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# A Case Study Investigating Teachers' Knowledge and Implementation of Response to Intervention

Regina Sims  
*Walden University*

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# Walden University

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

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Regina Sims

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2013

Abstract

A Case Study Investigating Teachers' Knowledge and Implementation of Response to  
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by

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MA, Prairie View A&M University, 1996

BS, Prairie View A&M University, 1990

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Administrator Leadership

Walden University

September 2013

## Abstract

The local school district in the current study was struggling to meet adequate yearly progress (AYP) targets in reading because secondary students were scoring below the basic level in reading and their content area teachers had little or no training in reading deficiencies. What had been speculated, yet never tested, was the utility of teacher training in research-based reading programs and interventions on increasing those reading achievement scores. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine issues hampering RTI implementation. This case study focused on analyzing the perceptions of secondary RTI teachers within an urban school district in Texas. The theoretical framework was based on cognitive and social constructivist theory. The research question investigated the best approach to improve teachers' knowledge and implementation of the RTI framework to increase students' reading achievement. Interview data were collected from 3 RTI teachers who had more than 3 years of teaching experience. Data were analyzed through lean coding by using provisional codes to reduce codes to 3 major themes. Reports from the 3 teachers suggested that they all encountered many challenges in implementing RTI; additionally they all conveyed that they needed more support from administrators, access to prescribed resources, and consistent guidelines in program implementation. A white paper was developed to inform the local district on RTI implementation challenges and provide recommendations for improvement. This study impacts social change by providing administrators and educators with information that could improve implementation practices and result in better understanding of RTI.



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## Dedication

This doctoral study is dedicated to my loving, wonderful, and supportive husband, Downen Sims, and my lovely and encouraging children, Desmond and Aleyah Sims. My husband and children have supported me throughout this entire endeavor. Words cannot express my gratitude to God for blessing me with such an amazing family. My mother, Earnestine Patrick has also been supportive and kept encouraging me to complete this journey. My mother did an excellent job in teaching me to set goals and overcome obstacles. She has always encouraged me to get my education. I appreciate my aunt Gloria Lister for always being there and wanting to see me succeed. A special shout out to friends who have supported, prayed, and encouraged me throughout this journey. Without their love and support, I would not have completed this journey.



## Acknowledgments

This doctoral journey has been long and tedious, but I have not been in this struggle alone. I would like to give honor and glory to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I thank God for giving me the wisdom and knowledge to begin and complete this doctoral study. I want to also thank God for blessing me to know the late Mother Ella Mae Eagleton (grandmommy), and allowing her to deposit the words persevere and endure into my spirit before she went home to live with God. Each time I wanted to quit, God reminded me of these two words. I am thankful for the prayers of my Mt. Rose COGIC family and Pastor Ron and Sis. Jeorgia. A special thank you to Amber and Mary for providing needed feedback.

My doctoral committee was exceptional and consistently provided feedback to assist me in reaching my goal. I am eternally grateful for the opportunity to work with Dr. Robert McClure. He guided me, encouraged me, and brought out the best in me along this doctoral journey. I appreciate Dr. Ralph Marino and Dr. Bonita Wilcox for their feedback during the completion of my study. Their knowledge and expertise contributed to my success.

The following scriptures guided me throughout my doctoral journey:

“I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me.” Philippians 4:13 (KJV)

“And He said, the things which are impossible with men are possible with God.” Luke 18:27 (KJV) To God be the glory for the things He has done.

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## Section 1: The Problem

### **Introduction**

In a small urban school district located in Southeast Texas, the Independent School District (ISD) did not meet adequate yearly progress (AYP) in reading in 2010 and 2011. The district's population was comprised of predominantly Hispanic American students (74.1%) with a small African American and European American population (Texas Education Agency [TEA], 2011). The district was placed on the Stage 1 school improvement program (SIP) by the TEA. The District Planning and Advisory Committee (DPAC) reviewed the district plan and developed goals to assist campuses in meeting AYP guidelines. The district decided to implement these improvements: staff development, new resources for English language arts classrooms, district assessment improvements, and close monitoring of the number of students taking the modified version of the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) test. However, the district continued to miss AYP targets. The district received Title 1 funding and if AYP were not met, the Title 1 funds could be limited or withheld.

The ISD mandated that teachers administer district assessments two times a year to supervise students' progress in reading. These data were important in determining which students needed to be placed into intervention and tutorial programs. Students scoring 70% or below were required to attend morning tutorials and Saturday school. These data allowed the teachers to provide individualized instruction based on the skills needed by each student. The ISD required all English and reading teachers to attend a mandatory AYP meeting that focused on the transition from using the Texas Assessment

of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) to the STAAR assessment for determining AYP for schools and districts. This meeting was designed to inform educators about the importance of meeting AYP. AYP required schools to meet standards in test preparation, academic performance in math and reading, and English language arts.

The guidelines for meeting AYP were not available for the new STAAR assessment, which posed a challenge for Texas school districts. Texas was requiring districts to change assessment measures without stating expectations or goals. Educators were experiencing the unknown with this new test and did not know what to expect or how to accurately prepare their students to pass the exams. The TEA (2011) developed practice STAAR test to give examples of how the STAAR would be worded and formatted. The TEA also developed passing scores on the STAAR to determine if schools and districts met AYP.

Districts and schools were informed that the STARR would be more rigorous than the TAKS test (TEA, 2012). The STAAR would also be a timed test, which was one of the differences between the two assessments. Because of these changes, schools were focusing on improving their reading intervention programs. To ensure that students met AYP, the district focused on their response to intervention (RTI) model. The district has implemented the RTI framework since 2008. According to Johnson and Smith (2011), RTI is a framework that leads to better teaching and learning through the integration of high quality instruction, intervention, and assessment. In the area of language arts, the local district offered coteaching, resources, English as a second language (ESL), READ 180, System 44, and tutorials that assisted in supporting the needs of the students

struggling to read. RTI represents a three-tier model, which is based on a research-based approach. In RTI implementation, the diverse needs of all students are met to increase academic achievement. Johnson and Smith (2011) suggested that “Tier 1 represents the general instructional curriculum; Tier 2 represents interventions for at risk students with poor achievement and Tier 3 represent special education students” (para 3). The school district studied used an RTI model to increase reading achievement of low-performing students to help meet AYP standards.

Many students on the secondary level were struggling with reading difficulties associated with learning as an ESL student. ESL students often experienced problems while acquiring early literacy skills, making it difficult to read (Pierce, Katzir, Wolf, & Noam, 2010). According to Pierce, Katzir, Wolf, and Noam (2010), reading failure is prevalent among urban ESL students who fall into the poverty category. Many ESL students in the district studied came from homes where the parents were not fluent in the second language and their education was limited (Teacher, personal communication, February 10, 2011).

A difference between reading difficulties and reading disabilities exists (Pierce et al., 2010). At the ISD that was studied, many students had reading difficulties because of environmental issues, such as learning English, poverty, and instructional practices. The challenge to meet the needs of the students was a problem for all content area teachers who sought ways to improve reading instruction. Many teachers had difficulty meeting the needs of the diverse learners because of limited funding and resources. Teachers wanted to attend more training to increase their knowledge of RTI implementation in

order to use research-based reading strategies to promote student success (Teacher, personal communication, October 11, 2011).

Teachers found that some students at the secondary level lacked the vocabulary and comprehension skills needed to become fluent readers. Many were able to sound out words but were unable to read fluently and comprehend what was being read (Teacher, personal communication, October 11, 2011). According to Glenburg, Goldberg, and Zhu (2011), “reading aloud sentences composed of words in the child’s vocabulary does not guarantee comprehension” (p. 29). Many secondary students attending the district studied were able to decode words but slowly; because the “primary purpose of reading is comprehension” (Pierce et al., 2010, p. 134) many ESL students were considered at risk for reading failure.

Motivating students to become successful readers was difficult for teachers in the district studied. Harms (2012) stated that “extrinsic motivation comes not from within the individual, but from outside” (p. 10). Teachers often used extrinsic rewards to motivate students to read. Students will many times participate to reap the benefits and rewards (Harms, 2012). Ulper (2011) stated that motivation is the key to get students reading. Strategies to get students to read will only work if the student has a desire to read (Ulper). As the librarian, my assignment was to motivate students to read. I offered extrinsic rewards to students for reaching a specific reading goal. However, many times these rewards did not motivate students to become life-long readers (Harms, 2012).

Reading skills are the most important skills for students to experience overall academic achievement (Cho, Xu, & Rhodes, 2010). According to Cho et al. (2010),

students struggle at the secondary level to acquire basic reading skills that are needed to be successful across all academic disciplines. According to the local district's reading assessment scores, some students were struggling with mastering basic reading skills (Teacher, personal communication, November 5, 2011). Reading is more than calling out words; a person must be able to comprehend what is being read. Therefore, schools and districts are held accountable for ensuring that students are proficient in reading by 2014 (TEA, 2012).

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB; 2002) act requires that all classroom teachers be "highly qualified" (p. 29). However, the term highly qualified is relative. Piasta, Conner, Fisherman, and Morrison (2009) stated that some disagree on the definition of highly qualified. According to NCLB, a highly qualified teacher must have a bachelor's degree, be competent in core academic subject(s), have certification by passing a state exam, or participate in an alternative program (TEA, 2013). Piasta et al. believed that a teacher's education alone was not enough to teach literacy content. Teachers should be taught more content knowledge in order to effectively impact students' literacy achievement. A student's reading success is related to the amount of knowledge that teachers have in teaching reading skills (Piasta et al., 2011). Teachers at the district under study attended departmental meetings to discuss ways to develop more engaging lessons and reflect on their instructional practices and knowledge about teaching reading skills to improve AYP scores.



### **Larger Population**

AYP is an important topic across the United States because districts and schools are accountable for student's academic performance. Although I addressed the issue at the local setting, AYP performance is also declining on the national level. According to the Alliance for Excellent Education (2011a), many students are graduating from high school without the skills needed to be successful in a postsecondary school. The Alliance for Excellent Education also indicated that "1.2 million students across the United States did not graduate from high school in 2008" (para 8). The United States Department of Education (2011a) stated that 25 % of eighth grade students and 27 % of 12th grade students score below the "basic" level in reading, which means they do not have partial mastery of the appropriate grade-level knowledge and skills. Due to evidence of poor literacy skills among adolescents, many states are attempting to improve their reading and writing curriculums (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2011b). According to TEA (2011a), 49% of all Texas school districts did not meet AYP, and 8.3% of all campuses missed AYP in reading. These data shows that districts in Texas are struggling to meet state academic standards and students are not meeting proficiency goals. Districts and schools are held accountable for ensuring that all students experience academic success.

School districts in Texas relied on the Texas Projection Measure to assist in meeting state academic standards. According to TEA (2012), many Texas districts were affected by the removal of the Texas Projection Measure. This measure allowed students who did not pass the state assessment to be counted as passing AYP if it was predicted that they would pass the following year. To meet AYP in reading for 2011, districts had

to have 87% of students to pass reading. By 2014, districts must have 100% of their students passing reading (TEA). With such high percentages of districts and campuses failing to meet AYP, districts started focusing on improving reading and intervention programs. Johnson and Smith (2008) indicated that a primary reason for poor RTI models in secondary schools is the lack of standard intervention protocols. Unlike elementary schools, secondary schools do not have a standard RTI intervention model. Secondary schools are responsible for creating their own RTI model using research-based reading programs. Little, if any, research exists on a RTI implementation model available for secondary students (Johnson & Smith).

According to NCLB (2002), schools are required to use research-based reading programs to assist students in becoming successful readers. RTI is the framework used in Texas and was implemented in the local district in 2008. RTI is a multitiered instructional program that allows students to have successful educational opportunities in the regular classroom. The TEA (2008) indicated that “instructional approaches used within the general education setting should result in academic and/or behavioral progress for the majority of the students” (para 2). According to the RTI framework, 80% of students in the general education classroom should experience academic success with instructional strategies implemented by the teacher. Instructional strategies should be research-based and used to facilitate the learning process.

A goal of educators at the local district was to prevent reading failures. The schools were implementing research-based programs, but students were continuing to read below grade level. According to NCLB (2002), students must master five essential

elements to be successful readers: phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Secondary students who do not learn basic reading skills will not acquire the skills necessary to become competent readers (McCollin, 2010). McCollin (2011) revealed that many adolescents struggle to comprehend textbook content because they have not mastered early reading skills. Mastering reading skills in the early years could assist students in becoming fluent, competent readers across all content areas during middle and high school years.

Many intervention programs have been adopted throughout the United States and are geared toward students in kindergarten through third grade because the government's initial focus was on early intervention programs. Some of the intervention programs used in schools were READ 180, Reading Recovery and Accelerated Reading Instruction. McCollin (2010) believed that students who could not read by third grade would continue to have reading problems. Bates, Breslow, and Hupert (2009) stated that researchers now agree that the government needs to focus on improving literacy skills for students in K-12. According to Bates et al., adolescent literacy is not the focus of most research topics. This study revealed that most current research focused on early reading skills, instead of ways to improve the reading skills of adolescents who have struggled to learn to read throughout elementary school. The focus has been on getting students proficient in reading by third grade, but the focus needs to be to get all students reading at a proficient level regardless of grade level or age.

## **Rationale**

The school district studied missed AYP for 2 consecutive years because of exceeding the federal cap in reading/English language arts. According to TEA (2011a), “school districts cannot exceed the 3% cap limit on the STAAR alternate and STAAR modified test unless they have been given an exception to the 1% cap” (para 13). According to the district assessment data, students continue to struggle with reading skills. Because of the large enrollment of ESL students, instruction must be differentiated using research-based strategies. Second language learners from low socioeconomic and non-English backgrounds have difficulty acquiring the English language and learning to read (Derderian-Aghajanian & Cong, 2012).

Teachers must be trained in innovative ways to teach students to read. Effective research-based reading programs and interventions are required to increase reading achievement. According to AYP (2011), only 73% of limited English proficient (LEP) students met state assessment standards in reading. The goal of the district was to increase this percentage by 14%. For this to happen, the district must implement a strategy for increasing reading achievement for all students.

ESL students often experience lower academic achievement in reading when compared to their English-speaking peers (Derderian-Aghajanian & Cong, 2012). In the district being studied, ESL students were expected to read and perform successfully in all content areas. This was often a challenge for ESL students because they were attempting to develop cognitive academic language proficiency skills in the second language. Bowman-Perrott, Herrera, and Murry (2010) defined cognitive academic language

proficiency skills as the “level of second language acquisition required for ELL to perform at grade level in content area classroom learning” (p. 93). According to Webb and Kapavik (2010), content presented to learners must be engaging and applicable in order for student to experience success. It is important that students are allowed to participate in the learning process. At the end of a lesson, students should know how to use the information learned in everyday life.

Educators, parents, and politicians are concerned with the underachievement of ESL students (Good, Masewicz, & Vogel, 2010). However, no common ground exists on the cause of the growing achievement gap. The achievement of Hispanic Americans has consistently been lower than European Americans (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). Lopez (2009) revealed that many Latinos discontinue their education because of language barriers and a dislike of school. Educators continue to seek intervention strategies that will successfully meet the needs of the diverse learner.

The goal of the RTI model is to develop a solid Tier 1 general education program. Providing effective general instruction assists in improving students’ academic success. The percentage of students that should be successful with Tier 1 is 80% to 85% (Johnson & Smith, 2011). Any percentage lower requires school officials to evaluate and improve the Tier 1 program. Allan and Goddard (2010) indicated that during Tier 1 instruction, teachers should incorporate differentiation, universal design, and literacy strategies across content areas. Applying these strategies should improve instruction and student achievement. Reading instruction and intervention programs should be observed to ensure that research-based practices are implemented correctly. Students must

experience success and be given the correct intervention based on their needs. The phenomenon of reading failure concerns schools and districts. Quality instruction must be developed to assist in meeting students' instructional needs (Calderon, Slavin, & Sanchez, 2011).

### **Definitions**

*Achievement gap:* The difference in academic achievement between various ethnic groups (Herron-McCoy, 2009).

*Adequate yearly progress (AYP):* Used yearly to determine the achievement of schools and school districts in reading and math (US Department of Education, 2012).

*Differentiated instruction:* According to Council for Exceptional Children (2011b), differentiated instruction requires teachers to adapt their instruction to meet the learning styles of the students.

*English as a second language (ESL):* An English program that serves students identified as limited English proficient (Jackson, 2013).

*Highly qualified teacher (HQT):* Teachers that have a college degree and state certified (US Department of Education, 2012).

*Intervention:* An education program or practice designed to improve student achievement (Institute of Education Sciences, 2012).

*No child left behind (NCLB):* A law passed in 2002 that promotes higher standards and higher accountability for schools and districts (Sabol, 2010).

*Response to intervention (RTI):* A multilevel prevention model used to determine how and if students responds to instructional changes (National Center on Response to Intervention, 2012).

*State of Texas assessments of academic readiness (STAAR):* An assessment that measures curriculum and TEKS. This test will replace the TAKS (TEA, 2012).

### **Significance**

Reading is a skill needed by everyone to experience academic success (McDonald & Thornley, 2009). Students must learn to read fluently and comprehend what is being read to learn from the text (Rasinki, Homan, & Biggs, 2009). Because of student's experiencing reading difficulties, NCLB (2002) mandated that educators use the RTI framework to assist struggling readers. Therefore, a project study on teachers' knowledge and implementation of RTI in reading was crucial in determining if teachers were effectively implementing RTI.

Teachers must understand what interventions are and why they are useful in the classroom. Many teachers at the secondary level stated that they have not received any formal training on interventions to use with their struggling readers (Teacher, personal communication, February 29, 2012). However, teachers were required to document intervention strategies in lessons. Training is needed for teachers to create appropriate lessons for struggling readers (Wanzek, Vaughn, Roberts, & Fletcher, 2011).

Documentation is a form of data that allows the teacher to recognize if strategies implemented have or have not been successful. These data can be useful in creating individualized lessons for students using strategies that have been successful. Providing

professional development opportunities may be beneficial in assisting teachers with preparing lessons based on data results.

The purpose of this study was to determine if teachers' knowledge of RTI affected their implementation of RTI and improved student reading achievement. The interview process allowed teachers the opportunity to elaborate on their experiences in using the RTI framework. They also shared interventions that were and were not successful. This information should assist educators in finding a solution to increase low reading scores of secondary students as defined by AYP. Students could also benefit by being provided needed interventions to assist them in becoming successful in reading. The RTI framework was developed to prevent failure and ensure that all students have access to quality instruction that is implemented with integrity (RTI Action Network, 2012). Guaranteeing that students are exposed to quality teachers is critical to student success (Chait, 2009).

### **Guiding/Research Question**

The purpose of this study was to examine teachers' knowledge on the implementation of RTI and how it may improve students' reading achievement and increase AYP scores. To understand the needs of teachers and students, I conducted interviews to acquire information on teachers' knowledge and use of the RTI framework. Luther and Richman (2009) noted that it is important to obtain teachers' understanding and perceptions of the program they are being required to implement. The teachers in the district studied received RTI training, but additional RTI training is needed to assist them in helping students reach their fullest reading potential.



