Responsibilities**

I am responsible for overseeing the PD and supporting the MES teachers, school, and administration. I must also provide the teachers and district with the confirmed dates, times, and locations for all activities. Teachers are responsible for actively participating in the PD and PLCs, so they will be able to implement the RTI strategies with fidelity. The principal and administrative team will be asked to attend to lend their support and encouragement to the staff.

## Project Evaluation Plan

The evaluation plan includes formative and summative evaluations using the Kirkpatrick Model (Aryadoust, 2017). This framework has been used to evaluate educational training since the 1950s. It consists of four levels:

- Level 1: Reaction–How did the participants respond to the training?
- Level 2: Learning–Did the participants understand the training?
- Level 3: Behavior–Are the participants using what they learned?
- Level 4: Results–How did the training impact the organization?

Formative evaluation can generate feedback to enhance instruction during the teaching process (Gaumer et al., 2017). For this project, a formative evaluation will be used to solicit constructive criticism from participants after each session to gauge what was learned and what areas may require clarification. This information will dictate the focus of subsequent sessions, as I will then be able to modify the agenda to allow time for reteaching if necessary.

This formative assessment will cover Levels 1 and 2 of the Kirkpatrick Method. A summative evaluation is usually completed at the end of the training, given that it is designed to measure the overall effectiveness of a program (Houston & Thompson, 2017). For this study, a summative evaluation will be given after the third day of PD and at the end of coaching sessions, as it will measure Levels 3 and 4 of the model to determine if the teachers are implementing the RTI process with fidelity, in addition to the result of the training for the school.

## Goals of the Project

The objective of this project is to provide the teachers and staff at MES with a comprehensive PD program on RTI that will instruct them in the process and allow them to implement interventions with fidelity. The goal of the formative evaluation of the PD workshop sessions will be to determine what was learned and what needs to be addressed in upcoming PD workshop sessions. The summative assessment will measure the training and coaching effectiveness and determine its impact on MES. The key stakeholders of this study are the principal of MES and the superintendent of ABCD School District.

## Project Implications and Social Change

### Local Stakeholders

The implications at MES, the local level, are that the teachers and staff will receive comprehensive training in RTI with ongoing coaching throughout the school year. This will allow the teachers to receive continuous training, which may increase self-efficacy in implementing the RTI intervention with fidelity with the support of district leaders. Once RTI is properly executed, improvements in academic achievement should follow, reducing referrals for special education services, and thus promoting positive social change at the local level.

### Larger Scale

I believe this project could benefit other school districts implementing RTI, as it provides a thorough overview during its 3-day duration and includes ongoing coaching for the staff to ensure teachers are employing interventions with fidelity. RTI is only as effective as its implementation, and this project has the potential to ensure the exactitude

of an intervention, thereby solidifying the results of an effective program and increasing student achievement, which could further lead to positive social change within other school districts.

# Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

## Introduction

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to examine the use of RTI at a local urban elementary school to reveal any gaps in practice and to formulate a plan to correct those deficits. In so doing, the number of special education referrals and students identified for special education services could potentially decrease. The purpose of Section 4 is to provide reflections on the findings of my study, including project strengths, limitations, recommendations for future changes, and directions for further research.

## Project Strengths

According to Sanetti and Luh (2019), the lack of fidelity in implementation results in an unnecessary increase in the number of students requiring more intensive intervention and an overall rise in the number of referrals to special education. This appeared to be a likely scenario with MES, and upon further investigation, it was revealed that their RTI program had challenges. The study participants shared that there was a lack of understanding about the purpose and process of RTI, especially regarding implementing interventions. A major strength of this project is that it was specifically designed to meet the needs of the teachers in improving their understanding of the purpose and process.

This project is designed to explain RTI, its tiers, the importance of implementation, progress monitoring, and how crucial implementation fidelity is to the entire process. Furthermore, the PD workshop will not be rushed; it will be conducted

over 3 days, with opportunities for breakout sessions to allow for modeling and collaboration among colleagues. The literature review further revealed that effective implementation of RTI requires not only PD but ongoing coaching, which I have included in my training. My goal for this project was to address the needs of staff at MES and provide them with a high-quality PD that can instill a solid understanding of both the purpose and process of RTI. This was done in the hope that they can come away with everything required to implement RTI with fidelity and positively impact student growth.

The participants and administration of MES further strengthened this project through their willingness to participate in this study, be interviewed, and share their perceptions of the RTI process at their school. I was able to develop a PD based on my findings from the interview, as well as the literature review, to address the concerns of the participants.

## Project Limitations

The PD workshop designed for MES requires 3 full days to complete. Although COVID-19 is still an issue, PD may be held virtually on the Google Meet platform due to ongoing COVID-19 concerns. To circumvent the scheduling issues, ideally, the PD would be held during the time allocated by the district for PD, with coaching sessions occurring during the PLC time, thereby preventing the district from having to fund and hire substitutes for coverage. However, many districts create their annual calendar 2 or 3 years in advance; if that were the case, it is certainly a limitation. Nonetheless, the potential benefits of the PD workshop for the district, teachers, and students outweigh the limitations.

## Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

I designed the program around a 3-day PD period with additional quarterly coaching. An alternative could be a virtual PD with a discussion board with prompts eliciting weekly responses. Virtual coaching sessions could also be held for teachers unable to attend the coaching session at the designated time. Another alternative would be to create a training manual for the teachers that would include the RTI guidelines, timelines, and its purpose and process. Therefore, coaching could still be made available to clarify any issues the teachers may encounter as well as provide additional support. The best approach would be to present the PD as designed. However, if that is not feasible, the program may be modified accordingly.

