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An Investigation of Teacher Experiences with Implementation of a Response to Intervention Model

Jennifer H. Murphy
Walden University

Walden University

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

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Jennifer H. Murphy

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Review Committee
Dr. Howard Moskowitz, Committee Chairperson, Education Faculty
Dr. Donald Wattam, Committee Member, Education Faculty
Dr. Karen Hunt, University Reviewer, Education Faculty

Chief Academic Officer

Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University
2015

Abstract

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Jennifer Head Murphy

MAT, University of South Carolina, 2000

BS, Clemson University, 1998

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

A Southeastern school district was in the initial phases of a response to intervention (RtI) model using 3 tiers of intervention prior to students being identified for participation in special education. General education classroom teachers were responsible for all Tier I interventions by differentiating the core curriculum. However, teachers received little to no *specific* training related to implementation, progress monitoring, and data analysis of these differentiated interventions. This case study examined teachers' perceptions of the current implementation of RtI in one elementary school and their perceptions of professional support needed to implement, assess, and analyze RtI data. This qualitative research project study used constructivism as the theoretical framework. The research questions centered on teacher perceptions of how the implementation of the RtI model impacted teacher efficacy in meeting the needs of students and to what extent teachers at the school felt prepared to implement Tier I interventions as they were intended. The purpose of the study was to identify gaps in practice and teacher perceptions of the effectiveness of Tier I intervention. Data collected from questionnaires and individual interviews were analyzed using open coding. Themes and concepts that emerged related to Tier 1 were the use of data, instruction, support, analysis, and differentiation. These findings led to the development of 3 specific trainings to provide educators with more knowledge about Tier I implementation and data-driven decisions in the RtI process at the school. Because it may strengthen the implementation and effectiveness of Tier I level interventions in the general education classroom, the project has the potential to decrease the number of students referred for special education evaluation and placement.

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Dedication

This doctoral project study is dedicated to the glory of God, to my family, to my students-past, present, and future, and to my colleagues in the field of education. My God equips me and leads me, my family supports me, and my students and peers inspire me. In the words of Casting Crowns, this degree is "not because of who I am, but because of what You've done; not because of what I've done, but because of who You are!" I am blessed beyond measure and dedicate this completed doctoral project study with admiration and gratitude to you!

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My doctoral committee has been inspiring, encouraging, and readily available to support, respond, and advise. Thank you to Dr. Howard Moskowitz, Dr. Donald Wattam, and Dr. Karen Hunt for your countless hours of feedback and assistance in seeing this doctoral study through to fruition.

A doctoral degree is not a journey one takes alone. It takes many people to make the load bearable. I could never have done any of this without the prayers, love, encouragement, patience, and support of many! Collectively, we made it! I am forever grateful to each of you and thank my God every time I think of you (Philippians 1:3).

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Section 1: The Problem

Introduction

Roles and responsibilities of general educators, speech-language pathologists, school psychologists, and interventionists have changed to focus more on literacy in the general education setting since the emergence of response to intervention (RtI) approaches in the early 2000s. The 2004 reauthorization of No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2002) legislation and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA, 2004; Henley, & Furlong, 2006; Rudebush, & Wiechmann, 2011; Samuels, 2011) both included RtI. The focus of IDEA was on the quality of education that students received in the general education setting (Lujan, Love, & Collins, 2008).

There is not one specified model of RtI identified as most effective. The most common RtI model includes three levels of intervention supports referred to as tiers. As the amount and intensity of resources required in meeting the student's needs increases, the intervention tier increases. Tier I usually includes high quality general education core curriculum instruction and differentiated instructional intervention. Tier II includes targeted small-group academic interventions. Tier IIIa includes intense intervention or replacement of core curriculum, carried out in small groups or individually, while Tier IIIb includes special education as specified by an Individualized Education Plan (IEP; District RtI plan, 2011).

RtI has proven effective when key literacy components are in place; however, the model and its effectiveness is different in every school (Hoover, & Love, 2011; Samuels, 2001). IDEA allows state and local education agencies to create their own regulations for

using and implementing an RtI model (Federal Register, 2006). But, this freedom has sometimes led to confusion among practitioners and problems with implementation (Hollenbeck, 2007). Because many regulations for RtI implementation have been made locally, the quantity and quality of specific professional development and coaching support for teachers is often inconsistent or lacking (Hoover, & Love, 2011).

My purpose in conducting this study was to identify gaps in practice and teacher perceptions regarding the effectiveness of Tier I intervention. Using a case study approach, I selected a southeastern, suburban elementary school as my study site. The teachers at this school had not been given any focused training on Tier I intervention implementation and differentiation (District Professional Development Matrix Data Review, 2011-2012).

I queried teachers on their perceptions of the current implementation of RtI as well as their perceptions of supports and resources needed to implement, monitor, assess, and analyze interventions with fidelity in the way they were intended. My findings led me to develop specific training designed to educate educators about effective Tier I implementation and data-driven decisions in the RtI process. Effective Tier I intervention gives schools the potential to substantially reduce the number of students identified as learning disabled (Scanlon, & Sweeney, 2008). This approach optimizes instruction for children who struggle during early years of school, which increases engagement with core curriculum in the general education setting, and decreases referrals for special education testing and services.

Definition of the Problem

Researchers have suggested that 80% of students are successful with Tier I preventative, pro-active supports and interventions provided by differentiating the instruction in the general education, core classroom setting (Allington, 2009; Fuchs, & Deshler, 2007; Fuchs, & Fuchs, 2008; Johnson, Mellard, Fuchs, & McKnight, 2006). The Tier I phase includes strategy implementation, progress monitoring, and data analysis found in different general education classrooms. Teachers identify specific strategies to meet the needs of students and these interventions are implemented. Teachers respond to the progress of students and set new reading goals based on the data gathered.

The RtI process was adopted system wide across the southeastern, suburban school district using the three tiered approach. The elementary school was in the second year of full RtI implementation in third through fifth grades and in the third year of implementation in kindergarten through second grades. Teachers and administrators noticed a lack of consistent evidence related to the fidelity of Tier I intervention implementation through the core curriculum. In response, school administrators created and published a school RtI plan which was initially implemented in the 2011-2012 school year. This plan presented specific protocol and procedures for identification, implementation, progress monitoring, data analysis, and next steps for moving up and down the tiers for Tier II and Tier III. However, interventions at the Tier I (T I) level were largely left up to the classroom teacher as indicated in the school plan (School RtI Plan, 2011). The school RtI team revised the plan for the 2012-2013 school year. However, the protocol at T I was still nonspecific.

Although teachers in this suburban elementary school were responsible for implementing T I reading interventions in their general education classrooms, none had received specific training on the implementation of interventions, progress monitoring administration, or data analysis, as shown by looking at the school's professional development calendar for 2010 through Fall 2012. Universal screening was uniform school-wide, as was Tier II (T II) and Tier IIIa (T IIIa) intervention protocol, but progress monitoring, intervention implementation, and data analysis at T I were inconsistent. According to a list of district professional development offerings for Fall 2011 through Spring 2013, neither the school district nor the school provided specific professional development for general education teachers related to training for T I implementation and differentiation of intervention strategies and monitoring assessments through the core curriculum. The district provided general education teachers with professional development on the newly adopted reading textbook series; this training included resources for a small group component and a Common Core State Standards transition.

Rationale

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

As previously discussed, teachers at this suburban elementary school were charged with the responsibility of implementing T I reading interventions in their general education classrooms, but none had received specific training on the implementation of interventions, progress monitoring administration, or data analysis. I chose to focus on

this problem for my study in order to explore the experiences of these teachers and their perceptions of efficacy in their intervention practices.

Common goals of RtI include providing culturally responsive instruction in core curriculum instruction within the general education setting and reducing the number of students evaluated and/or identified for special education (Allington, 2009; Glover, & DiPerna, 2007; Johnson, Mellard, Fuchs, & McKnight, 2006; Johnston, 2010; Mellard, & Johnson, 2008; Owocki, 2010). A change in student population influences cultural responsiveness and divergent teaching. Due to increased residential growth, family transiency, and urban sprawl in the neighboring historically rural areas, the demographics of the community populating this suburban elementary school changed from 2000-2010. The number of students eligible for free and reduced lunch in the elementary school being studied increased from 10% in 2001 to 37.7% in 2011. At the same time, the proportion of minority students increased from 19.3% in 2001 to 30% in 2010, according to archived district data for the school.

RtI implementation has the potential to decrease the number of children inappropriately referred for special education services (Scanlon, & Sweeney, 2008). However, the number of students at the study school who were evaluated and given special education increased. In 2011, 30 students received special education services for emotional or learning disabilities, and 54 students received special education for speech and language processing disabilities. In 2013, 51 students received special education for emotional or learning disabilities, and 78 received special education for speech and language processing disabilities. Additionally, Scanlon and Sweeney (2008) suggested

that a minimum of 15 weeks of daily T II and/or T IIIa intervention should be offered before students are considered for special education placement or learning disabled (LD) classification. The study school did not heed Scanlon and Sweeney's recommended timeframe prior to implementing RtI.

Methods of student identification for intervention and effectiveness measures of RtI procedures vary. In the study school's current RtI plan, a parent, teacher, or universal screener can be used to identify students in need of T I intervention. However, the school's RtI plan did not identify a standardized assessment of measuring students' responsiveness to intervention, resulting in inconsistent methods of implementation. According to RtI best practices, schools should formally document progress. However, teachers and administrators varied significantly in their opinions regarding the type of instrument that should be used for T1. According to Scanlon and Sweeney, no widely accepted standard exists for how often such assessments should be used (Scanlon & Sweeney, 2008).

Because of a lack of collaboration between general educators, administrators, interventionists, and special educators regarding the T I level, the school RtI plan featured divided intervention protocol systems with varying degrees of assistance provided to students. Teachers provided identified, planned, and implemented support in isolation instead of as a team. If educators infuse RtI into the current system without collaborating or collectively shifting thinking, the distinction between general and special education will continue to exist (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008). Students at the T IIIb level have IEPs which are created through collaboration among general and special

educators. The school RtI plan recommended that teachers collaborate with other teachers for intervention strategies to adapt to the core curriculum. However, at the T I level there were inconsistent guidelines and structures to promote problem-solving and collaborative dialogue.

Evidence of the Problem from the Professional Literature

Bandura (1982) found that people undertake and perform with confidence those activities that they judge themselves capable of handling. A sense of agency to complete a task well motivates involvement and successful perseverance (Bandura, 1982). Similarly, teachers who demonstrate high efficacy for differentiating instruction have a sense of ownership and empowerment in making competent instructional decisions, which reinforces their beliefs that they make a difference for the students they serve (Costa, & Garmston, 1994). Also, if teachers reflect and refine their practices, make responsible instructional decisions based on data, and receive support as they take action, they may feel more capable of making an impact through T I differentiation and intervention implementation.

Yet, few researchers have examined the efficacy of the RtI model (Dexter et al., 2008) focusing on T I core curriculum interventions. Although efficacy has been well documented for the standard protocol approach having a predetermined program and individualized or small group instruction, it has not been documented in the general education mainstream classroom (Glover, & DiPerna, 2007). According to Fuchs and Deshler (2007), additional research examining the efficacy of T I is warranted across different levels of classroom instructional effectiveness and core reading programs.

An effective RtI approach combines pre-referral interventions with the teacher's capability to implement other early interventions in an effort to reduce misidentification of students with learning disabilities (Mellard, & Johnson, 2008). Expectations for ongoing, thoughtful assessment and individualized instruction are high at the TI level. Howard (2009) identified responsibilities of teachers within T I. They are expected to do the following:

- implement a curriculum flexibly, in a way that attends to the needs of all students;
- differentiate instruction using instructional resources that extend beyond what core programs typically offer;
- offer specifically targeted support based on what they learn from classroom-based assessments; and
- monitor all students' progress over time.

A child's responsiveness to intervention can be more accurately monitored for progress and the intervention plan can be modified if he or she has received T I instruction emphasizing integrity and treatment fidelity (Johnston, 2010). Because the teacher is the most important factor in student achievement (Kyzer, 2009), it is essential that teachers be provided with research based strategies for intervention instruction. The success of RtI also depends on teachers engaging in thoughtful assessment that leads to thoughtful instruction. Teachers implementing RtI must understand reading acquisition and have knowledge of assessments in order to administer appropriate monitoring and develop strategic lesson plans (McCombes-Tolis, & Spear-Swerling, 2011).

Yet, through the spring of 2013, teachers at the study school had not received specific professional development and training on common instructional intervention strategies, the analysis and prioritization of data, or the assessment or monitoring of progress. Classroom teachers were expected to assess, diagnose, and provide high-quality, scientific, research-based interventions that met the instructional needs of their students (Mask, & McGill, 2010).

Data from the National Research Center on Learning Disabilities highlight unresolved issues important to RtI implementation, teacher effectiveness, and student achievement (Fuchs & Deshler, 2007). These findings caution against moving forward with RtI implementation too quickly without understanding the purpose, assessment, protocol, and team components of the method. Scientifically validated instructional protocols were specifically linked to the success of RtI. Assuring fidelity and integrity in implementation and treatment strategies and in validated instructional protocols remains a challenge.

Following Hoover (2011), the first course of intervention should be adjusting core instruction to better meet the needs of the learners. Additionally, teachers at the T I level provide research-based curriculum, evidence-based interventions, differentiated strategies, and monitor progress. Teachers need preparation in components of RtI, including planning of lessons and assessments for the most effective implementation. If teachers have not been prepared to analyze data and provide instructional components of a problem solving method, then instructional decisions for learners within RtI will be

effected (Bender, & Shores, 2007; Fuchs, & Fuchs, 2006; Hoover, 2011; Mellard, & Johnson, 2008).

The purpose of my study, therefore, was to identify gaps in practice and gauge teacher perceptions of issues regarding the effectiveness of Tier I intervention. My interviews and focus groups with teachers led me to develop specific training focused on data analysis and differentiated instruction. My overarching goal was to provide educators with effective Tier I implementation and data-driven decisions in the RtI process at the school and within the district.

Definitions

In this section I define common vocabulary and terminology that are specific to RtI and relevant to my study. In doing so, I heed Creswell's (2003) advice that researchers define terms so that readers can understand the precise language and interpretation used by researchers.

Accommodation: Any change made to instruction and/or assessments that does not change expectations for performance or modify the construct that is being measured (No Child Left Behind, 2001; IDEA, 2004; Mellard, & Johnson, 2008).

Evidence-based practice: Educational practices and instructional strategies that are supported by relevant scientific research studies (Allington, 2006; Allington, 2009; National Center on Response to Intervention, 2010).

Efficacy: The knowledge that one has the capacity to make a competent difference and the willingness and ability to act accordingly (Bandura, 1982; Costa, & Garmston, 1994).

Fidelity/integrity of implementation: Implementation of an intervention, program, or curriculum based on research findings and developers' specifications (Hoover, 2011).

Individualized education plan (IEP): A written document that is developed, reviewed, and revised in accordance with IDEA (2004), which stipulated that special education and related services be specifically designed to meet the unique educational needs of a student with a disability.

Intervention: Systematic and explicit instruction that is provided to accelerate growth in an area of identified need. Interventions are designed to improve performance relative to a specific, measurable goal. Interventions should be based on valid information about current performance and be realistic in terms of implementation; they should also include ongoing monitoring of student progress (Fuchs, & Fuchs, 2008; McIntosh et al., 2011; Owacki, 2010).

Interventionist: General and special general educators who have been specially trained to provide interventions (Fuchs, & Fuchs, 2008; McIntosh et al., 2011).

Learning disability: An assessment conferred on a child who has been provided with age-appropriate learning experiences and instruction but who has not met state-approved grade-level standards in one or more of the following areas: oral expression, listening comprehension, written expression, basic reading skill, reading fluency skills, reading comprehension, mathematics calculation, and mathematics problem-solving IDEA (2004).

Progress monitoring: A scientifically based practice that is used to assess students' academic performance and evaluate the effectiveness of instruction. Progress monitoring can be implemented with individual students or an entire class. The process is also used to monitor implementation of specific interventions (Hoover, 2011; National Center on Response to Intervention, 2010; Owacki, 2010).

Research-based interventions: Reliable, trustworthy, valid, and evidence-based instructional practices. Such an intervention might help educators evaluate program outcomes (e.g., when a program is used with a particular group of children, the children can be expected to make adequate gains in achievement). Ongoing documentation and analysis of student outcomes help to define effective practice. In the absence of evidence, the instruction/intervention must be considered a "best practice" (Allington, 2006; Allington, 2009; National Center on Response to Intervention, 2010; Hoover, 2011).

Response to intervention (RtI): The provision of high-quality instruction and interventions matched to student need, the frequent monitoring of progress in order to make changes to instruction or instructional goals, and the use of applying child response data in making important educational decisions (Batsche et al., 2006; Owacki, 2010; Wright, 2007).

Special education (SPED): A common model with three or more tiers that delineate levels of instructional interventions based on student skill need (IDEA, 2004; Scanlon & Sweeney, 2008).

Tier I (T I): High-quality, scientifically based instruction provided in the core-curriculum setting. It is differentiated to meet the needs of students who are periodically screened to monitor their progress and provide necessary support (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Vaughn, 2008; Vaughn, & Fuchs, 2006; Vellutino et al., 2007, Wright, 2007).

Tier II (T II): Increasingly intensive instruction matched to students' needs on the basis of their performance (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Vaughn, 2008; Wright, 2007).

Tier III (T III): Intensive, individualized, interventions that are aimed at reducing students' skill deficits and providing remediation of existing problems and preventing more severe problems (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Vaughn, 2008; Wright, 2007).

Universal screening: A time-efficient screening that is administered three times per year to assess students' current levels of performance in a content or skill area (Hoover, 2011; Owacki, 2010).

Validity: An indication that an assessment instrument consistently measures what it is designed to measure (McIntosh et al., 2011; VanDerHeyden, 2011).

Significance

This study was important at the local level because professional development support was created to strengthen T1 intervention implementation at the core classroom level, potentially decreasing the case load of students in T II, T IIIa, and T IIIb. The State of South Carolina Annual School Report Card showed an increase in students served in the study school's special education program; the proportion of the school's student population in special education programs had increased from 6.2% in 2002 to 9.1% in 2010. A third teacher who was certified to teach emotionally disabled (ED) students and

a part-time teacher who was certified to teach learning disabled (LD) students were hired in the 2011-2012 school year. They were hired to accommodate the growing number of students who were identified as having special instructional needs and requiring T IIIb or special education (SPED) level instruction. At the time, two speech teachers, four certified reading interventionists, one English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) teacher, one school psychologist, four literacy support personnel, and five instructional assistants for special education were on staff to provide interventions for students at the T II and T III levels.

Furthermore, the number of students at this elementary school meeting or exceeding state standards on the state-mandated accountability test had decreased (South Carolina Department of Education [SCDE], 2001, 2010). The school did not meet adequate yearly progress (AYP) for the 2010-2011 school year due to insufficient achievement growth for the students with disabilities who receive IEPs (SCDE, 2011). The school received a "C" rating on the state's 2012 school report card due to insufficient growth in student achievement for students on IEPs. Archival data from the annual state-mandated school climate survey indicated that the school climate deteriorated during the period; one factor was a decline in teacher efficacy in meeting the needs of diverse student populations (SCDE, 2010).

The intent of my project study was to identify gaps and weaknesses in teachers' implementation practices regarding T I interventions. To study the problem, I queried general education teachers' experiences at my study school on their attitudes and perceptions toward, and experiences with, T I interventions. Identifying gaps in practice

through data synthesis, reflection, and dialogue strengthen the shared capacity to successfully implement RtI (Fuchs & Deshler, 2007). By understanding teachers' perceptions of their experiences, effectiveness, and needs for effective implementation, support can be provided to improve the fidelity and integrity of T I interventions in the classroom. Doing so decreases the number of students referred to T II interventions and allows more students to remain in the mainstream general education setting.

By carefully examining the nature of T I instruction, which has received little focus in prior studies, I sought to contribute new insight about RtI implementation. Many researchers have examined the effectiveness, integrity, fidelity, and efficacy of T II and T III interventions (Bianco, 2010; Dexter, Hughes, & Farmer, 2008; Glover, & DiPerna, 2007; Greenfield et al., 2010; Kyzer, 2009; Mastropieri, & Scruggs, 2005; Stuart, Rinaldi, & Higgins-Averill, 2011). My study filled a gap in information related specifically to T I interventions being implemented by general education teachers in the core curriculum, mainstream classroom setting. Researchers estimate that the number of students at risk for reading difficulties can be reduced by 6%-10% if students are provided with consistent, high-quality T I classroom instruction (Denton, Fletcher, Anthony, & Francis, 2006). My study findings suggest that teacher perceived strategies and supports are needed to improve the effectiveness of T I interventions within the RtI reform effort.

Guiding/Research Questions

My purpose in carrying out this project study was to explore the how general education teachers perceived their preparation to be prepared to implement quality T I

interventions in an RtI model. Past researchers have found that quality T I interventions decreased the number of students referred for SPED services and increased the need for supplemental reading support in the regular education setting for students at risk of school failure (Allington, 2009; Berkeley et al., 2009; Farstrup, 2007; Glover, & DiPerna, 2007; Johnson, Mellard, Fuchs, & McKnight, 2006; Johnston, 2010; Mellard, & Johnson, 2008; Owocki, 2010). Early interventions support these students and help them become strategic readers as they progress in reading accuracy, fluency, and comprehension. Researchers have found that new implementations such as RtI are more successful when quality, sustained, professional development opportunities for teachers are provided. The following questions guided my project study:

1. What are teachers' perceptions of their own efficacy to provide reading interventions given the recent implementation of the RtI model?

2. How do teachers perceive the training they have received? Do they perceive it as having prepared them to implement T I interventions with fidelity?

3. What training and/or supports are necessary for teachers to implement T I interventions with integrity?

Review of the Literature

In this section I review literature related to this project study. I will present the conceptual framework that guides the study along with theoretical perspectives related to RtI, T I interventions, and teacher perceptions. Current research of training, tiered interventions, implementation of interventions, intervention fidelity, and perceptions of reform will be included. I will then discuss challenges, strengths, and weaknesses of the

reviewed literature in connection to my project study. My review will end with a summary of how saturation of literature regarding the topic was reached.

I used numerous research databases, including Education Research Complete, ERIC, ProQuest Central, SAGE, and Academic Search Premier, to conduct an in depth literature review. My preliminary search terms were *Response to Intervention*, *Tier I interventions*, and *Teacher Efficacy*. My search for citations related to Response to Intervention generated more than 1,000 journals articles and books. I subsequently narrowed my search to only include full text, scholarly (peer reviewed) articles from 2000 to 2011. My search for citations related to Tier 1 interventions and teacher efficacy produced a more limited list of sources. I also used *differentiation* and *teacher effectiveness* with Response to Intervention to generate a more versed compilation of resources. I reviewed studies until saturation was reached indicating replicated ideas and reported study results.

Conceptual Framework Related to the Problem

Teachers and students engage in active problem solving to build knowledge. Learners construct new meaning through critical thinking and applying experiences of prior skill sets. Teachers using a constructivist framework design student-centered lessons focusing on problem solving, inquiry, higher order thinking, independent thinking, and application to construct meaning of concepts and ideas (Schweitzer & Stephenson, 2008). Constructivist methods guide learners through questioning, discovery, and authentic engagement.

Yet, teachers who are inadequately trained or have fewer opportunities for collaboration may not be as successful in providing student-centered lessons. These differences relate to the construction of T I interventions by the classroom teacher in the RtI process. I believe that more specific training and knowledge of RtI is necessary. Teachers come to the classroom with various skillsets and abilities with regard to teaching students with learning disabilities, using multiple teaching strategies, motivating diverse learners with different abilities and backgrounds, and making sound instructional decisions to meet the needs of students (Corbell, Osbourne, & Reiman, 2010). Teachers who effectively implement RtI take induction-level knowledge and create a framework to deconstruct lesson plans in an attempt to identify methods of differentiation while incorporating best practice to meet the needs of all learners (Harris, & Sparkman, 2009; McEneaney, Lose, & Schwartz, 2006). While teachers have more scripted protocols to follow in implementing T II and T III interventions, they must construct and apply various instructional decisions and strategies to differentiate instruction in T I of the RtI model. Teachers at the T I level adjust instruction to match the needs of each student in intervention. This decision making is responsive and reflective of the progress students make toward learning.

Professional partnerships and dialogue foster teachers' ability to stay aligned and abreast of current and effective instructional trends in education. Such collaboration is also required to calibrate progress measurements used in T I. Educators providing intervention of T I need opportunities to address questions. Cambourne (2001) argued that teachers need to construct knowledge and shared meanings when seeking to engage

in theory-to-practice processes. In addition, Brock and Boyd (2011) argued that underlying beliefs (both examined and unexamined) about language, literacy, and learning undergird effective instructional practices and decisions. Cambourne (2001) also suggested that learners need to construct meaning and knowledge individually by reflecting on their own assumptions and knowledge and that this should be done collaboratively through dialogue. This suggestion directly relates to teachers as learners, including their role in the RtI context. With proper training and carefully selected execution of content, teachers and students can reflect on their work and become independent thinkers, both of which are goals of constructivism (Schweitzer, & Stephenson, 2008).