ESL students experience difficulties in becoming competent readers. Andrews (2010) found that many secondary ESL students do poorly in reading, which causes them to struggle academically in all subject areas and beyond the classroom. ESL students' success rests on their ability to comprehend text by reading fluently (Grabe, 2010). If students score 70% or below on the state-mandated reading exam, they are considered to be struggling readers. Schools are then required to use test data to determine the level of intervention needed for each student. Secondary teachers were required by the district and local campus administrators to document proof of implemented interventions. Teachers communicated that they would like to become more knowledgeable on the RTI process and have access to more intervention strategies to use with their students (Teacher, personal communication, February 10, 2012).

In this project study, I addressed the following research question:

1. What was the best approach to improve teachers' knowledge and implementation of the RTI framework and increase reading achievement among urban secondary students?

## **Review of the Literature**

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for this project study was constructivism. Constructivism allows students the opportunity to become creators of knowledge through active learning. Powell and Kalina (2009) noted that in cognitive constructivism students gain understanding of concepts through personal experiences, and in social constructivism students learn best by engaging with teachers and peers. Both

constructivist theories can be used in the classroom to enhance students learning experiences. Teachers may need to adopt a constructivist teaching style in order for students to experience academic success.

The ESL population continues to increase, which changes, the dynamics of classrooms across the United States. According to TEA (2012b), “the passing standards in the federal accountability system must rise to passing rates of 100% on the mathematics and reading tests by 2014” (para 5). Teachers must implement instructional techniques that will meet the needs of their students. Teaching methodologies may have to change to meet this challenge.

The primary databases used to conduct this literature review were Google Scholar, Proquest, and EBSCO. These databases were used to retrieve full text articles on *AYP*, *professional development*, *RTI*, *RTI implementation*, and *poor reading achievement*. The literature was reviewed and additional information added until complete saturation was reached. The articles used in the literature review were written within the last 5 years.

In this qualitative study, I focused on teachers’ knowledge and implementation of the RTI process to assist the district in meeting the state’s AYP goals. In the social development theory, “social and cognitive development work together and build on each other” (Vygotsky as cited Mooney, 2013, p. 100). This theory was founded on the principle that cognitive development is dependent on the zone of proximal development (ZPD). Vygotsky defined the ZPD as “the distance between the most difficult task a child can do alone and the most difficult task a child can do with help” (as cited in

Mooney, 2013, p. 101). Becoming knowledgeable of students ZPD may assist teachers in providing the appropriate assistance needed to complete the required task.

In a constructivist classroom, a variety of teaching practices should be implemented. Teachers can assist students by preparing opportunities and activities that allow students to collaborate with their peers. Kelley and Clausen-Grace (2011) revealed that students have difficulty learning if they are not engaged in the learning process. Kelley and Clausen-Grace also indicated that highly engaged readers demonstrated higher levels of reading achievement. Teachers are challenged to facilitate instruction instead of using the traditional lecture-based teaching approach (Kelley & Clausen-Grace, 2011). Vygotsky did not believe in basing students' success on test results; Vygotsky believed that teacher observations about students were as valid as test results (as cited in Mooney, 2013). The RTI model allows the teacher to design students' instruction based on observations and results of data (Tolbert, 2012).

Teachers are an integral part of the learning process. Students rely on the expertise of the teacher to acquire needed knowledge. Vygotsky believed the role of the teacher was important and was instrumental in the student's ability to attain new skills; the student's environment is helpful in stimulating the student's cognitive development (as cited in Mooney, 2013). Vygotsky believed that "learning and development are similar but not identical; the combination of instructing the child and honoring the child's individual development optimizes learning" (as cited in Mooney, 2013, p. 110). Learning takes place when the students can perform a new skill with assistance from the teacher-student's ZPD. Vygotsky believed that the adult participating in the academic experience

is accountable for sharing knowledge with students so that learning can occur (as cited in Miller, 2010).

Social constructivists believe that students begin the learning process by doing what they can independently and then gaining assistance from a more knowledgeable other (MKO). Neal and Schanzenback (2010) discussed research studies that focused on administrators who used resources to focus on students who they believed would pass the assessments while neglecting students who they did not believe would pass. Teachers must improve their instructional practices to assist in meeting the needs of their students (Rotherham & Willingham, 2010). Constructivists focus on providing assistance to help students learn content and overcome learning challenges (Martin, 2011).

Cognitive constructivism is based on Piaget's (1973) theory of cognitive development. Piaget stated that humans do not immediately understand information when it is given; they must be given the opportunity to construct their own knowledge (as cited in Mooney, 2013). Piaget believed that students learned more from doing instead of listening to teacher's instructions (as cited in Mooney, 2013). Learning will not automatically occur; teachers should facilitate this process by including Piaget's stages of development that targets students' ability to learn at various stages (as cited in Mooney, 2013). The teacher's goal should be to gradually withdraw assistance so that students can take ownership of their learning (Passarelli & Kolb, 2011).

Professional development opportunities may assist teachers with acquiring knowledge on successful implementation of RTI. The causes and results of reading difficulty are discussed in the literature review. This information is useful in assisting

teachers to effectively meet the needs of all learners. Teachers could benefit using the constructivist approach by using prior experiences to learn new methods to provide differentiating and constructive learning experiences for all students (Chi, 2009).

### **Accountability**

Teacher accountability is the focus of many discussions in the United States. The passing of NCLB (2002) affected the responsibility of teachers. Teachers must ensure that their instruction is aligned with state assessments. Schools are not only accountable for student's achievement, but they are also responsible for the progress of various subgroups (TEA, 2011a).

Many students enter school with poor reading skills, language barriers, and no motivation to read. Some schools attempt to place struggling students in special education classes because of the pressure to meet accountability targets (Ladd & Lauren, 2010). The state and federal accountability system's primary concern is local districts meeting learning targets on high-stakes test (TEA, 2011a). Musoleno and White (2010) found that teachers were under stress due to high-stakes testing. The teachers felt that too much energy was spent on testing and test preparation and not enough focus on teaching creative and engaging lessons.

High stakes testing is used to determine if campuses and districts meet AYP (TEA, 2012a). Wright (2009) stated that "the pressure felt by educators has driven them to cut corners when preparing children to take high-stakes tests" (p. 117). Wright suggested that many schools cheat by allowing students more time on tests and allowing them to work ahead on sections before the testing day. Wright added that "more

scandalous problems have involved changing students' answers after the tests have been completed, teaching specific responses to test questions ("teaching to the test"), and helping students while the test is in progress" (p. 118). The problem with teaching to the test is that students are not receiving content knowledge and are lacking skills needed to achieve academically (Wright).

### **No Child Left Behind**

The NCLB Act (2002) is an educational reform designed to increase student achievement in all subjects, including reading and enhances the culture of schools. NCLB was enacted to reduce discrimination in student performance by race and socioeconomic status (Dee & Jacob, 2011). AYP performance is measured by subgroup and aggregate school performance (TEA, 2011a). AYP is also used to determine if schools and districts are meeting academic standards.

Teachers and administrators across the United States are being held accountable for students passing state assessments under both state and federal accountability systems. NCLB (2002) set guidelines and caused changes for educators. NCLB mandated that all students be proficient on state assessments by 2014 and required districts to select and implement intervention programs that have been proven effective through scientifically-based research. Dee and Jacob (2011) revealed that test-based accountability systems can cause educators to focus only on subjects being tested and deprive students of learning other subjects. Dee and Jacob also disclosed that NCLB had not influenced the reading achievement of fourth grade students; neither had it any effect on closing achievement gaps. Dee and Jacob revealed that state mandated assessments

can be beneficial to measuring student, school, and district progress. But, holding teachers and administrators accountable for students progress may cause teachers to teach to the test and deprive students from learning skills that may help to improve students overall academic success. Students are being left behind due to achievement gaps, and the gaps cannot be closed teaching to a test.

Billions of dollars have been spent on increasing reading achievement, but reading test scores have not increased (United States Department of Education, 2011a). The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES; 2011) reported that fourth grade students' average reading score in 2011 did not change from their average reading score in 2009. However, Grade 8 students' average reading score was 1 point higher in 2011 than in 2009. The Institute of Education Sciences (IES; 2011), showed that reading scores among fourth and eighth grade students remained relatively flat for the past 2 years. Jehlen (2011) stated that high-stakes testing is not the answer. High-stakes testing has caused many teachers to feel the stress of ensuring that students meet or exceed expectations on state assessments and are teaching students to pass a test versus teaching students to read for success (Jehlen).

### **Causes of Reading Difficulties**

As school and district populations continue to increase, teachers must work even harder to meet the needs of all students. Teaching students to improve their reading skills is a high priority (Taylor, 2012). The National Early Literacy Panel (NELP) discussed the following skills necessary for developing reading competence in all children: “phonemic awareness, print awareness, understanding the alphabet, decoding strategies,

reading fluency and comprehension strategies” (as cited in Shanahan & Lonigan, 2010). These skills are important for students learning to read. Students who are proficient in these skills during early years can become competent readers on the secondary level. Lesaux and Kieffler (2010) stated that “Students beyond the primary grades, effectively analyzing and comprehending text is a complex process that is central to academic success” (p. 598). Vaughn et al. (2008) stated that secondary students who are experiencing reading challenges need instructional strategies in vocabulary and comprehension techniques. Students struggling to read on the secondary level may lack the ability to decode words and understand the meaning of words in context. These students will have to be allowed opportunities to learn and practice vocabulary and comprehension techniques that will assist them in becoming competent readers in all content areas.

Reading difficulties among adolescent students is prevalent across the United States (Bauerlein, 2011). The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA; 2009) revealed that in reading literacy only “30 percent of United States students scored at or above proficiency level 4, and 18 % scored below level 2” (para 5). PISA measures reading literacy based on Levels 1-6, (1 lowest level, and 6 highest). Reading difficulties can be caused by multiple factors. Students often enter middle school after receiving poor reading instruction, with low English skills, learning disabilities, and without the foundational skills needed to become good readers (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Compton, 2010).

ESL and native English students can experience obstacles in becoming good readers. Lesaux and Kieffler (2010) noted that 201 ESL and 61 native English-speaking



sixth grade students were screened for reading difficulties from six different middle schools. Students scoring at or below the 35<sup>th</sup> percentile were also given a language and literacy assessment and were categorized as struggling readers. Sixty percent of the ESL participants and 40 % of the native English speakers were determined to be struggling readers. Struggling readers revealed “commonalities in low general vocabulary scores, low working memory scores, and academic vocabulary scores in the low average range and these were consistent with underdeveloped oral language skills” (Lesaux & Kieffler, p. 614). ESL and native English students can be at risk for reading failure if students do not acquire the skills needed to become literate readers. Oral language development is important during the early years because it teaches students that sounds have meaning. Decoding the meaning of words builds students comprehension skills.

Lipka and Siegel (2010) conducted a longitudinal study using ESL and non ESL students in kindergarten and followed them until 7<sup>th</sup> grade. Students participating in this study were experiencing reading difficulties during kindergarten. Participants participated in a RTI approach where they were monitored and assessed frequently. Lipka and Siegel found that by the time the students were in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, most students were no longer at risk for reading problems. Providing early interventions through a prescribed RTI approach reduced reading difficulties in ESL and non ESL students (Lipka & Siegel). Both studies indicated that ESL and native English students can be at risk for reading problems regardless of the language barrier. It is important that early reading skills are taught, monitored and assessed. Using an effective RTI approach may also be helpful in reducing reading problems on the secondary level.

Readers at the secondary level not only struggle with foundational reading skills but also from the effects of reading at low levels (Vaughn et al., 2008). As a result, students may be unmotivated to read and encounter reading difficulties. Melekoglu's (2011) quasi-experimental study on the impact of reading motivation on struggling readers with and without learning disabilities (LD) included 13 struggling readers with LD and 25 struggling readers without LD. Melekoglu found that after 8 weeks of 90-minute daily blocks of READ 180 instruction, all students made reading gains as measured by the scholastic reading inventory (SRI). According to the adolescent motivation and reading survey (AMRS), students' motivation for reading improved. Motivation is an important factor in students' reading achievement that needs to be addressed as part of a balanced and effective reading program (Melekoglu).

Some students exhibit poor reading skills and language acquisition issues because of an auditory processing deficit. Loeb, Gillam, Hoffman, Brandel, and Marquis (2009) suggested that students with poor auditory processing might also have problems with understanding that words are made up of sounds and connecting sounds with alphabet. Loeb et al.'s study consisted of 103 students with poor reading skills and language deficits. The students ranged in ages 6 to 8 years-old, and each participant was assigned to one of the four computer-based interventions that focused on increasing phonemic awareness and poor reading skills. Loeb et al. found that after 6 weeks of intervention, phonemic awareness improved, but no improvement was made in reading skills. Many times students in early grades learn to sound out words but do not understand that words have meaning. Asking student's questions about the meaning of words as they are

reading may help them develop better comprehension and vocabulary skills. Corriveau, Goswami, and Thomsom (2010) found that auditory processing has a direct effect on preschool students' ability to learn pre-reading skills. The study focused on 3 to 6 year old students who had not received any formal reading instruction. Students were asked to listen to forty sets of sounds and determine which sounded like a bell. The student's ability to detect specific sounds was found to increase students rhyming skills. Identifying rhyming words is a skill taught before formal reading instruction. These two studies focused on young children's ability to process auditory information and how auditory processing affects student's ability to learn to read. One intervention method was not successful in increasing literacy skills, whereas another intervention had the potential to predict a student's ability to become a successful reader.

Researchers have stated that many teachers are inadequately prepared to teach reading (Joshi et al., 2009). Students receiving poor reading instruction have often times been incorrectly placed in special education programs due to experiencing reading challenges (Orosco & Klingner, 2010). Orosco and Klingner revealed that poor teacher planning, limited resources, negative school climate, and misaligned instruction and assessment contributed to an insufficient RTI model. Students were placed in special education programs based on incorrect implementation of the RTI framework.

Noll (2013) discussed how school districts are killing RTI by not implementing it correctly. Noll noted that administrators should focus on ensuring that high-quality instruction is taking place on Tier 1 level. Students who are receiving differentiated instruction on this level are less likely to need remedial instruction. Teaching teachers

how to effectively analyze data was also discussed. Noll revealed that teachers are given data but are not trained on how to use data to improve instruction. Professional development opportunities should be site based and focus on the needs of a specific campus. Training teachers to correctly analyze data could improve RTI implementation and student reading achievement (Noll). Student's academic achievement should not decline because of poor teacher planning, lack of data analysis skills, and poor RTI implementation. Student success should be the main goal and educators should be held accountable for ensuring that their instructional methods are aligned to the students needs.

Reading comprehension allows students to understand what is being read. Bharuthram (2012) believed that one of the main goals of an educator is to teach students to read fluently and comprehend what is being read. Succeeding in secondary school is based on students' ability to read and comprehend instructional content (Bharuthram). Students with reading comprehension problems can often read aloud fluently and correctly but are unable to understand what is being read (Hulme & Snowling, 2011). Reading but not comprehending is often considered a hidden disability because educators are unaware that there is a reading problem until the students' comprehension level is assessed (Hulme & Snowling). Clark, Snowling, Truelove, and Hulme (2010) revealed that one cause of reading comprehension failure may be poor oral language skills. Clark et al. identified groups in the study as oral language and text comprehension and a combination of oral language and text comprehension. Students were taught written text and spoken language together and in isolation. Students received 20 thirty-minute

intervention sessions per week. Clark et al. revealed that students who received oral language in isolation and combined with text comprehension improved in reading comprehension skills. Students in the isolated oral language group showed significant gains in oral vocabulary knowledge. Clark et al. results should cause educators to identify students with oral language deficiencies in order to implement interventions early to alleviate reading comprehension problems.

Oral language is the ability to speak and listen. Oral language skills are critical in developing successful readers (Goldenberg, 2010). In a study of students aged 4 and 6, Kendeou, Van Den Broek, White, and Lynch (2009) revealed that oral language plays a role in students' reading achievement. These students were tested and retested 2 years later to determine if their oral language skills continued to affect their comprehension level. Kendeou et al. found that students' oral language development and decoding skills have a direct effect on students' success in reading comprehension. Kendeou et al. suggested that oral language and decoding skills are developed during student's preschool years. Many times these skills are taught in isolation, but teaching them together may also assist students in developing reading skills. Educators may need to evaluate instructional strategies to ensure that decoding and oral language skills are taught to keep students from experiencing reading failure.

Reading fluency can hinder a students' reading comprehension. Reading fluency is defined as "skilled reading" (Kuhn, Schwanenflugel, & Meisinger, 2010, p. 239). Meisinger, Bloom, and Hynd (2010) noted that when students' reading abilities are assessed, the reading fluency assessment is often omitted. According to Meisinger et al.

excluding a reading fluency assessment can cause diagnostic results to be invalid. Meisinger et al. examined 50 students with dyslexia or other reading difficulties. The goal of this study was to determine if reading fluency affected the identification of students with reading disabilities. Meisinger et al. revealed that failure to evaluate students for reading fluency might result in the under-identification of students who are reading disabled. Reading fluency assessments allows educators to know if students are reading accurately, fast or slow, and with expression. If fluency is not measured, students who are not reading accurately or too slowly to comprehend may not be identified. Students who are not identified as needing assistance may not receive the interventions needed to help them become fluent readers.

Reading difficulties are prevalent in students of all ages and ethnicities across the United States (Bowman-Perrott, 2010). Students acquiring a second language often experience more difficulty when learning to read in a second language (Woolley, 2010). Denton, Wexler, Vaughn, and Bryan (2008) observed that ESL students and other students with minimal oral vocabulary skills may require more assistance because of their inability to respond to general classroom interventions. When students fail to respond to classroom interventions, teachers may be required to place them in Tier 2 to provide the best method of interventions for the student. Tier 2 allows students to work in small groups or receive individualized instruction to assist students in becoming academically successful in reading (Denton et al.).

### **Impact of Reading Difficulties**

Poor reading skills can result in grade retention. Reschly (2010) defined grade retention as “the practice of holding students back to repeat a grade for which they have not met academic or social expectations” (p. 69). NCLB(2002) mandates that schools and districts use state assessments to determine if students should be promoted. Rubin (2011) noted that the reforms of the NCLB Act were responsible for the rising retention percentages. Griffith, Lloyd, Lane, and Tankersley (2010) reported that students exhibiting inadequate reading skills, will likely experience grade retention. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2009) 10% of students in kindergarten through eighth grade are retained at least once. The TEA (2011a) reported that 3.5% of Texas students were retained during the 2010-2011 school year.

Students who are at a high risk for retention often have reading disabilities that become societal issues (Abbott et al., 2010). Abbott et al. conducted a research study with kindergarten and first grade retained and promoted low-achieving students. Abbott et al. indicated that retained students would advance in reading if they were provided with more academic time and literacy instruction inside the general education classroom. The data revealed that both the retained and low-achieving promoted students increased at the same rate during kindergarten and first grade. However, the retained students reached the below-average achievement level in 3 years, and the promoted students reached the same below-average achievement in 2 years. The retained students were at 79 correct words per minute and the promoted students were at 59 correct words per minute by the end of second grade. Students need to be at 90 correct words per minute in order to reach the

independent reading stage (Abbott et al.). Reading is an important skill needed by all. Providing rigorous reading instruction may help to accelerate struggling reader's progress (Lang et al., 2009).