## Scholarship, Project Development, and Leadership and Change

### Scholarship

My doctoral journey has taught me that patience is a virtue. My experience at Walden University has transformed me into a better writer, researcher, and student. This basic qualitative study has revealed several qualities about me as a student. I have honed my research skills and developed a desire to continue learning and researching ways to impact educational change. I have also gained a genuine desire to become an agent of change for the urban district where I teach to encourage the students to continue to strive for excellence and to pursue their dreams. I believe in the RTI process and know that if properly implemented, student growth will follow. There were many challenges getting to this point, but my chair was always supportive and encouraging. My second chair,

University Research Review (URR) member, and IRB committee ensured that I devised a high-quality, scholarly work project and followed the standards and procedures.

**Project Development**

This project was developed based on the findings of my basic qualitative study. I saw a problem in MES as we continued to receive more referrals for special education evaluations despite the implementation of RTI. I had assumed that with it in place, there would be an increase in student growth and a decrease in special education referrals, yet the opposite occurred. This query spurred my decision to create a project that would allow me to determine exactly what was occurring. I believe this project has the ability not only to shed light on the problems identified but to rectify them as well. While at Walden, I have learned the importance of the project from inception to delivery. I have gleaned much as a student and educator from the scholarly articles I have read. I am more equipped to perform my job, and I am in a better position to help and train other teachers. This journey has taught me to be a better educator who will consistently strive to serve others.

**Leadership and Change**

The world is ever-changing, and the field of education is no different. Teachers are expected to embrace whatever new curriculum has been selected for the school regardless of whether it meets the student body's needs. Effective leadership should consider the thoughts and ideas of their staff and support them. Teachers and staff are more inclined to embrace changes when they feel supported. I want to be the type of leader who fosters a supportive environment for my staff, allowing them the opportunity

to flourish. This project has demonstrated the importance of valuing staff input and providing opportunities for them to learn and support their growth. My goal is to continue to inspire children and teachers to achieve the goals they have set for themselves. As a lifelong learner, I am passionate about education, and I desire to share that passion with teachers and students. My time at Walden University has encouraged me to become a servant leader and an agent of social change. I aspire to be a leader who encourages others to dream, develop their passion, and achieve their goals. RTI is a framework proven to increase student achievement if implemented with fidelity. Therefore, I believe this project will provide the PD needed to assist teachers in implementing RTI.

## Reflection on the Importance of the Work

While at Walden University, I have developed an appreciation for the research process. I learned how to develop and craft a research proposal, conduct the actual research, analyze the data, and develop a PD that addressed the needs identified in the research. When I began at Walden University, it was my first time attending an online university, and I had to learn to use different technology and learning platforms. I also had to become adept with qualitative research because it was what I eventually used to analyze my data.

The goal of this project was to educate the staff about the current practices of RTI and what changes needed to occur to increase their implementation fidelity, increase student achievement, and potentially decrease the number of special education referrals. I am deeply indebted to Walden University for providing me with the requisite skills to

create a project that can be used in my school district to facilitate professional learning for the staff at the study site.

## Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

The results of this study indicated a need for an intensive RTI PD with ongoing coaching throughout the year to ensure the interventions are being implemented with fidelity. For RTI to be effective, the interventions must be properly implemented. The lack of fidelity can skew the effectiveness of the intervention. The implications of this project can provide MES with PD on RTI and ongoing coaching as well as training in implementing interventions, which can increase the fidelity of the implementation process, thus increasing the effectiveness of the interventions.

The PD will also be used district-wide to assist other schools in strengthening their RTI PD training. The training for this PD was designed during COVID-19; and due to school closures and social distancing, the school staff could not meet face-to-face. However, I would like to give the PD in person and have the opportunity to work with teachers in small groups and their PLCs to model the actual interventions, observe them providing the interventions, and coach them one-on-one. While this study was designed for an elementary school, future research should look at RTI in middle and high schools to see how the interventions are being implemented in those settings.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to examine general education teachers' implementation of RTI to identify any gaps in practice and, if so, to create a plan that could correct those gaps. The results of the basic qualitative study indicated that

the general education teachers did not clearly understand RTI and the interventions. As a result, the interventions were not implemented with fidelity. This gap in practice was identified, and a PD project was created to correct the gap and hopefully decrease the number of special education referrals. For RTI to be effective, it must be implemented with fidelity, and this PD can provide the teacher with the training and ongoing coaching needed to facilitate effective implementation.

It has been my honor and privilege to attend Walden University. I am grateful for the skills I have developed as a researcher, scholar, and practitioner. It is my desire to continue as a servant leader and social change agent.

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Appendix A: The Project


## Good Morning

Introduction

- Presenter- Carla Graham
- Career Overview
- Interest

# Housekeeping Notes

- Bathroom locations
- Please mute cell phones
- The refreshments are located on the rear tables and can be taken back to your seats
- We have a full agenda; in order to get through all of our training, we must adhere to our lunch and break schedules.
- Evaluations

# Day 1: Agenda

| | |
|---|---|
| 8:15-9:00 | Greetings/Introduction |
| 9:00-10:00 | RTI: What is it? Why we use it? |
| 10:00-10:15 | Break |
| 10:15-11:30 | Tier I |
| 11:30-12:00 | Small Group Discussion |
| 12:00-1:00 | Lunch |
| 1:00-2:30 | Tier 2 |
| 2:30-2:45 | Break |
| 2:45-3:00 | Q&A/ Exit Tickets |

# Training Objectives

1. Provide teachers and staff with a clear comprehensive understanding of what RTI is and how it is to be used.
2. To provide teachers and staff with a clear understanding of what is expected at each tier.
3. To inform teachers and staff of the rate of success RTI has had with increasing student success and decreasing the number of referrals.
4. To increase the implementation fidelity of the RTI interventions by providing continuous PD, PLC's, as well as coaching.
5. To provide support for the teachers and staff throughout the entire RTI process.