According to the constructivist model supported by Piaget (1971), Vygotsky (1978), Dewey (1938), and Cambourne (2001), teachers benefit from being in learning settings that deliberately and consciously go beyond mere how-to professional development. Johnston (2010) argued effective implementation of T I intervention requires increasingly expert teachers collecting instructionally useful data on each student as well as their own teaching, and constructing useful instruction and productive, purposeful discourse. Through specific, differentiated professional development, the focus can be on effective instruction, prevention models, and the development of teacher expertise and efficacy. Schools must be able to provide a strong learning community for both children and for teachers (Johnston, 2010). The constructivist view challenges school leaders to reevaluate their approach to professional development as it relates to common terminology and practices. Johnston (2010) provided a framework for RtI that

included professional development and systemic intervention to reveal the significance of effective instructional training and teacher expertise in the context of RtI. Bandura (1982) argued that self-referent thought mediates the relationship between knowledge and action. He also found that competent models teach effective strategies for new or challenging experiences even through observation (Bandura, 1982). Therefore, effective training may improve teacher efficacy by increasing agency and expectations when teachers then judge that they, too, possess the capabilities to implement interventions in the manner they were researched and validated.

National Perspectives on RtI and Tier I Interventions

Training. Training and support are provided to teachers in many ways. The focus of these trainings is varied and generally relates to district or school initiatives. In a survey conducted by the International Reading Association (2008) with attendees of their annual convention, 75% of respondents ranked RtI and T I interventions as hot topics in education. The USDE (2011) provided additional support and training opportunities for RtI implementation through Race to the Top grants. These grants were awarded to states initiating effective educational reform. Although South Carolina was not awarded this grant in the initial application process, the state made it to the second round of the selection process in 2009 and was a finalist in 2010. However, the newly elected state superintendent of education and governor did not reapply for the funding during the call for applications in 2011, declining the opportunity to receive federal resources to support RtI planning and implementation.

At the same time, the State Department of Education has provided general guidelines for RtI implementation; however, there are still no widely accepted standard for how assessments and interventions should be implemented and monitored at the local district and school level. The study school's RtI plan identified universal screening measures and progress monitoring for T II and T III, but it did not identify specific progress monitoring or results indicators at the T I level. This lack of specificity illustrates the paucity of scientific evidence to guide schools in their implementation of RtI, especially at the T I core curriculum level (Scanlon & Sweeney, 2008). Research is only useful when practitioners are sufficiently trained to effectively use the findings in their practice; practitioners also must be given adequate support to sustain the research-based implementation (Danielson, Doolittle, & Bradley, 2007).

Therefore, I studied teacher preparation practices to assess teacher knowledge of reading process and how it affects students' reading within the context of RtI implementation. In doing so, I explored the degree to which South Carolina's required reading programs prepared educators to understand essential components of reading, key concepts of RtI, and opportunities for applying these components and concepts through lesson planning, delivery, and assessment routines (McCombes-Tolis & Spear-Swerling, 2011). I found that a majority of preparation programs in the state did not address essential components of reading as identified by the National Reading Panel. Programs did not include requirements for candidates to demonstrate lesson planning and assessment for any specific components of reading or RtI throughout their practicum or student teaching experiences. I also found that a majority of these programs used

unacceptable textbooks as rated by the National Center for Teacher Quality (McCombes-Tolis & Spear-Swerling, 2011). Knowing which competencies to assess, having sound strategies for assessing them, and knowing how to match instruction with demonstrated needs are at the heart of the successful RtI classroom (Allington, 2009). Also, instructional competency impacts intervention delivery at the T I level.

Tier I Interventions. The three-tiered model most commonly referred to in research and practice begins with T I reading interventions in the general education classroom setting. T I intervention is preventive and proactive in remediating academic difficulties (Batsche et al., 2006). It entails universal screenings, benchmark assessments, interventions, and progress monitoring for students having difficulty in class (Berkeley et al., 2009). By having an additional interventionist provide more structured strategies, T II intervention provides additional interventions for students not progressing in T I by T III provides the most intense interventions, which are usually implemented by special education teachers and staff (Wright, 2007).

Because of the need for increased intensity and further individualization and diversification of intervention at the T III level, educational experts have developed two approaches of T III. T IIIa generally consists of similar interventions as offered in T II. But, it has been modified by increasing time, decreasing group size, or slowing instructional pace. T IIIb is a core curriculum replacement that is offered by a special educator for a specific identified learning disability. T IIIb includes an IEP created to specifically meet the instructional needs of the student. Specific to T I, differentiated instruction and support are provided at the individual and group level by the classroom

teacher (Fuchs & Deshler, 2007; Hoover, 2011; Mask & McGill, 2010; Mellard & Johnson, 2008; Scanlon & Sweeney, 2008). T I instruction involves typical classroom instruction with adaptations and differentiation which require minimal resources and modifications to implement. T I interventions become part of the daily core reading curriculum. Researchers suggested 80% of students are successful with high quality T I preventative, pro-active supports and interventions provided through differentiation in the general education setting without needing supplemental pull-out interventions (Allington, 2009; Fuchs & Deshler, 2007; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2008; Johnson, Mellard, Fuchs, & McKnight, 2006). Students in T I should receive instruction that prepares them for literacy application and literate activities they will encounter in future schooling and in life.

T I interventions are based on scientific reading research revolving around the National Reading Panel (2000) report. The intervention instruction at T I is delivered through a core-reading program (Justice, 2006). Effective implementation of interventions focusing on phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary have proven successful in T I research to date (Allington, 2006; Allington, 2007; Fuchs, Fuchs, & Vaughn, 2008; Howard, 2009; Vaughn & Fuchs, 2006; Vellutino et al., 2007).

Students needing intervention supports are identified through universal screeners. At the T I level, all students are screened to determine their response and achievement with general classroom instruction (Mellard & Johnson, 2008). Students determined at-risk in comparison to their grade level peers as determined by a national benchmark

receive modified or differentiated instruction in the general education classroom (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2008; Gersten et al., 2008). Student progress is monitored to measure their response to interventions and to determine which students are not responding and in need of further instructional support. Literature suggested it is essential for students to receive high quality instruction in their regular education classroom that is research-based and that general education teachers implement scientific, research-based interventions to address students who have been identified as having difficulty (Porter, 2008).

Implementation of Interventions. Many approaches to RtI are addressed in the current literature and it is implemented in different degrees across the United States (Berkeley et al., 2009; Duffy & Scala, 2012; Martinez & Young, 2011; Wehby et al., 2010). Schools cannot determine that a student has a reading problem without the student previously being exposed to quality instruction (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2008). Effective T I intervention may lessen the referrals and identification of special education and increase achievement for these student subgroups, (Hall, 2008). With the reauthorization of the IDEA (2004), schools may use RtI data rather than a traditional discrepancy formula mode as part of the process for determining eligibility for special education services. Systematic implementation and monitoring determines the need for further research-based instruction and/or intervention in general education, special education, or both (Denton et al., 2006; RtI Action Network, 2009). Clay (1987) asserted many children identified as learning disabled in reading qualified for this classification because their early instruction was not sufficiently responsive to their instructional needs.

Howard (2009) suggested approximately 80% of the student population is expected to show adequate growth within the core curriculum if T I interventions are effectively implemented. It is imperative that interventions are reliable, accurate, and easy to implement. The RtI process is more likely to be unsuccessful if the educators are weak at selecting, organizing, and delivering the interventions (Daly, Martens, Barnett, Witt, & Olson, 2007).

Implementation research is focused on putting theory into practice (Hollenbeck, 2007). Brain-based learning, multiple intelligences, and even direct instruction are necessary to differentiate lessons and determine skill acquisition. Teachers use their own schema to construct effective implementation of interventions at the T I level. However, needs of some students exceed what the general education teacher is able to effectively address and neither the student nor teacher is provided supports to address these needs (Cooter & Cooter, 2004). Because of lack of training, teachers are ill-prepared to implement the tiered reading intervention strategies in the regular education classroom (American Federation of Teachers, 2004; Walsh, Glaser, & Wilcox, 2006). Mastropieri and Scruggs (2005) explored issues of implementing RtI, arguing that the RtI model needs to be fully operationalized before barriers to implementation can be removed. The reliability and validity of the decision-making process identifying appropriate instructional interventions is an issue with the RtI process (Otaiba et al., 2011). One descriptive study found general educators identified needing improvement in the areas of using data to write measurable goals, and utilizing consistent progress monitoring data collection and analysis to shape instructional interventions (Martinez & Young, 2011).

Teachers must deconstruct data from universal screeners and formative classroom assessments to decide which interventions are needed and then plan how to apply these interventions before actual implementation can begin.

Students are actively engaged in lessons through a variety of culturally responsive strategies when teachers effectively use the constructivist method. Hoover (2011) challenged educators to consider the cultural responsiveness of T I instruction for diverse struggling readers, arguing the need to blend quantitative and qualitative data in instructional decision-making. Data from universal screeners provide information regarding a student's strengths and weaknesses, and indicates that some change is needed; however, it does not specify the particular instructional elements to change. Background experiences or schema in the content area, language proficiency, motivation to learn, and higher level thinking and reasoning abilities are considered when planning appropriate intervention and instructional modalities to reach diverse learners within the general education setting (Hoover, 2011). Teachers use data to determine which students need intervention; however, they must also discern which interventions are appropriate to meet the specific needs of the learner and then construct effective instructional practices to implement.

There is considerable diversity with regards to how this approach is operationalized in schools (Scanlon & Sweeney, 2008). The guidelines set forth by the state, district, and school administration varies. Components of RtI are inconsistent and unclear from state to state and even building to building within the same district (Berkeley, Bender, Peaster, & Sanders, 2009). Studies showed cross-schools differences

in RtI practices (Jenkins et al., 2012; Mellard et al., 2009, 2010). In a study of 62 elementary schools from 17 states, teachers indicated that while core curriculum at the TI level was provided through commercial reading programs providing opportunities for differentiation through small group reading instruction, 20% of respondents indicated differentiation was inconsistent in the core curriculum (Jenkins et al., 2012). Teachers at this school meet weekly as a grade level team and are encouraged to plan collaboratively and discuss data. While time to meet is provided weekly, structure and format of the meetings are left to the discretion of the team. This autonomy may lead to varying degrees of intervention strategy sharing and results analysis. T I instruction provides the foundation for the success of RtI (Gersten et al., 2008). Educators are anxious to implement the interventions with fidelity but lack significant research findings and data to support achievement gains associated with the RtI model (Dexter, Hughes, & Farmer, 2008). Budgetary issues related to professional development, personnel, and supplemental materials are also different from school to school within the same district.

Intervention Fidelity. It is imperative that interventions are reliable, accurate, and easy to implement. The integrity of curricula and assessments can be affected by the deviation from intended procedures. Evaluating the adequacy of classroom interventions before determining if more intense supplemental interventions are needed is essential. Porter (2008) suggested that fidelity measures be completed to determine if the intervention was implemented as intended and with consistency. Hoover (2011) recommended evidence exists to confirm proper implementation of instruction and associated assessments by educators in an RtI model. Research indicated that teachers'

choice of intervention affects the level of procedural implementation and quality of intervention (Wehby et al., 2010). Abbott and Wills (2012) argued the quality of implementation of instruction and intervention is critical to successful student outcomes and should be evaluated but separate of traditional job performance evaluations. Teacher fidelity is important for all staff involved to follow the prescribed procedures and reliably use fidelity measures such as observation checklists (Abbott & Wills, 2012). Fidelity of intervention implementation was observed by Denton et al. (2006) to monitor consistency, integrity, and quality of T II and T IIIa instruction. Lessons were rated according to the presence or absence of monitoring student performance, providing timely feedback throughout the lesson, use of appropriate pacing, and communicating clear expectations for the students. A 5-point Likert-type scale was used to rate the degree the teacher or interventionist followed procedures, corrected errors, and scaffold or retaught skills as necessary. Denton et al. (2006) argued that fidelity protocol needed to be monitored and observed systematically to ensure interventions were implemented according to their specifications in all tiers. Hoover (2011) also argued the fidelity of T I interventions be confirmed through a variety of methods such as co-teaching, observations, work samples, interviews, and videotaping of lessons. Bianco (2010) conducted a qualitative case study and found it necessary to include purposeful mechanisms to enhance data-driven instruction in order to effectively monitor fidelity of RtI implementation in one school district. The researcher found school wide structures such as student intervention tracking forms, reading coaches, and teacher self-reflection of video-taped lessons improved integrity of interventions within

the RtI model. VanDerHeyden (2011) also argued the importance of classification agreement analyses for quantifying effectiveness of various decision models. The researcher offered critical analysis of positive and negative predictive power estimates. The findings presented in this study encourage practitioners to examine and refine their current RtI decision models. These strategies to monitor and evaluate interventions can assist in program validity and implementation fidelity. Teachers providing T I interventions can reflect on feedback provided through monitoring strategies as presented in these research studies.

Perceptions of Reform. RtI is unique as a federal policy in that it allows for teacher judgment within the context of the reform effort. The interpretation and flexibility of RtI utilizes local decision making, even down to the individual classroom level, combined with federal structures. The intent behind RtI is providing federal policy which can be disseminated by teachers closest to their students, allowing teachers to make appropriate intervention and assessment decisions (Fletcher & Vaughn, 2009; & Hollenbeck, 2007).

Teachers' perceptions are rarely considered before, during, or after school reform initiatives. Teachers play important roles in the implementation of reform efforts, however, their perceptions are seldom presented when determining effectiveness of the school reform (Darling-Hammond, 2009). Hargreaves (2007) identified personality, personal development, age, career stage, generational identity, and attachment as critical variables associated with teachers' perceptual reactions to educational change and reform.

Greenfield, Rinaldi, Proctor and Cardarelli (2010) investigated teachers' perceptions of school-wide change in the context of RtI implementation models. Identifying potential success and challenges by looking at teacher perceptions can assist others in adopting and implementing the RtI reform. Greenfield et al. (2010) found monitoring progress of interventions was taking place in their study samples, but teachers reported not knowing what to do if the intervention was not working. The teachers in the study also reported knowing that changes to their instructional practices needed to occur, but not knowing how to do so because they were unable to identify specific instructional practices and who should receive which instructional intervention (Greenfield et al,. 2010). Teachers in the study also reported a desire for more time to process data to make appropriate intervention or problem-solving decisions; both special educators and general education teachers identified the need for more data and collaboration for better-informed instructional decision-making. Federal guidelines offer limited direction regarding how RtI should be implemented. This study reported teachers have concerns regarding implementation of this effort and their role in the change. The majority of participants in the study reported confusion of actual implementation, understanding of content knowledge associated with RtI, analysis of progress monitoring data to inform instruction, and accessibility to sustained professional development by those who delivered interventions across all tiers of instruction (Greenfield et al., 2010).

Stuart, Rinaldi, and Higgins-Averill (2011) also studied teachers' perspectives of an RtI implantation model. Their study showed limited efficacy of progress monitoring in year one implementation (Stuart, Rinaldi, & Higgins-Averill, 2011). Teachers

reported concerns for the time required to monitor student progress, how it would be collected, what data would be collected, and who would collect the data. Participants in the study shared concern for balancing the collection of assessment data and instructional responsibilities. Data from the study showed participants had concerns of accountability for performing interventions and how to collaborate (Stuart, Rinaldi, & Higgins-Averill, 2011). In year one, teachers did not feel in control of the way in which RtI was implemented. Teacher perceptions of their ability to influence positive learning outcomes can lead to a greater sense of efficacy, empowerment, and autonomy. When participants perceive benefits, they are more likely take on challenges associated with reform, thus building capacity for sustainability (Stuart, Rinaldi, & Higgins-Averill, 2011). Such change can be achieved through mutual effort of those who possess knowledge of personal efficacy, a sense of collective efficacy, appropriate skills, and the perseverance to shape the direction of learning environments (Bandura, 1982). Collective efficacy can shape social change. Teachers can be the catalyst agents of change.

Challenges of RTI. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (2009) reported that of the students who qualify for free and reduced lunch, only 17% of fourth grade students were proficient or better in reading, and only 44% of fourth graders in non-free/reduced lunch categories were proficient or above in reading across the United States. Schools are finding the need for reading intervention is greater than the personnel capacity; too many students need strong, individualized interventions. Systematic change is necessary to incorporate new research based strategies and interventions. This takes

time and often a cultural paradigm shift among involved personnel (Abbott & Wills, 2012; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2008; Johnston, 2010). Porter (2008) shared concerns that too little are known about the challenges that schools face when implementing an RtI model.

RtI assessment models determine if students are responsive or non-responsive to different tiers of intervention based on variously established achievement criteria. IDEA allows data derived from RtI processes to be used in lieu of intelligence versus achievement discrepancy evaluations (Lujan, Love, & Collins, 2008). McKenzie (2010) argued that the lack of full evaluation, including intelligence testing, heightens the probability of false negatives when identifying students with learning disabilities. He explained gifted students who perform at or above average academically may be incorrectly judged as responsive, yet they may be gifted with a learning disability that goes undiagnosed. Average achievement for students who are capable of performing significantly higher, slip through the cracks of the RtI process (McKenzie, 2010). The awareness of the diagnostic limitations of RtI paired with increased understanding of students with coexisting cognitive talent and learning disability may lessen this challenge of RtI. McKenzie (2010) encouraged educators to allow RtI assessments and traditional evaluations to complement each other in meeting all of the instructional needs of individuals.

Implications

The purpose of this study was to address the needs of general educators concerning their T I role in implementing an RtI model effectively. The literature

provided explanation of the benefits of an RtI model implementing strategic T I interventions. This study added to the current literature by examining teacher perceptions in effective implementation of interventions in the regular education setting. As illustrated by the literature review there is varied information regarding the processes schools use to implement RtI as well as the overall perceptions of RtI. Information, evidence, and support in current literature is more specific for T II and T III interventions, while the focus of the study is regarding implementation of effective T I interventions. The benefits of training and sustained professional development when implementing new initiatives were supported in literature, however, effective T I intervention implementation is yet to be thoroughly explored. While the 80% of students should have success in reading achievement, the research did not specify how teachers are to successfully provide these T I interventions. Further research was needed to provide guidance in the area of training and professional development for T I intervention implementation in an RtI model. Given that RtI is in its infancy at the school, this study examined how school personnel perceived the process. Based on the results and observations, suggestions were made for a professional development framework related to literacy best practices, data analysis, differentiated instruction and assessments, data-driven decisions, data teaming, and tiered instruction. Results of the study were used to consider development, adjustment, and refinement of the current RtI model. Implications for future research were also discussed.

Summary

The local problem that prompted this study was explained including rationale, significance, and special terms associated with the educational problem. A review of the literature was presented to support the problem. T I intervention instruction received little focus in prior research studies. The degree to which differentiated instruction of core curriculum is implemented impacts student success in reading. Teacher perceptions of T I implementation were investigated, with the anticipation that well-implemented intervention instruction is strengthened through specific training and professional development opportunities, thus supporting student growth in reading. Investigating the experiences of these teachers is central to refining practices within the RtI process at this elementary school. The methodology of this study will be presented in the next section.

Section 2: The Methodology

Introduction

Although researchers in the field of education have defined characteristics of effective RtI models, they have not adequately determined the appropriate format, necessary training and methods for implementation of such models. My study addresses the limited training available to teachers on the implementation of T I interventions in the RtI process. Stake (1995) argued that a case study is intended to examine the complexities of a single case and to observe the interactions within its context. Using this approach, I selected a suburban elementary school in one district in South Carolina for analysis. To gain a better understanding of general educators' experiences with T I in the RtI framework, I gathered data from a questionnaire and follow-up, individual interviews with teachers. I sought to gather information and perceptions from teachers regarding implementation of T I interventions, progress monitoring, and the use of data analysis to inform instructional decisions.

Research Design and Approach

In his section, I will describe the research methodology that I used to investigate the following research questions:

1. What are teachers' perceptions of their own efficacy to provide T I reading interventions given the recent implementation of the RtI model?

2. How do teachers perceive the training they have received? Do they perceive it as having prepared them to implement T I interventions with fidelity?

3. What training and/or supports are necessary for teachers to implement T I interventions with integrity?

In posing my research questions, I sought to better understand RtI as a social phenomenon and consider its implications for teaching and learning. I focused on fidelity in RtI implementation by examining the experiences of individual teachers involved with T I interventions to illustrate the unique case, or bounded system, at my study school.

Within the qualitative method framework there are several options for conducting research. Creswell (2003) suggested that researchers choose among five possibilities: narrative, phenomenological, ethnography, case study, and grounded theory. An ethnographic study is similar to a case study in that it uses thick, rich descriptions of a phenomenon (Lodico et al., 2010). However, an ethnographic study is designed to study a cultural group over a long period. The phenomenological study is also similar to a case study in that it allows the researcher to learn of particular phenomenon through the eyes of participants (Creswell, 2008). This methodology requires the researcher to study the subjects for an extensive period of time. Due to the time constraints necessary, ethnographic and phenomenological research strategies would not be appropriate for this particular project study. Grounded theory designs require that the researcher theorize the research problem through the viewpoints of participants (Creswell, 2008). Because I was not trying to develop a theory, I deemed this method inappropriate for my study.

The case study method is used to intensively analyze and describe a person or a group of people who are bounded by a phenomenon in space and time (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). The participants in this study are all involved with the T I process at

the same school. Data are gathered through multiple sources to study the particularity and complexity within important circumstances (Creswell, 2008; Lodico et al., 2010; Stake, 1995).

I administered a questionnaire survey (see Appendix C) to 26 certified classroom teachers in my study school to gauge their attitudes, perceptions, and population characteristics. Using a questionnaire with questions based on a Likert type scale, I was able to assess teachers' confidence and sense of efficacy with the RtI process of T 1 development, implementation, and monitoring. I analyzed these questions descriptively by noting the frequency of responses for each item.

Following Creswell's (2008) advice, I then conducted follow-up interviews with a subsample of teachers who completed the questionnaire survey (see Appendix D) to further explore questionnaire data. I further investigated the research questions through follow up individual interviews based on demographic data including a mix of perceived confidence levels with the implementation of the RtI process. I followed systematic steps in transcribing and coding interview responses to place responses into categories and themes (Lodico et al., 2010). I then produced a descriptive narrative.

Context of the Study

The suburban elementary school that I used for my study is located 15 miles from the South Carolina State Capitol. The physical school, built in 1935 along the railroad tracks for which the town was established in 1890, is important in that it conveys the history and culture of the growing community of over 12,000 residents. The school in the study is one of 13 elementary schools in the district. The school serves 500 pre-

kindergarten through fifth grade students, and it includes the district's only self-contained special education program for ED students. Of the 62 staff members, 51 are certified educators, and 26 of these certified educators provide T I core curriculum interventions and progress monitoring.

Role of the Researcher

I have taught students from numerous cultural backgrounds and varying levels of academic needs across content areas. I have developed an appreciation and passion for serving students who need extra support in literacy. I was employed as a fifth grade general education teacher for the school represented in this study from 2000-2012. For the 2012-2013 school years, I worked as a reading interventionist serving kindergarten through fifth grade students with T2 interventions. For the 2014-2015 school year, I worked as a reading coach. All of these positions have been at the same school and the district represented where I still serve as a reading coach. I have no supervisory or evaluative role over colleagues in these positions.

I have built rapport with teachers in a variety of roles through my years of experience at the school in this study. In carrying out my study, I heeded Yin's (2009) advice that researchers obtain multiple sources of evidence, create a case study database, and maintain a chain of evidence. As previously discussed, I developed a questionnaire, interview questions, and an interview protocol and, therefore, obtained multiple sources of evidence. As the researcher in this study, I was charged with developing these instruments, collecting data, analyzing the findings, and safely storing data. (I will eventually destroy data after five years to protect participants' confidentiality.)

As Creswell (2003) noted, it is essential that researchers avoid introducing their own bias, values, and interests into study findings. By remaining in the role of the researcher for this study, I strove to disregard my personal feelings toward intervention while interpreting data. I addressed issues of reflexivity and subjectivity by reflecting on my relationships and experiences with participants and my own involvement in the RtI process to sensitize myself to personal prejudices throughout the data collection and analysis process. I remained open-minded and reflected on my biases in order to focus solely on the data collected. While I do not have any supervisory roles or evaluative responsibilities with the research participants, I do know them on a collegial basis and work with many of their students through T2 pull-out intervention programs. I also work in many of their classrooms providing demonstration lessons and collaborative planning.