Some students are referred to special education because of reading fluency problems (Silliman & Berninger, 2011). If a learning disability is identified through testing, the students are eligible to receive specialized instruction to assist in the students' academic achievement. If a student has a low IQ and is experiencing reading difficulties because he or she has been identified as a slow learner, then it is determined that the student is doing the best he can and does not receive specialized instruction (Silliman & Berninger). Jimenez, Siegel, O'Shanahan, and Ford (2009) studied 443 Spanish students ranging in age from 7 to 13 years who were classified as reading disabled (RD) and normal readers (NR). The purpose of the study was to determine if IQ scores played a role in the reading achievement of RD and NR students. Jimenez et al. indicated that the IQ scores and reading levels were not significant in the cognitive processes. The IQ scores did not have any relevance in the differences in reading achievement of RD and NR students. There was evidence that a learning disability could be causally related to a low IQ score due to student's reading failure.

According to the Intercultural Development Research Association (2011), 110,804 students dropped out of schools in Texas during the 2010-2011 school years. Students drop out of school for many reasons; some students drop out because of academic challenges (Council for Exceptional Children, 2011a). Reschly (2010) indicated that reading difficulties might affect students' motivation to remain in school.



Reschly referenced the “Matthew Effect,” which was based on the gospel of Matthew and states that the “rich get richer and the poor get poorer” (p. 74). Students who learn to read and practice reading become better readers, and students who do not learn to read continue to struggle academically.

Reschly (2010) proposed that reading skills are important for successful school completion. Reschly indicated that student engagement was the connection between reading and school completion. A student engagement model called Check and Connect was implemented during the study for students who were at risk of poor academic achievement. The purpose of this intervention was to promote school completion. Reschly revealed that ninety percent of the teachers stated that students who participated in the program for at least two years were showing social and academic improvements. Engagement and reading could be the key to preventing dropouts and promoting success (Reschly).

Students experiencing reading problems may also struggle with behavioral issues. Students’ who experience reading difficulties because of dyslexia, often suffer from behavior and self-esteem problems (Narimani, Sadeghieh Ahari, Homeily, & Siahpoosh, 2009). Terras, Thompson, and Minnis (2009) noted that intervention methods must include opportunities for educators to address how self-esteem and behavioral issues are related to reading problems. Terras, Thompson, and Minnis concluded from their exploratory study that dyslexic students did not have lower global self-esteem than the general population; however they exhibited self-esteem deficits in academic performance. Gendron, Williams, and Guerra (2011) reported that self-esteem and negative behavior

are determined by students' view of their overall school climate. Gendron et al. reported that many students who suffer with reading disabilities exhibit behavioral issues due to being taunted by classmates. In a longitudinal study on academic and behavioral issues of urban at-risk students, Montague, Enders, Cavendish, and Castro (2011) suggested that early behavior problems in students places them at a higher risk to experience poor academic outcomes. Montague et al. revealed that students' scores on individual achievement tests in elementary school predicted their reading achievement in high school. Students scoring poorly in reading in early grades were predicted to score poorly in secondary grades. This finding is detrimental for students who are required to take and pass high stakes reading assessments (Montague, et. al.).

Inadequate reading skills can negatively affect the lives of all students and adults, thus affecting their ability to succeed in other subject areas. As students leave primary school and enter secondary school, they are responsible for "reading to learn not learning to read" (Houck & Ross, 2012, para12). Because so many students enter secondary school without basic reading skills, teachers are required to implement intensive interventions (Vaughn, Denton, & Fletcher, 2010). Traditional instructional practices will have to be transformed into practices that meet the needs of the students (Hamilton, et al., 2009). Teachers' knowledge and implementation of RTI could be investigated to reform reading instruction and help to prevent the negative impact that reading problems have on so many struggling readers.

### **Issues with Reading Instruction**

According to the National Reading Panel (2000), reading fluency is an important outcome in effective reading instruction. Rasinki, Homan, and Briggs (2009) believed that reading fluency has been neglected in the reading curriculum and stated that teachers were more “interested in students’ ability to decode words accurately, not in reader’s ability to decode words automatically and quickly” (p. 193). Many teachers understand the essential components to prevent reading failure for struggling readers. Reading fluency is not just reading fast but it is reading for automaticity (speed) and prosody (expression). Rasinki et al. revealed that teachers need more effective strategies to teach fluency skills and teachers should not promote reading rate as fluency. Fluency is a component, but the major goal is for students’ to read with meaningful expression (Rasinki et al.).

Educators may increase the effectiveness of their instruction by incorporating research-based strategies into their lesson plans. This process may allow students to use their prior knowledge to build upon new information. Because of students’ varied backgrounds, teachers cannot assume that all students understand the information being taught. Students’ insufficient background knowledge on subject matter being taught can have a severe effect on students’ ability to understand instructional text (Fisher, Ross, & Grant, 2010). Fisher et al. evaluated the utilization “wide reading” and its effect on building students’ background knowledge. Wide reading allows students to read a variety of books on specific texts on their instructional level. Fisher et al. addressed the advantages of using direct and indirect experiences to develop background knowledge.

Fisher et al. discussed direct experiences as hands-on experiences and noted that students related to classroom concepts better after participating in hands-on and visual experiences. Indirect experiences were implemented by allowing students to develop background knowledge through the use of books, magazines, internet and other resources. Through the use of this method researchers saw a drastic increase in students reading achievement on classroom and state test on the specific topic studied. Fisher et al. suggested that to expand on students' background knowledge, teachers need to offer quality instruction, and other experiences to facilitate their understanding of information.

To execute effective reading instruction, teachers must have knowledge of how to apply explicit instruction and guided reading appropriately (Akakura, 2012). Guided reading is not a new concept; it was resurrected because of new research on the teaching-learning process (Rupley, Blair, & Nichols, 2009). In explicit classrooms, teacher and students interact as they collaborate in reading groups to create good text comprehension (Andreassen & Braten, 2011). Rupley et al. also pointed out that teachers' who model explicit instruction are more likely to see their struggling readers experience reading success. Rupley et al. also believed that teachers have a direct effect on how much students learn. This method uses effective instruction and also ties in to the constructivist view of relating new information with past learning so that students understand information (Rupley et al.).

Phelps (2009) evaluated 50 experienced reading teachers and 55 adults who never taught reading on their ability to teach students reading skills. Phelps revealed no significant difference between teachers and non-teachers about knowledge of reading

content, students, and teaching domains. Phelps also found that teachers have specialized content knowledge related to teaching students to read. Thus, teachers must acquire specialized knowledge in order to provide quality reading instruction for their students (Phelps).

Orosco and Klingner (2010) indicated that many teachers do not know how to effectively meet the needs of second language learners. Teachers must be knowledgeable of what students can do in their first language to assist them to learn to read in a second language (Goldenberg, 2010). Stewart (2010) stated that when teaching English language learners (ELL), educators should strive to ensure that students effectively acquire language skills. Stewart noted how the affective filter can hinder ELL from acquiring a second language and used her experience in acquiring a second language to evaluate how the experience influenced her teaching of ELL students. Stewart revealed that her teaching practices did not line up with her beliefs and her view of teaching ELL students was not accurate. Stewart believed that her instructional practices in how she instructs ELL needed to change. Stewart concluded that engaging in a second language learning experience may cause personal beliefs and instructional practices to change.

Benner, Nelson, Ralston, and Mooney (2010) conducted a study on the effects of reading instruction on students with behavioral disorders and found that the gap between strong and poor readers continues to increase in the absence of effective reading instruction and or intervention. Benner et al. suggested that students with behavior disorders experience reading difficulties because of the quality of reading interventions. For students to become successful readers, teachers should implement effective

instructional techniques (Kieffert & Lesaux, 2010). Teachers enter the classroom with various levels of expertise in teaching reading based on their educational background and teacher training (Allor, Mathes, Champlin, & Cheatham, 2009). Teachers must be able to determine when students are experiencing reading difficulties and provide the needed intervention (Wanzek et al., 2009). Thus, RTI was created to provide students with opportunities to succeed before being referred to special education.

### **Response to Intervention**

NCLB (2002) mandated that schools implement a RTI framework. The framework must address early intervention, scientifically-research based practices, and data that include universal screening and progress monitoring. RTI provides services and interventions to all students, with the goal to achieve positive behavior and academic outcomes by implementing interventions based on student's specific need (Sansosti, Goss, & Noltemeyer, 2011). The RTI model consists of three tiers, Tier 1 represents the general classroom, Tier 2 is interventions for students who are at-risk of failing, and Tier 3 represents special education (Johnson & Smith, 2011).

Students in middle school who experience reading difficulties have already been unsuccessful during their primary years and need academic and behavioral interventions that will help to improve their reading skills (Johnson & Smith, 2011). By the time students arrive in middle school many have already been diagnosed as slow learners or learning disabled (Spencer & Manis, 2010). Because classrooms are full of students on various academic levels, evaluating teacher's implementation of RTI could be the key to improving students reading skills (Orosco & Klingner, 2010).

District officials are examining student's low reading performance and looking at prevention and early intervention methods. Many intervention protocols are focused on the elementary grades with limited researched-based methods to support their use in the secondary setting (Johnson & Smith, 2008). Johnson and Smith (2011) stated that the goal of RTI is to reduce the number of students struggling to read and to reduce the amount of students referred to special education. Because of the percentage of minority students being referred for special education, RTI implementation attempts to provide various interventions and to initiate the referral process into special education as the last resort (United States Department of Education, 2009).

Educators have traditionally waited to address reading difficulties until third grade, causing many students to develop severe literacy skills deficits in later grades (Dunn, 2010). Provisions of the Individual with Disabilities Education Act 2004 allows states to discontinue using the IQ model and adopt the RTI model in identifying students for special education. RTI is designed to evaluate student's reading growth at least three times during the school year. Evaluating students so frequently allows teachers to identify reading problems early to provide the needed interventions (Fletcher & Vaughn, 2009). Fuchs and Fuchs (2009) indicated that the goal of RTI is to identify students who are not successfully responding to intervention strategies and provide them with the services needed.

Implementation of the RTI framework can vary depending on school and or district. Sinclair-Lowry (2011) studied how teachers evolved instructionally to implement the RTI model. Sinclair-Lowry revealed that language arts teachers in

secondary schools did not significantly change their instructional practices to meet the needs of all students. Teachers on the elementary level significantly changed their traditional instructional techniques to differentiate instruction and meet the needs of students by utilizing the RTI model (Sinclair & Lowry). Implementing RTI may be difficult because of components being implemented ineffectively or differently (Eichhorn, 2009). Eichhorn concluded that RTI must be implemented with integrity and fidelity to be effective. Eichhorn also reported that effectively implementing this model does not allow one to determine the causes of deficits without further testing. Therefore, using the model alone is not enough and progress monitoring must be utilized (Eichhorn).

Progress monitoring is a formative assessment used to evaluate whether students are learning from instruction at an adequate rate (Mellard, McKnight, & Woods, 2009). The results from the assessments are used to place students in RTI interventions. The concept behind progress monitoring is that data drives instructional decisions. Mellard et al. indicated that progress monitoring is important in an RTI model and should be used to prevent academic and behavioral problems and correlated to the curriculum. Mellard et al. also noted problems with the implementation of RTI because of inconsistencies in the use of progress monitoring among schools and districts. Mellard et al. surveyed 42 schools and interviewed principals, teachers, and psychologists in five of the schools. Many schools are not experienced in using screening and progress monitoring and could be guilty of identifying too many students as at-risk or LD (Mellard et al.).

One of the measures used in progress monitoring is curriculum-based measurements (CBM). CBM are short 1-to-3 minute assessments given to an entire



grade level to detect reading difficulties. Although this method is highly used, Fletcher and Vaughn (2009) stated that some concerns exist about the reliability of CBM benchmarks in effectively measuring whether students should move to a different tier. Fletcher and Vaughn suggested that other measures be used when determining if students are eligible for special education. Dexter and Hughes (2011) stated that without proper teacher training, implementing effective screening and progress monitoring would be a challenge. Schools and districts must use data to drive instructional decisions to transform teaching and learning (Mandinach, 2012).

### **Professional Development**

Professional development is a vital part of a teacher's responsibility of improving student's reading achievement (Hirsh, 2009). Professional development also provides teachers with the tools needed to assist them in improving their instructional methods. One of the most important targets of educational reform is to improve teacher's professional development opportunities (Desimoni, 2009). Understanding what makes professional development effective plays an integral role in educational reform (Desimoni). The current concern with professional development opportunities is the lack of funding. Because local schools and districts recently lost a significant amount of federal funding, they must be very selective in determining which professional development opportunities they provide for teachers (Teacher, personal communication, March 5, 2012). In a longitudinal study on the effects of using literacy coaches as a professional development strategy for teachers, Biancarosa, Bryk, and Dexter (2010) concluded that providing a year of professional development training for the literacy

coaches before placing them in classrooms had a significant positive effect on student learning. Biancarosa et al. disclosed that providing professional development opportunities that incorporate literacy coaches working with teachers and students could improve reading instruction and assist in meeting the reading needs of students.

Professional development may cause teachers' to reflect upon their instructional practices and strive to improve their instructional practices. Teachers must study student progress and examine instructional methods to assist in improving students reading achievement (Podhajski, Mather, Nathan, & Sammon, 2009). In a study conducted in England on the role of teachers' orientation to learning in professional development and change, Opfer, Pedder, and Lavicza (2010) revealed that teachers believed that their professional learning has the most impact on their instructional methods. The researchers also noted that whether a teacher learns and engages in change is predicated upon their beliefs, practices, and experiences. A teacher's orientation to learning influences how and what is learned in the classroom (Opfer et al.).

Reading is the foundation for which all other skills are developed (Gove & Cvelich, 2010). Because skill in reading is so important, teachers must make time to collaborate with peers. Lujan and Day (2009) suggested that roadblocks such as, time, and teacher isolation keep teachers from collaborating. They also believed that time must be set aside for teachers' to work in professional learning communities to plan and use data to lead instruction. To improve teachers reading instruction, teachers must have opportunities to work together to enhance each other's teaching methods (Lujan & Day).

Beginning teachers often take professional development courses to improve their teaching and instructional methods (Mitchell, Reilly, & Logue, 2009). Professional development in the form of mentoring is the process of “offering personal and professional guidance from an experienced and learned veteran to a new professional” (Rikard, & Banville, 2010, p. 246). Rikard and Banville revealed that when mentors and new teachers have a good relationship, the students show significant improvement in learning and teachers’ instruction improves. Teachers should also grow from this experience and contribute to increasing student academic achievement by providing positive classroom experiences (Milkie & Warner, 2011).

Veteran educators who are used as mentor teachers should provide new teachers with opportunities to engage in dialogue that could lead to improved instructional practices (Stanulis & Floden, 2009). One way educators may accomplish improved teaching techniques is through the use of peer coaching. Peer coaching requires colleagues to participate in learning communities and incorporate new ideas into one’s own design for professional development (Moss et al., 2009). Moss et al. shared that teachers’ use of peer coaching is a practical model to use to assist other teachers and that peer coaching caused teachers to understand the importance of peer conferencing. Moss et al. noted that peer coaching provided educators an opportunity to collaborate and cooperate. Teachers assisting teachers and putting students into small groups is a benefit of peer coaching. The researchers concluded that some teachers were not receptive to allowing other teachers in their classrooms, because they felt that peer coaching would not have a positive impact on their self-esteem (Moss et al.).

Teachers are more likely to embrace professional development models when they have the resources and support to be successful (DuFour & Marzano, 2009). Plummer (2010) observed that teachers who collaborated with peers concerning student learning, worked together on improving teacher instruction and designing lessons that met student's needs. Professional development training is essential, but it does not guarantee that all students will experience academic success. Teachers can learn to use professional development opportunities as a way to build upon their current knowledge and skills to become more effective teachers (Desimone, 2009).

To implement an effective reading program, teachers in the district studied needed to improve their knowledge of RTI implementation. If teachers are not trained on the essential components of the RTI framework, students may lack the skills needed to become successful readers. Reading teachers must be motivated to improve reading instruction at all costs. If teachers are not motivated to excel in reading instruction, students may continue to increase the reading achievement gap.

### **Implications**

The implications of this study should be beneficial to secondary students and teachers. By improving teachers' knowledge of the RTI framework, students reading achievement and AYP scores may improve. This case study focused on gathering data from teacher interviews to improve the implementation of the RTI process and improve student reading achievement, in order to improve reading instruction and improve district AYP scores. Results of this study validated that improving students reading achievement is essential.

## **Summary**

Section 1 focused on the problem of the local school district not meeting AYP for two consecutive years. District assessment data revealed that students continue to struggle to read. The literature review discussed the constructivist view of classroom teaching practices as they relate to the implementation of RTI. Causes and effects of reading problems were also discussed. Many students experienced difficulties because of learning English as a second language, poverty, and poor reading instruction. The challenge of effectively implementing an RTI model on the secondary level was also included. Section 2 discusses the methodology for the study. This section includes precise information on the research design including data collection and analysis. It also includes measures taken to protect the confidentiality of participants.

## Section 2: The Methodology

### **Introduction**

Increasing student reading achievement on the secondary level was vital for the school district studied. The ISD will not meet AYP in reading if students do not experience reading success. The local problem that initiated this project study was that the local school district missed AYP in reading in 2010 and 2011. The district will have to make improvements to meet the NCLB (2002) goal of 100% of students passing reading by 2014.

I selected a qualitative research design to study how teachers' knowledge and implementation of RTI affects students reading achievement. According to Creswell (2012), "qualitative research is used to address problems with unknown variables. The literature may have little to no information about the phenomenon; therefore, the researcher has to gain information from participants through exploring the problem" (p. 16). Qualitative researchers focus more on the views and perceptions of the participants in the study (Creswell, 2009). Each school's implementation of the RTI model varied based on their population and the needs of their students. In this qualitative study, I explored how teachers' knowledge and implementation practices may help improve students' academic achievement in reading within the district studied.

### **Description of the Qualitative Tradition**

In this project study, I used a qualitative case study research design. Lodico, Spaulding, and Voegtler (2010) defined qualitative research as a "research approach that acquires data through the use of interviews, observations and document analysis" (p. 15).

Conducting individual interviews allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. I was able to gather data from teachers responsible for implementing RTI interventions. The data were summarized through a written narrative and analyzed to identify common themes. A case study was suitable for this study because the case study is a “common approach that focuses on individuals and small groups by documenting their experiences and collecting information from multiple sources and perspectives” (Lodico et al., 2010, p. 5). Using a qualitative case study allowed me to study a real life problem and provide solutions through the use of various sources. Creswell (2012) stated that a “case study is an in-depth exploration of a bounded system based on extensive data collection; the case is separated out based on time, place, and physical boundaries” (p. 465). The problem investigated was specific to a particular school district that could be generalized to other district with similar ethnicities and size. Interviews and RTI data were used to provide data focused on the purpose of the study. The data obtained helped me to provide answers to the guiding research question in this study.

### **Justification for Qualitative Case Study Tradition**

A case study is the study of a problem through special cases. I selected a case study design for this study because I investigated a problem by using “in-depth examination and gathering data through interviews and document collection” (Glesne, 2011, p. 22). This tradition aligned with the problem because of limited research on teachers’ knowledge of RTI implementation at the secondary level. An understanding of how to assist teachers in meeting AYP in reading was important to me because teachers’ knowledge assisted me in generalizing the findings. I used a descriptive case study to

gain knowledge of teacher perceptions of the RTI framework and the effects of teachers' implementation practices on the reading achievement of students.