# Learning Outcomes

- Comprehend the significance of RTI.
- Distinguish the differences between each tier.
- Discern the elements of each component.

# RTI: Teachers' Perceptions

According to the research I conducted, teachers revealed several challenges within the RTI program, including:

1. Lack of clarity of the purpose and the RTI Process.
2. Lack of understanding of tiers and interventions.
3. Lack of understanding of the significance of implementation fidelity and progress monitoring.

# History of RTI

- IDEA 2004 requirements to provide data on student achievement progress are based on 40 years of educational research called Response to Intervention.
- The RTI approach is an educational reform that requires an integrated approach to service delivery.
- General educators and special educators must work together to intervene early with integrity and progress monitoring when students are struggling with basic skills.

# Response to Intervention (RTI) Definition

Response to intervention integrates assessment and intervention within a multi-tier system of supports (MTSS) to maximize student achievement and to reduce behavioral problems. With RTI, schools use data to identify students at risk for poor learning outcomes, monitor student progress, provide evidence-based interventions and adjust the intensity and nature of those interventions depending on a student's responsiveness, and identify students with learning disabilities and other disabilities.

*(National Center on Response to Intervention, n.d.)*

# The 4 major components of RTI include:

- A school-wide, multi-level instructional system for preventing student failure
- A data-based screening process
- Progress monitoring and documentation of student intervention and progress
- Data and evidence-based decision-making for instruction, intervention, movement within levels, and the IAT (Instructional Assistance Team) process

## Core Principles of RTI

**High Quality Classroom Instruction**

Students receive high quality instruction in their general education setting. Before students are identified for specific assistance, there must be assurance that the typical classroom instruction is of high quality. This quality can be assessed by comparing students' learning rates and achievement in different classrooms at the same grade level.

**Research-based instruction**

General education classroom practices and the curriculum vary in their efficacy. Evidence that the classroom instructional practices and curriculum have demonstrated validity as important. If instruction is not research-based, one cannot be confident that students' limited gains are independent of the classroom experiences.

## Core Principles of RTI

**Continuous progress monitoring**

In RTI models, students' classroom progress is to be monitored continuously. In this way, staff can readily identify those learners who are not meeting the benchmarks or other expected standards. Various curriculum-based assessment models are useful in this role.

## Core Principles of RTI

**Research-based interventions**

When students' screening results or progress monitoring results indicate a deficit, an appropriate instructional intervention is implemented, perhaps an individually designed instructional package or a standardized intervention protocol. The standardized intervention protocols are the interventions that researchers have validated through a series of studies. School staff is expected to implement specific, research-based interventions to address the student's difficulties. These interventions might include a "double-dose" of the classroom instruction or a different instructional method. These interventions are not adaptations of the current curriculum or accommodations, because those procedures should have been implemented already. These research based interventions are 8 to 12 weeks in length and are designed to increase the intensity of the learner's instructional experience.

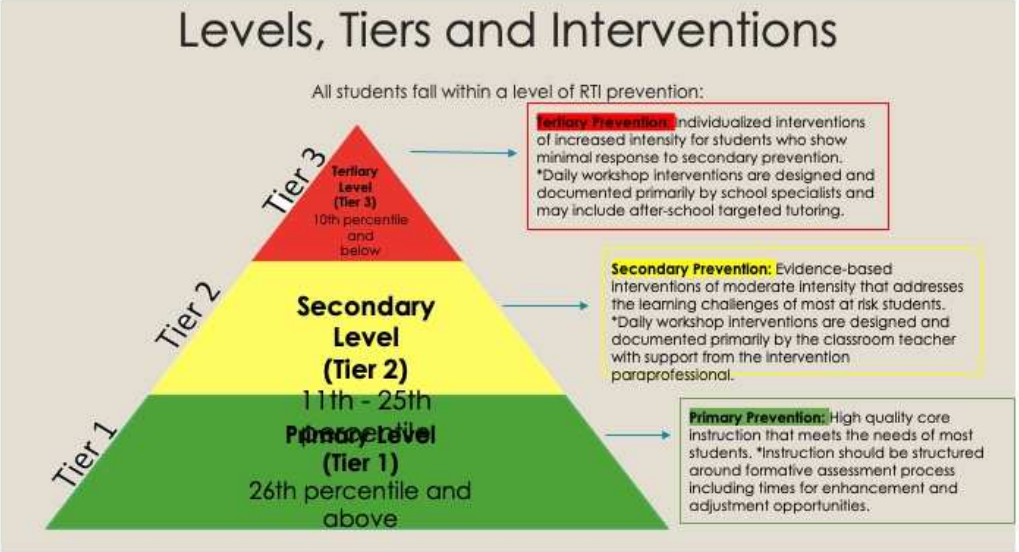
## Core Principles of RTI

**Progress monitoring during interventions**

School staff members use progress monitoring data to determine interventions' effectiveness and to make any modifications, as needed. Carefully defined data are collected, perhaps daily, to provide a cumulative record of the learner's response to the intervention.

**Research-based instruction**

While the interventions themselves are designed, implemented, and assessed for their learner effectiveness, fidelity measures that focus on those individuals providing the instruction are also completed. The fidelity measure, usually an observational checklist of critical teaching behaviors, is completed by a staff member other than the teacher being observed as indicates whether or not the intervention was implemented as intended and with consistency.