Participants

I selected participants based on their knowledge and familiarity with RtI and T I interventions (Lodico et al., 2010). According to Lodico et al. (2010), purposeful sampling provides vital, firsthand information essentially connected to the study. Deeper inquiry per individual is required due to few participants in the purposeful sample. The use of purposeful and convenience sampling techniques led me to select 26 accessible and proximate participants, all of whom are certified general education classroom teachers and currently provide T I interventions in their core curriculum. Each participant has specific knowledge of RtI and T1 and has attended required professional development at the school and district level. (It is important to note that none of these

professional development trainings and workshops, through Spring 2014, was specific to RtI implementation or to the challenges of T I interventions for classroom teachers.) I emailed teachers a link to complete the electronic survey questionnaire.

A representative sample was selected for the follow-up interview from the initial survey questionnaire respondents. Variables that focused the sample for follow-up interviews included demographic data such as years of experience and current role in the RtI process, as well as mixed level of comfort and perceived confidence with the RtI process. I selected survey questionnaire participants who share perceptions of most and least confidence for this purposeful subsample follow-up interview.

Ethical Treatment of Participants

Participation in the study was voluntary. No prospective participant was coerced into participating through any means. As Lodico et al. (2010) observed, the researcher has an ethical responsibility to protect participants and the profession throughout the research process (Lodico et al., 2010). I successfully completed the Web-based training course "Protecting Human Research Participants" through the National Institutes of Health, Office of Extramural Research. Accordingly, I provided each participant with a letter of consent addressing their rights and how I would minimize harm to them. I promised confidentiality to all participants. To that end, I assigned each participant a code so that his or her actual name does not appear on any documents. I marked all questionnaires, interviews, and transcripts with participant codes and did not include any identifying information. I stored all questionnaires, recorded interviews, and transcripts

in a locked file cabinet inside a locked closet in my home office; I will destroy all data after five years.

I requested and received permission from all institutions and individuals involved in the study through letters of participation and consent. Permission was obtained from school and district administrators, the district research review board, as well as Walden University's Institutional Review Board (Walden University institutional review board approval number 06-30-14-0172640) prior to any research being conducted to ensure safety, proper procedures, and that participants were not harmed.

Data Collection

Data collection began after informed consent was obtained from all participants. I sent an initial invitation and consent form to participants' personal e-mail addresses. When participants replied to the initial invitation and consent, the survey questionnaire link was shared with them. Creswell (2008) discussed several guidelines for data collection that were followed. I created the survey instrument (see Appendix C) used for the initial portion of the study after reviewing and adapting perception surveys such as the Florida Problem Solving/RtI (PS/RTI) Project Perceptions of Practices (2012) and Perceptions of RtI Skills surveys (2012). No questions were copied from these surveys, but I studied these surveys to analyze the design of their questions in getting at respondents' perceptions. These published surveys were created through a collaborative project between the Florida Department of Education and the University of South Florida. They are available for educational purposes, and I utilized their format to help word my questions to effectively tap into educators' perceptions and perceived skills

associated with T1 implementation, planning, and progress monitoring.

Portions of the National Center on Response to Intervention (NCRtI) Essential Components Integrity Worksheet (ECIW) (2011) survey questionnaire were also reviewed as a model for questionnaire development in this study. This document was produced under the USDE, Office of Special Education Programs. This document is public domain and authorization to reproduce it in whole or in part, for noncommercial purposes has been granted in writing, and permission to reprint the publication is not necessary. These instruments were only used to guide the researcher in developing valid and reliable questionnaire questions to address the research questions. Technical adequacy and evidence of content and construct validity were provided (Florida PS/RTI, 2012). The common factor analysis of the instrument as indicated by an Educator Expert Validation Panel suggested the PS/RTI perceptions of practices survey taps into educator perceptions of the extent to which RtI practices are occurring in two domains: academic content and behavior content. The results of the common factor analysis of the PS/RTI perceptions of RtI skills survey taps into educator perceived skills in three domains: applying RtI skills to academic content, behavior content, and skills in manipulating data and using technology to assist in data-based decision-making. Internal consistency reliability for all five factors yielded by the factor analysis of the two surveys exceeded the .70 threshold typically used (Florida PS/RTI, 2012). The NCRtI Essential Components Integrity Worksheet survey questionnaire was developed in partnership with RMC Research Corporation, the U.S. Office of Special Education Programs, and NCRtI.

The instrument has been used in previous research and is reliable and valid (NCRtI, 2011).

I assessed the validity and reliability of the survey created for this study through content validity comparison of the created questionnaire with the published versions studied. To establish validity, I asked myself: Is the questionnaire measuring what it is intending to measure; is it appropriate for the content and sample population; and is it comprehensive enough to collect information related to the purpose of the study while still connecting directly to the research questions in this study? To establish reliability of questionnaire questions, internal consistency of wording in Likert type scales was used. I conducted an internal consistency reliability analysis using the data collected to ensure that questions that propose to measure the same general construct produce similar scores. For example, if a teacher agreed with a high level of confidence based upon support given on one indicator and disagreed with low level of intervention implementation support, then this indicated good internal consistency. This consistency analysis is reported in the results portion of this section. The same survey questionnaire questions were administered to every participant. These measures were taken to enhance the quality of research in this study.

These questionnaire surveys were administered in the participants' natural setting via personal e-mail. The follow-up interviews (see Appendix D) used to gather more in-depth, rich qualitative data took place in an informal setting either face-to-face or over the telephone. Audio recording of the interview were used as participants granted permission and consent as acknowledged in the permission letter. I set the purpose for

the research and informed participants of how the information gathered would be used. Participants' identities will remain confidential.

Initial data was collected through individual survey questionnaires to the sample. Questionnaires allowed participants to answer on their own time schedule; therefore rich data was collected with limited time constraints (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). Participants were informed they could request clarification regarding questions throughout the completion of the questionnaire by contacting the researcher via e-mail or telephone. Participants were invited to take the survey questionnaire through their personal e-mail address in the late summer of 2014. I asked participants to complete the survey in a two week time period. Once permission was received, teachers were sent a link to Survey Monkey to complete the survey individually prior to the third full year of RtI implementation. Survey Monkey is convenient and provides aggregated data according to raw scores of participants. The questionnaire responses answered how teachers perceive their own efficacy to meet the needs of students with intervention given the recent implementation of the RtI model; how teachers perceive the training they have received to prepare them to implement T1 interventions with fidelity; and what training and/or supports teachers perceive necessary for them to implement T1 interventions with integrity. Twenty six certified classroom teachers submitted the survey electronically upon completion.

From that survey questionnaire sample, a purposeful representative sample was selected for open ended individual follow up interviews. The variables used to select these participants included years of experience, current role in the RtI process, and

perceived levels of most and least comfort and confidence with implementation of the RtI process. Interview questions inquired deeper explanation of participants' role in T1 differentiation, their perceptions of training and support, their experiences with progress monitoring and data analysis, and their perceptions of their effectiveness in meeting students' needs. The interview questions can be found in Appendix D. Individual interviews of the teacher participants were conducted to gather data about perceptions of how and why support and resources assist with T I intervention implementation and progress monitoring. With permission, all 12 follow up interviews were audio-recorded electronically for accuracy. I took notes on an interview protocol form (see Appendix D) while participants responded to open ended interview questions. At the conclusion of the interview I asked if participants had anything else they would like to add to allow them to add rich data that may not have been gathered through my prepared open-ended and follow-up questions. Transcripts and analysis were shared with the participants, but no changes were suggested by the participants.

Data Analysis

The questionnaire data results provided a picture of the research problem while the follow up interview data refined and explained that general picture. Questionnaire data was analyzed to identify trends and perceptions. I grouped the results based on years of experience and role within the RtI process.

Overall, 26 teachers responded to the questionnaire survey (see Table 1). Of those 26, four had 0-5 year(s) of experience, six had 6-10 years of experience, four had 11-15 years of experience, seven had 16-20 years of experience, four had 21-25 years of

experience, none had 26-30 years of experience, and one had 30+ years of teaching experience. This demographic data was used as an indicator for the interviews.

Table 1

Participant Years of Experience

Years of teaching experience	Number of Participants
0-5	4
6-10	6
11-15	4
16-20	7
21-25	4
26-30	0
30 +	1
Total	26

The aggregated data of trends and demographics based upon frequency of response were as follows: of the four teachers with 0-5 years of experience, two were comfortable and two were somewhat comfortable with the RtI process (see Figure 1), one reported limited professional development for specific development and monitoring of T1 interventions, while three reported none (see Figure 2). Two reported limited resources available to assist in monitoring T1 plans, two reported no resources. Two reported support from interventionists and collaboration from colleagues in developing and monitoring T1 plans, while one reported limited support, and one indicated no support. Two reported no planning time for T1 plans, one reported limited time, and one indicated there was time for these plans. One was confident and three were somewhat confident in using data to identify needs, setting goals, and implementing effective strategies to meet student needs; two were confident and two somewhat confident in terms of monitoring

student responsiveness and making decisions based on this responsiveness (see Figure 3). Three beginning teachers felt effective and one somewhat effective in implementing T1 interventions with fidelity (see Figure 4). One teacher shared she feels confident in determining "what" is needed, but struggles with the "how" to get students where they need to be, according to the additional comment question on the survey questionnaire.

Of the six teachers with 6-10 years of experience, one was extremely comfortable, one was comfortable, and one was not very comfortable, while three were somewhat comfortable with the RtI process (see Figure 1), two reported no professional development for specific development and monitoring of T1 interventions, one reported limited, and three reported receiving professional development specific to developing T1 plans, two reported limited and two reported receiving professional development specific to monitoring T1 plans (see Figure 2). Four reported having resources available to assist in monitoring T1 plans, two reported limited resources. Four reported support from interventionists in developing T1 plans, while two reported limited support. Three reported support in monitoring plans and collaboration with colleagues, two indicated limited support, and one responded no support or collaboration in this area. One reported no planning time for T1 plans, three indicated limited time, and one indicated there was time for these plans. Two were confident and somewhat confident in using data to identify needs, while one was extremely confident and one not very confident. Two were confident, three somewhat, and one not very confident in setting goals. One was extremely confident, one somewhat confident, and one not very confident implementing

effective strategies to meet student needs, while three were somewhat confident. Three were confident and three somewhat confident in terms of monitoring student responsiveness and four were somewhat confident, one confident, and one not very confident making decisions based on this responsiveness (see Figure 3). Three teachers in this demographic felt somewhat effective, two felt effective, and one felt not very effective in implementing T1 interventions with fidelity (see Figure 4). One comment suggested that the RtI process promotes information exchange and collaboration, but the implementation is not consistent in these beginning stages.

Of the four teachers with 11-15 years of experience, two were comfortable, one was extremely comfortable, and one was not very comfortable with the RtI process (see Figure 1), two reported limited professional development for specific development and monitoring of T1 interventions, while two reported none (see Figure 2). Three reported limited resources available to assist in monitoring T1 plans, one reported no resources. Three reported limited support from interventionists and collaboration from colleagues in developing and monitoring T1 plans, while one reported no support. Two reported no planning time for T1 plans, one reported limited time, and one indicated there was time for these plans. One was confident, two were somewhat confident, and one was not very confident in using data to identify needs. Two were confident and two were somewhat confident setting goals and implementing effective strategies to meet student needs; two were confident, one somewhat confident, and one not very confident in terms of monitoring student responsiveness and making decisions based on this responsiveness (see Figure 3). Two teachers with this experience level felt effective, one somewhat

effective, and one not very effective in implementing T1 interventions with fidelity (see Figure 4). Additional comments from teachers in this demographic suggested the desire to learn more about setting measurable instructional goals for students based on data.

Of the seven teachers with 16-20 years of experience, four were comfortable and three were somewhat comfortable with the RtI process (see Figure 1). Four teachers reported receiving, professional development for specific development and monitoring of T1 interventions, while one reported limited professional development, and two reported none (see Figure 2). Five teachers reported resources available to assist in monitoring T1 plans, two reported limited resources. Six reported support from interventionists in developing and monitoring T1 plans, while one reported limited support. Five reported collaboration with colleagues and two indicated limited collaboration. Two reported planning time for T1 plans, while five reported limited time. Two were extremely confident, three were confident, one was somewhat confident, and one not very confident in using data to identify needs. One was extremely confident, three confident, two somewhat confident, and one not very confident setting goals. One was extremely confident, four were confident, and one was somewhat confident at implementing effective strategies to meet student needs. One was extremely confident, two were confident and four somewhat confident in terms of monitoring student responsiveness. Four were confident, two somewhat confident, and one not very confident making decisions based on this responsiveness (see Figure 3). Four teachers in this demographic felt effective and three felt somewhat effective in implementing T1 interventions with

fidelity (see Figure 4). Two comments pointed to the need of more specific professional development specifically in the area of developing and implementing strategies to meet specific needs of readers.

Of the four teachers with 21-25 years of experience three indicated they were comfortable and one was somewhat comfortable with the RtI process (see Figure 1), two reported receiving professional development for specific development of T1 interventions, while two reported limited training. Two reported receiving professional development for specific monitoring of T1 interventions, while one reported limited training, and one reported none (see Figure 2). Two reported limited resources available to assist in monitoring T1 plans, two reported receiving resources. Two reported support from interventionists in developing and monitoring T1 plans, while two reported limited support, and one indicated no support. One reported collaboration among colleagues, while three reported limited collaboration. Three reported planning time for T1 plans, one reported limited time for these plans. One was extremely confident, one was confident and two were somewhat confident in using data to identify needs and setting goals. One was extremely confident, two confident, and one somewhat confident implementing effective strategies to meet student needs; three were confident and one somewhat confident in terms of monitoring student responsiveness and making decisions based on this responsiveness (see Figure 3). Three experienced teachers felt effective and one somewhat effective in implementing T1 interventions with fidelity (see Figure 4). Continuity and instructional dialogue among all teachers and interventionists was a suggestion made in one comment by a teacher in this demographic.

No teachers with 26-30 years of experience responded to the survey questionnaire. One teacher with over 30 years of experience indicated that she was somewhat comfortable with the RtI process (see Figure 1). She indicated no specific professional development for the development and implementation of T1 plans (see Figure 2), with no resources or support in developing and monitoring these plans. She reported limited collaboration with colleagues and limited planning time devoted to T1. While she was confident with data and decision making, she was only somewhat confident setting goals, implementing strategies and monitoring responsiveness to interventions (see Figure 3). She feels she is somewhat effective in implementing T1 interventions with fidelity (see Figure 4). This teacher did not make additional comments on the questionnaire, but did indicate that additional supports or resources specific to T1 would be helpful in her role in the RtI process.

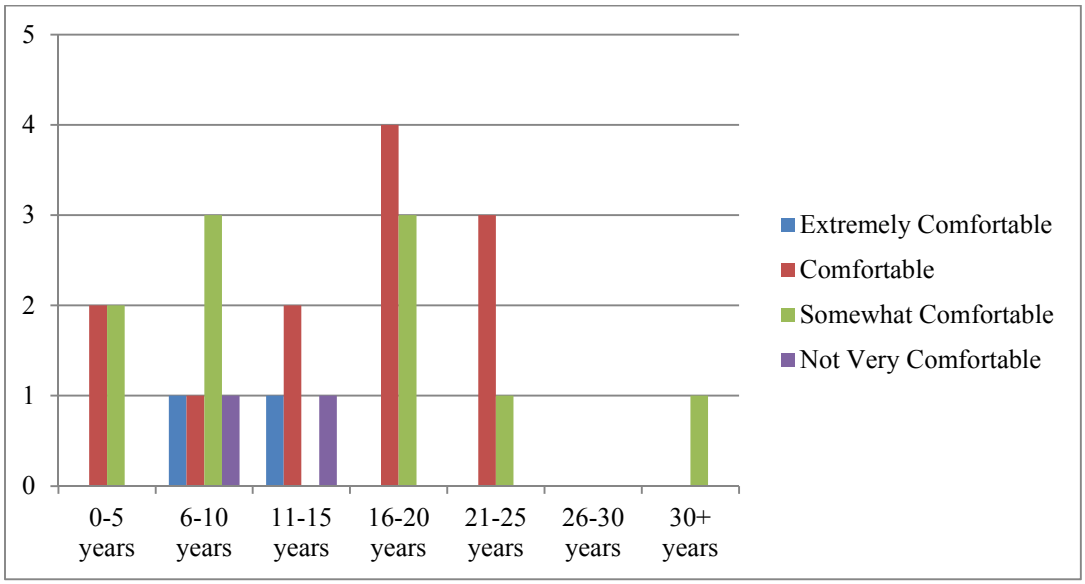

Figure 1. Comfort level with RtI process by years of experience.

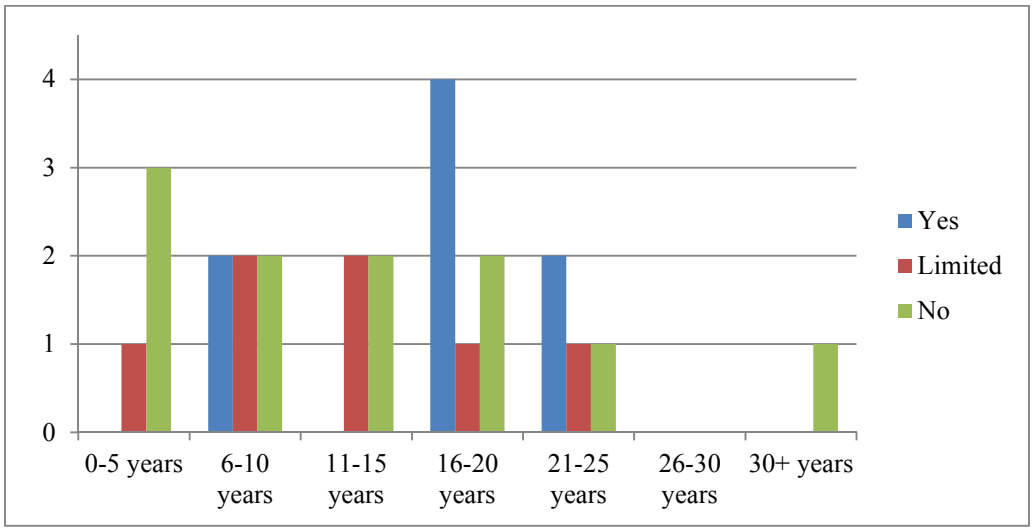

Figure 2. Professional development offered specific to development, implementation, and monitoring (combined) of Tier 1 intervention plans by years of experience.

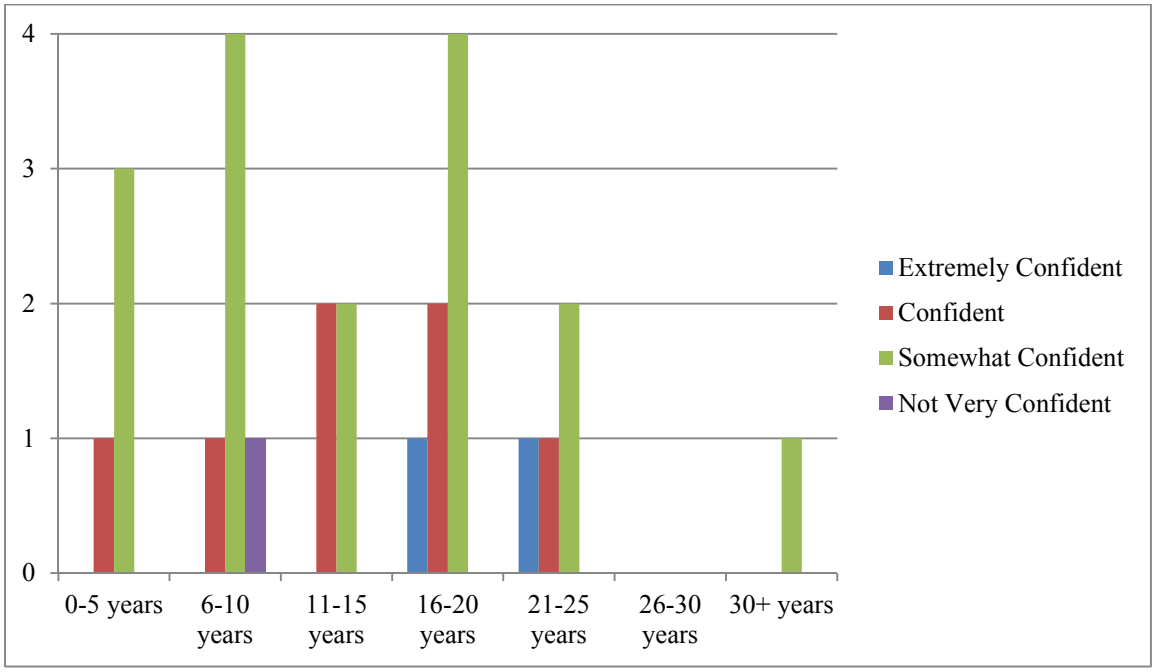

Figure 3. Confidence level of Tier 1 development, implementation, and monitoring (combined) by years of experience.

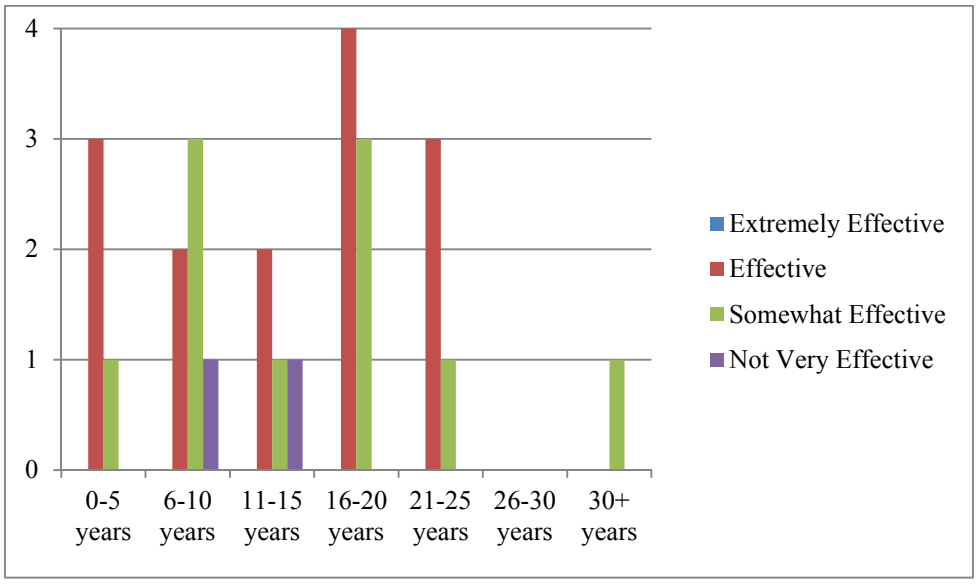

Figure 4. Effectiveness of Tier 1 implementation by years of experience.

I then looked for the trends across the data as a whole. Overall, a total of 44% of the 26 respondents reported being somewhat or not very comfortable with the RtI process, 68% reported receiving limited to no specific professional development regarding developing and monitoring T1 interventions and 42% reported feeling somewhat or not very effective in implementing T1 interventions with fidelity. Only one teacher responded that no additional supports or resources specific to T1 differentiation would be helpful in their role in the RtI process.

From these demographics and data, I selected 13 teachers to conduct follow up interviews. Selection was based on their level of comfort, confidence, and experience. One teacher chose not to participate in the follow up interview.

Concurrent collection and analysis of data occurred during the follow up interviews, meaning that participant responses lead to further questioning in the interview. This qualitative research is characterized by flexibility with informal

instruments to gather data with rich and thick descriptions (Lodico et al., 2010).

I transcribed the recorded interviews verbatim. I used survey documents and transcribed interview data. The findings based upon this data were shown to participants to check for accuracy, known as member checking (Creswell, 2003). Accurate transcriptions are critical in analyzing the data (Merriam, 2009). After completing the transcriptions, I listened to the audio recorded interviews and compared what was said with the transcriptions of the interviews for accuracy.

Creswell (2003) suggested collecting data, transcribing field notes, gaining a sense of material, and coding the data to develop themes. Content analysis was used to analyze data focusing on the variety and the frequency of specific patterns and phrases that were communicated in the interview process (Merriam, 2009). I analyzed the content by first printing each interview transcript in a different color of ink. Then, I cut the transcripts into sections by interview question to analyze like questions from each participant together. Using highlighters, I highlighted similar comments made by the interview participants. After coding this data, I went back through the similarly colored comments and grouped them into broader categories. By grouping the color-coded comments together, obvious themes and typological concepts of perceived confidence and motivation with T1 implementation surfaced. No data were discrepant because each participant has an individual experience to share. Every participant provided unique, yet valuable, data to the research study to lend answers to the research questions (Merriam, 2010). Analyzing qualitative data requires the researcher to make sense of the data in order to create answers to the research questions. Misinterpreted data compromises the

results of the study (Merriam, 2009), therefore, my interview findings and short answer analysis of individual's data was sent to participants to be sure their data was interpreted as intended (Lodico et al., 2010). This step was crucial to the validity of the study. Individuals had an opportunity to discuss my findings of their data at their convenience via face to face conversation, or my personal cell phone or personal e-mail, both given to participants upon consent. Every participant responded positively to my analysis. In addition to member checks, a peer review was performed to contribute to the relevance and authenticity of the study and to promote the study's internal validity. The peer reviewer was a colleague with a Master's degree in Language and Literacy who has conducted case study and practitioner research in the past. The reviewer has experience with research protocol. I removed demographic indicators to ensure that the peer reviewer was not able to identify any participant based on findings reported. This knowledgeable colleague reviewed the raw data transcriptions, honoring the anonymity of participants, and my analysis. Lodico et al. (2010) suggested this colleague may provide additional analysis and interpretation of the data. The peer reviewer concurred with the identified themes that emerged from the interview data. This step contributed to the relevance and authenticity of the study.