### **Rationale for Not Selecting Other Qualitative Research Traditions**

There were three qualitative methods that I did not select for this project study. I did not select grounded theory research, ethnography research, or phenomenological research. Grounded theory research was not beneficial for this study because my goal was not to develop a theory. Lodico et al. (2010) stated that researchers who use the grounded theory design use the findings from the study to develop a theoretical framework. In using a case study research design, I began with the problem and acquired data to reveal themes and potential solutions. I did not choose the ethnography design because ethnography is used to focus on a cultural group and requires the researcher to have "long-term access to a specific group to produce a detailed record of their beliefs and behaviors" (Creswell, 2012, p. 462). I used a case to obtain information from a variety of sources and perspectives (Lodico et al.). Phenomenology was not selected because phenomenology is used to portray the essential structure of human experiences, and the phenomenological method is mainly used to examine the "affective, emotional, and intense human experiences" (Merriam, 2009, p. 26). I selected a case study because it limited the number of participants involved and allowed me to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon studied.



## **Participants**

### **Criteria for Selecting Participants**

I selected participants for this study with purposeful sampling. Creswell (2012) stated that purposeful sampling is when “researchers select a location and participants to understand the central phenomenon” (p. 206). The population of interest for this project study was teachers in Grades 6 to 12 who were responsible for implementing RTI in an urban school district that failed to meet AYP for 2 consecutive years. Creswell recommended that 1, 2, or 30 to 40 participants be used for case study research along with other data. The selection criteria for selecting participants were (a) sixth to 12<sup>th</sup> grade RTI teachers, (b) teaching in a secondary school responsible for implementing RTI, and (c) 3 or more years of teaching experience. The teachers were coded as Teacher A, B, C, and so on to ensure that their identity remained anonymous.

### **Justification for Number of Participants**

I purposefully selected participants because my goal was to present an in-depth representation. Using a large sample size may lessen my ability to get accurate details (Creswell, 2012). Glesne (2011) stated that qualitative researchers, unlike quantitative researchers, do not seek to use a large sample size for the purpose of making generalizations. My goal was to obtain multiple perspectives on how the implementation of RTI affected students’ academic achievement in reading. Using a small amount of participants allowed me to gain information from various teachers in different grade levels at the selected secondary schools. Secondary teachers were the focus of this study

because little research has been done on the implementation of RTI at the secondary level.

### **Procedures for Gaining Access to Participants**

Permission to conduct research throughout the district studied began with getting approval from the local school district's research committee. School district representatives were required to sign a letter of cooperation. The documents were developed according to the guidelines of Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) and served as permission to conduct interviews with selected participants. I met with the district's RTI specialist to discuss the teachers who met the selection criteria. I contacted teachers who met the selection criteria by e-mail and notified them about the purpose of the study, their possible role, benefits to them, and asked them to respond to the invitation to participate or not to participate. I contacted the willing participants by e-mail and arranged a meeting. Because I was employed by the school district studied, I had access to the participants' e-mail addresses.

### **Methods of Establishing a Researcher-Participant Working Relationship**

Building a research-participant working relationship was accomplished in various ways. Participants received an e-mail stating the purpose of the study, their role, and the benefits of participating. During the meeting with participants, I explained my role as the researcher and interviewer and their role as a participant. I reassured the participants that their responses and identity would remain confidential, and their honest perspectives would assist me in gathering credible data to develop a project. The participants were assured that all data gathered during the study would be used to create the project study.

### **Ethical Protection of Participants**

An IRB application was submitted containing information about the data collection and data analysis that was used in the study. Participants who agreed to participate in the study received information about the purpose of the study, voluntary nature of the study, procedures, risks, and benefits of participating in the study, confidentiality, and contact information. Participant names and place of employment remained anonymous, and any identifying factors were kept confidential. All participants were asked to sign a consent form before participating in the study. Benefits and potential risks were reviewed with participants again before the interview. Participants were informed that they could discontinue their participation at any time during the study. I ensured that all information was kept confidential and participants experienced no privacy violation, perceived coercion, social or economic loss, psychological stress, or adverse health effects.

### **Data Collection**

#### **Justification for Data Collection Material**

The primary method of data collection in this study was individual face-to-face interviews. According to Creswell (2012), one-on-one interviews are effective tools for interviewing outspoken participants who are not afraid to share information comfortably. Interviews are common as a data collection tool (Merriam, 2009). In qualitative research, one-on-one interviews allow the researcher to obtain information from others with the purpose of acquiring information from their perspective. Using interviews is crucial because researchers cannot see how people feel about a certain situation; therefore,

having a conversation with participants by interview allows researchers to discover how the situation is interpreted in participants' mind (Merriam). A good researcher will use questions that will provide responses that will benefit the research study.

I developed the interview questions based on the literature review and research question. To determine the credibility of the interview questions, I conducted a field test to gain feedback for final revisions of interview questions. A field test allowed experts in the field to review the questions and give feedback on whether the questions were credible and appropriate to the population. The field test did not include potential participants who met the criteria for participation in the study.

Three teachers were recruited to participate in the field test. The purpose of the field test was e-mailed to each potential participant and, once they agreed to participate, I shared interview questions with each participant. Each participant was asked to determine the quality and capability of the question to provide sufficient information on teachers' knowledge and implementation of RTI. Participants determined if each question was clear, appropriate, and if it would make sense to the targeted audience. The feedback from the participants assisted in developing the final version of the questions that were used for the project study.

Three participants responded and agreed to participate in the field test. Each participant was asked to determine the credibility of each of the 15 potential questions by identifying problems or weaknesses in construction or wording and ability of the question to produce information relevant to the study.

The following questions were evaluated in the field test:

1. Does the question address the basic research question and give the researcher the needed data?
2. Are the questions relevant to the phenomenon, to elicit a realistic and accurate response?
3. Are questions too narrow or limited in scope?
4. Is the wording of the question clear?

Based upon the provided feedback from the three participants, 12 of the questions were deemed credible, two of the questions were removed because they were redundant, and one was removed because it did not make sense to the field test participants. The 12 interview questions considered credible were submitted with my IRB application.

Interviews were noted as a source in a case study because participants can be probed to answer *why* (Yin, 2009). At the conclusion of the interviews, participants' responses were analyzed with content analysis.

After IRB approval (12-05-12-0179092), I sent an e-mail including the invitation and consent form to potential participants of selected schools to gain permission to conduct the interviews with potential participants. Participants were required to respond to the e-mail with the words "I Consent" before interviews were conducted. These interviews assisted me in gaining their perspectives concerning the implementation of RTI and its benefit to students' reading achievement. Interviews were audio recorded and were 45 to 60 minutes in length. I employed an open-ended structured interview and used an interview protocol as my data collection tool during the interview process. Creswell (2012) believed that the "interview protocol is used for the purpose of providing

questions and a place to record notes” (p. 225). I asked interview questions that gave me an understanding of the phenomenon. Glesne (2011) pointed out that “beginning researchers often confuse research and interview questions” (p. 104). I developed questions by participating in discussions with language arts teachers and using information acquired in the literature review and field test. My goal was to understand the phenomenon of how it may improve teachers’ knowledge and implementation of RTI on student’s reading achievement to meet AYP standards. Responses from the interviews and scholastic inventory data were analyzed using content analysis. Fink (2008) defined “content analysis as a method of analyzing qualitative data to draw inferences on the meaning of open-ended responses and responses to survey questions” (p. 89). Content analysis was used to identify the frequency of themes that emerged from the participants’ interview responses. The data is then used to draw conclusions. Content analysis will be discussed further in the data analysis section.

I initiated the data collection by e-mailing potential participants and notifying them that they had been selected to participate in my study. Three sixth to 12<sup>th</sup> grade teachers replied “I Consent” via e-mail to participate in my study. I responded by thanking them and began setting up interview dates and times. Before each interview was conducted, I reviewed the purpose of the study and reminded them that they would be assigned a letter to protect their identity. I audio recorded the interviews, which took approximately 45 minutes each. At the conclusion of each interview, I thanked the participant. Data analysis was conducted as soon as I completed the data collection. I listened to the audio recordings and indentify the emerging themes. To make certain that

the data were credible; each participant participated in member checking. The participants' role was to endorse or reject the transcripts and clarify any misunderstandings. The participants approved all transcripts; therefore, no discrepancies were discovered. During this process, I also reviewed the archival data; in the archival data, I found themes that were revealed during the interviews.

### **The Role of the Researcher**

My role as the researcher in this study was to purposefully choose, interview, document, and assess data provided by each participant. Creswell (2012) stated, "Researchers who use purposeful sampling, intentionally select participants and locations to gain knowledge on the central phenomenon" (p. 206). Once written permission was gained from all participants, I arranged interview dates and reviewed the purpose of the study. When interviews were conducted, I used the interview protocol to record all responses. I then compiled data and coded the responses.

The local problem of the district not meeting AYP targets was my passion for this study. I am attached to this local problem because I too am having difficulty in developing strategies to motivate students to read to learn. To produce a valid study, I disregarded my personal experiences to view the perspectives of others and created interview questions that would dismiss any biases. I am a librarian employed in the district used for this project study. I had no authority over the participants in this study. The data collection methods used in this study minimized any biases because of potential relationships. The problems the teachers faced in implementing RTI and helping students meet reading AYP goals was the focus of this study. My interest in this topic developed

from conversations with colleagues because of our dissatisfaction with the district not meeting AYP and teachers' lack of knowledge in the implementation of the RTI framework.

### **Data Analysis**

I used Creswell's (2012) qualitative analysis through qualitative interviews to discover teachers' understanding of the RTI framework and implementation. The data analysis process was on-going and was directed by the study's research question. Initially, I organized the participants' consent forms and transcribed interviews. While reading through the interviews, I made notes and initial codes. Next, I performed detailed analysis by coding, categorizing, and labeling data to determine the themes that evolved. The interviews were coded using lean coding. Creswell defined "lean coding as assigning very few codes during the first reading of a manuscript in an attempt to reduce codes to broad themes" (p. 244). Creswell stated that using fewer themes is best when writing a detailed qualitative report. After coding interviews, I synthesized and summarized the codes. The findings were then summarized. Finally, I wrote a narrative discussion. The narrative discussion included information based on each finding to convey interpretations and themes. Creswell stated that "Interpretation is the process of clarifying conclusions in words to give answers to research questions" (p. 10). Interpreting the findings allowed me to use language that could be understood by non-educators. I was also able to provide information to answer the guiding research question. Creswell claimed, "Qualitative research is interpretive and researchers should make sense of their findings" (p. 257). Interpretation allows the researcher to observe the



phenomenon based on personal perceptions or by comparing past studies. Interpretations and themes that evolved during data analysis assisted me in creating a project that was an extension of the collected data.

### **Accuracy and Credibility of Findings**

I adhered to all research procedures approved by the IRB for collecting qualitative data to ensure accuracy and credibility of the data. Participants were not contacted until the research proposal was approved and permission was granted. A voluntary consent form was e-mailed and signed and participants replied “I Consent” prior to the start of the study. The voluntary consent form included participants’ rights, and a confidentiality request. Individual interviews were audio recorded and transcribed completely. All transcripts were kept on a password-protected document and hard copies and interview responses were kept in a locked file box. Qualitative researchers must ensure that their findings and interpretations are accurate and credible (Creswell, 2012). Researchers can use several strategies to validate findings in qualitative research. Researchers can use triangulation, member checking, or external audits. To determine if findings were credible in this study, the participants were asked to participate in member checking. Member checking used the input of the participants and gave them a chance to review transcribed data of their interview to confirm that data was or was not accurate. Member checking occurred after each interview to corroborate that data was valid. Member checking allowed participants the opportunity to clarify any misunderstandings or misconceptions and check the accuracy of the findings to determine if they were complete and realistic. The participants were asked to agree or disagree with the

interview transcripts to clarify any misconceptions. After gaining participants' approval of the transcripts, the transcripts were used to disclose themes and assist in creating a project study. All participants were assigned identifiers to protect their privacy and the schools privacy.

I triangulated data from interviews, and the scholastic reading inventory to make sure that these sources of data substantiate the identified themes. Triangulation allows “researchers to develop a report that is accurate and credible” (Creswell, 2012 p. 259). If data is valid and credible, these sources of data should be similar (Creswell).

Triangulation is a validation strategy that was used in this case study to describe various sources that identified similar data. Triangulation allows researchers to produce reports that emerge from data and not researchers' opinions.

### **Dealing with Discrepant Cases**

Discrepant cases are data that are collected that show a different perspective on an emerging theme. I handled these cases by discussing the themes that were found to be contradictory with all study participants. When gaining perspectives from different participants, each participant's perspective may not correlate. Discrepant cases must be identified during the data collection and data analysis stage. This process allowed me to the opportunity to provide a realistic and valid representation of the findings and gain a deeper understanding of the findings so that the final report is accurate and valid.

### **Research Findings**

The research findings from this project study materialized from interviews and archival documents used to verify interview data. In developing the findings, I began by

reading and rereading the transcripts to discover codes that were similar, which lead to the dominant themes. I then assessed the archival data, which corroborated the findings discovered in the interviews. Each finding will be discussed below to address the following research question:

**Research Question:** What is the best approach to improve teachers' knowledge and implementation of the RTI framework and increase reading achievement among urban secondary students?

*Finding 1: The secondary RTI teachers participating in this study revealed that there needs to be more administrative support at the campus level in implementing READ 180 and System 44 in order to increase students' reading achievement.*

All of the participants agreed that more collaboration on the campus level is needed between the RTI teachers and campus administrators. Secondary teacher "C", with many years of experience, stated that sitting down and talking to some campus and district administrators was desired. But, the teacher felt that they would not bother to listen. This participant followed up by stating, "I really do think that the principal and assistant principals or district administration need to sit down and take some instruction with READ 180 and see what it entails and maybe they would understand." On-going research indicated the importance of leadership in schools. According to United States Education Secretary Arne Duncan, "There's no such thing as a high performing school without a great principal" (Connelly, 2010, p. 34). Participants were careful not to state negative things about their principal, but they wanted to convey that collaboration is

important and teacher-principal collaboration shows that their campus administration is concerned with what concerns them. Secondary teacher “A” also stressed, “Nobody explains to me why a student has been placed into my READ 180 class or how the student qualifies. I really don’t know if students are being properly placed into my classroom.” The teachers want to be able to offer input about student placement and the number of students placed into their classrooms.

Participant teacher “C” explained that too many students are being placed into her classroom, there are not enough computers, and nobody cares. She stressed:

We are supposed to have three students to a computer, so they can properly go through the program. But, they put 28 to 30 kids in our classrooms and we don’t have enough computers. They don’t ask me anything, but I have told them that I have seven working computers, so that’s 21 students.

Teacher “C” continued to express her deep concern for the students assigned to READ 180 and System 44 on her campus. She stated:

Students are just not getting what they need because they do not have computers. The campus and district administrators are aware of this, but nobody is doing anything. The district administration has talked to our campus administrators, but nothing has been done and this frustrates me.

Participants also revealed that their campuses did not use an RTI team. They felt that if there was a team in place at the campus level, there may be more collaboration and their needs, along with their students’ needs, would be met. According to Hoover and Love (2011), a challenge with effectively implementing RTI is obtaining teacher support

and buy-in so that the RTI teacher is able to implement the necessary changes needed to transition into this model. Based on these findings, I created a project to address ways that administrators can offer support to increase reading achievement.

*Finding 2: The secondary RTI teachers participating in this study revealed that consistency in intervention program procedures and instructional practices should be implemented across secondary campuses in local district to ensure successful implementation of the needed interventions.*

Teachers, who are responsible for implementing needed reading interventions, want to know if their implementation practices are successful. The teachers interviewed all gave different responses as to how data are used and analyzed to influence decisions. Participants were asked, “How do you use data to make decisions on the needs of the students?” Teacher “A” replied that she uses the READ 180 reports from the Scholastic Achievement Manager (SAM). She said that she prints them out twice every 9 weeks or more often if a student asks questions about their lessons. She uses this data to determine student progress and rewards students for growth twice every 9 weeks. Teacher “B” stated that she uses the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) data to determine if student’s lexile levels have increased. She also uses the intervention grouping data and growth reports. She affirmed, “The SRI is a good indicator of determining student growth.” Teacher “C” mentioned that she assess by giving students an oral reading fluency test and listening to their recorded reading to see if her students are making progress.

Teacher “A” explained, “There are district reports that the RTI teachers and campus administrators cannot access. This information is shared with us at our READ

180 meetings that occur at least two or three times a year.” The teacher felt that district reports were not accurate or fair. She felt that the district data did not reveal true results because the intervention programs on the secondary campuses are not consistent. She revealed that all of the campuses do not have access to the same resources and some are not implementing the program correctly. Based on this information, the use of data to monitor student progress is inconsistent. Teacher “A” said, “If we don’t use the program correctly, we might as well not use it. Because there is no consistency among secondary campuses, we cannot use district data to compare campuses.”

Participants also felt that campus administrators and counselors needed to be trained on the guidelines for placing students into the intervention programs. One of the participants noted that the district has guidelines for placing students into intervention programs. She felt that the campus administrators and counselors need to follow guidelines and not just place students into an intervention class. The other teachers did not mention anything about a district guideline for placing students into intervention programs. One teacher stated that on her campus they use district assessments and campus based assessment scores to place students into her intervention classes. Teacher “B” said, “We do not have a cut off score but those who constantly fail campus based assessments and district assessments are placed into an intervention program. Teacher “C” revealed, “They just put the special education kids in my class. Many of them are double coded, special education and English language learners. I don’t think any guidelines are used.” She also stated that many of her students are placed into READ 180 and they should be in her System 44 class.

The interviews also disclosed inconsistencies on how students exit READ 180 and System 44. One campus uses a district-created qualification checklist. Teacher “A” noted, “Just because students qualify one year doesn’t mean that they will qualify the next year. They have to re-qualify every year based on the district guideline sheet.”

Teacher “B” said:

If students score 950 or higher lexile on the SRI, they can exit the program. They may also exit if they score high on the campus based assessment or district assessment. We don’t want them in the program for more than two years.

According to Teacher “C”, students can exit READ 180 once they reach grade level. Some of the RTI teachers are not aware that the district has a qualification checklist to place and exit students into and out of the intervention programs. Therefore, they have created their own campus guidelines. Based on these findings, I created a possible solution to address the inconsistency in placing and exiting students into and out of READ 180 and System 44 intervention classes.

*Finding 3: The secondary RTI teachers participating in this study revealed that appropriate resources and sufficient time is needed to effectively implement the READ 180 and System 44 intervention programs.*

Another concern that was revealed by all of the participants was the lack of resources to implement the READ 180 and System 44 programs. The READ 180 program not only necessitates the utilization of computers, but also several lexile leveled books, workbooks, CD players, and headphones with microphones. The secondary teachers all stated that they did not have enough student rbooks, and the headphones they

are given constantly break and it is difficult to get them replaced. Secondary teacher “A” stated, “I teach READ 180, but they keep placing students who should be in System 44 in my classroom. I don’t have all of the System 44 materials, so I use what I have.” During the interviews, I was informed that each secondary campus should have at least two RTI teachers, one teacher for READ 180 and another teacher for System 44. The Read 180 teacher services students with a lexile score of 400 and above. The System 44 teacher services students classified as Beginner Reader (BR) to under 400 lexile score. A participant states, “If I am going to continue to receive students who need System 44, then I should be provided with the resources that the students need to be successful.”