# Research and the Fidelity of RTI

- While RTI offers an effective program for early intervention, it is only as good as it has been implemented (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2018; Keller-Margullis, 2012).
- In an effort to increase and maintain the fidelity of implementation, regular fidelity checks should occur on an ongoing basis (March et al., 2016).
- Regular professional development and coaching has a positive effect on the fidelity of implementation (Preston et al., 2016).

# Why is RTI important?

- To increase student achievement
- To improve student engagement
- To ensure student success
- To identify students who need assistance and provide them with meaningful interventions

# Who benefits from RTI?

- All students, including
  - English Language Learners (ELL)
  - Student's with a 504 Plan
  - Students with IEPs
  - Gifted and Talented Students


## Tier I- Table Discussion

- Discuss with your table-
  - What Tier I interventions do you use in your classroom?

# Tier I: In the Classroom

80-90% of school aged children respond successfully to quality core instruction in the general education classroom

- Academic Interventions include:
  - Mnemonic Cues
  - Frequent opportunities for movement
  - Circulate often
  - Have students repeat directions
  - Give clear directions
  - Differentiate instruction
  - Provide varied texts or supplementary materials at different levels
  - Use multiple and flexible grouping opportunities
  - Divide instruction into shortened segments and provide feedback before moving to the next segment
  - Adjust and extend time as needed
  - Use graphic organizers
  - Provide opportunities for students to answer in a variety of ways
  - Assess frequently (Formative and Summative)

# Tier I: In the Classroom

- Behavioral Interventions include:
  - Establish a predictable climate in your classroom
  - Develop a positive relationship with students
  - Use school-wide discipline plan
  - Create a relationship with parents as soon as possible
  - Define clear expectations and motivate students with positive reinforcement
  - Teach rules and procedures
  - Provide positive and active supervision
  - Establish clear, consistent routines and expectations for accomplishing daily tasks and activities

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  - Provide positive and active supervision
  - Establish clear, consistent routines and expectations for accomplishing daily tasks and activities

# Table Discussion

- What could you do to improve your Tier 1 instruction? What challenges do you believe are present in your school or classroom that interfere with Tier 1 instruction?

# Lunch

Your lunch time will be from 12:00-1:00

Enjoy!

# Tier 2

- Tier 2 supports
  - What tier 2 supports are implemented in your classroom?

# Tier 2: In Small Group

**With Teacher or Interventionist**

- Academic Interventions include:
  - Have students record notes or illustrations of key points during instruction
  - Provide a copy of the text with main ideas highlighted
  - Easy to follow visuals are provided
  - Review and practice previously taught material frequently
  - Increase modeling, guided practice, and hands-on learning to increase student participation
  - Integrate real-life experiences into instruction- make connections
  - Use a laser pointer, stick pointer, highlighter tape, or colored pens to focus on key information
  - Frame projected information when using ELMO

# Tier 2: In Small Group (continued)

**With Teacher or Interventionist**

- Academic Interventions include:
  - Prepare materials in advance to avoid instructional lag time
  - Present instruction at a lively pace using humor
  - Illustrate key points, no matter the level of artistic ability, to focus attention and help with retention of information
  - Pause during a lesson to allow students to repeat a word or phrase related to the concept being taught
  - Incorporate names of students when telling stories or presenting problems to capture attention
  - Make use of color in gaining attention of students (i.e., colored markers, highlighting tape, post-it notes)
  - Turn off room lighting to change atmosphere of the room

# Tier 2: In Small Group

**With Teacher or Interventionist**

- Academic Interventions include (continued):
  - Have headphones available for students who have auditory distractibility
  - Keep desktop and/or tabletops free of clutter to help students focus on instruction
  - Stop often to summarize key elements in a lesson
  - Invite students to use their own words to summarize key points of a lesson to a partner
  - Provide a less distracting area for independent work
  - Allow students to move around the room during instruction when appropriate
  - Alternate between passive and active instructional activities
  - Kagan strategies and placement

# Tier 2: In Small Group

**With Teacher or Interventionist**

- Behavioral Interventions:
  - Administer evidence-based interventions to small groups of students (Reading Mastery & Corrective Reading)
  - Increase supervision and monitoring of expected behavior
  - Teach expectations of group behavior thoroughly: explain, model, demonstrate, role play, and practice
  - Establish clearly defined daily social skills goals
  - Reinforce social skill in the classroom setting
  - Notify students of schedule change
  - Share literature that provides positive examples of appropriate behavior or character
  - Give students a task list of things that they need to complete
  - Model a problem-solving strategy for students and talk through the steps, as they are taught to help students internalize
  - Watch for signs of student frustration and use de-escalation strategies to direct and calm the student

# Tier 2: In Small Group

**With Teacher or Interventionist**

- Behavioral Interventions (continued):
  - Call the student by name and discreetly redirect
  - Intervene quickly at the first sign of the student losing control
  - Assign a task for redirection
  - Teach students positive self-talk
  - Model and practice "Give me ten"
  - Allow time for student to refocus and gain self-control
  - Lead students to recognize when a problem situation might occur and what action to take
  - Provide a cooldown area in the classroom that a student can access when needed
  - Allow student to take a walk with supervision
  - Use physical activities to relieve stress

# Fireside Chat

- Discuss which academic and behavioral strategies you find helpful and which ones you find difficult within your classrooms

# Exit Ticket


Please complete the exit ticket for today's professional development.