Internal consistency analysis for the survey questionnaire used in this study indicated appropriate correlation between survey items as analyzed through IBM SPSS software with a Cronbach's Alpha reliability statistic of 0.927. 100% of participants responding they were extremely comfortable with the process also indicated they were extremely confident with the development, implementation, and monitoring; however 0%

of those same respondents indicated being extremely effective in actual implementation with fidelity, instead indicating they were effective. Of the 12 participants reporting they were comfortable with the RTI process, 58.3% indicated they were confident and 75% indicated they were effective with implementation. Of the 10 participants reporting they were somewhat confident, 62.5% also indicated they were somewhat comfortable and effective with the process. Of the two respondents indicating they were not very comfortable, 100% indicated they were also not very effective and 50% indicated not very confident with the process of T1 intervention. Of the 18 participants who reported limited to no specific professional development or training for T1, 66.6% reported additional training and/or supports needed specific to T1. The comparison of questions asking for information measuring the same general construct produced similar scores indicating good internal consistency for this survey.

The goal of this study was to answer the research questions: What are teachers' perceptions of their own efficacy to provide reading interventions given the recent implementation of the RtI model? How do teachers perceive the training they have received? Do they perceive it as having prepared them to implement T I interventions with fidelity? What training and/or supports are necessary for teachers to implement T I interventions with integrity?

Two overarching themes and three categorical concepts emerged from the survey and interview data to answer the research questions. The overarching themes revolved around *data* and *instruction*. From the themes of data and instruction, three categorical concepts emerged as shown in Appendix B. The categorical concepts of *analysis* fell

under the theme of data, while the concept of *differentiation* fell under the theme of instruction. The categorical concept of *support* showed up under the theme of data and instruction, tying the two themes together.

Instruction. The most overarching theme that emerged from the data revolved around instruction with intervention. This theme of instruction included choosing and implementing appropriate instructional strategies to meet the needs of different learners, specifically those identified for T1 intervention. All teachers shared that they feel comfortable with core curriculum in reading instruction and strategies to teach students performing at grade level, but eleven teachers expressed lacking at least some level of confidence in knowing which strategies to use with identified T1 students. This includes implementation of instructional strategies in small group and one on one teaching situations. Teachers felt more confident meeting the needs of proficient and advanced readers than those who needed extra support in reading. This was true no matter the years of experience. Teachers of students in upper elementary grades expressed an even lower level of confidence when T1 interventions included basic reading process and early strategic behaviors. Across the board, including years of experience and grade level taught, teachers expressed feeling more comfortable teaching comprehension strategies than balanced cuing systems.

Differentiation. The concept of differentiation came up in all 12 interviews under the theme of instruction. Alice, a teacher with 6-10 years of experience, explained, "When I have four students on T1 plans, but all have different needs, it is hard for me to know where to start. Should I pull them all in one small group or one on one instruction?

I feel like I don't know the best approach." Bob, a teacher with 11-15 years of experience, shared, "I can differentiate my instruction and pull small groups, but I struggle to differentiate within that small group to meet the needs of my T1 students." Caroline, a primary teacher with 0-5 years of experience stated, "Differentiating instruction to meet the specific needs of the student on a consistent basis effectively and throughout the span of the T1 plan is hard for me." Dalton, an upper elementary with 10 years of experience shared, "I know my students, I know the curriculum, and I know my standards, but when it comes to modifying that core curriculum to meet a child's specific needs in reading, I feel like I am ill-equipped to do it well day in and day out."

Many teachers mentioned the reading levels of students and using that as a way to differentiate instruction, but upon further inquiry, this contributed to their level of perceived self-competence as well. Eliza, a teacher with three years of experience explained:

> I can assess my students and know their independent and instructional reading levels, but I may have one student on level M that still needs to re-read to monitor and self-correct, and they may be on a plan for that, while my other level M students are working to support inferences with evidence from the text. Do I group by level or need? I start second guessing myself no matter which decision I make. Can the T1 intervention be instructed through groups on different levels? How much do levels matter? I feel I should focus my T1 plan to teach to the skill and reading behavior instead of at a certain level.

Caroline shared another perspective in terms of reading levels that impacts her confidence regarding instruction with T1 intervention:

> One T1 student may need support with voice print match, another with return sweep and left to right directionality, while another only knows five letters, and yet another is reading almost grade level text but has no clue what they have just read because they are only word calling. All four students have a T1 plan, but all are on very different reading levels. I must differentiate my instruction to meet all of their needs, plus the needs of the other twenty students who have needs of their own, but aren't identified as T1 because they are meeting grade level expectations according to data. This makes my head spin if I stop and think about it too long. How can I say I have a high level of confidence to do all that?

Overall, instructional decisions and instructional implementation for T1 intervention was a theme that was uncovered in analysis of the survey and interviews. Furthermore, differentiated instructional strategies had an impact on perceived efficacy of teachers in the RtI process. Frances, a second year teacher summed it up, "I feel confident in determining what is needed, but I struggle with the best way to go about teaching it for each individual student in T1."

Data. The second overarching theme that developed from the survey and interviews was data. This included a broad scope from choosing the correct assessments that gather the data points needed, to ways to monitor progress and shape instructional decisions for intervention based on the data. Gracie, a teacher with 16-20 years of experience stated, "I understand the initial data from the universal screeners that

identifies students needing T1 intervention. However, I find it hard to match assessments with specific interventions." Hannah, a veteran teacher said, "Finding a way to progress monitor a very specific intervention focus is difficult. If I am working on determining importance, do I measure this with main idea and detail type assessments?" 10 teachers mentioned the amount of data available to them, and even labeled their experiences as data-rich, "I have data! What do I do with it?" Bob, an intermediate teacher with 11-15 years of experience said, "I am in data overload. I have all the data I need, but which pieces are most valid? Where should I focus my efforts?" Data are key components of the RtI process and has an impact on teachers' perceptions of their effectiveness.

Analysis. Under the theme of data, analysis is a concept that showed up in different ways from all participants. Some spoke of this through terms like triangulation and aggregation, while others said pointedly that analysis of data affects their role in the RtI process. While gathering data is an area that all twelve interview participants felt confident with, few felt confident in how to use the data. Eliza, a beginning teacher explained, "I don't know what do to with it. What does this score tell me about this student? He fell into the 'needs additional assistance' range, but what does he need assistance with specifically?" Isabella, a veteran, upper elementary teacher shared, "My assessments are too big. I can't zoom in on where the child is struggling because my assessments measure so many steps. I can't pinpoint the breakdown."

Specific to progress monitoring, Gracie explained her feelings of incompetence:

> If initial data points to comprehension, I don't know how to break that down. Comprehension is a big umbrella, so many components fall under that. How can I unpack the data more? Then, how will I know when she has made progress? I don't know what data to collect that will show growth specific to the intervention I am working on with her, other than my observations of her doing it in her reading. What will that data look like?

The interviews showed most of the participants are knowledgeable on types of assessments, both formative and summative, and how to collect that data, but many expressed concerns with what the data means. Jennifer, a primary teacher shared her frustration analyzing data from running records:

> I am able to track the students reading, mark errors, substitutions, self-corrections, and note where they pause or re-read or appeal for help. I can keep up with their word calling and can ask them to retell the story and follow up with comprehension questions. I can calculate a rate at which they read and even note their fluency. I am good at this. I feel confident that I do this efficiently. But I still don't know why this child is having trouble reading a higher level of text successfully? I see what they are doing as they read; I've got a record of it. But it's just an assessment to me. I don't really know what to do with it or how to use it. It doesn't show me what to do next.

Support. Support is the final categorical concept of the study. As I used selective coding during the data analysis process, I saw that support could easily fall under both overarching themes of instruction and data, tying them together. While it was

articulated in different ways, such as help, training, further practice, collaboration, and even accountability, it all fell under the concept of support. Teachers made statements such as, "It would be helpful to talk about strategies that may work for this student," "I wish I could talk through the data with someone," and "I need more training specific to (reading strategies/behaviors) this." Kathy, who reported a high level of confidence on the initial survey, shared a need for additional support in the follow up interview:

> Initial data showed that this student was not showing success within the vocabulary strand on the reading assessment. I knew that was too broad for specific intervention, so I dug deeper and noticed he was not using context clues on reading passages of his social studies tests to determine meaning of unknown words or concepts in text. I came up with a goal and an instructional plan around these two pieces of data. I front-loaded vocabulary concepts in science and social studies, I used graphic organizers in whole group and small group instruction. In guided reading I modeled using the clues in the text to define the word. But when I did a post-test to monitor progress toward the intervention goal using a Time for Kids passage, the data showed he got two correct out of five. Now what? I'm out of instructional ideas. I did what I know to do. I need support to continue to help this student. I need new ideas from colleagues.

An upper elementary teacher, Lilly with 11-15 years of experience, shared her experiences with students needing reading process support, "All of my training in my pre-service courses and even in continuing education professional development has been

about reading to learn. I am not prepared to teach students to learn to read. I need more training and support in this area."

Jennifer, who elaborated about running records shared, "I need assistance analyzing miscues and writing an analysis statement from the running record that can help me process what the student is doing which can inform me of my future teaching." Bob shared, "I don't always know how to analyze the behaviors each reader has under control. Another pair of eyes to observe behaviors and understandings would be so helpful, especially designing the instructional implications of the behavioral evidence." More specifically to T1, Kathy, an experienced teacher explained, "We discuss strategies and the instructional goals for our students being served by T2 pull-out interventionists. It would be helpful to have these same sharing and planning sessions for our T1 students." Dalton summed the concept of support up in this manner, "I get the 'here's what', but could use some support with the 'so what' and 'now what'."

Conclusion

This research study has developed into a professional development project plan. Based on the findings that emerged, this project can be authentically implemented at my school and in my district. The professional development plan includes the themes and concepts that evolved from this research study's data. The overarching themes of *instruction* and *data*, as well as the categorical concepts of *differentiation, analysis,* and *support* are all addressed in the professional development plan as a way to contribute to the efficacy of practitioners implementing and monitoring T1 interventions. By learning what contributed to high confidence levels of teachers implementing T1, similar supports,

training, and practice can contribute to effective implementation with other teachers. The goal of this study was to understand the perceptions of teachers implementing T1 interventions to provide a level of support that fosters more efficacious teachers in T1 instructional situations.

The results of this study are somewhat limited by the size of the participant pool. In a case study, the participant pool is limited to only a few participants to obtain rich, quality data. A more generalizable study would be to include general education teachers at other schools in the district also charged with T I interventions and progress monitoring. By including other teachers who meet the study's criteria, their data could be compared to that of participants in this study. This research was conducted so the results can inform future practice in the implementation of an RtI model at this elementary school. The research findings may help determine the need for future professional development and support, as well as future funding and grant request opportunities.

I interpreted findings by looking at the larger picture and purpose of the research. To ensure quality, I addressed the major findings thoroughly, identifying personal reflections in the data, presenting all view points in the literature, limitations of the study, and included suggestions for future research. By validating the findings of the research, I addressed personal interpretations and personal connections to the research, and avoided biases (Merriam, 2009).

Section 3 provides specific details of the professional development project. I include the implementation plan for the professional development project along with

rationale, literature review, project evaluation and implications for social change at the local level and beyond.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

The project that I developed from this study is an ongoing professional development (PD) training that can be implemented over time in the school where the study took place. These trainings can be presented throughout the school year during regularly scheduled PD sessions or planning periods at the school, thus providing consistency and continuity over time. The PD sessions will help teachers uncover the relevance and significance of the study's two overarching themes (instruction and data) and three categorical concepts (differentiation, analysis, and support) for successfully implementing T 1 interventions. Many of the strategies that are included in the PD training are ones that teachers have been exposed to previously. However, my survey and interview data indicated there are gaps in the processing and practice of application and implementation. Therefore, I believe that the PD trainings that I have developed will provide a necessary reinforcement of these strategies.

School districts favor PD based on current research in guiding teachers to meet the needs of their students. Based on my review of the literature (Bianco, 2010; Greenfield et al., 2010; & Stuart, Rinaldi, & Higgins-Averill, 2011) teachers of my study school need support to increase their comfort and confidence in meeting the needs of all students, particularly those receiving T1 interventions. By engaging in PD sessions, teachers in the school will have a new opportunity to consider the impact the five previously mentioned themes and concepts can have on their own instruction through intervention. Because the PD will be presented over time, there will be continuity of

support as the teachers take on new learning and understanding and apply that to their teaching. Teacher participants can sustain the short term effects of PD over time. They will be able to implement the PD strategies to some degree in their instruction (Park, Roberts, & Stodden, 2012).

The problem that I addressed in my study was my study school's lack of specific training for T 1 development, implementation, and monitoring. The teachers in the school who completed the survey and were interviewed for the study all had a role in the RtI process, specifically T 1. They also expressed some level of decreased confidence in the RtI process. I wanted to gauge teachers' level of confidence in implementing T1 interventions successfully as well as gauge their perceived needs in doing so. By careful listening to the stories shared by the study participants and analyzing their responses, I was able to better understand how the five overarching themes and concepts wove together to create successful instruction within the RtI process at the T1 level. My project will provide teachers with realistic, relevant, and practical strategies and processes that they can implement to help each of their students succeed academically (Cleary, 2011).

Description and Goals

I can deliver the PD trainings during regularly scheduled sessions and trainings throughout the school year; cumulative hours will total 3-8 hour work days. I will conduct the training using a Prezi presentation for the delivery of information in this PD project. Because I work as a reading interventionist at the study school, I will also be available for ongoing support between PD sessions. Knowing that many professionals,

including educators, do not like to use their time on training sessions that are meaningless to their practice (LaCursia, 2011), I will focus the trainings on specific learning needs drawn from my research. Following Byington and Tannock (2011), I will provide teachers with a link to the Prezi presentations that they can access for future reference, along with a printout for note-taking. I included quotes from the case study participant interviews in the prepared project. These insights will provide the foundation for the PD because they convey the expressed perceptions of those studied (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006).

My purpose in designing these trainings was to provide authentic opportunities for teachers to immerse in and engage with literacy best practices and student data in an effort to align their beliefs with their teaching practice. More specifically, my goals for the training are to (a) create a more systemic process for analyzing data and adapting instruction for individual students and (b) to close the gap between teachers' knowledge and application in providing T1 intervention with efficacy in implementation on a consistent basis. During the 3 days of trainings, participants will

- review research regarding data analysis,
- engage in guided data analysis,
- process and practice data analysis with authentic and relevant data,
- collaborate with peers in discussions of analysis,
- identify next steps in instruction based on data,
- plan for teaching based on data analysis,
- construct personal meaning of differentiation,

- review research based best practice strategies,
- examine student data and determine students' strengths and needs,
- collaborate with colleagues to identify differentiated instructional strategies to match student's needs,
- identify response indicators to monitor effectiveness of instruction,
- evaluate personal beliefs about learning,
- set specific goals for student learning based on analysis of student evidence,
- choose appropriate strategies to address learning goals, and
- align instructional practices with beliefs.

Because it expands teacher knowledge and awareness of differentiated instruction and data analysis, I believe that ongoing PD will positively impact teacher perceptions, competence, and self-efficacy in meeting the diverse academic support needs of students in T 1 intervention. In addition, because PD emphasized collaboration, application, and reflection by teachers, I believe that it will lead to more focused and intentional instruction across our school community.

Rationale

There is a high expectation for ongoing, thoughtful assessment and individualized instruction at the T I level. Howard (2009) identified responsibilities of teachers within T 1. They are expected to do the following:

- implement a curriculum flexibly, in a way that attends to the needs of all students;
- differentiate instruction using instructional resources that extend beyond what core programs typically offer;

- offer specifically targeted support based on what they learn from classroom-based assessments; and
- monitor all students' progress over time.

T 1 instruction provides the foundation for the success of RtI (Gersten et al., 2008). If there is integrity in the level of T 1 instruction, and if the intervention has been taught with treatment fidelity, then the child's response to intervention can be more accurately monitored for progress and the intervention plan can be modified (Johnston, 2010). Because the teacher is the most important factor in student achievement (Kyzer, 2009), it is essential that teachers be provided research based strategies. As previously discussed, teachers at my study school had not received specific PD and training around common instructional strategies or analysis, the prioritizing of data, and the monitoring and assessment of student progress. At the T 1 level, there are substantial differences of professional opinion regarding the type of instrument that should be used; there is no widely accepted standard for how often such assessments should be used (Scanlon, & Sweeney, 2008). The success of RtI depends on teachers engaging in thoughtful assessment that leads to thoughtful instruction. Knowing the competencies to assess, having sound strategies for assessing them, and knowing how to match instruction with demonstrated needs are at the heart of the successful RtI classroom (Allington, 2009).

Review of the Literature

In this section, I review the literature related to the project that I developed. I will present the framework that guided project development including perspectives related to professional development, data analysis, and differentiated instruction. In doing so, I will

highlight current research on support, professional development, data analysis, and differentiated instruction. I will conclude the section with a summary of how saturation of concepts presented in literature was reached.

In reviewing the literature, I accessed Education Research Complete, ERIC, ProQuest Central, SAGE, and Academic Search Premier via the Walden University Library to find articles related to this project. My initial search terms included the following: professional development, support, in-service, teacher trainings, data analysis, data teams, differentiation, differentiated instruction, small group instruction, and instructional strategies. Using a Boolean search, I narrowed my search to only find literature that was published during the past 5 years, was available in full-text format, and was published in peer-reviewed journals. A review of the reference sections of the articles and studies steered me to other articles and research. Literature was reviewed and added to the study until saturation was reached.

Support. Support is provided to teachers through PD and training. PD is widely used in education to share information, practice strategies, provide training, and offer support to practitioners. PD is referred to as the cornerstone for educational reform (Fishman, Marx, Best, & Tal, 2003). Effective PD has a positive impact on student achievement (Powell, Diamond, Burchinal, & Koehler, 2010).

PD can be presented in many ways; workshops are one of most common forms. PD workshops for educators can take place during teachers' planning times, after school, and either on-campus or off-campus at a central location (LaCursia, 2011). Typically in education, PD is delivered through a *sit-and-get* model relying on an expert to

demonstrate and disseminate information to the participants (Desimone, 2009; McLeskey, & Waldron, 2002; Sappington, Pacha, Baker & Gardner, 2012). Whole-group, broadly focused workshop type trainings are generally not as effective as smaller, more targeted, hands-on workshops that are differentiated and focused on the needs of participants (Sappington, et al., 2012). Researchers view workshops that are applicable and meaningful to the participants involved to be the most effective type of PD (LaCursia, 2011; Lee, 2011). School districts realize more value from their PD planning and investment by allowing teachers some choice (e.g., choosing trainings that are of interest to them) (Sappington, et al., 2012).

I developed the PD trainings for this project based on the insights my survey and interview participants shared regarding their perceptions and needs. The most meaningful PD is linked to teachers' level of engagement in the PD process (Desimone, 2009; Domitrovich, Gest, Gill, Jones, Sandford, 2009; Hadar, & Brody, 2010; Lee, 2011). Participants in this project engaged in relevant analysis and exploration using data and evidence from their own students and classroom instruction for a more meaningful PD experience. Meaningful and sustainable PD builds capacity in teachers and empowers them to create communities of practice through engagement and collaboration with their colleagues (Desimone, 2009; Latz, Neumeister, Adams, & Pierce, 2009; Lee, 2011; Lee, Penfield, Maerten-Rivera, 2009). It allows time for participants to process new learning, collaborate and discuss findings, and plan with peers and interventionists.

According to Desimone (2009), effective PD should (a) be individualized and school based, (2) use coaching and follow up procedures, (3) feature collaboration, and

(4) embed practices into daily lives of teachers. Interventionists are available during PD project sessions and between sessions for ongoing support and collaboration. PD trainings that are led by practitioners are effective because the practitioners have a deeper connection to the classroom and understanding of the material in action than a presenter who is not actually practicing the work in the classroom (Lee, 2011; Schmoker, 2006). Highly effective teachers are experts in their field and bring validity and credibility when used by their own districts as leaders of PD trainings (Byington, & Tannock, 2011; Lee, 2011). It is critical that districts ensure that teacher-led PD is based on best practice and current pedagogy and research (Byington, & Tannock, 2011).

Other essential elements of effective PD involve practice, self-reflection, peer support, and ongoing feedback to bolster teachers' confidence in their own teaching practices (Desimone, 2009; Kennedy & Shiel, 2010). By using colleagues and reading interventionists at each PD session, teachers will be able to experience peer coaching and support in hypothesizing student strengths and weaknesses and problem solving for student needs. PD needs to be differentiated to be relevant and teachers must have a voice in their own learning if they are to effect systemic change (Stover, Kissel, Haagm, Shoniker, 2011). Teachers will use authentic, individual student data to differentiate the approach for instructional planning and collaboration through PD. PD support that is targeted to the needs of teachers and offers training and support over time may improve teachers' perceived confidence in providing instruction for students.

The themes and categorical concepts that emerged from my findings concur with recent research on PD in the education field. My research findings indicated that in terms

of differentiation, increased collaboration and improved strategies were based upon PD, and continued support led to implementing a process for modifying curriculum and incorporating accommodations and modifications into daily routines (Causton-Theoharis, Theoharis, Bull, Cosier, & Dempf-Aldrich, 2010; Domitrovich, et al., 2009; Hadar, & Brody, 2010). Planning time and ongoing PD was needed to effectively respond to the diverse needs of students (Horne & Timmons, 2009). Ongoing PD with follow-up support and coaching had the strongest effect on teacher self-efficacy beliefs for differentiated reading instruction and implementation (Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009). PD that embeds time for reflecting, processing, collaborating, and planning may improve adjustments made to instruction in an effort to best meet the needs of individual learners.

Data analysis. Education professionals use data extensively, but they do not always thoroughly analyze and use the information available to them. Similarly, my research participants shared feelings of being data rich, but information poor. There is an overabundance of data but a lack of information to make better instructional decisions (Reeves, 2009). Effective use of data is crucial in improving learning outcomes (Kekahio & Baker, 2013; Reeves, 2009; Schwanenberger & Ahearn, 2013; Thomas, 2011; Wilhelm, 2011). Data analysis should not be an event but a continuous process. Analyzing data is not a means to prove or disprove teacher competence or to show the effectiveness of instruction; rather it is for the purpose of improving practice that leads to learning and student achievement (Thomas, 2011). Teachers identify what is revealed and concealed through each measure by looking closely at data and assessment practices.

Educators must commit to focus on increasing student achievement by improving the collective capacity of all involved in an effort to improve teaching practices (Dufour, Dufour, Eaker, & Many, 2006; Marzano, 2009; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; McNulty & Besser, 2010; Reeves, 2006). Data are used as evidence to confirm or revise decisions that drive instruction.

To effectively analyze data, it must have a face and stakeholders must look beyond the numbers (Reeves, 2010). Teachers should ask what they want to learn from the data and what they need to know about the data before analyzing (Thomas, 2011). More focused analysis occurs when teachers match what they want to know about their students to the purpose of the assessment given. Opinions and attitudes can bias how data are interpreted; therefore, teachers should consider assumptions before interpreting data, and observations that come from examining data should be grounded in specific, factual, related data points (Kekahio & Baker, 2013; Reeves, 2009). An interdependence of team members relying on each other leads to improved learning outcomes for all students (Thomas, 2011). There is a difference between cooperation that supports sharing information, coordination that leads to sharing resources for a project, and collaboration that leads to contribution and sharing of resources, risks, and rewards (Winer & Ray, 1994). Collaboration around data is needed to make data-driven decisions that impact student learning. Data teaming can provide structures and processes to improve core instructional practices through collaboration (Dufour, Dufour, Eaker & Karhanek, 2010; Reeves, 2006; Schwanenberger & Ahearn, 2013). Data informed group conversations around the patterns that are lifted from data, and discussion around the

instructional factors that led to the patterns and weaknesses lead to a strategic action plan of how educators will respond and improve future instruction (Kekahio & Baker, 2013; Thomas, 2011; Wilhelm, 2011). Thoughtful discussions of assessment gaps and revelations as well as assumptions of student performance are addressed in data teaming. Through the data team process, teams share materials, practices, and strategies that lead to shared responsibilities and leadership for student achievement (Reeves, 2009; Schwanenberger & Ahearn, 2013). Research participants indicated a need for collaborative structures and support. The data team process can provide the structures to support and encourage data analysis and collaboration.