All participants needed new updated rbooks. An rbook is a workbook that students use to obtain daily instruction in reading, vocabulary, writing, and grammar skills. Each student should receive their own rbooks to complete lessons. However, the interviews revealed that some campuses are no longer providing this needed resource for the students. Teacher “A” expressed:

I don’t have my students write in their rbooks anymore. They are supposed to be able to take them home every year, but, I have them write on an answer sheet because the materials are so hard to come by because everything is so expensive. Headphones and CD players are also needed.

All participants were dissatisfied with not being able to get replacement headphones when needed. Teacher “A” stated, “I always need new headphones because they break so often. I continue to ask for them and it’s always a problem and it always



takes too long to get them.” Teacher “C” emphasized, “I need more computers, better computers, better headphones, better microphones, more materials, and more time.”

According to each participant, the READ 180 and System 44 programs are designed to be implemented daily for 90 minutes. When asked the question, “How often do students visit your class and how many minutes do they spend with you?” All teachers responded that they were not assigned enough time. All participants expressed a desire and need to have more instructional time with the students. Many conveyed that they have to leave out certain components of the program or shorten time spent on each component because of time constraints. A secondary teacher stated, “Because we only have 70 minutes daily instead of 90, I don’t do the wrap-up at the end of the period.” Teacher “B” revealed that she only saw her students every other day for 52 minutes. During the interviews I discovered inconsistencies among secondary campuses in adhering to the 90 minutes of daily intervention prescribed by Scholastic.

### **Summary of the Data Analysis**

My data analysis was derived from information received from the three participants who agreed to participate in this study. I initially sent out 12 invitations to participate in my study. I received information that five participants had agreed to participate in my study. When emails were sent out to arrange interview times and dates, only three participants agreed to participate. The other 2 participants did not respond to any of the emails sent out to set up interview times and dates. Merriam (2009) stated that in case study research, the number of participants is not as important as selecting participant’s who are able to answer the research question. Creswell (2012) noted that a

“case” may include a single or several participants. He also suggested that when researchers are seeking a thorough understanding of a phenomenon, only a small number of cases need to be evaluated because focusing on too many cases will limit the time that researchers have to dedicate to investigate a particular case (Creswell). After I interviewed the three participants, I reached data saturation because enough data were gathered to determine the existing themes; therefore no further data collection was necessary.

The research findings from the participants motivated me in creating my project. I used my research question as a guide and I analyzed and re-analyzed the data to uncover the most important themes from the data to guarantee that the project would offer a significant solution to the needs and concerns addressed among the secondary teachers interviewed. I used a variety of quotes from the interview transcripts to convey the teachers’ point of view and corroborate my interpretation of the findings. My goal was to use the project to provide a remedy to the stated needs and concerns.

The participants revealed that more administrative support is needed at the campus level in implementing the prescribed intervention programs to increase student achievement. The participants felt that campus administrators did not seem concerned with implementing the program with fidelity. According to the participants administrators were not ensuring that students were scheduled appropriately, teachers and students lacked needed resources, and campus administrators needed to become more knowledgeable of the RTI process. The participants wanted support from their campus administrators, to ensure student success.

The participants also noted that consistent data based guidelines should be used across all secondary campuses when placing and exiting students into and out of the reading intervention programs. Participants conveyed that each secondary campus uses their own guidelines for placing students into the intervention programs. One participant stated that there are district guidelines that should be followed. However, the other participants never revealed in the interviews that they were aware of any district guidelines for placement into intervention program. Each campus also used a different method to exit students from the program. The data revealed that if district guidelines are available, the RTI teachers and campus administrators need to be informed.

The participants also discussed a lack of resources and sufficient time to implement the program. All participants agreed that they were not given the prescribed time allotment to teach their students. They also mentioned that a lack of needed resources caused difficulty in implementing the program efficiently. All of the participants were doing the best they could with the resources that were available. They felt that having the needed resources would positively affect student achievement.

### **Conclusion**

The objective of this case study was to investigate teachers' knowledge and implementation of RTI to improve district studied AYP scores and students' reading achievement. Individual teachers were interviewed to understand how to assist them in their knowledge and implementation of RTI instructional practices. Coding and content analysis were used for data analysis and to assist in developing the narrative. The study

used interviews from sixth to 12<sup>th</sup> grade teachers at secondary schools within a selected district to create and recommend a project to solve the identified problem.

In section 2 a description of the qualitative case study was discussed. Three main themes surfaced from the research data that assisted in creating the project. The first theme was the need for more administrative support at the campus level to increase student achievement. The second theme was the need for a consistent data based guidelines across secondary campuses for students entering and exiting the READ 180 and System 44 programs to endure that students needs are met. The third theme was the need to for appropriate resources and sufficient time to effectively implement the intervention programs.

Section 3 focuses on the project and present a literature review, project evaluation, and project implications. Section 4 elaborates on my reflections and conclusions regarding the study.

## Section 3: The Project

### **Introduction**

Section 3 provides a description of the proposed project for this research study. In this section, I will explain how the problem was addressed and how it relates to the proposed project, which is a white paper. I will discuss the project goals and the justification for why a white paper was selected as the project. I will also provide a literature review and address implementation, evaluation and social changes related to this project. Section 3 provides details based on what was revealed during the data analysis to improve teachers' knowledge and implementation of RTI. In the literature review, I discuss the white paper project and its appropriateness to address the themes discovered during the data analysis. I provide recommendations that will assist the district being studied in making future decisions as they relate to RTI and prescribed intervention programs.

### **Description and Goals**

The purposes for this white paper project were connected to the local district's inability to meet AYP standards because of poor reading achievement. Graham (2013) noted that white papers are an effective way to educate and speak to a targeted audience, and that white papers are used in the technology field to solve a business or technical problem. Stelzner (2013) also believed that white papers help their audience make decisions and solve problems. A white paper can also be used as a research-based document that includes recommendations to help solve problems. In a white paper completed by CTB/McGraw Hill (2010), their goal was to improve student achievement

by providing solutions for successful implementation of an assessment component in the RTI model. I used a white paper for this project to expound on the findings and recommendations on how to improve secondary teachers' knowledge and implementation of RTI to improve student achievement in reading. The white paper provides a representation of the research study by discussing RTI implementation issues and suggestions for implementation improvements. I also wanted to present a project to the administration, RTI teachers, counselors, educators, and parents in the district studied that consisted of information relevant to implementation of RTI. The white paper consists of an introduction, description of problem, description of solution, recommendations, conclusion, and references.

In the white paper, I included descriptions of the data collected during the one-on-one interviews with participants. In this case study, I focused on the district's problem by gaining teachers' perceptions and evaluating student's achievement using the districts archival data. With the white paper and case study, I focused on the local district's problem by supplying pertinent RTI information that educators can use to inform decisions relating to improving teacher implementation practices and improving student achievement.

### **Rationale**

White papers are used in business and educational settings to disclose information and offer solutions to problems. A white paper can be defined as "a short document designed to state an organization's policy, position, or philosophy about a subject or to pose a problem" (Young Adult Library Services Association [YALSA],

2013, para 1). Based on the findings identified in Section 2, I selected a white paper (see Appendix A) as the project genre to address the educational problem of this project study. Following the interviews of teachers, a review of the archival data and analysis of the data, the need for the projected effectiveness of a white paper emerged. Completing a white paper allowed me to provide information that was targeted to a special audience in the local district. The white paper also provides administrators, educators, and RTI teachers with information that could assist them with improving their current RTI model and intervention programs. In the white paper, I explained the data analysis in vernacular that could be understood by educators and other stakeholders.

In the white paper, I addressed the revealed problems of lack of campus administrative support, lack of resources, and inconsistent guidelines for placing and exiting students into and out of prescribed intervention programs. I presented the analysis of teachers' perceptions after transcribing interviews and allowing participants to participate in member checking. In the white paper, I provided administrators, RTI teachers, and educators with recommendations concerning successful implementation of the RTI framework based on analysis from the qualitative case study. In the white paper, I focused on relevant information concerning the local district's RTI model and presented recommendations for enhancing current practices. I concentrated on providing information that could assist in increasing knowledge to enhance the reading skills of secondary students.

## Review of the Literature

In this literature review, I concentrated on the construction and contents of developing the project study, which is a white paper. The solutions and recommendations to administrators, RTI teachers, and educators in the local school district were published in the white paper. The information of this project originated from the literature in Section 1 and this literature review. The focus of the literature review includes the following: white paper, RTI implementation challenges, and intervention programs. In the white paper review, I explain the genre and the appropriateness of the white paper to address the problem, and the structure of a white paper. RTI implementation challenges were revealed in the data analysis of the project study. Intervention programs were centered on the potential of positive effects on READ 180 and System 44 established in the literature. This literature was the foundation of the project study.

This literature review was developed using the following databases: EBSCOhost, ERIC, dissertation database, and ProQuest Central. Key search terms included *white paper*, *RTI implementation challenges*, *administrator support*, *acquiring funding for RTI*, *fidelity*, *intervention resources*, *implementation consistency*, and *RTI scheduling*. This literature review contained article written within the last five years.

Many illustrations of white papers were accessible, but few details existed on using them in educational settings. Researchers discussed descriptions, definitions, and the construction of white papers. RTI challenges revealed during data analysis were administrative support, fidelity, consistency in program and practice, resources, and



sufficient time. These challenges are reviewed in detail. READ 180 is also addressed to review the research about the reading intervention program used by the district being studied.

### **White Paper**

I chose a white paper for my culminating project to educate and assist RTI teachers, administrators, and educators in the local school district. Kantor (2009) described a white paper as “a document between six and twelve pages whose purpose is to educate, inform, and convince a reader through the accurate identification of existing problems and the presentation of beneficial solutions that solve those challenges” (p.11). In this white paper, I discussed the barriers of RTI implementation and provide recommendations to improve implementation practices.

White papers can be useful in disseminating important information to business professionals, educators and specific audiences. Kantor (2009) explained that one reason business decision-makers appreciate white papers is because a white paper is an influential and fact-based medium. One of the main benefits of a white paper is its capability to present educational subject matter that influences facts to validate claims and develop reader’s trust (Kantor). Kantor stated that the white paper is the marketing tool used most frequently to convey information to a targeted audience. The white paper was appropriate for publishing this study’s findings and recommendations to the local district.

### **Constructing a White Paper**

White papers can serve multiple purposes. Kantor (2009) identified various

formats and purposes for writing white papers, but noted that white papers should target a specific audience. A white paper is used to assist in educating the targeted audience about a problem and the building support of a proposed solution (YALSA, 2013). These aspects are revealed in the goals of my white paper, which included informing district and campus administrators, RTI teachers, and educators about the results of the study and convincing all to adopt the solutions and recommendations outlined in the white paper.

### **Response to Intervention Challenges**

Urban schools across the United States are experiencing challenges related to the implementation of RTI (Orosco & Klingner, 2010). Orosco and Klingner indicated that avoiding scheduling issues at the secondary level was a challenge for counselors and administrators due to scheduling conflicts. . Many educators are also unsure of their roles and or responsibilities, which also cause challenges when implementing RTI. (Pyle & Vaughn, 2012). Pyle and Vaughn noted that secondary schools are experiencing difficulties with teaching students to read because students are several grade levels behind in reading, which produces a lack of motivation and affects student achievement. Educators must understand the challenges of implementing RTI before schools can experience academic success (Orosco & Klingner). If RTI is implemented before teachers are aware of the barriers, students may not experience academic success.

### **Administrative Support**

Administrators must invest finances to have successful implementation of any new reform (Friedman, 2010). The lack of needed resources is one of the challenges to implementing RTI intervention programs. Friedman found that continual success

requires continual investment in programs, the costs of professional development, materials, and staffing can be difficult due to budget constraints. Hamilton (2010) believed that the implementation of RTI requires funding that should provide resources for the instructional process. Hamilton noted that many times new funding is not needed, but current funds should be reallocated based on the collective vision of the school to increase student achievement; Hamilton believed that federal money is sufficient to implement RTI. Cicek (2012) stated:

Although no state or federal funds are specifically appropriated for RTI (Response to Intervention) implementation, several funding sources such as academic funds, which related to drop-outs and special education services may appropriately be accessed by districts to support this initiative. (p. 846) Cicek noted that administrators have access to funds that can be used to provide resources to implement the RTI reform.

Educational administrators are responsible for being instructional leaders. Jones, Yssel, and Grant (2012) revealed that campus principals play a role in the successful implementation of RTI. Teacher and administrator buy-in is crucial in the success of the RTI initiative (Hamilton, 2010). According to Mitra (2010), the principal is responsible for assessing the implementation of new programs and providing support to increase the level of implementation. Principals are accountable for ensuring that new initiatives are successful at the campus level. A lack of administrator support has caused a barrier to the implementation of RTI because many administrators are not knowledgeable about the RTI process (Sansosti, Goss, & Noltemeyer 2010). Sansosti et al. indicated that

principals must demonstrate their knowledge by participating on RTI teams, providing the resources to implement research-based interventions, using a data-based system to monitor progress, and allocating time for teachers to meet to discuss student achievement. When administrators are operating as instructional leaders they will ensure that teachers have the resources needed to implement programs with fidelity. Administrators will also provide time for teachers to collaborate to discuss instructional strategies that may benefit student's academic performance.

Secondary principals are experiencing obstacles during RTI implementation. In the quantitative study conducted by Sansosti et al. (2010), 476 secondary principals completed "an online survey to determine the importance and availability of RTI related practices and beliefs among secondary principals" (p. 289). Sansosti et al. revealed that secondary principals in this study believed that RTI was important but difficult to implement in a secondary setting. Sansosti et al. also conveyed that intervention and accountability were important but not readily available in the schools participating in the study. In the data analysis results, I found that secondary principals lacked the use of research-based interventions and systematic data collection on the campuses.

Administrative support is needed during RTI implementation. Barnhardt (2009) also conducted a case study that included two elementary schools and their principals. Barnhardt found that one of the schools received principal support through constant teaching training, professional development, and continuing teacher support, which resulted in a successful RTI implementation experience. The other school in this study experienced a lack of principal support in RTI implementation and their efforts were

unsuccessful. Barnhardt also revealed the importance of district leadership, because the principal who exhibited poor leadership skills in the implementation of RTI did not have district support to assist with his school's implementation. Principal leadership influences successful or unsuccessful RTI implementation.

### **Fidelity of Implementation**

Fidelity is important when implementing a prescribed program. According to the National Center on Response to Intervention (2013), fidelity refers to the "degree to which the program is implemented as intended by program developer, including the quality of implementation" (p. 11). Unless the intervention program is implemented as it was designed, fidelity cannot be measured. Newman- Jacobs (2008) believed that schools were responsible for making sure that teachers' instructional practices are research-based, explicit, and intentionally delivered as prescribed by the authors. Newman-Jacobs revealed that fidelity on the secondary level was uncertain, whereas it was more visible on the elementary level. Denton et al. (2008) found that RTI implementation fidelity is difficult because of scheduling issues. I found in conducting this study that teachers found it difficult to implement the prescribed program because students were not being scheduled to attend the appropriate classes. It is difficult for teachers to implement a program without the proper resources and accurate student placement. Students should be scheduled into the correct Tier level for maximum learning to take place. Schools that do not follow the correct protocol for placing students in the correct classes may not experience positive results.

Educators must make it a goal to execute interventions with fidelity (O’Keeffe, 2009). Inadequate intervention fidelity could compromise the validity of RTI implementations and weaken RTI implementation success to be used as an option in lieu of previous methods for assisting at-risk students (O’Keeffe). When implementation fidelity is low, RTI interventions will be just as ineffective as previous instructional methods (O’Keeffe). O’Keeffe also stressed that the due process of learning disabled students may be breached if intervention fidelity is low or not measured. Many students who are classified as learning disabled are required in an individualized education plan (IEP) to receive a specific amount of time in a core subject daily. If teachers are not providing instruction based on students IEP, they are breaking the law. It is important that all students receive the appropriate amount of instruction and intervention classes are taught as prescribed.

Educators must use data to determine if interventions are positively affecting student achievement (YALSA, 2013). According to the Institute of Educational Sciences (2009), teachers have access to a large amount of data but have not been trained on using the data. Stecker, Lembke, and Foegen (2008) noted that for schools to see success, they must use assessment data to monitor their instructional programs. If teachers are required to use data to verify student’s progress to produce increased academic achievement, they must be taught and held accountable for using data assessment tools (Nunn & Jantz, 2009).

### **Consistency in Program and Practice**

Progress monitoring is used in RTI models to inform educators when students are

not making acceptable progress (Stecker et al., 2008). Stecker et al. suggested that curriculum-based measurements (CBM) may be used. With CBM, teachers must give short assessments to determine a student's proficiency in a specific academic area. In the district studied, teachers administer CBM on a monthly basis in order to assist with making instructional decisions. Teachers must use resources, allocate time, and apply effective assessment procedures in general and special education classrooms (Stecker et al.).

Consistent guidelines are important in determining if student's needs are being met. Burns (2013) noted that rules and or guidelines must be put in to place to formulate intervention and instructional decisions. Burns believed that consistent decisions must be made for students that are based on data across campuses and districts. In this study's data analysis, I found that the local district studied needed to implement consistent guidelines for students entering and exiting intervention programs. Data must drive instructional decisions to effectively meet the needs of struggling readers (Bacon, 2012).

It is critical that teachers follow curriculum guidelines. In the Burgos (2012) mixed methods study, participants in the three qualitative interviews revealed a lack of consistency in the way that teachers implemented curriculum. Burgos noted that some teachers were following the curriculum, while others were not. Burgos conveyed that many times teaching practices are inconsistent because experienced teachers think they know everything and resist change. Burgos listed some suggestions to rectify this issue. The main suggestion was to emphasize the importance of principals or facilitators monitoring teachers to ensure that they are following the curriculum guidelines (Burgos).

For this to occur, principals must become instructional leaders and learn about the curriculum and or intervention programs that they are requiring teachers to implement (Parsons & Beauchamp, 2012).

When implementing the RTI framework, productive instructional leadership is needed to implement an effective intervention program (Parsons & Beauchamp, 2012). This local district's study revealed that inconsistent guidelines and practices among teachers and administrators will not produce success for all, but will leave students behind in reading and will not assist the local district in meeting AYP reading targets. Campus leaders must take on an instructional leadership role versus a managerial role to ensure that a successful instructional program is implemented (Parsons & Beauchamp). A qualitative study by Kolsky (2009) disclosed that principals directly affect the instructional practices of teachers. Kolsky interviewed principals and teachers, and the interviews revealed that campus administrators must be rooted in instructional leadership to see improvement in teacher's instructional practices. Effective instructional leadership on behalf of principals is essential in continuous school improvement (Kolsky). The data also suggested that principals must acquire effective leadership skills before becoming effective instructional leaders. Effective leadership starts with campus administrators who are leading by example and making an effort to ensure that teachers are implementing programs successfully and with fidelity.

### **Resources and Sufficient Time**

Scheduling and sufficient resources were additional challenges identified in the present study. The RTI framework recommends that students are grouped and regrouped



based on their academic needs (Institute of Education Sciences, 2009). Campus leaders are in charge of providing intervention teachers with time that allows student schedules to change as needed (Schnoebelen, 2012). Students scheduling needs should be given priority over the needs of the general classroom teacher (Howell, Patton, & Deiotte, 2008).