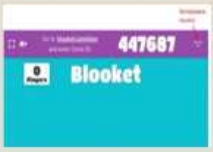
# Exit Ticket

What was one important thing you learned in training today?

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

What would help make today's lesson more effective?

# Blooket




What do we know?

What did we learn?

# Tier 3

- Students not making progress using Tier I or Tier 2 level interventions are moved on to Tier 3 Intervention.
- Tier 3 provides intensive evidence-based instruction individually or to a group with no more than 3 students.
- Tier 3 committee (Dean, Interventionists, Classroom Teacher, Social Worker, and Speech, if applicable) will meet every 6 weeks to discuss needs of each student in the process.

# 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

# Tier 3

Intensive Supports


# 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 Aims Web
  - Be prepared to discuss the student with the team

# The Flow of a Tier 3 Meeting

Someone will be assigned to take notes at each meeting (the coordinator, facilitator, or school psychologist)

- Introductions
- Student information
- Hearing and vision screening results
- Attendance
- Services currently being provided to the student
- Purpose of the meeting
- Parental input
- Student strengths
- Medical information
- Behavior
- Grades, Milestones, Aims Web, NWEA Results,
- Discussion

# The Meeting

- Communication is Key!
- All members hold a piece of the puzzle
- Discussion should be a rich conversation regarding specific area of concern, evidence-based interventions, and data analysis


Have a
Break


evaluate
education
interventions
Research
behind
evidence-based
evidence
School
Programs
research
effectiveness
Education

## Evidence-Based Interventions

An evidence-based intervention is a treatment that has been proven effective when implemented with fidelity as indicated by the protocol of the intervention.

## Research-Based Reading Instruction

- The most effective way to teach reading to children is through a combination of methods, such as:
  - Systematic Phonics Instruction
  - Add Synthetic Phonics Instruction for Struggling Readers
  - Oral Reading
  - Vocabulary
  - Reading Comprehension
  - Computer Technology

# Research-Based Reading Instruction

- Systematic Phonics Instruction
  - Teach a planned sequence of phonics elements instead of highlighting skills as they appear in text. This method is appropriate in routine classroom instruction.
- Add Synthetic Phonics Instruction for Struggling Learners
  - Systematic Phonics Instruction in combination with Synthetic Phonics Instruction produces the greatest gains for students who are low-achieving, of low socio-economic status, or learning disabled. Synthetic Phonics instruction consists of teaching students to explicitly convert letters into phonemes and then blend the phonemes to form words.
- Oral Reading
  - Oral reading is important for developing reading fluency, the ability to read with efficiency and ease. (The research does not support silent reading as intervention.)

# Research-Based Reading Instruction

- Guided Oral Reading
  - Guided oral reading helps students across a wide range of grade levels to learn to recognize new words, helps them to read accurately and easily, and helps them to comprehend what they read.
- Vocabulary
  - Teach vocabulary by using a combination of methods-
    - Direct instruction—apart from narrative or text
    - Indirect instruction—as words are encountered in text
    - Reptation and multiple exposure
    - Computer technology

## Research-Based Reading Instruction

- Reading Comprehension
  - Teach students a variety of techniques and systematic strategies
    - Monitoring comprehension
    - Using graphic and sematic organizers
    - Answering questions
    - Generating questions
    - Recognizing story structure
    - Summarizing
    - Using prior knowledge
    - Using mental imagery
- Computer Technology
  - Highlighted text and word processing can improve reading

## Research-Based Math Instruction

- Mathematical proficiency has five strands
  - Understanding math
  - Computing fluently
  - Applying concepts to solve problems
  - Reasoning logically
  - Engaging with math

## Teach Computation and Concepts

- Students become proficient when they understand the concepts, and they understand the concepts, when they are skilled at computational practice

## Teach All Strands Together

- When the teachers teach the strands together, they show the students how the five strands support each other.

## Calculators and Fluency

- While calculators have decreased the need for performing advanced math calculations, students need to know what is happening during those calculations. Computational fluency is needed for solving high-order math.

## Research-Based Writing Instruction

- Effective writing programs will look different grade by grade
- Writing instruction will teach students how to plan, compose, revise, and edit their own pieces of writing.

# Lunch

Your lunch time will be from 12:00-1:00

Enjoy!

# Benchmarking/Progress Monitoring

- Aims Web Plus reading benchmarking:
  - All K-2 students will be benchmarked three times a year.
  - 3-6 students in the bottom quartile on the Fall NWEA are benchmarked three times a year.
- Aims Web Plus reading progress monitoring:
  - Students in the 25th percentile and below in grades 3-6 are progress monitored weekly.
  - All K-2 students are monitored bi-weekly.

# Documenting the Intervention Plan and Fidelity of Implementation

- When implementing RTI, schools need progress monitoring data and an effective data management system
- Intervention Dates
- Intervention Plans
  - Written
  - Measurable
  - Specific description of instruction
  - Linked to specific probes or measures of learning

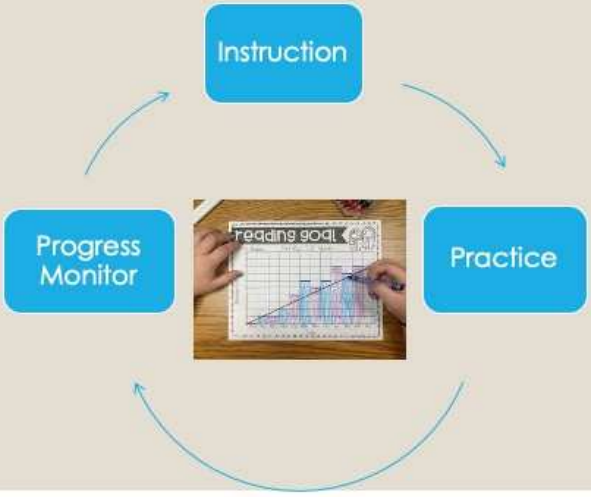
# Fidelity of Implementation of the Intervention