Differentiation. Differentiated instruction enables teachers to focus their practice based upon individual student needs. Teachers understand that there are diverse needs, but many have difficulty supporting these varying needs (Tobin & McInnes, 2008). In addition, most elementary teachers were trained as generalists, not content specialists, making it more difficult to differentiate in terms of readiness if they are not deeply knowledgeable of content (Hendrick, 2012). Most teachers realize the need to differentiate, but transitioning from perception to practice can be overwhelming. This project promotes opportunities to assess one's beliefs and reflect on personal practice to analyze how beliefs match practice and implementation in terms of individual student needs and differentiation. Once data has been analyzed, teachers must determine what works versus what works best for their students by knowing the impact of their teaching strategies (Hattie, 2012a). To differentiate, a different approach must be used to engage learning through re-teaching and remediation without using the same presentation again,

even in a smaller group (Thomas, 2011). The practice of differentiation proposes that educators teach not out of habit or teacher preference, but in response to the students being served (Tomlinson, 2000). The purpose of differentiated instruction is to maximize student growth and individual success by adapting classroom strategies to meet students where they are in terms of learning styles, needs, interests, and profiles (Anderson, 2007; George, 2005; Huebner, 2010). Differentiation includes the areas of content, the information needed to learn; process, how students will learn; and product, how students will demonstrate their learning (Knowles, 2009; Levy, 2008; Tomlinson, 2000); and environment, the flexible structure of the classroom (Tomlinson, 2000). There are many components to differentiation. Instruction is different for this particular time for this particular learner in some capacity at the skill, process, or comprehensive level.

Data from formative, summative, and informal assessments "on the run" and "in the moment" shape opportunities for differentiated instruction (Avalos, Plasencia, Chaves, & Rascon, 2007; Kasanovich, Ladinsky, Nelson, & Torgenson, 2007; Levy, 2008; Tomlinson, 2000; Wilhelm, 2011). A systematic approach of on-going assessments and data are needed to be sure groups remain flexible (Ankrum & Bean, 2008; Tomlinson, 2004). Teachers attend to how students approach learning then create flexibility in the presentation and assignment to compel and extend the students' learning. Small groups may be a part of differentiation. Groups are shaped in flexible ways to modify instruction in response to students' readiness, interests, profile, and current needs (Ankrum & Bean, 2008; Tomlinson, 2004). Explicit teaching which clearly defines

performance criteria, takes into account previous learning, provides demonstration, and gives students opportunities for students to engage in and apply learning through small groups and independent work is also a component of promoting developmental competencies in students (Dube', Bessette, & Dorval, 2011). Differentiation focuses on where the student needs to go, how they are going to get there, and where they are going next (Hattie, 2009; Hattie, 2012b). To meet the needs of all learners in the classroom, teachers must serve all students in heterogeneous classrooms that are responsive to the varied needs of learners through modified instruction. Specific instructional strategies for meeting these needs are most effective when research based. Effective strategies may include cooperative learning, micro-teaching, providing feedback, inductive learning, reading for meaning, scaffolded reading opportunities, use of graphic organizers, reinforcing effort, and providing teacher clarity (Harvey, Silver, Dewing, & Perini, 2012; Hattie, 2009; Hattie, 2012b; Marzano, 2001). Through differentiation, improved student outcomes can encourage continued teacher development.

Implementation

This project will be implemented during ongoing PD sessions throughout the school year totaling 3-8 hour days' worth of training. A walk-through organizer provides an outline for the sessions, including times suggested for each activity (see Appendix A). I will share the project via Prezi presentations which show relationships between big concepts and small details through a moveable presentation format. Paper copies and electronic links of these presentations will be distributed to any administrators and

teachers interested in participating, as well as extra charts used for guided discussion and collaboration (see Appendix A). With administrative support, the project may be presented to all grade levels kindergarten through fifth grade. The Prezis contain data from the study and strategies from the research that will give teachers relevant, practical support in data analysis and differentiation strategies for students on T1 intervention plans. Time is built into the PD sessions for collaboration and analysis of student data, as well as planning for differentiation with colleagues, including reading interventionists. Printed copies and electronic access of the Prezis, as well as necessary handouts to facilitate processing will be available for participants to use during the sessions and for later access. The project is created and intended for an audience of teachers involved with T 1; however the strategies are critical for engaging teachers and students in all learning environments. This project can be utilized at each of the district's eleven elementary schools as PD training. The PD alone will not cause a shift or an increase in efficacy of teachers serving students in T1. The project's success depends on individual teachers processing the themes and concepts presented and implementing the strategies and structures with students on a systematic basis. As the researcher, I will be available for support between the PD sessions for analysis, observation, collaboration, application, and implementation as participants deem appropriate.

Potential Resources and Existing Supports

Administrative support is a critical element of this project, as the administrative team will have to allow the project to be implemented during allotted PD time. Another critical element of support is the teachers, including reading interventionists, who

participate in the PD sessions. These participants will have to embrace and implement the project to provide ongoing collaboration and support for their teams. Comfortable space is needed with room for participants to sit in collaborative groups with their teams. Basic technical resources needed include a laptop computer, projector and screen, and necessary hardware. As the researcher and presenter, I am available and capable of connecting the devices for the PD sessions at the school level.

Potential Barriers

The potential resources and existing supports are also the potential barriers to this project's success. If administrators choose not to implement the ongoing PD, the project will not be successful because the structure for dissemination will not be available. If teachers do not process and implement the themes, they will not see a shift in their confidence and comfort in implementing T1 interventions with fidelity. The key to the project's success relies upon full implementation as a self-extending system in as many arenas as possible.

Proposal for Implementation and Timetable

The project is created and available for implementation pending the approval of this project study dissertation. I will share the presentations with my administrators at that time. If they approve, implementation should begin in the Fall of 2015 and continue throughout the 2015-2016 school year. The district has scheduled several teacher in-service days and the school has set aside a weekly planning period for each grade level. The Prezi presentations can be implemented during these scheduled times or additional times as administration deems appropriate throughout the year. The total hours for the

complete implementation of this project are the equivalent of 3-8 hour days. This can be broken up into numerous 1 to 3 hour mini-sessions or done in daylong in-service trainings. No matter the session format, all 3 days' worth of training will be completed by the end of May, 2016 if allowed to implement the project. I will make the Prezis and all necessary documents and supports available for teachers in electronic and paper copy format for review and reflection on their own at each PD session.

Roles and Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of the presenter, teachers and administrators who attend the PD trainings are critical to the study's full implementation. The presenter must be responsive to the participants so appropriate pacing and support can be provided during sessions. For teachers to improve their sense of efficacy they must utilize the structures and practices in their teams and classrooms in a consistent manner. To help students on T1 intervention plans to improve their reading competence and ultimately achievement, teachers must strive to analyze data effectively in order to shape instruction responsively. If a teacher feels competent and confident in meeting the needs of their students with T1 interventions, the project will be considered a success for that teacher and his/her students.

Project Evaluation

The evaluation of project implementation will be done informally over time. The success of the project can be evaluated over time by examining teachers' level of confidence and competence in implementing T1 interventions with fidelity. The goal is

for teachers to become efficacious in analyzing data and shaping instruction to meet the needs of their students from that analysis, particularly in the T1 process.

Informal evaluation can be monitored by the level of engagement during the collaborative and reflective PD sessions. More formally, the evaluation of the PD sessions will come through the formative feedback from participants following each session as included in the last slide of each presentation (see Appendix A). The Prezi includes best practices that evolved from the research and data obtained during the study. Feedback from session participants will be used to enhance the quality of future training sessions (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010). Participants may share additional best practices to be included in future trainings. Therefore, all participants will be asked to complete an exit-slip feedback evaluation form (see Appendix A) following each session which will be used to meet the needs of participants in future trainings, as well as in real-time supports between sessions. Participants may also take the same Survey Monkey survey that they completed in the Fall of 2014 measuring their perceptions of support, confidence and efficacy related to T1. By completing this at the conclusion of the PD series, teacher perceptions can be compared to measure the effectiveness of the completed project. In addition, administrators may note shifts in instruction of participants during informal walkthrough and formal classroom observations.

Implications Including Social Change

Local Community

This study has the potential to positively impact teachers and students in the local community. There is an impact for social change as this project study may strengthen T I

intervention implementation, thus improving the effectiveness of interventions at the T I level which has the potential to decrease the number of students referred for special education evaluation and placement. By supporting an attitude of collaboration in data analysis and implementation of differentiation through intervention, a large potential of teachers, and in turn students, will be affected. As one teacher stated, "I want to reach each child, but it is overwhelming. I need help breaking it down and planning for each child at the onset." Teachers need time to process and implement and reflect on their beliefs and a practice in an effort to shape instruction that is responsive to students' needs. This project study can potentially reduce the number of students referred to T2 and T3 pull-out intervention settings, and to special education settings by improving teachers' confidence and competence in their own practice of engaging in core instruction.

Far-Reaching

The effects of this study are far-reaching. I would like to share the project at the school, but also at other schools in our district and even to other districts utilizing an RtI process. Their teachers and students can benefit from the themes and concepts of the study as it relates to intervention. The processes and strategies presented are relevant beyond the content area of reading and to a broader audience than elementary teachers. Therefore, I am eager to share the findings of my study at various professional development opportunities to positively influence teachers and students across geographical boundaries. I plan to submit the findings of my study for publication consideration in professional association journals in which I am affiliated so teachers

from a broader sphere can learn and practice these strategies take them to impact achievement of more students.

Conclusion

In Section 3, I gave a detailed description of the project that emerged from my research. The goal of the training is to close the gap between teachers' knowledge base and their sense of agency in actual implementation and practice. This project will be implemented in the form of ongoing PD training for teachers in the school that I studied. I provided a review of professional literature that supports and refines my findings. I included potential resources and potential barriers to full implementation of the project. I also gave a timetable for implementation including the roles and responsibilities of the presenter and participants engaged in the project. Measures for the project's immediate and long term evaluation are described. The implications for both local and far reaching social change are also explained.

In Section 4, I detail my personal reflections and thoughts of the doctoral project study process. In this section, I provide the projects strengths, weaknesses, and limitations. I discuss what I gleaned from my growth as a leader, scholar practitioner, and project developer.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Introduction

This project study developed from a personal hypothesis I had regarding teachers' perceptions of their abilities with regard to RtI and T I interventions. After gathering data from teachers at my study school, I then created a series of PD training sessions in which I will be able to share findings, research, and support with teachers to build their level of efficacy. In this section, I provide personal thoughts and reflections on my experiences of this project study. I detail the project's strengths, weaknesses, and limitations, as well as consider opportunities for future research. I also share my reflections about how my thinking has shifted and how I have evolved as a leader, scholar, practitioner, and project developer.

Project Strengths

While researching the literature, I found limited scientific evidence and support to guide schools in their implementation of RtI, especially at the T 1 level (Scanlon & Sweeney, 2008). Therefore, I believe that a strength of this project is that it specifically addresses this concern through reflection and collaborative planning. It also offers a focused and research-based exploration of strategy which can be used for any content area and is applicable to teachers with various levels of experience and effectiveness. My exploration of teachers' personal beliefs about learning reinforces the view that underlying beliefs about language, literacy, and learning impact effective instructional practices and decisions (Brock, & Boyd, 2011). My project is adaptable based on reflection and relevance; therefore, it reaches participants through authentic, meaningful

engagement (Desimone, 2009; Domitrovich, Gest, Gill, Jones, & Sandford, 2009; Hadar, & Brody, 2010; Lee, 2011).

My study data came directly from practitioners in the field who work at my school. These teachers are charged with serving students in their classrooms through differentiation and adapting their instruction to meet the individual needs of readers in T 1 intervention. All participants, including those who took the survey questionnaire and those who were subsequently interviewed, currently serve students with T 1 intervention plans.

Although some participants are more confident than others in the implementation of T 1 interventions, all contributed to the findings of this project study. During the interviews, all of the participating teachers agreed that the five themes and conceptual categories that emerged from data gathering impacted their level of confidence and competence in implementing T 1 interventions with fidelity on a consistent basis. My data gathering guided me in creating the project training sessions. Because practitioners who have a deep connection to the classroom provided the initial data, I believe that my subsequent trainings are more effective, specific, and valid. Also, as someone who practices in the field and who understands the material presented for implementation in the classroom, I believe that I am better able to develop relevant, hands-on workshops that are specifically focused on the needs of the participants (Lee, 2011; Sappington, et al., 2012; Schmoker, 2006). As LaCursia (2011) and Lee (2011) noted, relevance makes projects more effective.

The data from all survey questionnaires and interviews strongly pointed to the five themes and concepts: data, instruction, support, analysis, and differentiation. Comments made in each interview were interwoven with perceptions and remarks of others providing the themes of this project. From these themes, I gleaned research-based practices, which provide support and address analysis and differentiation issues. Because teachers who attend the PD trainings reflect, collaborate, and practice, they can immediately implement their learning with their teams and students. A training session allow participants an opportunity to practice and know which competencies to assess, develop sound strategies for assessing them, and experience how to match instruction with demonstrated needs, which are at the heart of the successful RtI classroom (Allington, 2009). As Tschannen-Moran and McMaster (2009) noted, ongoing PD with follow-up support and coaching has a strong effect on teacher self-efficacy beliefs. When implemented in a systematic manner, these processes will have a lasting impact on teacher comfort and confidence which will ultimately support student progress and achievement in the school.

Recommendations for Remediation of Limitations

A weakness of the project is that it depends on participants' level of reflection and engagement. Essential elements of effective PD include practice, self-reflection, peer support, and ongoing feedback to foster a stronger confidence in teachers for their own teaching practices (Desimone, 2009; Kennedy & Shiel, 2010). If participants are not fully engaged in the PD sessions, then they will not find the trainings to be meaningful and will not reassess their classroom teaching. Therefore, trainings will have limited

impact on student achievement. By encouraging participants to use authentic student work samples as evidence, I sought to encourage more relevant and meaningful reflection and collaboration on the part of teachers, which is something that can lessen the impact of low engagement.

Another weakness of the study is the size of the study. Only 26 teachers completed the survey questionnaire, of which 12 participated in follow-up interviews. My number of respondents is an appropriate sample size for a qualitative case study (Creswell, 2008). However, restricting my interviews to my colleagues at my study school meant that I did not interview many other educators in the district who are involved with T 1 interventions. I chose to interview 13 participants based on demographic information and what they shared in the survey questionnaires regarding their comfort and confidence in implementing T 1 interventions. One potential participant was unable to participate in the interview process, which left me with 12 interview participants. More input may have contributed to an in-depth study highlighting different dimensions. More specific PD may have come from additional data.

One way to address the limitations of the study is to repeat the study in other settings, such as all of elementary schools in my district. I conducted my research at a medium sized, suburban school located near a capitol city in the southeastern United States. By repeating the study in other schools of varying sizes and with different student and teacher demographics, I may be able to capture distinctive differences with regard to the phenomenon I am studying.

Another way to address the limitations of this study would be to hold focus group interviews with a group of people who have something in common to add richer, unique data following the individual interviews. I have the option of using several types of focus group interview approaches (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010; Merriam, 2009). Two strands of focus groups that could prove valuable to the study are homogeneous groups with participants who self-reported very high or very low levels of efficacy. It would also be valuable to interview a group of highly effective intervention teachers. (I would assess their effectiveness in this regard based on student achievement and progress after T 1 intervention as shown in progress monitoring data.) These focus group interviews could yield another distinct dimension of data that can provide the basis for another study.

Scholarship

When I enrolled in my doctoral program, I thought I had a solid understanding of scholarship. Because I see myself as a lifelong learner and student in this field, I have continued to take graduate-level courses throughout my career in education, even after earning a Master's degree plus thirty hours of certification. I enjoy reading, writing, and reporting. I appreciate the concept of in-depth study. I am a National Board Certified Teacher and have renewed my certification for a second ten year period.

However, when I started to take doctoral-level courses I quickly learned how much I had yet to learn in the world of advanced academia. While I used the term *research based* strategies and *data driven decision making* in my common language, I did not fully understand what was implied by those statements. While I knew the concepts of

qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methodologies, I had never been engaged with them. I had to learn how to approach research, how to narrow and broaden the focus to search for research depending on the topic, how to read research, how to question and analyze what I was reading, and how to glean pertinent and relevant information from the studies I was exploring. I needed exposure and practice to even begin the journey. I had to learn by immersion, jumping in the metaphoric water to become familiar with research design through repeated exposure and experience. The more I read and reviewed, the more comfortable I became. But this journey of scholarly growth came in baby steps, as the more I learned, the more I realize I had yet to learn. Even at this stage of my own research project study, I am reminded that I continue to be a lifelong learner and ever-developing connoisseur of educational research.

Once I had a grasp of my doctoral journey, I identified a problem to research in my local setting. Because I serve as a mentor and provide certified mentor training around my state, I initially planned to study the role and impact of mentoring induction teachers in their first years as practicing educators. However, as I began to undertake my research, I discovered that mentoring induction was not the problem that I was most passionate about. I also did not believe that it was the most prevalent issue for teachers and students within my district. As a reading interventionist who is involved firsthand with the RtI process, I wanted to know more about the barriers to intervention in the area of reading. I wanted my project to be meaningful and justify the amount of time and energy that would be put into it. I wanted it to have an authentic impact on student learning and teacher support while connecting with literacy. For these reasons, I

developed a project that directly links authentic collaboration with purposeful differentiated instruction and student achievement in reading.

Once I decided on my topic, my project study seemed to evolve and fall into place. I felt that I had a real, workable problem that had the potential for social change for the teachers, and ultimately the students, in my school community. Although my doctoral research has been an involved, dynamic, and complex process, I do not regret it. The process has stretched me as an individual, a student learner, a teacher, a colleague, a researcher, and a writer. This process has been an adventure of faith and test in perseverance and interdependence for which I am grateful and do not take for granted. I am a different kind of scholar on this side of the journey, and my practice as a teacher and a leader will be better for it. I am more than thankful for this opportunity and experience of scholarly growth.

Project Development and Evaluation

The data collection and analysis processes were interesting and engaging. While each process was time intensive, I was so involved that I enjoyed the laborious organization and work. The development of the project was thought provoking as I wanted it to be more than a "sit-and-get, in-and-out, one-and-done" PD. I wanted to create reflective, research-based PD that could provide support and time for processing, as well as invite opportunities for engaged, relevant collaboration. I decided that Prezi-driven PD training sessions would be the most efficient and effective way to share my findings because all participants could access the information easily. My use of Prezi presentation software also provided a resource for teachers to reference after the sessions.

I strove to create Prezi presentations that teachers would find engaging, interesting, relevant, and applicable. My presentations are broken into two main sections, based on themes and concepts that emerged from my survey and interview research. Upon drafting the Prezi presentations, I had two colleagues outside my school preview them and provide me with feedback. One colleague is a regional Reading Recovery teacher leader, and the other colleague is a National Board Certified Elementary Media Specialist. Both colleagues are charged with providing ongoing PD and support to teachers in the field of literacy. I took their suggestions and constructive feedback and created two presentations that I hope my teacher participants will find engaging, instructional, and useful as a reference in their teaching.

Leadership and Change

Competencies of a teacher-leader include instructional leadership, policy leadership, and association leadership (CTQ, NBPTS, & NEA, 2014). Working through the doctoral process has provided me with opportunities to develop as an instructional leader by sharing effective practices with others in order to benefit more students. I have also developed as a policy leader by advocating to shape decisions that impact and support student learning and as an association leader by leading critical, collective groups in the advancement of sound instructional practices to improve student achievement.

Having served my state as a former chair of the State Teacher Forum, having served as an Education Policy Fellow, and having presented numerous national educational conferences, I see myself as an active and engaged servant-leader in the field of education. But, my doctoral study has thrust me into a different leadership role, that of

an interdependent scholarly leader with a responsibility to share and act. My colleagues see that I am asking more refined and deeper questions and that I am looking to research for new inquiries instead of just articulating my own thoughts and experiences in professional dialogue. I am seeking and sharing findings from other studies. I am speaking differently, approaching conversations differently, and articulating possibilities and rationale differently. My perspective is more global and focused on the bigger picture. This journey stretched and shifted not only me and my approach to problem solving but my circle of support and influence as well. I raised the expectations I had of myself in critical roles, and in turn, our collective vision was broadened beyond the boundaries of the four walls of our classrooms. I realize that I am part of something bigger, and this process has helped me to define my new perspective.

A teacher who holds a doctoral degree in administrative leadership for teaching and learning will have many opportunities to serve in new capacities. I am completely satisfied and beyond happy and grateful for the opportunities I have in my current role in the field of education. However, if I find new opportunities to use my doctoral degree in a way that enables me to better serve teachers and students, then I am open to following wherever God guides me. With this degree come new responsibilities. I am aware of these responsibilities, and I plan to use my leadership influence to unite and elevate the voices of others in order to create and support change in our profession that will ultimately benefit all learners.

Analysis of Self as Scholar

Throughout this process, I have become a scholar. I have learned how to live a scholarly life, not only gaining a great deal of knowledge over the course of the past few years but learning ways to use that knowledge to better my practice and elevate the practice of others. As a scholar, I have begun to share my experience and knowledge with administrators and professional educators within my realm of influence. As a mentor to new teachers, I have a new level of credibility as they see me as a lifelong learner. My collaboration with colleagues in reading intervention has become more connected to the works of others and how that can influence our approach to problem solving. As a scholar, I have been able to support peers working on graduate degrees as I have had opportunities to encourage their work and practitioner research projects. By tapping the potential of my peers, I have inspired others to take action for the benefit of students in my school.

I have had to learn how to approach learning in a new way at the doctoral level. I could not rely on studying my course work notes and memorizing theories or strategies. At this postgraduate level of study, new learning requires synthesis. I had to learn how to glean information gathered from many sources and then analyze and organize it into a useful context to my setting, constructing my own knowledge from the experience. A true scholar realizes that the learning is never done, and I know I have a great deal left to learn.

Analysis of Self as Practitioner

I have always considered myself to be a reflective practitioner, welcoming observations from administrators and peers, valuing their feedback and thriving on their suggestions. I have always prided myself on putting the needs of my students first and trying to bring my very best to the classroom every day for them. I have always tried to implement best practice strategies and responsive processes, and actively seek opportunities for classes and coursework. After 15 years of teaching, I feel like I am a successful practitioner in the field of elementary literacy. Now I realize I am more than a teacher practitioner, but a research practitioner as well. I eagerly anticipate opportunities for more practitioner research to find best practice strategies in my local setting with my colleagues on the front lines. I want to use my research experience as a springboard to explore more research to impact teacher competence and student achievement in the broader community. My definition of my role as a practitioner has evolved. I must do more than teach. I must apply what I have gained from this experience by building capacity in my peers, fostering systems that develop teacher leaders in their own contexts, and by supporting and elevating the practice of those around me. My communication is more effective, my reflection more refined, my practice more intentional, my vision more student-centered and global, my responsibility to contribute more urgent.

Analysis of Self as Project Developer

I have had the opportunity to prepare and present to small and large audiences as local, state, and national conferences over the last 15 years of my career. I have been a

keynote speaker, session facilitator, workshop presenter, advisory board member, and instructional coach. However, developing a project for this process was a completely different experience. Collecting my own data, analyzing the results, identifying the themes and categorical concepts, then developing PD to address those needs was a new experience. I was not as confident at the onset because the PD was shaped from my own research. I am more vulnerable as a project developer and presenter at this level because the project is a product of my own inquiry and work. While I enjoy the new risk, it does challenge my efficacy, flexibility, and level of interdependence. I desire for the project to create and facilitate genuine partnerships among all stakeholders to meet their needs. I want it to increase capacity on a large scale. I will crave the feedback of the teachers who participate in the PD, as this will shape and refine my future research and the projects that come from it.

The Project's Potential Impact on Social Change

If practitioners in my school engage fully through participation in this project and truly collaborate in analyzing data, matching instructional strategies with needs of students, and ongoing peer support, then this project has the potential to improve teacher confidence and competence with T1 intervention implementation and build consensus and peer capacity in this area. This will lead to more research-grounded instruction, which will impact student achievement. When students make progress with T1 interventions, they no longer need formalized intervention. Instead of needing more intense interventions and possibly evaluation and placement in special education, more students may remain in the classroom with core instruction. This project has the potential

to impact the educational path of students across multiple content and grade levels as well as across geographical boundaries. The potential impact for social change in my own setting alone is real, but the project will impact the social change of only a few teachers and students if I am the only one to use the findings, structures, and processes from this study. If all 26 of the teachers involved with implementing T1 interventions at my school will engage in and implement the project, many more students will be impacted. If other teams of educators in the district and beyond experience and implement the project, even more students will be impacted through social change by academic progress and success, ultimately keeping them out of more intensive tiers of intervention and possibly out of special education, keeping them in the core classroom which is the least restrictive learning environment. The more opportunities I am given to present the project in other settings, the more teachers and students will be impacted. The potential for social change increases as the scope of participants widens, ultimately building and refining agency in instruction to increase student achievement in general education thus decreasing the evaluation and identification of students needing special education services.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

I would like to repeat the study in different settings as a direction for future research. While I believe that the structures and processes that evolved from the themes of the data are generalizable best practice strategies, I would like to test that theory. I would also like to explore focus group interviews with highly effective T1 teachers as evidenced by progress monitoring data for future research possibilities. In comparison to

self-perception, different themes and concepts may arise from researching the practices of effective and highly competent teachers in implementing T1 interventions with fidelity. The findings from a study of this nature could have a potentially far-reaching impact on social change for teachers of and students in reading intervention.

Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to identify gaps in practice and teacher-perceived issues regarding the effectiveness of Tier I intervention. The data from the teacher participants provided rich, anecdotal descriptions of the factors affecting their perceived efficacy in delivering T1 interventions. This study identified structures that teachers can refine that may improve analysis of data and planning differentiated intervention at the T1 level. The goal of the project is to create a more systemic process for analyzing data and adapting instruction for individual students by supporting colleagues in data inquiry and to close the gap between knowledge and practice to provide T1 intervention to students with efficacy on a consistent basis. The project has presented relevant, reliable, and specific structures that will make a positive impact on the RtI process.

The PD training will present the importance of practicing researched-based best processes for knowing individual students and refining instruction to reach them. Given the opportunity, I will share my research findings and developed project to faculties at the school and district in hopes of supporting teachers in their experiences with T1 intervention. As a product of and teacher in this school district, I hope to contribute to the funds of knowledge of my colleagues by sharing my research to positively impact the practice of teachers and achievement of students in our school system and beyond. I

aspire to create and support sustaining change that inspires others to take action for the benefit of students.

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Appendix A: The Project

Session 1: Facilitator's Agenda
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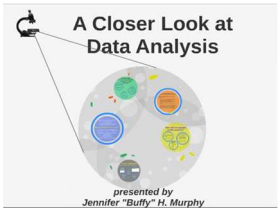
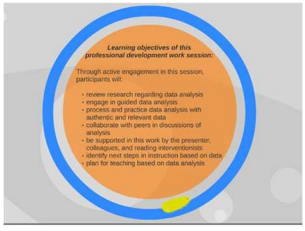
I. 

Introduction of Session: (10 minutes)

- The purpose for this first session of PD training is to provide authentic opportunities to immerse in and engage with literacy best practices and student data.
- The goals of the training are:
  - To create a more systemic process for analyzing data and adapting instruction for individual students by supporting colleagues in data inquiry and
  - To close the gap between teachers' knowledge and application in providing T1 intervention with efficacy in implementation on a consistent basis.
- Pass out handouts of presentation and evaluation exit-slips.

II. 

Learning objectives (5 minutes)

- Review research regarding data analysis
- Engage in guided data analysis
- Process and practice data analysis with authentic and relevant data
- Collaborate with peers in discussions of analysis
- Be supported in this work by the presenter, colleagues, and reading interventionists
- Identify next steps in instruction based on data
- Plan for teaching based on data analysis

III. 

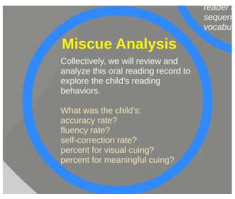
Research (20 minutes)

- Read slides about what teachers have said.
- Read quotes from current research
  - Pair Share: turn and talk with a partner. What resonates with you from these statements?
  - Group discussion: Share out from groups to help ground the work to be done today.

IV. 

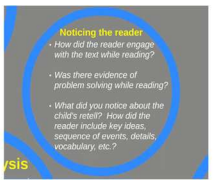
Dissecting Data: (30 minutes)

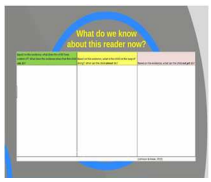
- Set up activity: We will watch and listen to a student read a book. While we watch the video, take a running record of the child's reading behaviors.

V. 

Analyze Miscues: (30 minutes)

- Analyze the running record you just took of the child.
- Compare your analysis with your neighbor.
- We will then analyze together as a whole group to calibrate our calculations and analysis.
- What is the accuracy percentage? (Miscues divided by total words X 100)
- What is the self-correction rate? (Errors + self-corrections / self-corrections)
- What is the percent full meaning used by the reader?
- What is the percent full visual used by the reader?

VI. 

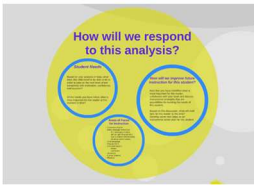


What do we know? (30 minutes)

- ❖ Looking at the data, what do we know about this reader?
- ❖ Use the chart. Fill in what the child can do independently, can almost do, and cannot yet do.
- ❖ Discuss with table groups.

VII. 
Application and Collaboration Time (1 hour)

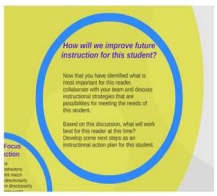
- ❖ Use your own student data that you brought with you to work through this same process.
- ❖ I will circulate and assist as needed.
- ❖ You may think through this analysis with your colleagues.

VIII. 

Student Needs (45 minutes)

- ❖ With your table group, share out your analysis.
- ❖ As a group, identify what this student's needs based on your analysis.

IX. 



Instructional Steps (45 minutes)

- ❖ Develop an instructional plan for this reader.
- ❖ Share strategies with your table group and support each other.

X. Tier 1 Application (1 hour and 15 minutes)

- ❖ Utilize this time to use the same process with your tier 1 student data.
- ❖ Analyze the running records.
- ❖ Write an analysis statement including what the child can do independently, can almost do, and cannot yet do.
- ❖ Determine what each student needs most.
- ❖ Create an instructional next steps plan for this student.
- ❖ Collaborate with your colleagues throughout this process. Reading interventionists can also support you as you develop these.

XI. 

Closure and Exit Slips (15 minutes)

- ❖ Wrap up the working session.
- ❖ Answer any lingering questions.
- ❖ Provide time for participants to complete exit slip.

Session1
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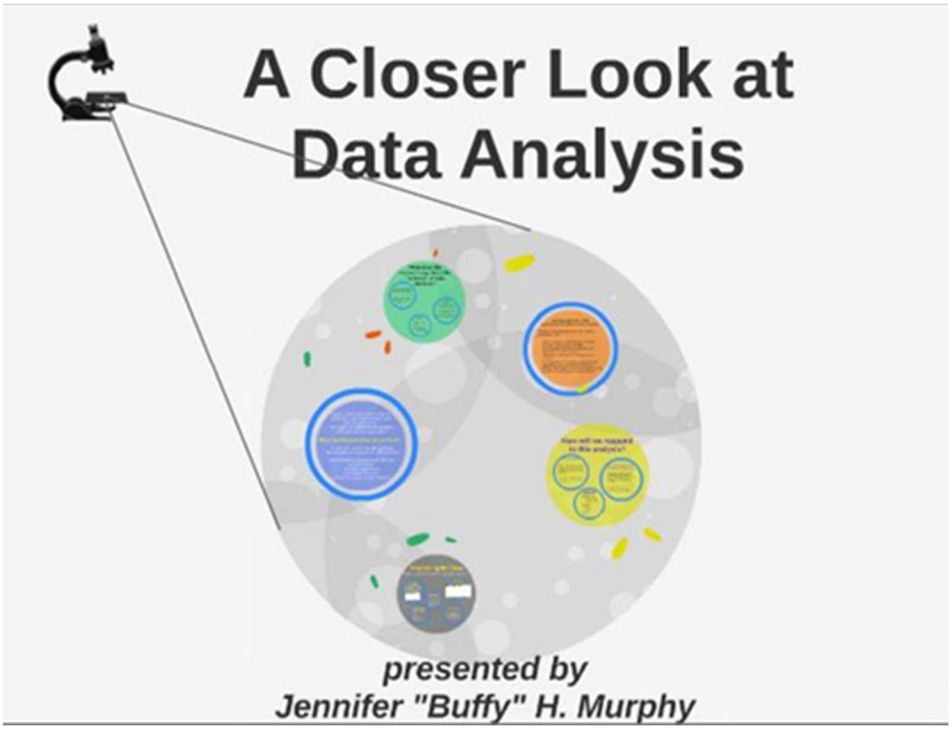
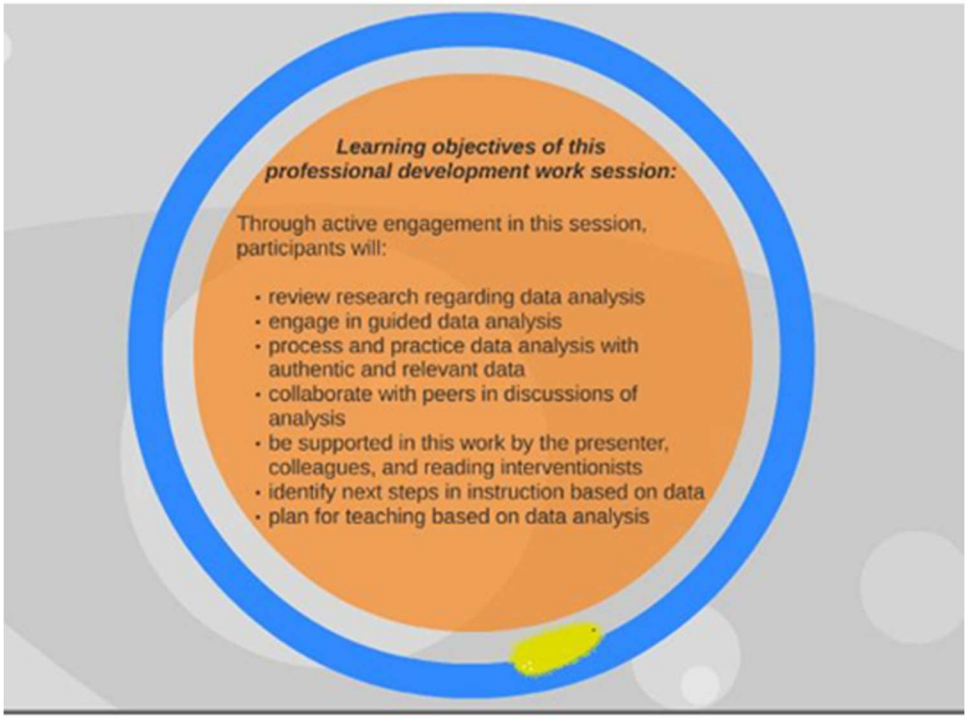
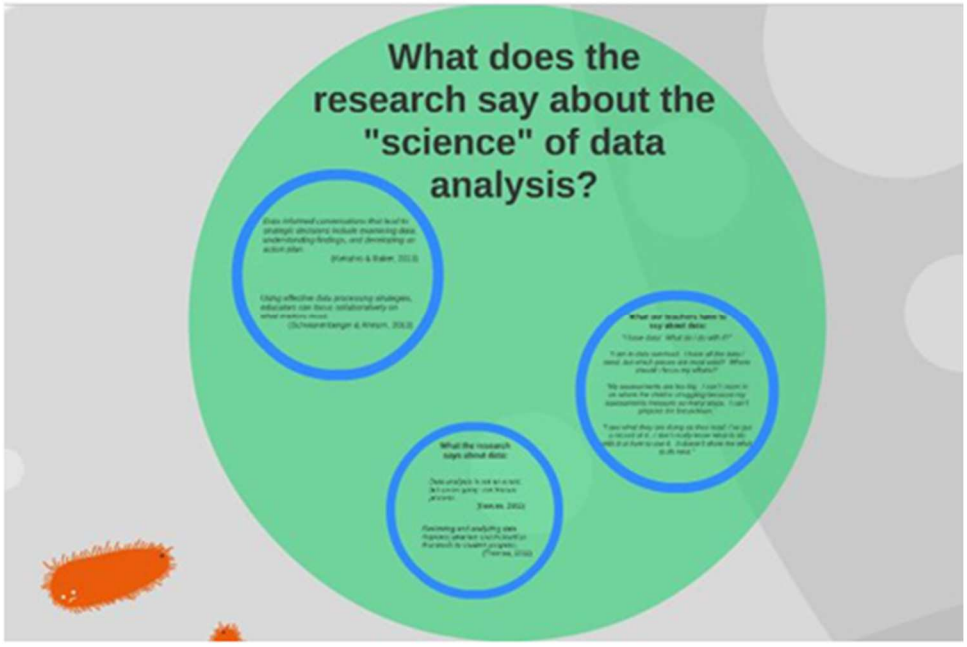
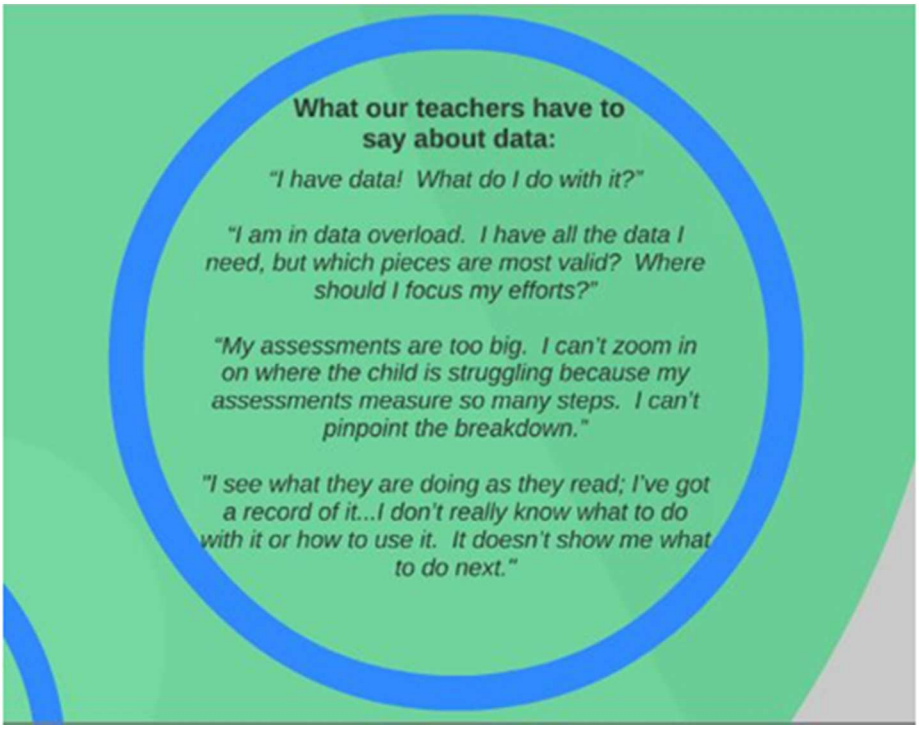




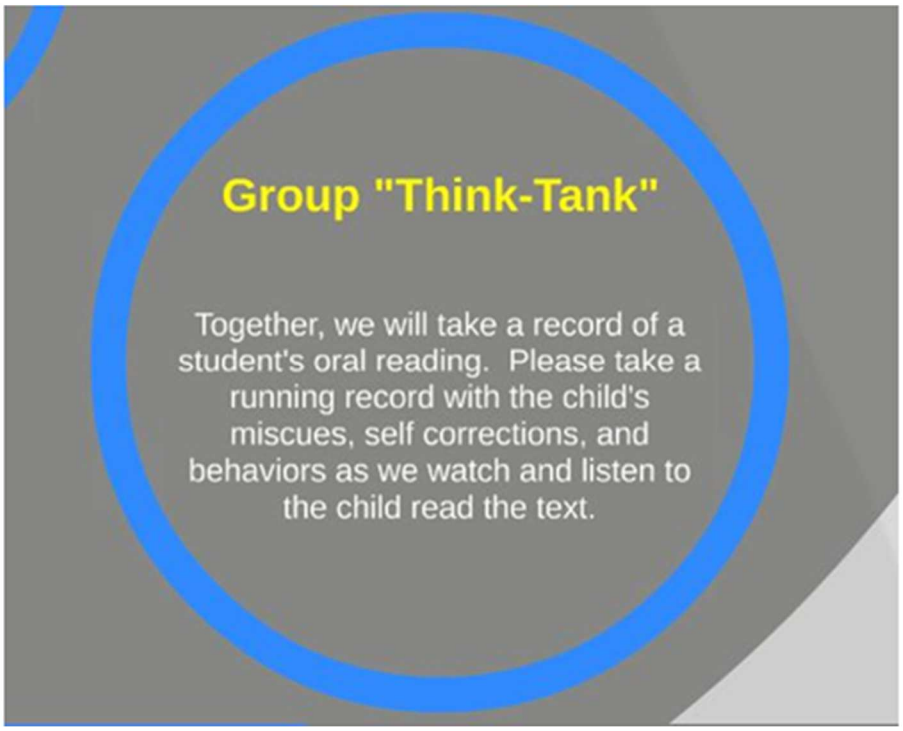

What does the research say about the "science" of data analysis?

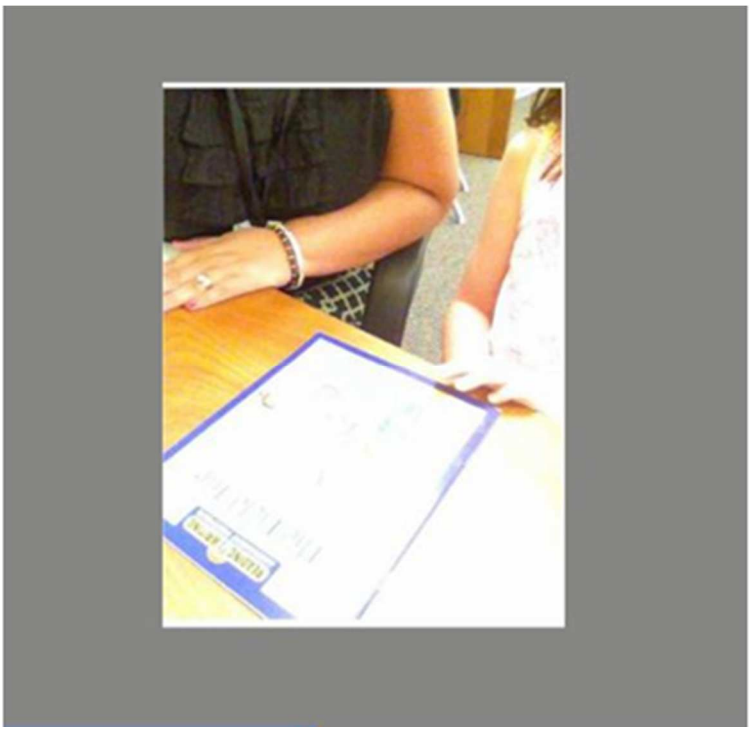

What our teachers have to say about data:
"I have data! What do I do with it?"
"I am in data overload. I have all the data I need, but which pieces are most valid? Where should I focus my efforts?"
"My assessments are too big. I can't zoom in on where the child is struggling because my assessments measure so many steps. I can't pinpoint the breakdown."
"I see what they are doing as they read; I've got a record of it...I don't really know what to do with it or how to use it. It doesn't show me what to do next."

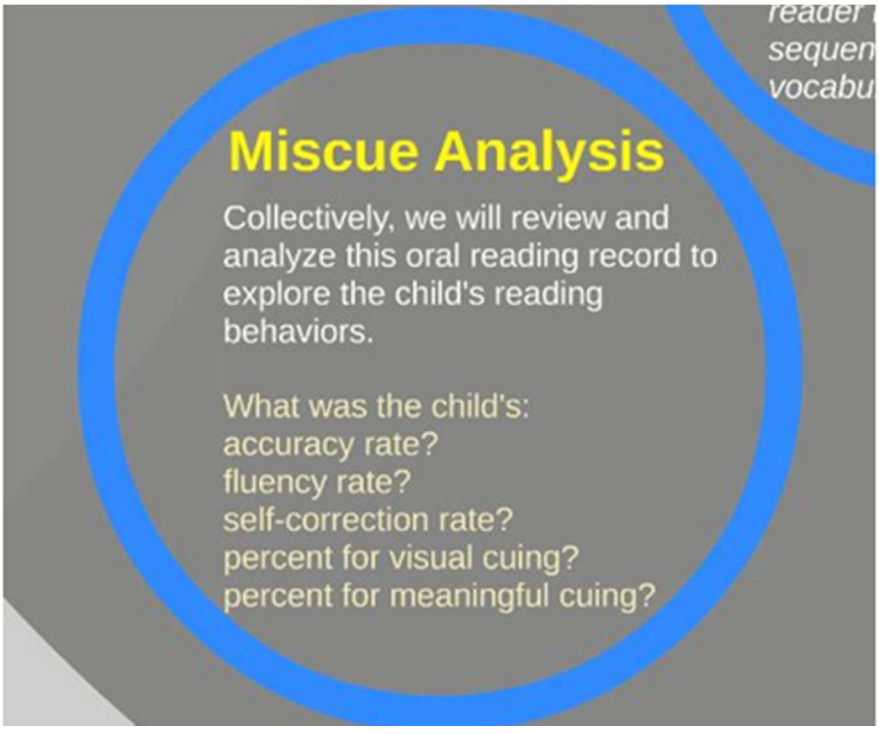

What the research says about data:
Data analysis is not an event, but an on-going, continuous process.
(Reeves, 2002)
Reviewing and analyzing data improves practice and instruction that leads to student progress.
(Thomas, 2011)

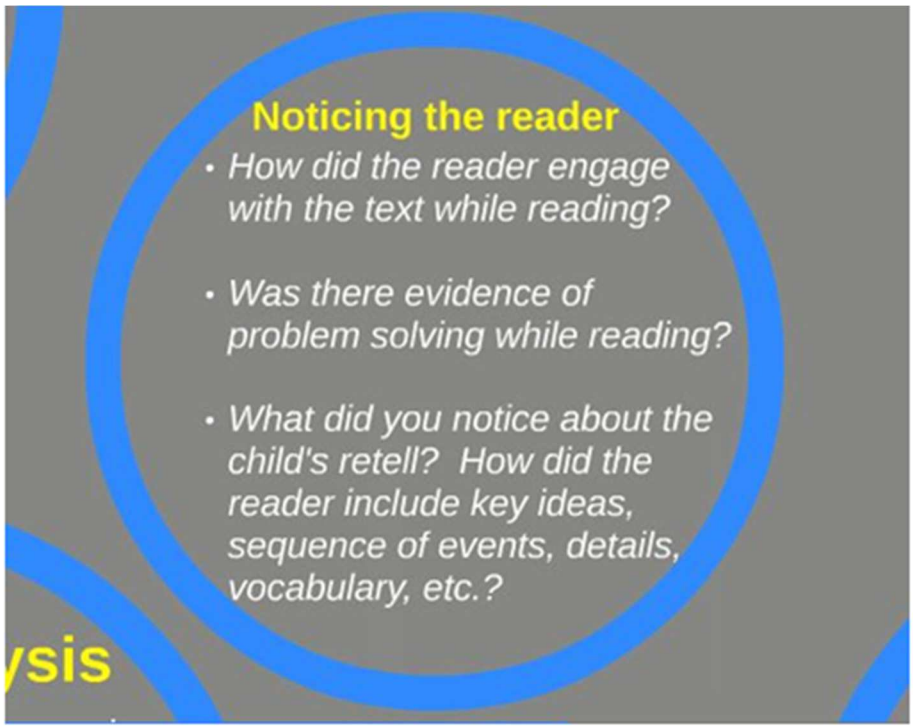

ana
Data informed conversations that lead to strategic decisions include examining data, understanding findings, and developing an action plan.
(Kekahio & Baker, 2013)
Using effective data processing strategies, educators can focus collaboratively on what matters most.
(Schwanenberger & Ahearn, 2013)

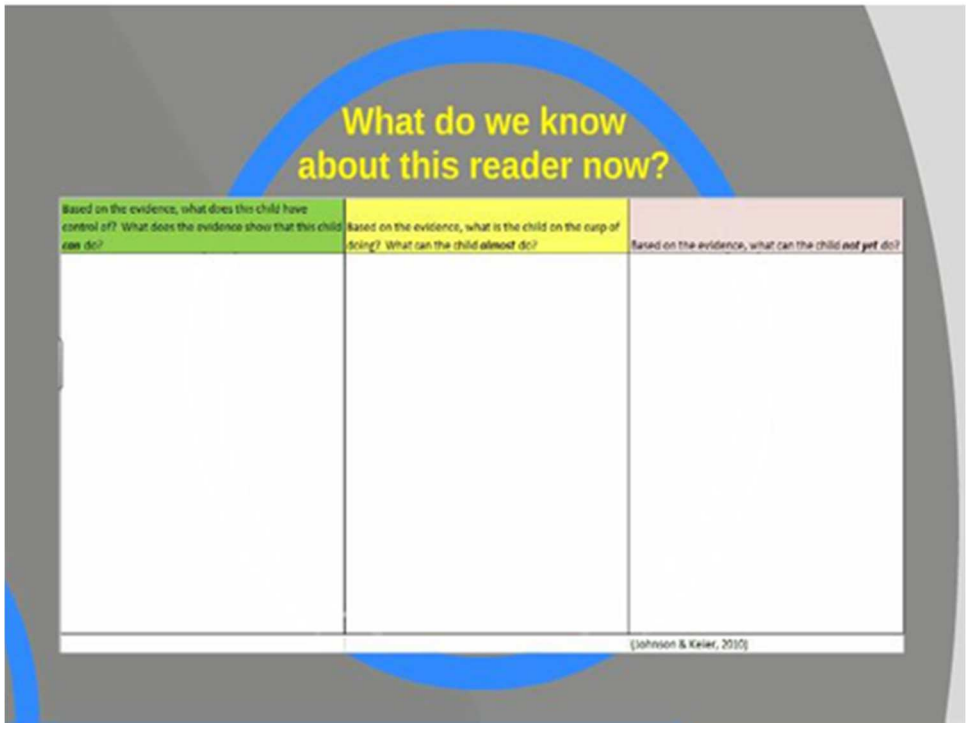

Dissecting the Data
"I wish I could talk through the data with someone."
What do we know about this reader now?
Miscue Analysis
Group "Think-Tank"

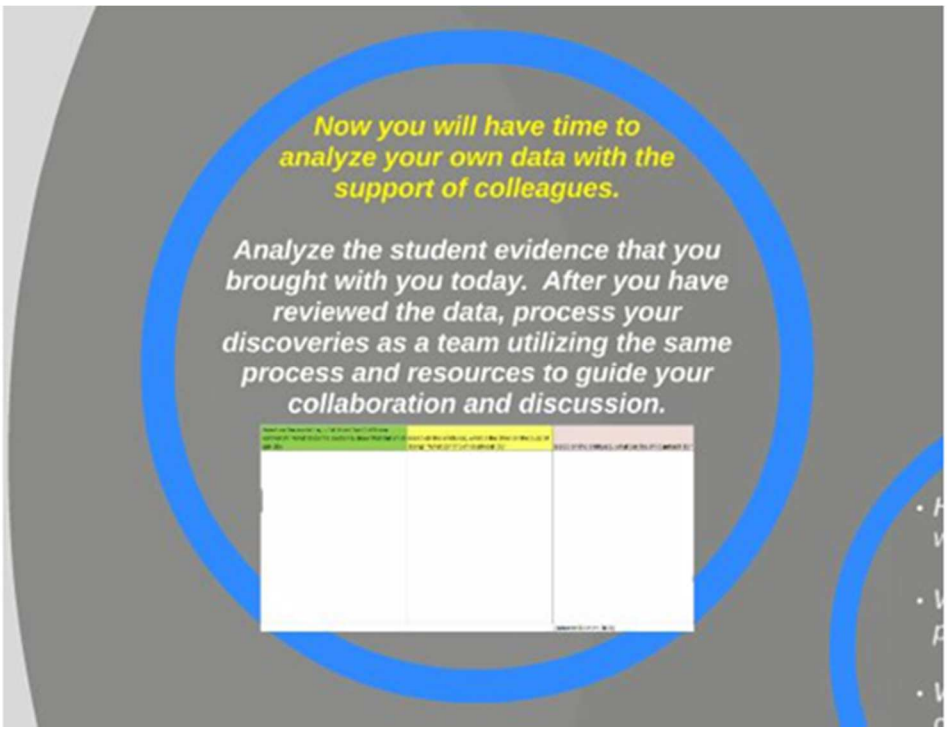

Group "Think-Tank"
Together, we will take a record of a student's oral reading. Please take a running record with the child's miscues, self corrections, and behaviors as we watch and listen to the child read the text.