Schnoebelen (2012) noted that to focus on student needs, the campus leader must provide a flexible schedule that allows the teacher to group and regroup student based on their needs. Schnoebelen noted that campus leaders need to implement schedules that meet teachers and student needs to positively affect student academic achievement. The results of Schnoebelen's qualitative case study suggested that campus administrators on the secondary level implement a 30-minute homeroom period that could allow intervention teachers the opportunity to provide targeted instruction and interventions. According to Howell et al., (2008), campus leaders are responsible for guaranteeing that the instructional setting is student-centered and needed interventions replace less important needs, such as bell schedules. Time must be set aside to allow students to receive supplementary interventions to implement the RTI model successfully. While this may be challenging, student needs must supersede staff needs in order to successfully impact student achievement (Howell et al.).

Scheduling enough class time to implement curriculum and interventions is necessary to meet student academic needs (Vaughn, Denton, & Fletcher, 2010). The district studied uses READ 180 as their reading intervention program. This program requires that students receive instruction daily for 90 minutes to receive all of the

necessary components of the program. During the data collection of this study, all of the teachers revealed that their students were not receiving the 90 minutes of daily instruction. Teachers also stated that they were leaving out some of the necessary components because of lack of time.

Blakey (2010) conducted a study at Gunning Bedford Middle School that improved student achievement and narrowed the achievement gap among special education and regular education students by implementing building-wide schedule changes. Gunning Bedford middle school implemented a 60-minute flexible block schedule that allowed them to incorporate a 45-minute academic enrichment period where teachers could identify students needing additional academic assistance and provide core academic remediation and supplemental interventions during this time period. The study results revealed that after implementing the schedule changes the special education students outscored their general education peers (Blakey).

Cooley & Floyd (2013) noted that state lawmakers reduced the education budget by more than \$4 million. This budget cut severely affected many school districts, which had to reallocate their funds to keep teachers and certain programs in the school (Thompson, 2011). In Haggard-Wellmann (2012) study, students and writing teachers were not given enough access to computers. The teachers in the study complained that they did not have enough access to computers, computer labs, or rolling laptop carts. The teachers believed that technology is a crucial skill needed in the world outside of school to assist students in real-world applications (Haggard-Wellmann). Computers were one of the needed resources identified during this study's interviews. Two of the

interviewees stated they needed more computers and better working computers. Budget cuts and funding are two factors limiting access to technology and administrators must find a way to reallocate funding to allow teachers the opportunity to implement technology resources (Davies, 2011).

### **Read 180**

During the interviews, participants indicated that the reading intervention program used by the district studied is the Scholastic READ 180 program. Several concerns discussed were scheduling issues, lack of resources and time constraints. The participants felt that because of these issues the READ 180 program was not implemented to its fullest potential. Therefore, students did not show significant academic achievement. The archival data also revealed that some campuses did not show significant lexile gains compared to other campuses that were equipped with sufficient resources.

Researchers at What Works Clearinghouse (WWC; 2009) conducted a series of studies to determine how successful READ 180 would be in increasing student achievement in reading. It was noted that out of 110 studies only seven met WWC rigorous standards. Based on this information, the success of READ 180 to increase literacy and comprehension achievement was determined to be potentially positive. The studies concluded that more investigation is required to verify the overall success of READ 180. Hubbard (2011) compared students in a READ 180 programs with students who met the qualifications for READ 180 but who were not in the program. Hubbard revealed no significant differences on their pre and posttest scholastic inventory scores.

Hubbard noted that if this intervention program is not producing significantly higher levels of achievement in reading, the district should not waste the money on this program. Hubbard suggested that this finding could be the result of the criteria used to place students into the READ 180 program. Hubbard disclosed inconsistencies on how students were placed into the READ 180 program. Therefore, some students may not have shown improvements because the program level was too low and teachers attempted to adjust their reading level to the computer-assisted program level (Hubbard).

In Lang et al. (2009) study of a Florida school district, 207 students were receiving READ 180 instruction and 202 students were in the general intervention program. Participants were randomly assigned to groups and given the Florida comprehensive assessment test. Lang et al. found that students who were instructed with READ 180 scored much higher in comprehension than students in the general intervention program.

A mixed method study conducted by Houck (2012) consisted of first-year ninth-grade students who consistently performed poorly in reading in seventh and eighth grade and were reading two levels below grade level. Ninety-three ninth graders participated in the study and received instruction in READ 180. Houck revealed that READ 180 students showed an overall growth of two years and improved their reading skills by 74% (Houck). I concluded from the study that READ 180 can have positive effects on student reading achievement.

These findings encourage me to believe that the district studied has the ability to affect students' achievement by improving RTI and READ 180 implementation. I

advised in the white paper that the district studied continue to use the READ 180 program and focus on improving implementation by obtaining the needed resources, allocating appropriate time, and gaining support from administrators.

### **Summary of Literature Review**

This literature review addressed white papers, RTI challenges, and READ 180. RTI challenges noted in the literature review were administrative support, fidelity, consistency in program and practice, and resources and sufficient time. The literature revealed that these subtopics require assistance on behalf of campus leaders. Intervention programs cannot be implemented efficiently without ensuring that teachers use instructional practices according to the curriculum standards (Oliver, 2011). Teachers cannot effectively implement any program without resources, time, and funding (Craig, Iberman, & Perdue, 2009).

READ 180 was addressed in the literature review to provide an insight on the effect of READ 180 on the reading achievement of secondary students. WWC (2009) study revealed that correct implementation of READ 180 may have a significant effect on the reading achievement of secondary students. Presenting these finding in the format of a white paper may cause the targeted audience to read and apply the given suggestions. Using a white paper will allow the results to be presented in an easy-to-read and understandable way.

A white paper summarizes research results into a well written document that provides information to meet specific needs (Sakamuro & Stolley, 2010). Academic white papers are written more often to cover educational subject matter (Ritz, 2009). I

used an educational research presentation in the form of a white paper to publish problem, solutions, and recommendations on how to implement an effective intervention program to increase student reading achievement. To assess the effectiveness of my white paper, a formative evaluation was used. The next segment will focus on this study's project implementation process.

### **Implementation**

The procedure for implementing the white paper required that I write and deliver it to the designated district representative. The paper was written according to white paper guidelines. The white paper included an introduction, problem, recommendations, conclusion, and references. The overall goal of the white paper was to provide suggestions that the district could use to make improvements to their RTI model.

The district representative is responsible for deciding how the white paper is distributed after I provided them with a copy of the final project. The district representative decided if the white paper would be delivered as an electronic copy or paper copy. The district representative may opt to have the white paper presented during an in-service to teachers, campus administrators, and RTI teachers in the local school district. The district may also request that I assist with the implementation of the recommendations discussed in the white paper.

### **Potential Resources and Existing Supports**

The district representative's option for distributing the white paper to district employees will assist in deciding the resources required to implement the project. Some resources that may be needed are laptop and projector for in-service presentation, a

computer, email addresses to distribute electronic copies, a copier, copy paper, staples, and a stapler to distribute printed copies, of the white paper. The district representative, campus leaders, and RTI teachers could also assist in disseminating copies of the white paper.

### **Potential Barriers**

Barriers for the white paper were nominal. The only apparent potential barrier was the district representative declining to distribute the white paper project study to the district employees. The district studied has the right to refuse the research findings. The district representative may decide to obtain the results and do additional studies. The representative may also determine that the findings should be kept at the administration level until they are able to implement the needed recommendations. If the white paper is not disseminated among the district employees, the project will not meet its anticipated expectations.

### **Proposal for Implementation and Timetable**

After gaining approval of my doctoral study and my white paper by Walden University, I agreed to deliver my white paper to the local district representative. I also requested to schedule a meeting with the district's research committee at their convenience to discuss the white paper and answer any questions regarding the white paper. The meeting provided suggestions for distributing the white paper to each secondary campus and an agreement to assist with implementing the suggested recommendation included in the white paper. The district representative directed the dissemination of the white paper to secondary campuses.

A recommendation for distributing the white paper was to email it to the campus administrators and RTI teachers. The email contained a cover letter discussing the purpose of the white paper. Participants were asked to complete a formative evaluation after reviewing the document. Principals may decide to implement some of the recommendations before completing the evaluation. If more clarification is needed about the white paper, participants can contact me directly. The cover letter suggested that campus leaders contact me if they would like me to do a presentation or discuss the findings with campus leaders.

District administrators can also implement the white paper by placing it on the district webpage for all stakeholders. The specific focus of the white paper was on improving AYP targets and addressing solutions and recommendations to the local district to effectively increase secondary students reading achievement. Making the white paper accessible to all stakeholders allowed parents and other educator's access to research-based information that could affect their educational practices. The white paper was beneficial to all stakeholders within an educational system and promoted positive social change.

### **Roles and Responsibilities of Student and Others**

I was responsible for writing and delivering my white paper to the district representatives and answering any questions concerning the white paper. The district research committee was responsible for meeting and determining if the white paper will be distributed and to whom it will be distributed. If district representatives decide to disseminate the white paper to campus principals, the principals will be responsible for



ensuring that the campus RTI teachers and counselors receive the information. The principals and RTI teachers were expected to complete the formative evaluation after reading and or implementing some or all of the recommendations. If the campus administrators decide to act upon recommendations from the white paper, I may be asked to contribute in the project's implementation.

### **Project Evaluation**

The goal of the white paper was to provide the campus administrators and RTI teachers with information and research-based recommendations to assist with future RTI decisions. The white paper presented a formative evaluation to gain feedback on the project. Stull, Varnum, Ducette, and Schiller (2011) believed that when learners participate in formative evaluation they are able to recognize learning that has and has not occurred. Formative assessments were used to ensure that the participants understood the white paper and if they did not, I provided timely feedback to any misunderstandings and made adjustments to ensure that the white papers goals were achieved. Stull et al. also believed that formative evaluation is helpful for instructors and learners. The instructors are able to assess if instruction was beneficial or if there are areas that need to be improved (Stull et. al., 2011). Formative evaluations help to determine what needs to be done next.

I used a questionnaire to gather data from secondary campus administrators, and RTI teachers. The data from the questionnaire assisted in determining what areas were helpful in the white paper and areas that needed more clarification. The intention of this white paper was to inform the main stakeholders who include the secondary campus

administrators and RTI teachers, to increase their knowledge of the RTI model and implementation practices.

### **Implications for Social Change**

#### **Local Community**

Struggling readers may benefit from this white paper because revealing the results from the data and implementing the suggested recommendations will address their needs. Low performing readers need to receive effective implementation of reading interventions to increase their academic success in reading (Wanzek, Wexler, Vaughn, & Ciullo, 2010). The white paper assisted the district representative, campus administrators, and RTI teachers by providing information to improve the RTI process. If recommendations from the white paper are implemented, then RTI implementation should improve, resulting in improved student reading achievement.

Social change may take place, as more students increase their reading achievement and are successful in reading on the secondary level, which may improve graduation rates. The local school district will benefit from improved academic achievement in reading, because the district will have opportunities to meet AYP targets in reading and avoid designation as a school in need of improvement status. Overall, all stakeholders should profit with students who are more positive, productive citizens.

#### **Far-Reaching**

This research study had the possibility to impact other small urban school districts. Because little research on RTI implementation on the secondary level exists, this white paper should contribute to that knowledge base. I concluded that overcoming

RTI implementation challenges may be difficult, but doable with support and resources. The white paper supplied data and recommendations for secondary leaders and their campuses. The recommendation to implement RTI teams on all secondary campuses may help to build campus buy-in by allowing educators the opportunity to consensus build through collaboration. Secondary schools may accomplish collaboration by implementing professional learning communities. My white paper suggested that allowing teachers to collaborate to discuss data could allow student achievement to increase. The white paper recommendations may encourage secondary administrators to review their decision making process and modify as needed. The recommendations could also improve teacher's knowledge and instructional practices and improve AYP scores in reading on the secondary level. The white paper also included information for improving practices and knowledge in an urban school district experiencing challenges with RTI implementation that could be used by other secondary urban schools.

### **Conclusion**

Section 3 included the goals, rationale, literature review, implementation, evaluation, and implications for social change of my white paper. I created this qualitative case study to discover the most effective ways to improve secondary teachers' knowledge and implementation of RTI to improve student achievement in reading. The white paper in this study made information available to the local school district that may assist in the districts future decisions concerning RTI. In my white paper, the findings from the data analysis were presented, the Texas' RTI framework was explained, and the challenges that urban school districts encounter when implementing

RTI were examined. Recommendations were a result of the literature review in section 3 and the data analysis completed in this study. Section 4 will include personal reflections and conclusions regarding the white paper. In section 4 I will also address the research process, strength and limitations of the white paper, analysis of my roles, and future research. The white paper that will be given to the local school district is included as an appendix in my doctoral study.

## Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

### **Introduction**

Section 4 includes my personal thoughts and conclusions in effectively implementing RTI on the secondary level. Implementing RTI successfully on the secondary level is an area of concern in the literature. Project strengths and limitations are discussed. Subsections addressed will consist of project limitations, recommendations for remediation of limitations, scholarship, project development and evaluation, and leadership and change. Information will be provided on my skill as a scholar-practitioner, and my potential as a project developer. My ability to use this project study to impact social change is examined. This section will conclude with future implications, applications, and directions for research.

### **Project Strengths**

The primary strength of my white paper was in examining a local problem in an urban school district, and offering recommendations to assist the local school district and other districts with similar demographics. This project provides the local school district with data needed to explain what may be needed to increase teachers' knowledge and implementation practices of RTI, leading to improving students' reading achievement. My recommendations in the white paper are geared toward making improvements at the secondary campus level, as opposed to the district level.

The first recommendation was to consider implementing RTI teams on all secondary campuses. Through this study, I found that teachers were not collaborating with campus leaders or other teachers in the decision-making process of placing students

into reading intervention programs. The lack of collaboration has led to the placement of too many students in intervention classes, incorrect placement of students, and inadequate time for successful implementation. According to the white paper, implementing RTI teams leads to success. Implementing RTI teams requires all members to collaborate and communicate in an open and trusting environment. This process also enables members of the community to share their knowledge about the RTI framework and the intervention programs with those who may not be as informed. Stakeholders are also able to participate in consensus building, to ensure buy-in to establish intervention strategies that will assist all students. Researchers have supported the implementation of RTI teams and that was one of the strong points of the project study.

The next recommendation I suggested in the white paper was to provide needed resources for teachers and student success. The reading intervention program implemented by the local district requires that teachers and students use resources in order to experience academic success and meet implementation fidelity. I found that all of the participants experienced a lack of needed resources. At the campus level, the administrator is responsible for ensuring that funding is available to purchase all of the components needed for the successful implementation of the intervention programs. The READ 180 program implemented by the district is a computer-based intervention program. A resource needed by all was more computers.

In the white paper, I found that information must be taught as designed to ensure implementation fidelity. By assessing teacher's instructional practices, administrators

can gain knowledge about the effectiveness of fidelity in the intervention program and how to participate in ongoing instructional support.

The third recommendation discussed in my white paper includes providing professional development opportunities for secondary administrators, teachers, and counselors. Providing professional development will allow educators to become knowledgeable on the core principles of RTI and the prescribed intervention program. In the white paper, I noted that educators, who are aware of the RTI process, are in the best position to assist students who are struggling in reading. Professional development trainings will assist everyone in understanding their roles and responsibilities in effectively implementing RTI and intervention programs.

The fourth recommendation cited in the white paper was to create consistent guidelines on each secondary campus for placing and exiting students into and out of intervention programs. I suggested that school leaders collaborate to determine which assessments will be most appropriate for conducting universal screenings, progress monitoring, and data that should be used to measure overall student progress. Using the same instruments throughout the local district may prove to be beneficial when students transfer to other campuses in the local district. Implementing this recommendation may convey to stakeholders that administrators are aligning their practices to make the necessary improvements to increase the effectiveness of intervention programs and student achievement.

The local school district will be able to use my white paper as a resource of information and ideas to improve the implementation of their current intervention

programs. All recommendations are offered to strengthen the effectiveness and fidelity of the program. The white paper will provide district and campus leaders with information to guide their future decisions regarding effective RTI implementation. This project is rooted in the idea that reading interventions can be successful when implemented effectively, therefore resulting in positive social change.

### **Project Limitations**

The main project limitation was that my white paper was limited to the local district studied and will only be useful to other districts with the same characteristics. The districts would need to be in an urban setting and implement the READ 180 intervention program on the secondary level. Other districts would have to be prepared to spend in excess of \$40,000 for the basic program at each of their secondary campuses. They may also need additional technology to support the software component.

Another limitation to this project was that the local school district and campus administrators may not have the time to implement the suggestions. Background information on RTI and four recommendations for improving the intervention programs were identified in the white paper. Campuses may be limited in their ability to access the funding, time, or individuals needed to execute the suggested recommendations, such as professional development, resources, and RTI teams. The district and campus leaders may also not agree with the stated recommendations. While this project included data analysis related to the studied problem, campus leaders may choose to reject my recommendations and continue with their current implementations practices.



### **Recommendations for Remediation of Limitations**

To resolve the limitations presented by concentrating on the local school district, data could be gathered from numerous school districts in Texas that missed AYP targets in reading. Comparing data from several districts with the same profiles to districts with dissimilar profiles may also be helpful. The results could be generalized to districts across Texas with similar profiles. District and campus leaders who are considering revising their intervention programs could view information from districts related to their district.

In this study, I focused on gaining teachers' perceptions of their knowledge and implementation practices of RTI through face-to-face interviews. The research process could have included interviews from campus and district administrators. Their perception of teachers' knowledge and implementation practices would have allowed me to obtain their perspective on changes that needed to be made concerning the RTI process and teachers instructional practices. Their perspective would have also provided me with information on administrators' knowledge of the RTI process. Interviewing administrators and teachers responsible for implementing RTI in other school districts could provide additional information.

I did not suggest implementing any changes in the district's reading intervention program. My plan could have included making changes to the district's intervention program to one that did not require the mandatory use of computers, considering that this is a needed resource that is difficult to obtain. I could have suggested that all RTI teachers become certified as reading specialists. I could have also recommended that

every secondary campus implement block scheduling to ensure that students are provided with 90-minute intervention blocks on a daily basis. The information in my white paper will help campus leaders decide what areas need to be changed in their campus implementation of RTI.

### **Scholarship**

Throughout the completion of this project study, I learned numerous things about scholarly research. Learning to write in a scholarly manner was new and challenging for me initially. However, I discovered that scholarly writing demanded that I synthesize articles and books by published authors. During the proposal stage, I was reminded often that I could not use my own words or opinions. As I began to embrace the true meaning of scholarly writing, I began to flourish.

An additional challenge that I faced was accepting constructive criticism from my committee chair. I had difficulty initially with all of the red correction marks on my proposal. Before beginning this endeavor, I thought I was a good writer. I soon learned that I had to dismiss everything I thought I knew, and adapt to a new level of writing. I had to think on a deeper level and not compose as a novice but as a scholarly-practitioner. I discovered that scholarship requires excellence.

During this research process, I asked myself question after question regarding my study. I searched for answers everywhere and reviewed hundreds of sources. It is not enough to just locate one source and not be concerned with its reliability or credibility. I had to continue searching for answers until I reached saturation. When I read educational books or articles, I now question them and try to find additional sources that support their

points on a specific issue. Through reviewing other research studies, I learned about the research process, the depth of research, and writing research results.