- Documented classroom visits
- Checklists
- Refer to classroom and group data over time: if student group improving quality instruction/intervention is occurring

# Tier 3 Intervention Plan

- Goals:
  - Develop a well written plan
  - Understanding baseline and goal score
  - Understanding entering intervention time and progress monitoring

# Instructional Process

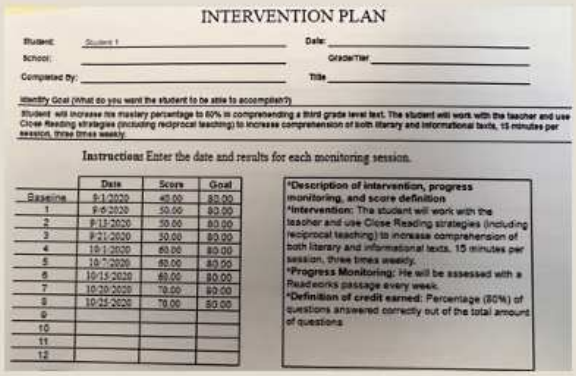


# Tier 3 Instruction

# Intervention Delivery

- Prepare for intervention delivery by using the following checklist:
  - Specific Time
  - Material needed
  - Intervention protocol

# The Plan and The Data



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 | | | |

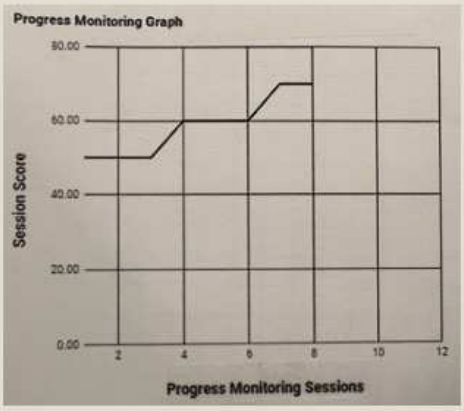
*Description of intervention, progress monitoring, and score definition

*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

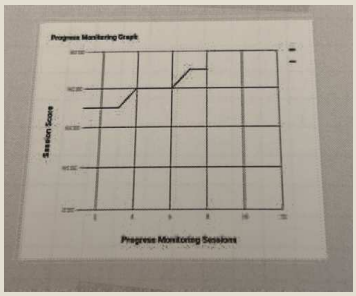
# Progress Monitoring Graph



# Tier 3 Results


# Student 1

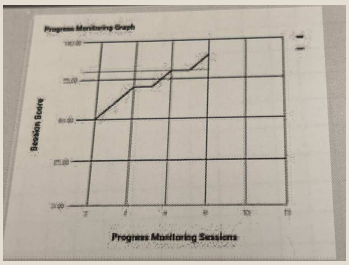
- Student shows growth but is not on grade level for deficit area
  1. Review data at Tier 3 meeting. Growth noted but not at grade level.
  2. Identifying intervention by increasing days, increasing level, or determine next deficit level for growth toward grade level.
  3. Continuous interventions and progress monitoring.




Student 1: Eight-week period, interventions three times per week, progress monitored one time per week.

# Student 2

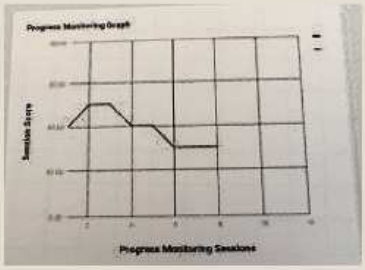
- Student shows growth and is at grade level for the deficit area
  1. Review data from Tier 3 meeting. Student is at grade level for deficit area.
  2. Take away Tier 3 supports, but continue Tier 1 and 2 support on grade level
  3. Progress monitor bi-weekly at Tier 2 and review data at regular Tier 2 meetings.




Student 2: Eight-week period, interventions three times per week, progress monitored one time per week.

# Student 3

- Student does not show growth for deficit area
  1. Review data from Tier 3 meeting. Student is not showing growth.
  2. Have other interventions been implemented?
  3. If no, change intervention. If yes, student is referred to the team.




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

# Let's Review

- Tier 1 is for all students. 80% will succeed at Tier 1.
- Tier 2 is for some students (about 10%). Tier 2 remediation on grade level with progress monitoring every 2 weeks.
- Tier 3 is for about 1-5% of students. Tier 3 remediation is at instructional level with weekly progress monitoring.

# 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

What was one important thing you learned in training today?

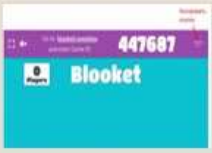
What is one thing you would like to know more about?

What would help make today's lesson more effective?

# Day 3: Agenda

| | |
|---|---|
| 8:00-8:30 | Blooket/Q&A for Day 2 Review |
| 8:30-9:30 | Tier 3 Follow-Up Meetings |
| 9:30-10:15 | Coaching |
| 10:15-10:30 | Break |
| 10:30-11:30 | PLCs |
| 11:30-12:00 | Small Group |
| 12:00-1:00 | Lunch |
| 1:00-2:00 | RTI Teams |
| 2:00-3:00 | Final Q&A/Exit Ticket |

# Blooket




What do we know?

What did we learn?