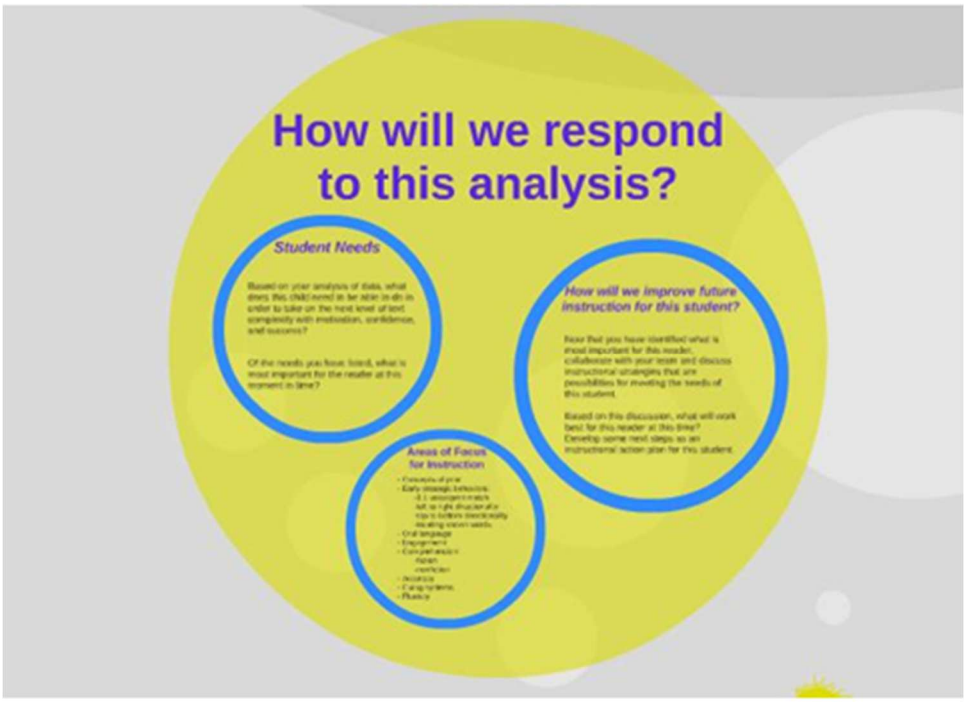


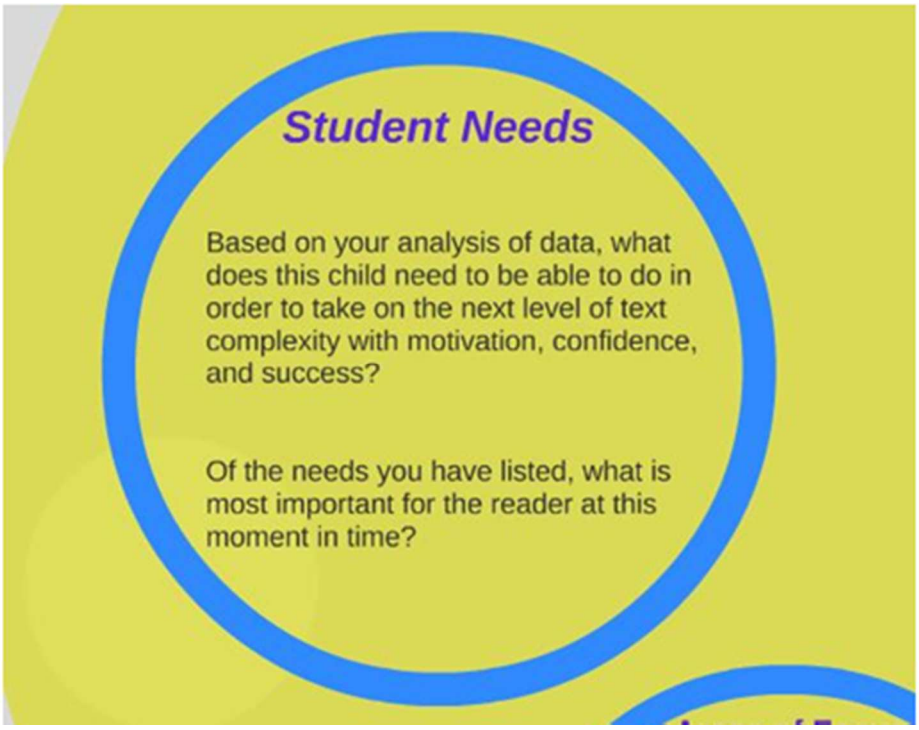

reader
sequen
vocabu
Miscue Analysis
Collectively, we will review and analyze this oral reading record to explore the child's reading behaviors.
What was the child's:
accuracy rate?
fluency rate?
self-correction rate?
percent for visual cuing?
percent for meaningful cuing?

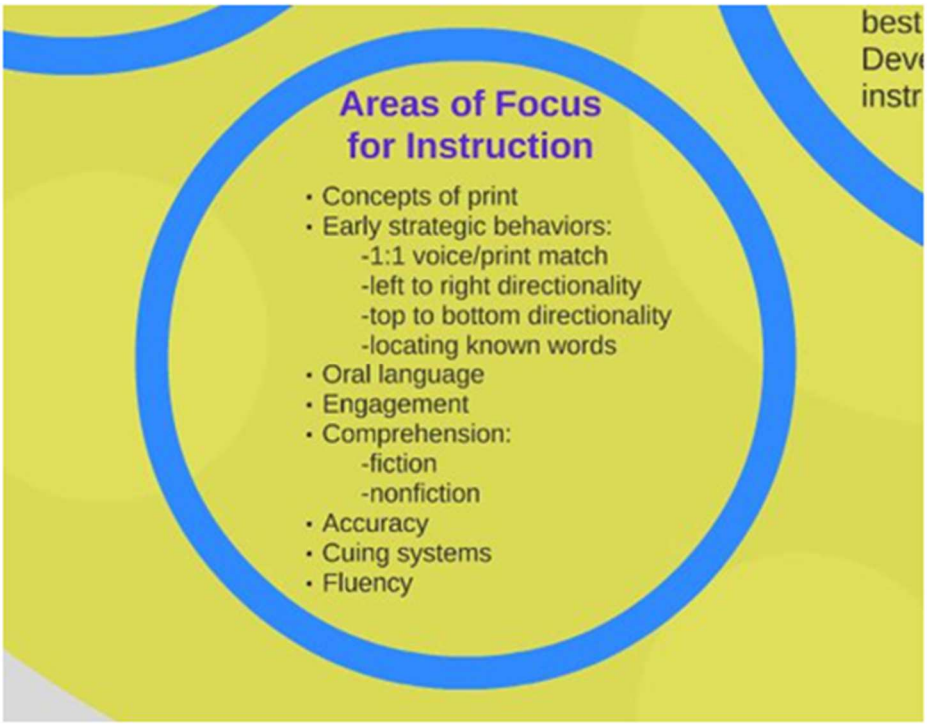

Noticing the reader
• How did the reader engage with the text while reading?
• Was there evidence of problem solving while reading?
• What did you notice about the child's retell? How did the reader include key ideas, sequence of events, details, vocabulary, etc.?
ysis


What do we know about this reader now?
Based on the evidence, what does this child have control of? What does the evidence show that this child can do?
Based on the evidence, what is the child on the cusp of doing? What can the child almost do?
Based on the evidence, what can the child not yet do?
(Johnson & Keier, 2010)


Now you will have time to analyze your own data with the support of colleagues.
Analyze the student evidence that you brought with you today. After you have reviewed the data, process your discoveries as a team utilizing the same process and resources to guide your collaboration and discussion.


How will we respond to this analysis?
Student Needs
How will we improve future instruction for this student?
Areas of Focus for Instruction


Student Needs
Based on your analysis of data, what does this child need to be able to do in order to take on the next level of text complexity with motivation, confidence, and success?
Of the needs you have listed, what is most important for the reader at this moment in time?


Areas of Focus for Instruction
• Concepts of print
• Early strategic behaviors:
-1:1 voice/print match
-left to right directionality
-top to bottom directionality
-locating known words
• Oral language
• Engagement
• Comprehension:
-fiction
-nonfiction
• Accuracy
• Cuing systems
• Fluency


How will we improve future instruction for this student?
Now that you have identified what is most important for this reader, collaborate with your team and discuss instructional strategies that are possibilities for meeting the needs of this student.
Based on this discussion, what will work best for this reader at this time? Develop some next steps as an instructional action plan for this student.
Focus
ction
nt
behaviors:
rint match
directionality
m directionality

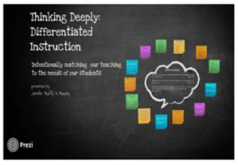

As you continue to analyze data for students in Tier 1 intervention, I am here to support you.
I am eager to collaborate and problem solve with you and your team!
What lingering questions do you have?
At our next session, we will go deeper into instructional strategies for differentiation.
I look forward to ongoing work with you and your teams to better support you in providing instruction to meet the needs of your readers!

Professional Development Reflections and Evaluation:

What worked?
What changes would you make?
What questions do you have?

Session 2: Facilitator's Agenda

Session 2 : http://prezi.com/cyt-aonrijm1/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy

I. 

Introduction of Session: (10 minutes)

- The purpose for this second session of PD training is to provide authentic opportunities to immerse in and engage with instructional decisions based on student data.
- The goals of the training are:
  - To create a more systemic process for analyzing data and adapting instruction for individual students by supporting colleagues in data inquiry and
  - To close the gap between teachers' knowledge and application in providing T1 intervention with efficacy in implementation on a consistent basis.
- Pass out handouts of presentation and evaluation exit-slips.

II.  What teachers say (5 minutes)

- Read comments made by teachers.
- How do these statements resonate with you? Share out with the group.

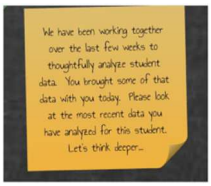
III.  Learning objectives (5 minutes)

- construct personal meaning of differentiation
- review research based best practice strategies
- look at student data and determine strengths and weaknesses
- collaborate with colleagues to identify differentiated instructional strategies to match student's needs

IV. 

Research (10 minutes)

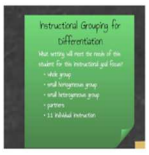
- Read quotes from current research
  - Pair Share: turn and talk with a partner. What resonates with you from these statements?
  - Group discussion: Share out from groups to help ground the work to be done today.

V. 

Analyzing Patterns: (30 minutes)

- Analyze the child's data and notice patterns.
- What are the child's strengths?
- What are the child's needs?
- Present this child to a partner.

VI. 



What will you do? (45 minutes)

- Knowing this reader, what is the desired outcome?
- What will you differentiate for this student?
- How will you differentiate instruction for this student?
- What setting will be best for this differentiation?
- Discuss with table groups.

VII.     Strategy Review (2 hours)

- Spend about 30 minutes deeply reviewing and discussing *each* of the four "Effective Strategies" slides.

  - Hattie's Top 10 Effect Size
    - Self-reported grades- students analyze their own work and evaluate themselves
    - Piagetian programs- teachers choose materials and tasks based on the developmental stages of their students and realize the importance of developing simultaneous and successive challenge of thinking.
    - Formative evaluations- teachers use student data and evidence of student learning to evaluate their teaching and monitor and adjust instruction based on this.
    - Micro-teaching- teachers conduct mini-lessons to a small group of students and then engaging in post discussion conferences about the lesson.
    - Acceleration –progressing students through an educational program at faster rates or younger ages than is traditional or conventional.
    - Behavior-classroom management and classroom climate support behaviors conducive to learning.
    - Comprehensive intervention- a combined direct instruction and strategy instruction model that addresses specific learning needs.
    - Teacher clarity- organization, explanation, examples and guided practice, and assessment of student learning.
    - Reciprocal teaching-enabling students to learn and use cognitive strategies such as summarizing, questioning, clarifying, and predicting when supported through teacher-student dialogue.
    - Feedback- provides cues or reinforcement to the learner and relates feedback to learning goals which is received and acted upon by students.

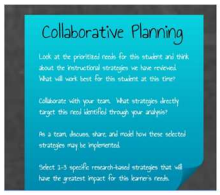
  - The Core 6
    - Reading for Meaning- strategies that help students develop the skills to be proficient, effective readers and make sense of text.
    - Compare and Contrast- teaches students to conduct comparative and contrasting analysis in order to engage with content at a much deeper level.
    - Inductive Learning- using inductive processes to help students see patterns and structures in content.

- Circle of Knowledge-strategic framework for planning and conducting engaging classroom discussions that get students to think deeply and communicate thoughtfully.
- Write to Learn- integrates writing into daily instruction
- Vocabulary's CODE- strategies to give students the ability to retain and use academic vocabulary.

- Marzano's Essential 9
  - Identifying similarities and differences- students compare, classify, and create linguistic, non-linguistic, and/or graphic representations of content concepts.
  - Summarizing and note taking- students put information in their own words by summarizing, eliminating, substituting, and analyzing information presented.
  - Reinforcing effort and providing recognition- teachers use symbolic recognition to reward standard of performance.
  - Homework and practice- teachers vary amount and format of additional independent practice given based on need to reinforce and enrich. If assigned, it should have a purpose and should be debriefed.
  - Nonlinguistic representations-students should create graphic representations and engage in kinesthetic activities to assimilate new information.
  - Cooperative learning- teachers utilize flexible grouping with specific roles and responsibilities assigned.
  - Setting objectives and providing feedback- teachers provide specific goals for learning and provide timely and relevant feedback.
  - Generating and testing hypothesis- students should engage in problem solving and decision making.
  - Questions, cues, and advanced organizers- teachers focus on what is useful and most important.

- Tomlinson's Ways of Responding
  - Small group instruction- flexible grouping of students with similar needs providing explicit teaching to that skill, strategy, or goal.
  - Graphic organizers- different levels and degrees of support provided to organize information.
  - Scaffolding reading- guided practice to move the reader toward independence.
  - Independent studies- students participate in individual investigations and explorations to go deeper into a topic or concept.

- Learning contracts- students and teachers negotiate goals for learning and steps needed to realize those goals.
- Learning centers- opportunities for collaborative and independent practice with different skill sets and strategy application for problem solving.
- Intelligence preferences- instruction presented to engage students' learning preference.

VIII. 

Student Needs and Strategy Planning (1 hour)

- ❖ With your table group, share out your analysis.
- ❖ As a group, identify what this student's needs based on your analysis.
- ❖ Develop an instructional plan for this reader.
- ❖ Share strategies with your table group and support each other.

IX. 

Results Indicators (15 minutes)

- ❖ Thoughtfully answer these questions individually and as a table group.

X. Application and Collaborative Planning Time (45 minutes)

- ❖ Utilize this time to use the same process with your tier 1 student data.
- ❖ Analyze the running records.
- ❖ Write an analysis statement including what the child can do independently, can almost do, and cannot yet do.
- ❖ Determine what each student needs most.
- ❖ Create an instructional next steps plan for this student.

- ❖ Collaborate with your colleagues throughout this process. Reading interventionists can also support you as you develop these.

XI. 

Closure and Exit Slips (15 minutes)

- ❖ Wrap up the working session.
- ❖ Answer any lingering questions.
- ❖ Provide time for participants to complete exit slip.

Session 2 :
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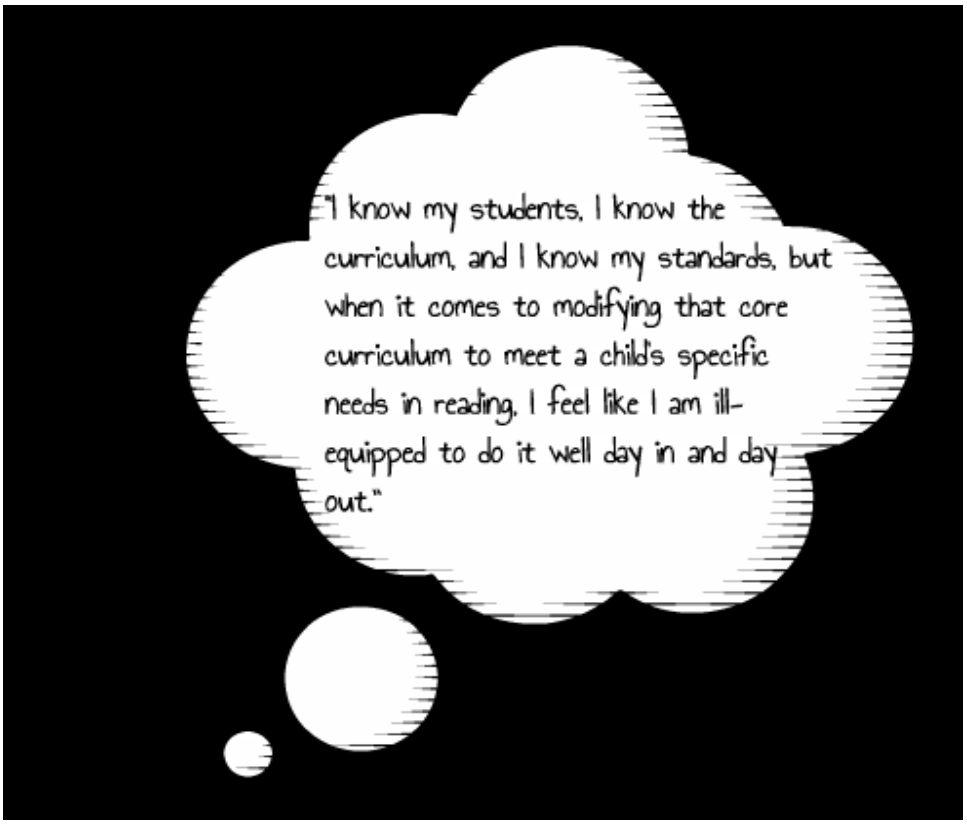
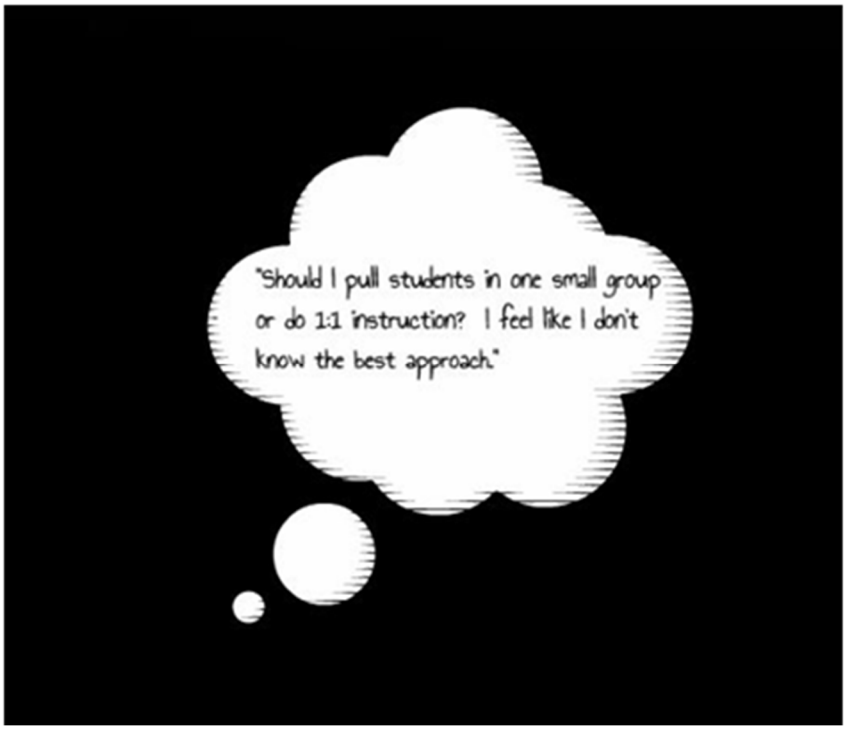
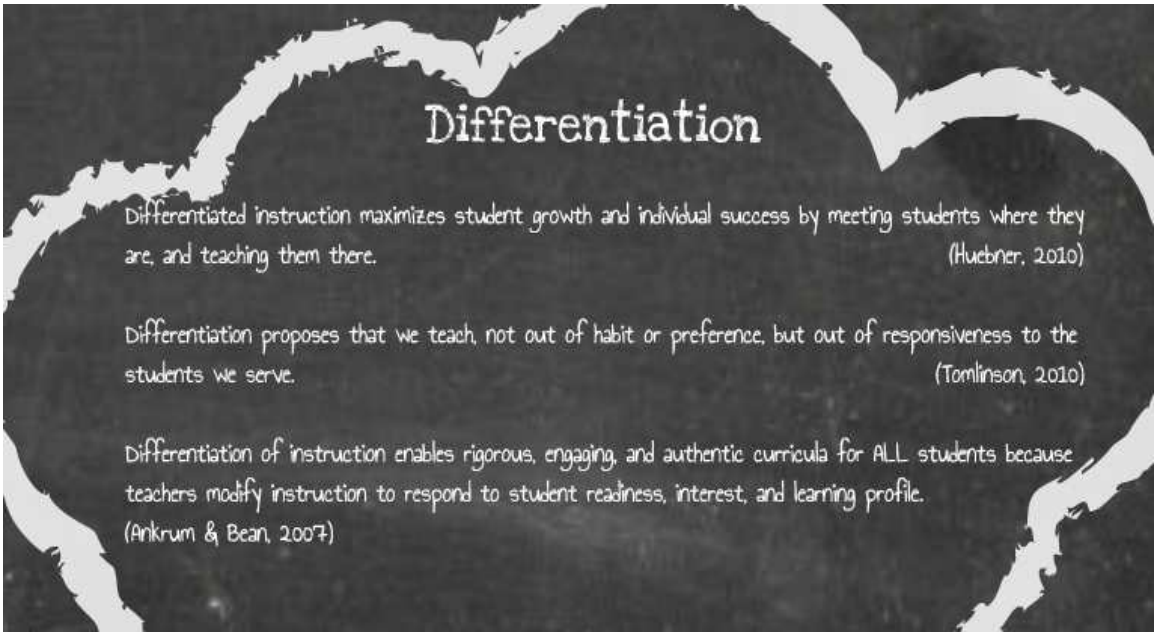
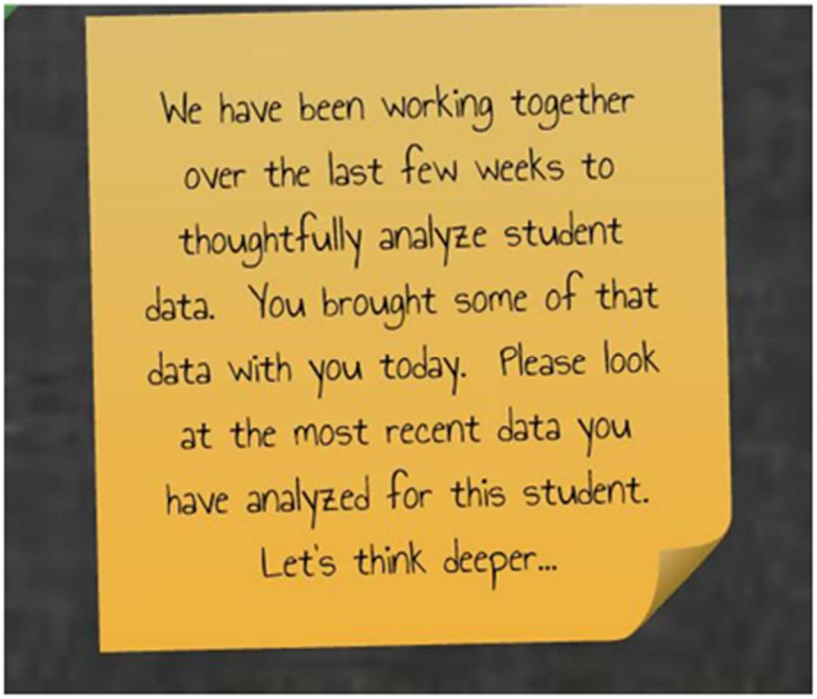