I also learned that research articles contained references, which allowed me access to additional sources. By reviewing the sources listed in the reference section, I was able to locate more information pertaining to my research study. I reread several studies many times to analyze and understand the findings. In scholarly writing, the writer must give rich and descriptive information. It had to go beyond the superficial and dig deeper to acquire knowledge.

Scholarship is about having the confidence to share information and become an expert in a field of study. Participating and completing this research study has given me the confidence to engage in conversation on a more intellectual level. I can now sit among other scholars and discuss research studies and contribute to the conversation. Throughout my doctoral journey, I shared the knowledge acquired with administrators, teachers, and colleagues. I believe sharing the information gained from my project study with secondary leaders will enrich the local district's intervention programs.

### **Project Development and Evaluation**

I realize that to select an evaluation method and to become a project developer requires much critical thinking to choose the best project option for the research question. I considered several project options, such as a professional development series, an RTI manual for teachers and administrators, and a white paper. During my research process, I located information about white papers. The purpose of a white paper is to report information and recommendations to a group (Sakamuro & Stolley, 2010). My goal was

to share my findings and recommendations of my project study with district and campus leaders and give a solution to the local problem. Therefore, a white paper was an excellent option for my project study. By writing the white paper, I was able to deliver information about my project study, the problem, solution, and recommendations to assist district and campus leaders in making decisions concerning their RTI procedures.

After deciding to create a white paper, I thought about the organization of the white paper. I reviewed several samples and became aware that there were various formats to choose and there was no specific format. The format of the white paper depends on the audience. I decided to use a format that was inviting, colorful, and eye-catching to capture educator's interest. I included sections on the problem, solutions, and recommendations for improving teacher's knowledge and implementation of reading interventions.

In developing my white paper, I focused on my audience and chose information that I believed would be most beneficial to them. The challenge was taking 100 pages of information and reducing it to seven pages for the white paper. This process taught me how to assemble only the most important information. I did not want to burden district and campus leaders with extraneous details and information. I provided an overview of the data collected and concentrated on the findings. I received feedback from several colleagues who assisted me in revising my white paper to create the final report. The final evaluation will be a summative evaluation from district and campus leaders, and this feedback will determine if they will implement the recommendations in my white paper.

Having the district and campus leaders to complete my summative evaluation will assist me in determining if I answered the questions that would meet the needs of the local district. This evaluation will also provide feedback on whether the recommendations suggested to improve teacher's knowledge and instructional practices were appropriate. It will be helpful to know what their thoughts are and if they believe that my recommendations will assist them in effectively implementing reading interventions and increase student reading achievement. My encounter with this project study has improved my project development and evaluation knowledge for future studies.

### **Leadership and Change**

This project study experienced has taught me that leadership development is an on-going process for me as I continue to increase my knowledge in the field of education. According to my colleagues and other administrators, I have the gift of leadership. I am what they call, a natural born leader. I love to organize, delegate, and assist others in developing their gifts and talents. Since my childhood I have always relied on what I thought was best for me; not the opinions of others. I was always determined to set goals and accomplish them, regardless of the cost. I credit much of my leadership ability to being the oldest sibling and to my mother, who taught me to be independent and to persevere no matter what life, throw at me. I also attribute my leadership skills to my involvement in church and social activities. I was also able to acquire and develop my leadership skills by participating on committees, programs, and service projects. The process of becoming a teacher, librarian, and administrator has given me many

opportunities to expand and practice being a leader on a consistent basis. My leadership is born out of experiences and knowledge.

When I embarked upon this doctoral journey, I was aware that the local school district was struggling to meet AYP targets. As I contemplated developing a problem for my study, I knew that my focus would be on improving reading achievement. I desired to learn more about AYP and the RTI framework and their relationship to secondary education. I desired to find out what the local district could do to improve AYP scores by assisting teachers' implementation practices to assist students in improving their reading skills. My idea was to promote needed changes and collaborate to work towards a common goal to improve AYP scores and increase student's reading success.

Since beginning this educational journey, I found out that leadership is a skill that you must want to embrace. Johnson (1998), in the book, *Who Moved My Cheese*, discussed how many people avoid embracing change because of their fear of taking risks. I stepped out in faith when I decided to obtain a doctoral degree. I was only able to do this by determining within myself that I would take this risk to become the kind of leader that I desired to be. People do not want to follow someone who is mediocre, they want to follow excellence.

I learned that leadership styles may change according to situations and challenges. A true leader is concerned about the needs of others and realizes that the situation is not about them. An effective leader must learn to adapt to various leadership styles when needed. Therefore, my leadership style would be directed towards a situational leader. This leadership style requires me to change when needed to meet the needs of the people

and the organization. I realize that change can be difficult and does take time. Working with individuals who are resistant to change allow me the opportunity to share the vision and communicate expectations and validate their concerns. Often people feel threatened by change, so assuring them that I will support them through the change can be comforting. I will continue to develop my leadership skills beyond this doctoral study. I will embrace continuous learning as I grow as an educational change agent.

### **Analysis of Self as Scholar**

In transitioning into a scholar, I had to develop into a scholarly writer by learning to collect and analyze data and review literature articles. Before deciding to enroll in Walden University, I researched several doctoral programs. My desire was to be a part of a program that was rigorous and would challenge me to be an effective leader and affect social change. My desire was to expand my understanding of administrative leadership and acquire skills needed to become a change agent to positively affect the education process for students, teachers, and administrators. Walden University assisted me in obtaining these goals and becoming a scholarly writer.

I learned to identify peer-reviewed articles from articles written by random individuals. I learned to locate studies that correlated with my research study. Writing the literature review was the most challenging. I located information that I believed was useful, only to discover that it was not supported by research. I invested many hours and many late nights trying to assess the quality of the sources to include into the research study.

This process has also deepened my knowledge regarding RTI and reading intervention programs. I increased my knowledge of reading interventions and the degree to which implementation practices can affect student achievement. My understanding of the role of the administrators, RTI teachers, and stakeholders grew immensely. I consider myself a budding expert in the field of secondary reading education, and I am excited to share my knowledge with the local district to improve reading achievement among secondary students.

Through my research on reading interventions, I have become a competent and budding scholar. I enhanced the body of research on RTI for secondary students and teachers. My experience as a scholar has been informative, but it is definitely not finished. I plan to continue to read and explore to advance my knowledge of RTI implementation on the secondary level. My confidence level has increased as a scholar, and I am proud to have contributed to the body of knowledge on improving secondary reading achievement.

### **Analysis of Self as Practitioner**

I have been an educational practitioner for 23 years. I obtained the necessary educational credentials during my tenure to positively affect the lives of everyone I encountered. While in the classroom, I considered myself to be a facilitator of student learning versus a class lecturer. I wanted my students to be engaged in the learning process and to make their own discoveries. As I moved from the classroom to the library and from the library to administration, my focus was on assisting educators in improving their knowledge of reading instructional practices.



As I reflect upon my skill as a practitioner, I recognize that I attempted to implement what I learned throughout my educational journey. I continue to attend professional development classes and conferences to increase my knowledge and understanding in the field of education. When I learn new information, I make an effort to apply the new concepts into my instructional practices. I hold myself accountable for implementing what I learned and I share my knowledge with colleagues, and I am excited about sharing my new knowledge with district and campus leaders.

My goals are to use my expertise to become an administrator in my school district and educate college students who are aspiring to become teachers or administrators. Future teachers and administrators must understand the importance of being instructional leaders. They must also become knowledgeable of the RTI framework on the secondary level to promote academic achievement among their students and need to be aware that students must be able to read across the curriculum on the secondary level to experience success. Administrators must learn how and what to assess during reading instruction in order to assist teachers in improving their instructional practices.

### **Analysis of Self as Project Developer**

I was made aware of the requirement to complete a project study during my orientation process. I was informed that because of the time of my enrollment, I did not have the option of completing a traditional dissertation. Initially I did not understand the difference between a dissertation and a project study. I was informed that a project study would give me the opportunity to examine a local problem and assist in improving educational practice by designing a project that would impact social change. I was elated

about the chance to create a project that may assist in improving student achievement. As I continued this journey, I soon realized that completing a project study was a challenging and difficult task.

Creating a white paper was a new endeavor for me. I discovered that a white paper was an option by reviewing other project studies. I learned that a white paper encompasses information pertaining to a specific problem with solutions and recommendations to solve the problem. I am proud to say that my research efforts were beneficial. I learned a lot of information about RTI on the secondary level and I am becoming an expert on the topic. I anticipate that this newly acquired knowledge will improve the chances that district and campus leaders will implement my recommendations.

I have never worked on anything as difficult as this project study. For this study, I wrote draft after draft and asked several colleagues, family members, and my committee to review and provide their feedback. Their feedback enabled me to produce a scholarly and logically written white paper. I am hopeful that the summative evaluation will offer information on whether the project meets the needs of the local school district. I anticipate receiving constructive feedback from the administrators regarding my white paper. I agreed to present my white paper to the district's research committee and plan to ask members to provide feedback based on the summative evaluation at that time. I am also open to any suggestions that they may have that will improve my white paper. I am certain that my newly acquired project development and evaluation skills will assist me

in my future project endeavors. My experiences with this white paper should allow me to create future projects with excellence and expertise.

### **The Project's Potential Impact on Social Change**

Throughout this project study I gained a deeper understanding about the implementation of reading interventions and intervention programs on the secondary level. I gained knowledge into the severity of secondary students struggling to read. The literature review allowed me to become aware of the importance of successful implementation of reading interventions and how program and practice must correlate to implement an effective reading intervention program. I was able to disclose some of what I learned with RTI teachers in the local district.

This doctoral journey changed my life in various ways. I learned time management skills, how to evaluate and analyze data, how to locate reliable sources, and how to write scholarly. My ultimate lesson was learning how to balance school, work, family and church. This doctoral process caused me to reflect upon why I became an educator and the impact the research study has on society. This journey has given me the strength, confidence, and knowledge to become an effective change agent.

It took me a while to learn the research procedures because I had never conducted a scholarly research study. I knew the local problem on which I wanted to focus, but I experienced some difficulty in writing the problem in a scholarly manner. With continual assistance from my committee chair, I finally produced a scholarly proposal that met Walden's expectations. My initial literature review completed during the proposal stage was quite extensive. I obtained numerous peer-reviewed literature studies to support my

topics and sub-topics. However, during my final literature review I was required to revise this section by adding additional topics and sub-topics. I also failed to use enough peer-reviewed sources. After completing the needed changes, I receive feedback from my committee chair that I could move on in the completion of my study. I am grateful for the support and assistance that I was given during this journey.

The project's potential impact on social change has implications at the local level, secondary level, and for teachers of secondary students with poor reading achievement. I studied teachers' knowledge and implementation of RTI to expose areas in need of improvement. Implementing the necessary improvements may benefit students, teachers, and administrators and lead to achievement for all. Teachers will benefit by gaining the needed support and resources necessary for them to improve their instructional practices. Secondary students will benefit because they will be placed into appropriate intervention programs and receive interventions based on their individual needs. District and campus administrators will benefit by improved AYP scores, and meeting AYP targets.

The district studied may realize that implementing successful reading interventions is critical for secondary students. If students' needs are not met, many students will continue to have difficulty reading across the curriculum, failing grades and many may never graduate from high school. If this occurs, AYP scores will not improve and will continue to reflect negatively on the local district. Students who do not learn to read will not become productive citizens of society but will have to rely on others to survive.

The expectation of secondary intervention programs should focus on increasing reading achievement so that students will be successful in all content areas. Having the ability to read successfully in all content areas will prepare secondary students to learn a trade, gain employment, or enter a postsecondary school. The local school district desires to make improvements that will positively affect teachers and students. The district is committed to continuing to make reading improvements at the secondary level. Other school districts could also make improvements regarding their low performing readers by implementing intervention programs that are successful.

### **Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research**

There are some implications of this project study for the field of education and the local district. The local school district and other urban districts could make many changes because of my findings and recommendations. They could implement RTI teams to discuss student's success and instructional practices to determine if the reading intervention program is being successful. This recommendation was suggested in my white paper. Documentation of student success will assist in determining implementation fidelity of the program.

This white paper project can also be presented as a professional development series. The information presented in the white paper can be broken down into professional modules at the districts discretion. The information from this white paper alone should not be the only resource used to improve teacher's knowledge and implementation of RTI. Further research should be done to examine other strategies that

may be useful on the secondary level. This white paper is designed to increase awareness and promote more collaboration on the subject of RTI on secondary campuses.

Dedicated educators want their students to be successful. They strive for excellence and desire to develop ways to improve student achievement. The RTI framework was created to assist educators in responding to students needs before academic failure, this increases student's chances of being successful. In RTI implementation, teachers must receive needed support and resources for them to increase their knowledge of RTI and improve their instructional skills. Providing administrative support and collaboration opportunities are methods of meeting the needs of the teachers and were a priority in this study. Local stakeholders may benefit by the local district's implementation of the recommendations presented in the white paper. This project should positively affect the knowledge of all educators throughout the school district. Their implementation of recommendations in the white paper should increase student achievement district-wide.

This project study identified how a local problem produced solutions and recommendations by obtaining and analyzing data to decide the best way to solve a local problem based on the perspectives of participants closest to the issues. In future research, the white paper can be used as a template to develop other white paper to address additional educational issues. The white paper could be used in other districts with similar educational needs. It can also be revised to meet the needs of elementary teachers and administrators and include math teachers.

In the near future, I plan to use my doctoral study to make presentations at workshops and educational conferences. Once this study is completed, I will be prepared to begin sharing the information and my results. Becoming a consultant will afford me the opportunity to speak with campus and district leaders across the United States to improve their RTI implementation and reading intervention programs. I plan to use my experience in completing this research study to write a book.

Additional research studies need to be written on implementing secondary reading interventions. During my research there were limited articles on RTI on the secondary level. Therefore, many of my articles dealt with research focused on elementary students. Research topics for secondary reading achievement could consist of reading and word skills, parental involvement on the secondary level, fluency and comprehension strategies, and reading intervention programs. Research on indirect and direct vocabulary instruction and making the reading/writing connection could also prove to be beneficial for helping secondary students overcome challenges with learning to read.

### **Conclusion**

This project study included a white paper that focused on solutions and recommendations to assist in teachers' knowledge and implementation of RTI on the secondary level. Participants of this study recommended that secondary administrators implement RTI teams to encourage collaboration and develop consensus-building skills. Teachers and administrators must work together to incorporate their expertise and shared knowledge to successfully evaluate student needs and help them in overcoming their difficulties with reading.

Section 4 focused on my reflections on scholarship, project development and evaluation. I discussed the process and challenges that I encountered in becoming a scholar. During my project development, I became skilled at learning how to select a project and create a white paper. I also learned the importance of summative and formative evaluations. I used feedback from my peers to produce a scholarly white paper. In discussing leadership and change, I noted how some people are afraid to embrace change because change requires one to take risks. District and campus administrators must prepare themselves to take risks if they decide to implement the suggested recommendations.

I also discussed my role as a scholar, practitioner, and project developer. In becoming a scholar, I learned to collect and analyze data, complete literature reviews, and write in a scholarly manner. As a practitioner, I continued to acquire knowledge to help others. I also held myself accountable for implementing new knowledge into my instructional practices. I will now have the knowledge and expertise to develop white papers, various projects options, and select evaluation tools.

Finally, I reflected on the influence of my study on social change, implications, and future research. The results and recommendations stated in the project are essential for the local school district and could assist other schools districts. I conveyed how I wanted to become a consultant and use my knowledge by presenting at workshops and educational conferences. I discussed implications for social change and how teachers and students can benefit from improved student achievement at the local level and other



educational settings. Future research studies should focus on reading and study skills, and reading intervention programs.

As an avid reader, I have always promoted reading in elementary and secondary schools. I constantly searched for ways to make reading fun and exciting for students who were considered to be reluctant readers. My goal from the beginning of this journey was to investigate how to improve students reading achievement. My newly acquired knowledge and expertise will assist me in continuing to be a change agent with emphasis on improving the reading achievement of secondary students.

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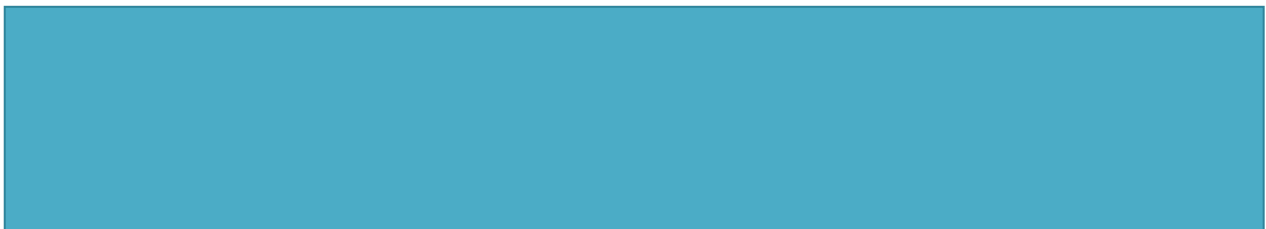
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# Implementing Reading Interventions

Overcoming Response to Intervention Obstacles

Knowledge + Resources + Fidelity = Student Success

Walden University  
A white paper by Regina Sims





## **Introduction**

Federal mandates require educators to implement instruction that allows students to receive interventions in the general as well as the special education settings. Texas uses a Response to Intervention (RTI) 3-tierd framework in general and special education programs to ensure that students experience every educational opportunity available. This study focused on investigating teachers' knowledge and implementation of RTI to improve secondary students' reading achievement. Many students on the secondary level are struggling to learn to read. Ensuring that educators are trained in implementing needed interventions could assist in improving students reading skills. The goal of the local Texas school district is to increase reading achievement by addressing the phenomenon of reading failures.

The local problem in the Texas school district examined for this study is their inability to meet adequate yearly progress (AYP) targets for two consecutive years in reading. This caused the district to be placed on a school improvement program (SIP) enforced by the Texas Education Agency. AYP requires schools and districts to meet standards in test preparation, academic performance in math and reading, and English language arts. To assist students in improving their reading skills, the local Texas district focused on their RTI model. The district has implemented RTI since 2008 and uses the READ 180 instructional program.

Discussing the local school districts difficulties in implementing RTI, overcoming implementation obstacles, and providing recommendations for successful implementation is the basis of this white paper. Implementing RTI on the secondary level has been challenging for teachers because their efforts are hampered by inconsistent guidelines, lack of support from secondary campus administrators, and insufficient resources. Until the issues hampering RTI implementation are resolved, teachers may not be able to implement RTI successfully, and student achievement may not improve.

## What questions need to be answered?

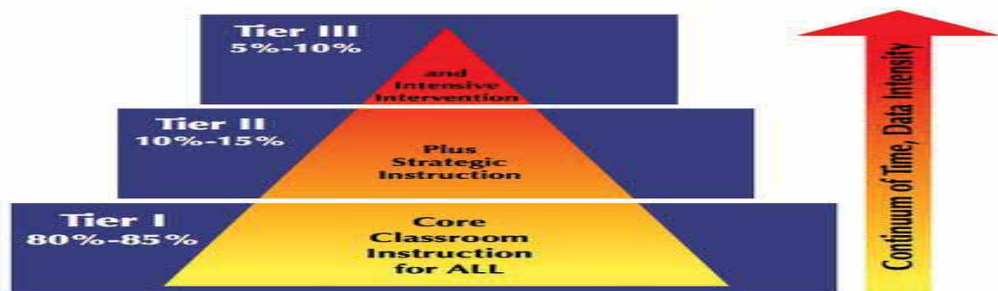
1. What is RTI?
2. Why is implementing RTI difficult for secondary teachers?
3. How can we conquer the obstacles and experience success in implementing RTI?
4. What are the implications for best solutions to improve teachers' knowledge and implementation of RTI?