## Tier 3 Follow Up Meetings

## Data

## Tier 3 Follow-Up Meetings

- Review of student data
- Student data collection printed out and graphs reviewed to determine if intervention is to be continued, intensified, or changed based on student progress.
- Review of student work samples

# Purpose of RTI

- The purpose of RTI is to monitor progress
  - Is the student responding to the intervention?
    - If yes, at what rate?
- If the student is demonstrating progress, then the correct deficit has been identified, and the intervention is appropriate.

# Questions to reflect on at each tier

- What interventions and strategies have I tried?
- Are they working?
- How do I know?

## Tier 3

- Once intensive interventions are implemented, students' performance may improve.
- However, if all interventions have been implemented, the Tier 3 committee may recommend that evaluations be completed for a disability as defined by IDEA 2004.
- At least 12 weeks of unsuccessful intervention must take place before a referral for special education testing can occur.

## Teacher Coaching

- Teacher coaching is available virtually and in person.
- This will help teachers who are unsure of how to implement an intervention.

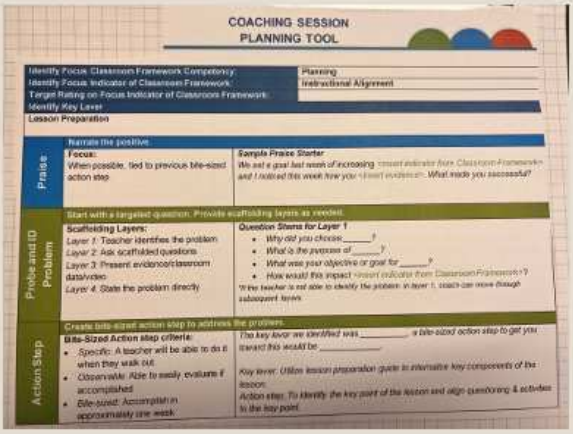
## Teacher Coaching

- According to the study, the staff indicated that they wanted additional support for delivering interventions to ensure they were being implemented with fidelity.
- The staff also indicated a need for coaching in the area of progress monitoring.
- The staff also expressed a need for assistance is selecting appropriate interventions.

## Research indicates…

- Coaching is an effective tool for supporting the appropriate delivery of RTI, increasing the fidelity of interventions thus improving student achievement (Wood et al., 2016).
- Coaching supports staff when they are delivering new instructional practices (Wood et al., 2016).
- Coaching allows teachers to receive direct feedback as they implement new skills, which will increase fidelity (Dunst et al., 2019).
- Coaching combined with PD increases the effectiveness and offers the opportunity for immediate feedback (Desimone & Pak, 2017).
- Coaching can be individualized to the specific need of the teacher or group (Desimone & Pak, 2017).

# Coaching Session Planning Tool



COACHING SESSION
PLANNING TOOL

Identify Focus Classroom Framework Competency: Planning
Identify Focus Indicator of Classroom Framework: Instructional Alignment
Target Rating on Focus Indicator of Classroom Framework:
Identify Key Lever
Lesson Preparation

**Praise**

Narrate the positive

**Focus:**
When possible, tied to previous bite-sized action step

**Sample Praise Starter**
*We set a goal last week of increasing <insert indicator from Classroom Framework> and I noticed this week how you <insert evidence>. What made you successful?*

**Probe and ID Problem**

Start with a targeted question. Provide scaffolding layers as needed.

**Scaffolding Layers:**
*Layer 1:* Teacher identifies the problem
*Layer 2:* Ask scaffolded questions
*Layer 3:* Present evidence/classroom data/video
*Layer 4:* State the problem directly

**Question Stems for Layer 1**
- *Why did you choose_____?*
- *What is the purpose of _____?*
- *What was your objective or goal for_____?*
- *How would this impact <insert indicator from Classroom Framework>?*

*If the teacher is not able to identify the problem in layer 1, coach can move through subsequent layers*

**Action Step**

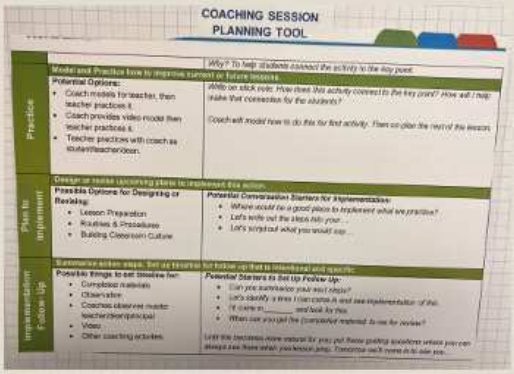
Create bite-sized action step to address the problem.

**Bite-Sized Action step criteria:**
- *Specific:* A teacher will be able to do it when they walk out.
- *Observable:* Able to easily evaluate if accomplished
- *Bite-sized:* Accomplish in approximately one week

*The key lever we identified was _____ a bite-sized action step to get you toward this would be _____*

*Key lever: Utilize lesson preparation guide to internalize key components of the lesson.*
*Action step: To identify the key point of the lesson and align questioning & activities to the key point.*

# Coaching Session Planning Tool



COACHING SESSION
PLANNING TOOL

**Practice**

*Why? To help students connect the activity to the key point.*

Model and Practice how to improve current or future lessons.

**Potential Options:**
- Coach models for teacher, then teacher practices it
- Coach provides video model then teacher practices it.
- Teacher practices with coach as student/teacher/observer.

*Write on stick note: How does this activity connect to the key point? How will I help make that connection for the students?*

*Coach will model how to do this for first activity. Then co-plan the rest of the lesson.*

**Plan to Implement**

Design or revise upcoming plans to implement this action.

**Possible Options for Designing or Revising:**
- Lesson Preparation
- Routines & Procedures
- Building Classroom Culture

**Potential Conversation Starters for Implementation:**
- *Where would be a good place to implement what we practice?*
- *Let's write out the steps into your...*
- *Let's script out what you would say...*

**Implementation Follow Up**

Summarize action steps. Set up timeline for follow up that is intentional and specific.

**Possible things to set timeline for:**
- Completed materials
- Observation
- Coaches observe master teacher/downloads
- Video
- Other coaching activities

**Potential Starters to Set Up Follow Up:**
- *Can you summarize your next steps?*
- *Let's identify a time I can come in and see implementation of this.*
- *If I come in _____ and look for this.*
- *When can you get the (completed material) to me for review?*

*Until this becomes more natural for you put these guiding questions where you can always see them when you lesson plan. Tomorrow we'll come in to see you...*


## Professional Learning Communities

# PLCs

- According to the results of this study, the staff indicated a need for ongoing PDs and support during the RTI process.
- The staff also wanted to be able to support each other, and PLCs afford the staff an ongoing opportunity to do so and learn from each other.

# PLCs

- PLCs provide teachers with a collaborative learning network that allows them to increase their knowledge and share experiences for the advancement of student achievement (Fuchs, 2016; Prenger et al., 2019; Voelkel & Chrispeels, 2017).
- PLCs have been positively correlated with student achievement, teach collaboration and efficacy (Fuchs, 2016; Prenger et al., 2019; Voelkel & Chrispeels, 2017).
- PLCs have been effective with RTI in the areas of implementation fidelity, selecting appropriate intervention, and progress monitoring (Prenger et al., 2019).


## Lunch

Your lunch time will be from 12:00-1:00

Enjoy!

## RTI Team

- The function of the RTI team is to develop a plan that will educate the staff in best practices and select evidence-based interventions to ensure student success.
- The RTI team will assist teachers in designing intervention plans, analyzing data, as well as collaborating with teachers throughout the decision-making phase of the RTI process.

## RTI Team Members

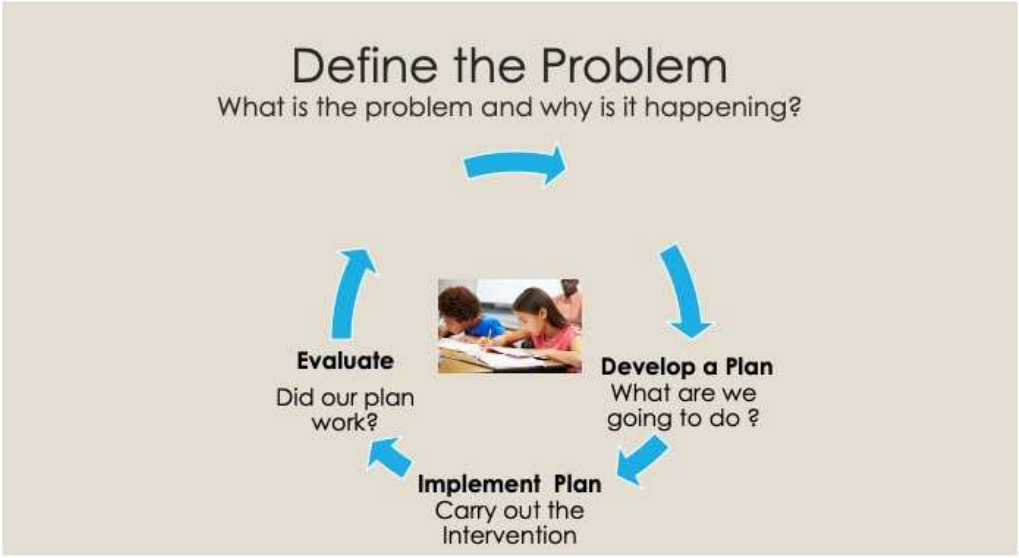
- RTI Coordinator
- Grade Level Deans
- RTI Facilitator

## RTI Team Responsibilities

- Responsibilities Include:
  - Teacher support
  - Problem-solve leadership
  - Tier 1 & 2 meetings
  - Analyze data
  - Provide instructional support at every grade
  - Monitor fidelity

## RTI Team Meeting

- Meet quarterly
- Develop a process to plan, implement, and monitor intervention
- Be proactive




# Whole Group Afternoon Discussion

- What is stopping you?
- Would you be interested in being on the Leadership Team at your school?
- What are the driving forces influencing the implementation of each tier at your school?
- What was your views of RTI prior to this PD?

# Final Evaluation


You will receive a final evaluation that will be sent in approximately 3 months.

I wanted to ensure that you had time to utilize this PD, the PLC, and coaching to assist you with RTI in your classroom. After 3 months, please take the course evaluation to assist me in future PD for our district.

Thank you for your attendance.

# Appendix B: The Interview Questions

What are the current challenges you experience when implementing Tier 2 interventions?

What is the process for selecting intervention strategies?

How do you determine if a particular strategy is effective?

What do you do if it is determined that the strategy is ineffective?

What process does Mayberry use to address challenges with training, progress monitoring, and the quality and frequency in which the interventions are being implemented?

According to the data generated and research-based practices, were the interventions assigned appropriate to meet the needs of the specific student's academic challenge?

What process could be put into place to improve or correct this problem?

What type of additional support do you think is needed to ensure that the interventions are being implemented as designed, documented consistantly, and implemented with fidelity?

What components of the RTI process prevent the smooth implementation of Tier 2 interventions?

What additional training or skills do you feel would be beneficial for you at this point?