## What is Response to Intervention?

The federal government allows states and districts the flexibility to establish models that reflect their communities (Texas Education Agency, 2013). The RTI definition adopted by the state of Texas states:

RTI is the practice of meeting the academic needs of all students through a variety of services containing the following key elements:

- High quality instruction and scientific research-based tiered intervention, aligned with individual student need;
- Frequent monitoring of student progress to make results-based academic and/or behavioral decisions; and
- Application of student response data to important educational decisions, such as those regarding placement, intervention, and instructional goal. (Texas Education Agency, 2013, para 1)



<http://edtech-thorshammer.blogspot.com/2011/07/differentiated-instruction-and-response.html>

At the Tier 1 stage of the Texas model, teachers implement interventions for about 80% of the students by differentiating instruction and collecting data at least 3 times a year. The data is usually collected during benchmark testing to evaluate student progress. Tier 2 focuses on the 15% of students who have not responded to classroom instruction and may be at risk for academic failure. Students performing at Tier 2 level may receive instruction from a co-teacher or through small group instruction. Approximately 5% of the students who have not been successful at Tier 1 and 2 will fall into Tier 3. These students receive more intense individual interventions and more frequent progress monitoring. Shapiro (2013) noted that the tiers are flexible, which allows students to move from each tier based on their response to interventions. Frequent progress monitoring is vital to successful RTI implementation to assure that educators adhere to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 2004 requirement of a least restrictive environment and free and appropriate education for all students (Sansosti, Noltemeyer, & Goss, 2010).

### **Why is implementing RTI difficult for secondary teachers?**

Reading difficulties among adolescent students are prevalent across the United States (Leseaux & Kieffer, 2010). According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (NAEP):

More than 60% of middle and high school students scored below the proficient level in reading achievement. Only 3% of eighth grade English learners scored at or above proficient on the NAEP reading assessment; 71% scored below the basic level. (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2009, pp. 19-20)

Teachers interviewed at the local district agreed that successful RTI implementation depends on the amount of support received from secondary campus administrators, application of consistent guidelines, and access to needed resources. Effective leadership from secondary campus administrators directly affects the implementation of programs and school improvement (Heck & Hallinger, 2010). Secondary campus administrators

are responsible for presenting and leading systematic organizational change at the campus level. Samples (2011) believed that the building of a new reform does not go into operation because a mandate is passed. Secondary campus administrators should introduce and promote the implementation of RTI on their campuses and provide the needed resources.

The Texas district studies also noted that inconsistent guidelines for placing and exiting students into and out of reading intervention classes are a problem. It was suggested that using a standard district protocol could help ensure that students are placed into the correct intervention classes. The standard protocol may also be useful for students transferring to different schools within the local district.

Insufficient funding has been a significant obstacle in successfully implementing RTI (Thompson, 2011). In Texas, the 82<sup>nd</sup> legislature reduced the education budget by \$4 billion dollars (Cooley & Floyd, 2013). The reduction in funding has caused school districts to reduce resources directed for key initiatives. Teachers need access to resources in order to implement prescribed interventions to improve student achievement. The local study revealed that teachers lacked computers and other resources (i.e. ebooks, headphones) necessary for successful utilization with the prescribed intervention program. Teachers involved in the study believed that the intervention program would operate better if students have access to working computers and other essential resources.

Wohlstetter, Datnow, & Park (2008) indicated that using data to drive decisions can improve student performance. Secondary campus administrators and teachers should value the results of data. Progress monitoring results are important when assessing student's progress or regression after implemented interventions. Teachers should be trained on using the data to move students to appropriate tier levels. Providing effective interventions and instruction may assist in meeting the academic needs of students.

## **How can we conquer the obstacles and experience success in implementing RTI?**

Implementing RTI requires direction and support from campus administrators (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012). Lunenburg (2010) believed to improve teaching and learning, the campus administrator should embrace, not delegate their role as instructional leader. When a campus administrator designates a spokesperson for an instructional program or initiative, teachers interpret that to mean that the program is not a high priority (Peariso, 2011). Peariso also revealed that many middle and high school administrators delegate their instructional role due to a lack of understanding the core principles of the program or initiative. Secondary campus administrators should understand that RTI is a key component in a framework for school improvement. RTI is more likely to be successfully implemented on campuses where the administrator understands that the implementation of RTI is directly affected by their own knowledge, instructional support, campus culture, consensus building, research-based practices, and data management (Bean & Lillenstein ).

Continuous teamwork and collaboration from campus RTI teams have proven to be instrumental at middle and high school campuses that implemented RTI (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012). Movit, Petrykowska, & Woodruff (2010) suggested that RTI teams should include staff members such as teachers, reading specialist, counselors, and administrators because each plays a vital role in meeting the needs of the students. The campus RTI team should meet often to discuss successes and challenges associated with student progress. In order to experience success, campus RTI teams should allow members the opportunity to collaborate and participate in consensus building discussions to establish intervention strategies to assist all students.

Fidelity is an important component of successful implementation of RTI (Texas Education Agency, 2013). “Fidelity is using the curriculum and instructional practices consistently and accurately, as they were intended to be used” (Mellard, 2010, p. 3). A

low rate of fidelity happens when inconsistencies occur and documentation is missing. To improve campus fidelity, teachers should provide consistent instruction that is being executed as prescribed (Texas Education Agency). Teachers should also be responsible for documenting when and how an intervention was implemented in order for a students' achievement to be associated to a specific intervention.

### **What are the implications for best solutions to improve teachers' knowledge and implementation of RTI?**

In the study of a local Texas school district it was revealed that specialized RTI teachers received adequate training to implement their prescribed program. Based on interviews, secondary campuses that had not applied a set of consistent guidelines associated with RTI and provided teachers with resources were experiencing very little improvements in student reading achievement. This study revealed that teachers need support from campus administrators, consistent application of the guidelines associated with intervention programs and practices, and the resources necessary to implement RTI. This study also provided evidence that secondary campuses may need to establish RTI leadership teams to improve student reading achievement.

### **The problem of implementing RTI could be effectively addressed if the following recommendations were implemented:**

**Recommendation 1-** Build RTI teams on all secondary campuses to normalize team members' opportunities to participate in collaboration and consensus building by affording members to contribute expertise and share knowledge to better assess student's needs and challenges. RTI team members could meet regularly to determine optimal intervention strategies for students.

**Recommendation 2-** Assess each teacher's instructional practices to ensure that instruction is being executed as prescribed.

**Recommendation 3-** Create clear guideline for placing students into and out of intervention and be consistent about adhering to guidelines. Determine assessments that would be used for universal screening and decide on ways to monitor, track, and measure students' progress. Applying consistent guidelines may benefit students who transfer to other secondary schools within the district.

**Recommendation 4-** Improve the fidelity of interventions by ensuring that teachers report on when and how each intervention was implemented, so that student's progress can be linked to that specific intervention.

**Recommendation 5-** Provide mandatory professional development for secondary campus administrators, teachers, and counselors regarding the core components of RTI and the school district's standard protocol associated with instruction and intervention. Educators involved must understand their individual and collective responsibilities relative to successful implementation of RTI. A secondary campus RTI specialist or district administrator could provide this training.

## **Conclusion**

The local school district's problem of not meeting AYP targets in reading for two consecutive years was the foundation of the doctoral study. The purpose of this white paper was to address the concerns conveyed in the study and offer recommendations to assist the local district in improving teacher's knowledge and implementation practices regarding RTI and the districts intervention program. Successful implementation of RTI could help educators improve student achievement by meeting the needs of the students. During data collection, interviewees revealed that poor campus administrator support, inconsistent guidelines, and lack of resources hampered their ability to implement a successful intervention program.

RTI is more likely to be successfully implemented on campuses where the administrators understand that RTI implementation is directly affected their knowledge of RTI, instructional support, consensus building, fidelity, and data management. Student reading achievement may improve on campuses where administrators implement RTI teams. RTI teams allow educators the opportunity to collaborate and discuss student's progress and challenges. RTI teams also offer a platform to establish intervention strategies that meet the needs of the students.

Another component in the successful implementation of RTI is fidelity. Secondary campus administrators and teachers should be responsible for ensuring that the prescribed intervention is being executed as intended. Teachers should also be consistent in documenting intervention outcomes. Documentation is key to assessing if the prescribed interventions are being successful.

There may be many obstacles for secondary campus administrators and teachers when implementing RTI. Secondary administrators may experience stress resulting from budget cuts and being overextended in their duties, both of which can decrease their capacity to effectively support teachers in their efforts to implement RTI. Teachers may not receive needed resources or support and feel overwhelmed by their responsibility to implement this reform alone. Regardless of the obstacles faced by secondary campus administrators and teachers, RTI is a mandate and could be implemented successfully with the proper training, resources, and support. Administrators and teachers should begin to work together and become knowledgeable on the RTI process in order to increase AYP targets and positively impact student's reading achievement.



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## Appendix B: Interview Protocol

**Interview Protocol for 6<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> Teachers****Date of Interview** \_\_\_\_\_ **Started:** \_\_\_\_\_**Ended:** \_\_\_\_\_**Interviewed****by** \_\_\_\_\_**Demographic Information**

- What is your current position?
- How many years have you been a teacher?
- What population do you serve?
- What is your educational background (i.e., degrees, content areas, special certifications)?

**Interview Questions**

1. How would you explain the purpose and goal of RTI?
  - When did you receive training?
  - Is the training on-going?
2. Discuss your training to implement the intervention program.
3. How effective do you feel the training has been in helping you meet the needs of your students?
4. Explain how students are placed into your intervention program.
  - How do you collaborate with content teachers?
5. How often do students visit your class and how many minutes do they spend with you?
  - What are students doing while in your classroom?
6. If students are unsuccessful with prescribed interventions, what do you do?
  - How do students exit the program?

7. How do you use data to make decisions on the needs of the students?
  - What data do you use?
  - How do you measure student's year-to-year progress?
8. What resources do you feel you need to implement the program more effectively?
  - What do you feel needs to be modified?
9. Explain your campus RTI process.
  - What is your role?
10. How does your campus progress monitor?
  - How often? What is your role?
11. What type of support do your campus and/or district provide for RTI implementation?
12. Is there anything you would like to add?

## Appendix C: Formative Evaluation

**Formative Evaluation Questionnaire**

1. What was the most important thing you learned from reading this white paper?
2. What questions do you have that were not answered in this white paper?
3. What additional information would you like to receive about implementing reading interventions?
4. How beneficial do you think this white paper will be for secondary teachers, and secondary campus administrators?
5. How would you rate this white paper, very helpful, helpful, or not helpful at all?

## Appendix D: Invitation to Potential Participants

December, 2012  
(Name of Teacher)  
(Name of School)

Dear (Name of Teacher),

I am an employee of [REDACTED] and I am currently working towards my Ed.D at Walden University under the supervision of Dr. Robert McClure. I am writing to request your participation in an interview to collect data on the effects of teachers' knowledge and implementation of response to intervention on students reading achievement. Permission to conduct research in the district has been granted by the district office.

The research will include six 6<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> grade response to intervention teachers. My goal is to use the data collected to create a project that can be implemented in the district to meet the identified needs that you and other colleagues share.

All of the information collected will remain confidential: names will not be revealed in reports of the research. The consent form will discuss background information, voluntary nature of the study, procedures, risks and benefits of the study, compensation, confidentiality, and contact information. Once interviews are conducted and have been transcribed, you will be asked to participate in member checking, which allows you to review the transcribed interview to ensure creditability of the finding and interpretations. At the completion of the study, I will provide you with the results and discuss the findings with you at your request.

The study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to ensure that it meets ethical and federal regulations. You are free to discuss your participation with the research study staff (Dr. Robert McClure or Regina Sims) at anytime.

I hope you will agree to participate in my research study. If you agree to participate, please reply with "I Consent" as soon as possible. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at [regina.sims2@waldenu.edu](mailto:regina.sims2@waldenu.edu).

Respectfully Yours,

Regina Sims  
Ed.D Student, Walden University

## Appendix E: Consent Form for Participants

## CONSENT FORM

You are invited to participate in a research study on the effects of teachers' knowledge and implementation of response to intervention on secondary students reading achievement. You were chosen for this study because you are a 6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade response to intervention teacher in [REDACTED]. This form is part of the process called "informed consent" to allow you to understand this study before agreeing to participate.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Regina Sims, who is a doctoral student at Walden University. Mrs. Sims is currently a middle school librarian in [REDACTED]. Her role as a researcher will be kept separate from her role as a librarian.

**Background Information:**

The purpose of this study is to understand how secondary teachers' knowledge and implementation of Response to Intervention (RTI) affects students reading achievement in an urban school district in Texas. The RTI teachers are responsible for proper implementation of the model and may require additional training on implementing the model more effectively.

**Procedures:**

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to:

- Participate in one 45-60 minute audio-recorded interview
- Engage in member-checking, which consists of a review of the transcribed interview to ensure credibility of the findings and interpretations. (approx. 30 minutes)

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

Your participation in this study is voluntary. This means that everyone will respect your decision to participate or not to participate in the study. No one in your school district or school campus will treat you differently if you decide not to participate in the study. If you decide to participate in the study now, you can change your mind and opt out of the study at any time. If you feel stressed during the study you may stop at any time. You may also refuse to answer or skip any questions that you feel are too personal.

**Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:**

There are no perceived risks to individuals participating in this study. Individuals who participate will benefit from this research by increasing their knowledge of the RTI process, having their perceived needs for effectively implementing RTI addressed and the creation of a project to meet their specific needs.

**Compensation:**

There is no compensation offered for participation in this study.

**Confidentiality:**

All information that you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your information for any purposes outside of this research project. In addition, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in any reports of the study.

**Contacts and Questions:**

You may ask any questions you have now or later, please contact the researcher via phone (713-204-7827) or email ([regina.sims2@waldenu.edu](mailto:regina.sims2@waldenu.edu)). If you would like to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can contact Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss your concerns with you. Her contact number is 1-800-925-3368, extension 1210. Walden University's approval number for this study is **12-05-12-0179092** and it expires on **December 4, 2013**. The researcher will provide you with a copy of this form to keep.

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read the above information and I feel that I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my participation. By replying to this e-mail with the words "I Consent" I am agreeing to participate in this study.

This has been approved by the Institutional Review Board of as acceptable documentation of the informed consent process and is valid for one year after the stamped date.

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## Appendix F: Letter of Cooperation to School District

November 15, 2012

██████████,

I am currently an employee of ██████████ and working towards my Ed.D at Walden University under the supervision of Dr. Robert McClure. I am writing to request permission to conduct research in the district on the effects of teachers' knowledge and implementation of response to intervention on secondary students reading achievement. I believe this study will be beneficial to the district and I hope that you will partner with me and allow me to conduct my study in ██████████.

A proposal of the doctoral study is attached for your review. The data collection instruments that I will use are interviews and archival data.

Before the study begins, an application will be submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to ensure that my research is in compliance with Walden University's ethical standards as well as U.S. federal regulations. A copy of the approval will be submitted to the district if permission to conduct the study in ██████████ is granted.

The confidentiality of all participants will be respected and all information will be kept under secure conditions. Participant's identities will not be revealed in any way.

Thank you for your consideration. I will be happy to share the results of this study with you. I am requesting that you respond to this request to document that I have received your permission to collect data in ██████████.

Respectfully Yours,

Regina Sims  
Ed.D Student

## Curriculum Vitae

**Regina Patrick-Sims****Education**

- 2013 (Anticipated) Ed.D. Administrator Leadership  
Walden University, Minneapolis, Minnesota
- 2006 Principal Certification  
University of Houston-Clear Lake, Clear Lake, Texas
- 1996 M.Ed. Special Education  
Prairie View A&M University, Prairie View, Texas
- 1990 B.A. Education  
Prairie View A&M University, Prairie View, Texas

**Certification**

- 2006 Principal Certification (PK-12), Texas
- 2006 PDAS Certification, Region 4 Education Service Center
- 2000 Learning Resource Endorsement (PK-12), Texas
- 1990 Elementary Self-Contained (1-8), Texas
- 1990 Elementary Reading (1-8), Texas

**Professional Experience**

2010- Present

**Library Media Specialist, ISD**

- Assist students in becoming effective and discriminating users of library services
- Teach research skills
- Establishes an attractive and easily assessable LMC
- Support the curriculum through collection development
- Actively plans with teachers to integrate library services in the instructional plan
- Evaluates and select materials needed to meet curricular and individual needs
- Provide reading instruction for pull-out program
- Promote competency in information literacy across the curriculum
- Collaborate with teacher and staff
- Designed and implemented teaching activities
- Serve on leadership teams

- Present information at department meetings
- Serve on district planning and advisory committee
- Supervise library assistant and student workers

2008-2010

**Director of Education, Private School**

- Responsible for education curriculum
- Trained teachers on instructional strategies
- Provided professional development trainings
- Managed school's budget and daily operations
- Wrote and received a grant from the Urban League
- Wrote and received a grant from the Early Childhood Association
- Attended conferences

2006-2007

**Assistant Principal, ISD**

- Responsible for student discipline
- Evaluated personnel
- Coordinated and facilitate staff meetings
- Manages administrative functions
- Assisted in interviewing potential personnel
- Attended state conferences

1999-2006

**Librarian, ISD**

- Empowered students to become critical thinkers
- Assisted teachers and students in becoming effective users of information
- Wrote and received a library grant
- Served on leadership teams
- Created an environment that is conducive to learning
- Taught research skills

1990-1999

**Teacher, ISD**

- Facilitator of the learning process
- Instructed students in core curriculum
- Utilized creative and innovative instructional strategies
- Awarded campus teacher of the year
- Attended local conferences
- Evaluated students performance on assessments

- Used technology in the teaching process

### **Committees**

District Planning and Advisory Team 2011-present  
Ladies of Distinction Sponsor 2011-present  
Spelling Bee Coordinator 2011-present  
National Junior Honor Society Sponsor 2011-present  
F.L.I.T.E. Leadership Team Committee Member 2011-present  
U.I.L. Coach 2012-present  
District and Campus Workshop Presenter 2011-present  
TELPAS Verifying/Rater 2012-present  
Career Fair Coordinator 2013

### **Achievements**

Employee of the Month-Galena Park Middle December, 2012  
Awarded Lifetime PTA Membership @ Cloverleaf Elementary  
Teacher of the Year at Mading Elementary  
Houston Area Alliance of Black School Educators Educator of the Year (1<sup>st</sup> Runner-Up)  
Member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. Xi Alpha Omega, Houston, Texas  
Member of Alpha Epsilon Xi Chapter of Kappa Delta Pi, International Honor Society in Education

### **Volunteer Experiences**

2003-Present I am a volunteer leader of Youth on a Mission Team; we travel to various countries educating children and providing medical services. I have visited Panama, Bahamas, Philippines, Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Barbados, South Africa, Cuba, Trinidad, Uganda and Malawi.