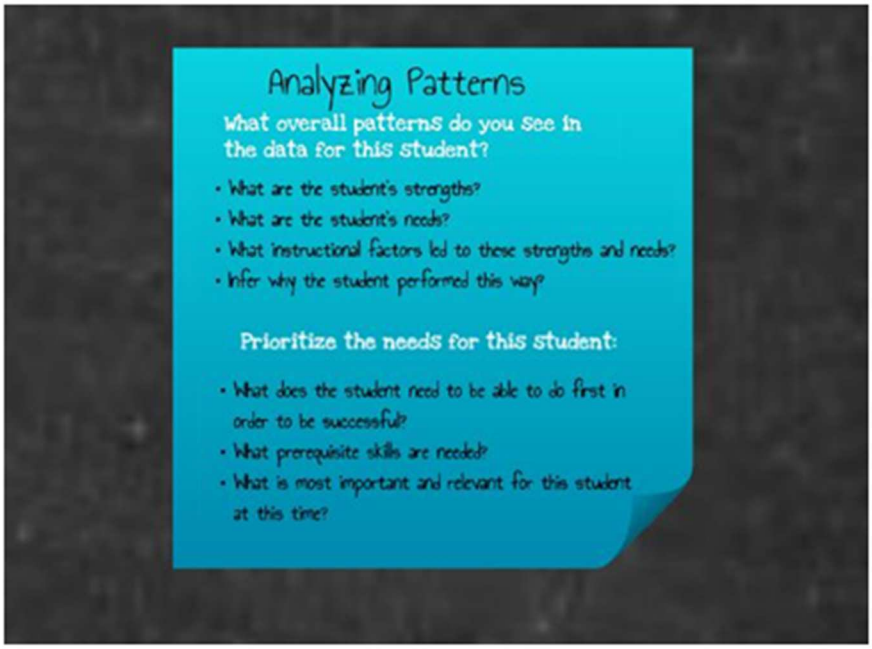

"Should I pull students in one small group or do 1:1 instruction? I feel like I don't know the best approach."

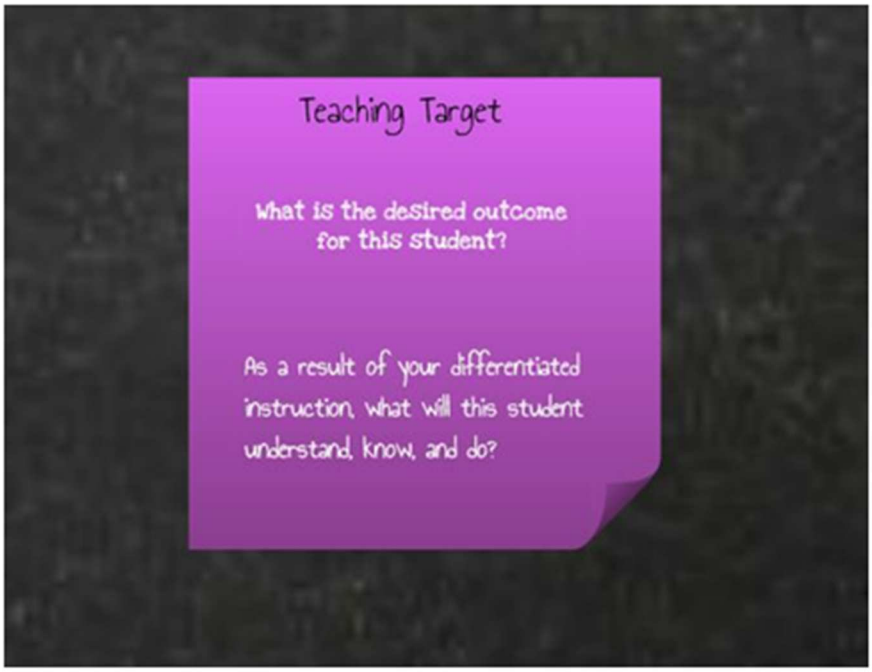

"I feel confident in determining what is needed, but I struggle with the best way to go about teaching it for each individual student."

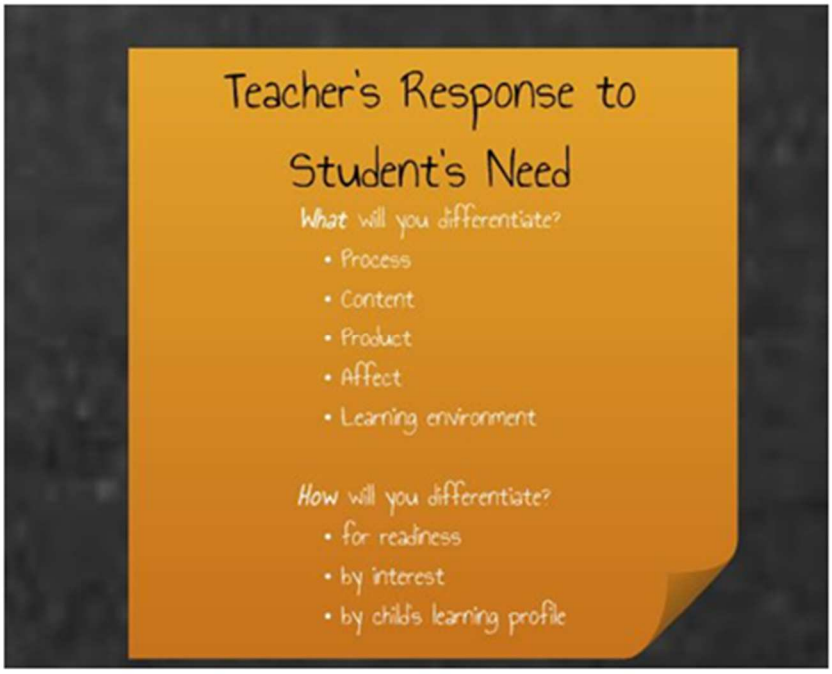

Learning Objectives for today's session
Participants will:
• construct personal meaning of differentiation
• review research based best practice strategies
• look at student data and determine strengths and weaknesses
• collaborate with colleagues to identify differentiated instructional strategies to match student's needs
• identify response indicators to monitor effectiveness of instruction


Differentiation
Differentiated instruction maximizes student growth and individual success by meeting students where they are, and teaching them there. (Huebner, 2010)
Differentiation proposes that we teach, not out of habit or preference, but out of responsiveness to the students we serve. (Tomlinson, 2010)
Differentiation of instruction enables rigorous, engaging, and authentic curricula for ALL students because teachers modify instruction to respond to student readiness, interest, and learning profile. (Ankrum & Bean, 2007)

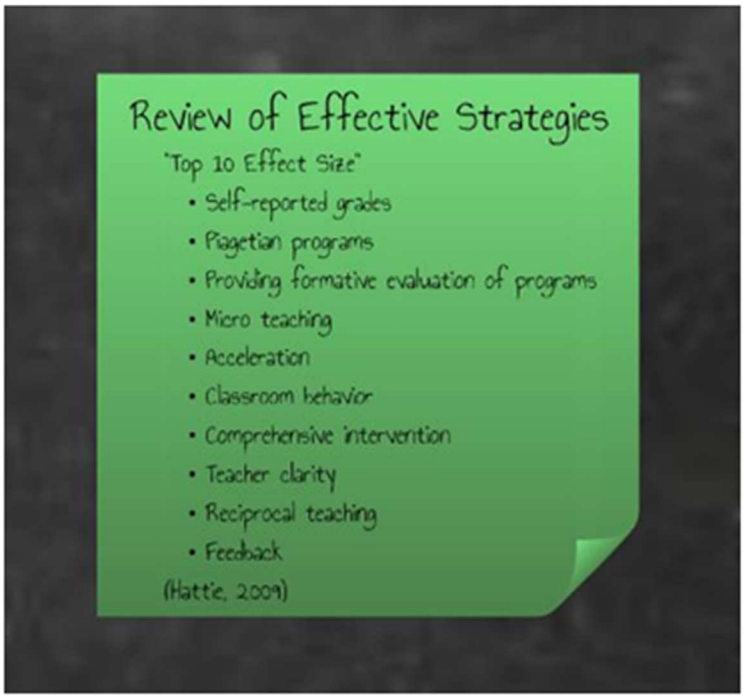

We have been working together over the last few weeks to thoughtfully analyze student data. You brought some of that data with you today. Please look at the most recent data you have analyzed for this student. Let's think deeper...

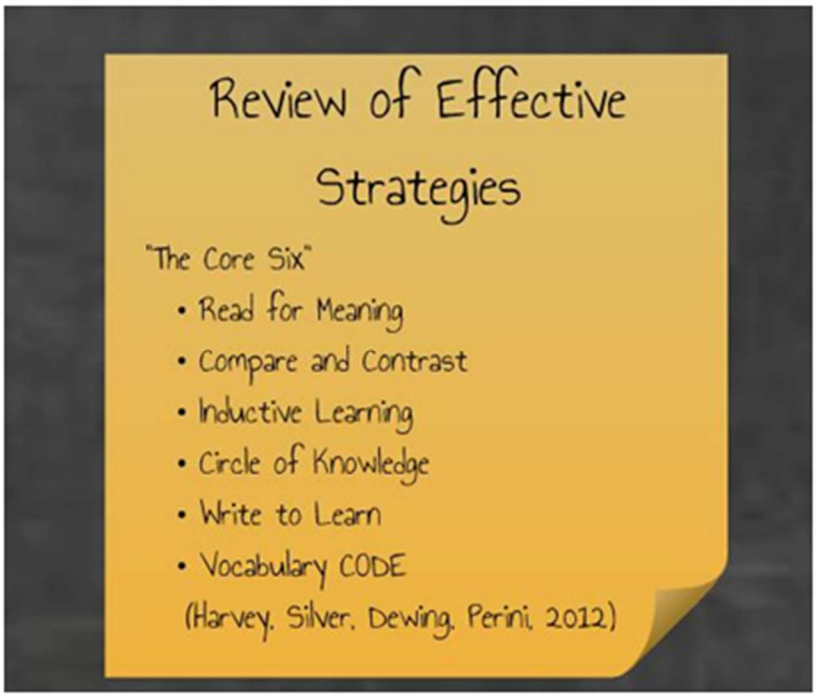

Analyzing Patterns
What overall patterns do you see in the data for this student?
• What are the student's strengths?
• What are the student's needs?
• What instructional factors led to these strengths and needs?
• Infer why the student performed this way?
Prioritize the needs for this student:
• What does the student need to be able to do first in order to be successful?
• What prerequisite skills are needed?
• What is most important and relevant for this student at this time?

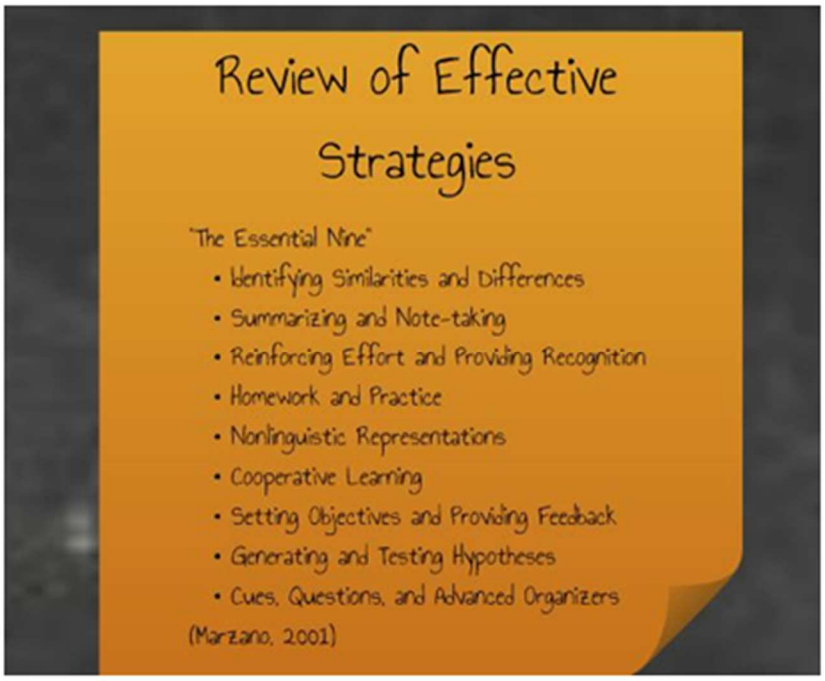

Teaching Target
What is the desired outcome for this student?
As a result of your differentiated instruction, what will this student understand, know, and do?


Teacher's Response to Student's Need
What will you differentiate?
• Process
• Content
• Product
• Affect
• Learning environment
How will you differentiate?
• for readiness
• by interest
• by child's learning profile

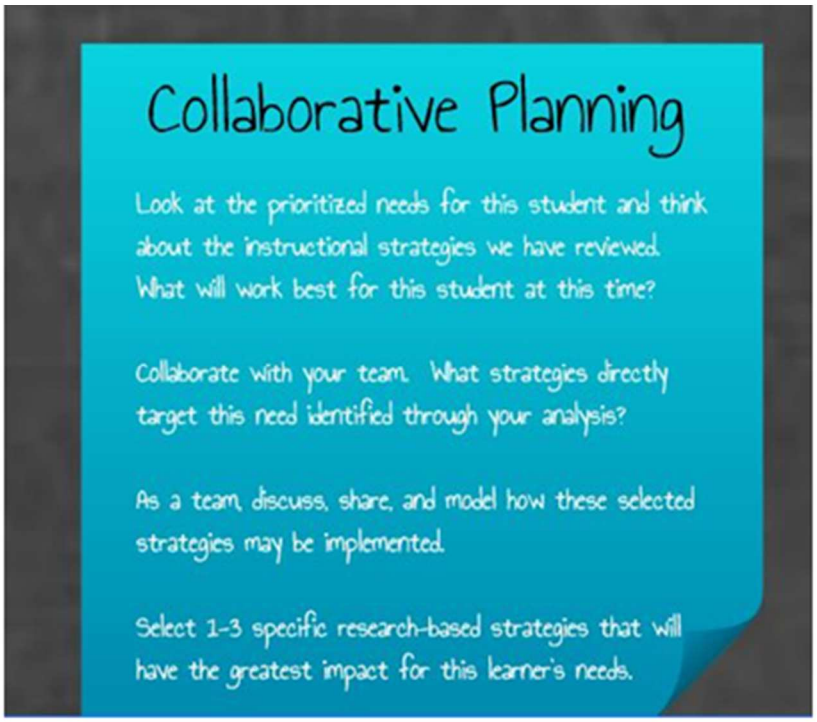

Instructional Grouping for Differentiation
What setting will meet the needs of this student for this instructional goal focus?
• whole group
• small homogeneous group
• small heterogeneous group
• partners
• 1:1 individual instruction


Review of Effective Strategies
"Top 10 Effect Size"
• Self-reported grades
• Piagetian programs
• Providing formative evaluation of programs
• Micro teaching
• Acceleration
• Classroom behavior
• Comprehensive intervention
• Teacher clarity
• Reciprocal teaching
• Feedback
(Hattie, 2009)


Review of Effective Strategies
"The Core Six"
• Read for Meaning
• Compare and Contrast
• Inductive Learning
• Circle of Knowledge
• Write to Learn
• Vocabulary CODE
(Harvey, Silver, Dewing, Perini, 2012)

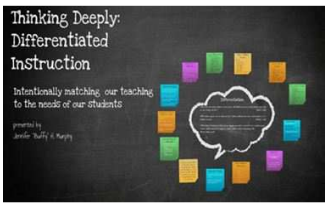

Review of Effective Strategies
"The Essential Nine"
• Identifying Similarities and Differences
• Summarizing and Note-taking
• Reinforcing Effort and Providing Recognition
• Homework and Practice
• Nonlinguistic Representations
• Cooperative Learning
• Setting Objectives and Providing Feedback
• Generating and Testing Hypotheses
• Cues, Questions, and Advanced Organizers
(Marzano, 2001)


Review of Effective Strategies
"Ways of Responding"
• Small group instruction
• Graphic organizers
• Scaffolded reading
• Independent studies
• Learning contracts
• Learning centers
• Intelligence preferences
(Tomlinson, 2010)


Collaborative Planning
Look at the prioritized needs for this student and think about the instructional strategies we have reviewed. What will work best for this student at this time?
Collaborate with your team. What strategies directly target this need identified through your analysis?
As a team, discuss, share, and model how these selected strategies may be implemented.
Select 1-3 specific research-based strategies that will have the greatest impact for this learner's needs.


How will you know if your responsive differentiation is successful?
What is the teacher action or behavior during implementation?
What is the student action or behavior?
What is the anticipated change in student performance if the strategy is implemented?
What evidence will show the success of your differentiation?


Collaborative Planning
As you use this process to differentiate instruction for your students, I am available for continued conversation and collaboration.
I look forward to working with you and your teams to support you as you analyze data and differentiate instruction for responsive teaching.



Professional Development Reflections and Evaluation:

What worked?
What changes would you make?
What questions do you have?

Session 3: Facilitator's Agenda

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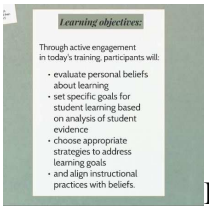
I. 

Introduction of Session: (10 minutes)

- The purpose for this third session of PD training is to provide authentic opportunities to immerse in and engage with literacy best practices and student data in an effort to align beliefs with practice.
- The goal of the training is:
  - To close the gap between teachers' knowledge and application in providing T1 intervention with efficacy in implementation on a consistent basis.
- Pass out handouts of presentation and evaluation exit-slips.

II. 

Learning objectives (5 minutes)

- Through active engagement in today's session, participants will:
  - evaluate personal beliefs about learning
  - set specific goals for student learning based on analysis of student evidence
  - choose appropriate strategies to address learning goals
  - and align instructional practices with beliefs.

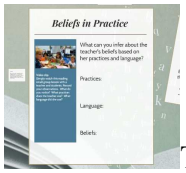
III. Reflect and Respond (30 minutes)

- Participants reflect, respond and pair-share the following:
  - When you hear it's time for reading, what do you think?

- What are the three best three things you've ever read or had read aloud to you?
- What are you currently reading?
- Have you ever liked a book(s) so much that you reread it? If so, what was it or what were they?
- What kinds of things do you like to read? Favorite author or genre?
- What kinds of things do you NOT like to read?
- Do you read any magazines or newspapers?
- What do you do when you finish a book?
- What are you going to read next?

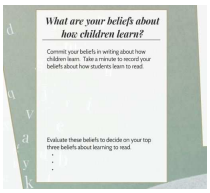
IV. Video clip: (15 minutes)

- Watch the video clip.
- Jot down your noticing.

V. 

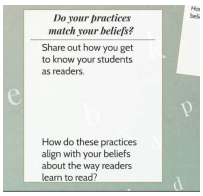
Take Another Look (30 minutes)

- Watch the video again, this time capture the practices and language observed.
- What can you now infer about this teacher's beliefs about learning based on this observation?

VI. 

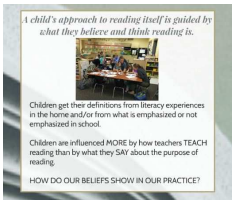
Personal Beliefs on Learning (20 minutes)

- What do you believe about how children learn? Take a few minutes to jot these down.
- Refine these thoughts and identify your top 3 beliefs about how children learn.

VII. 

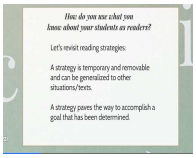
Practices Match Beliefs (30 minutes)

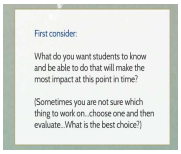
- ❖ How do you get to know your students? Share out how you learn more about your students.
- ❖ Facilitator charts responses in terms of formative/summative or quantitative/qualitative data collection. What do you notice? Respond as a group.
- ❖ Review your top three beliefs. Do these practices "match" and align with your top 3 beliefs? Discuss this as a group.

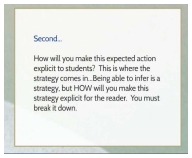
VIII. 

Beliefs in Action (10 minutes)

- ❖ Read the slide and thoughtfully discuss as a table group.

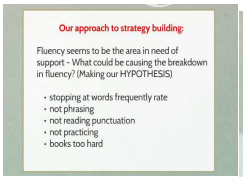
IX. 

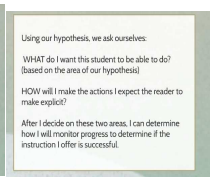




Strategy Review (30 minutes)

- ❖ Review purpose of strategy selection in alignment with beliefs and student needs. Read the three slides and discuss as necessary as we think about specific reading instruction for tier 1 students.

X. 



Strategies and Hypotheses (20 minutes)

- ❖ If fluency is an issue for this reader, let's break down what we know.
- ❖ Next, let us form a hypothesis based on what we know.

XI. 

Unpack the Process (45 minutes)

- ❖ We will break down the reading process to understand better what takes place when decoding unknown text.
- ❖ With a table group, read the emergent text provided.
- ❖ Discuss as a table group how you made meaning of the text written in a foreign text.
- ❖ What did you have to do first?
- ❖ What was most important for you as a reader?

XII. 

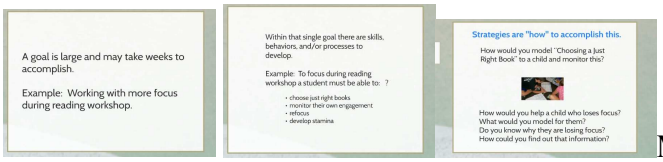
Setting Goals (20 minutes)

- ❖ Now that we understand how to break down the process, let's practice setting goals for readers.
- ❖ Instructional goal setting is based on student evidence as we have analyzed in the last two PD sessions.

XIII. 

Collaborative Application (45 minutes)

- ❖ Use the data and student evidence you brought with you today.
- ❖ With a partner, analyze and set an instructional goal for this reader.

XIV. 

More Practice (30 minutes)

- ❖ Given the following information, what goals would you set for this student?
- ❖ Based on our previous sessions, what strategies would you implement to teach the skills needed to meet this goal?

XV. 

Closure (15 minutes)

- Review initial beliefs about learning. How do your selected strategies match those beliefs?
- Please complete evaluation exit slips.

Session 3 :

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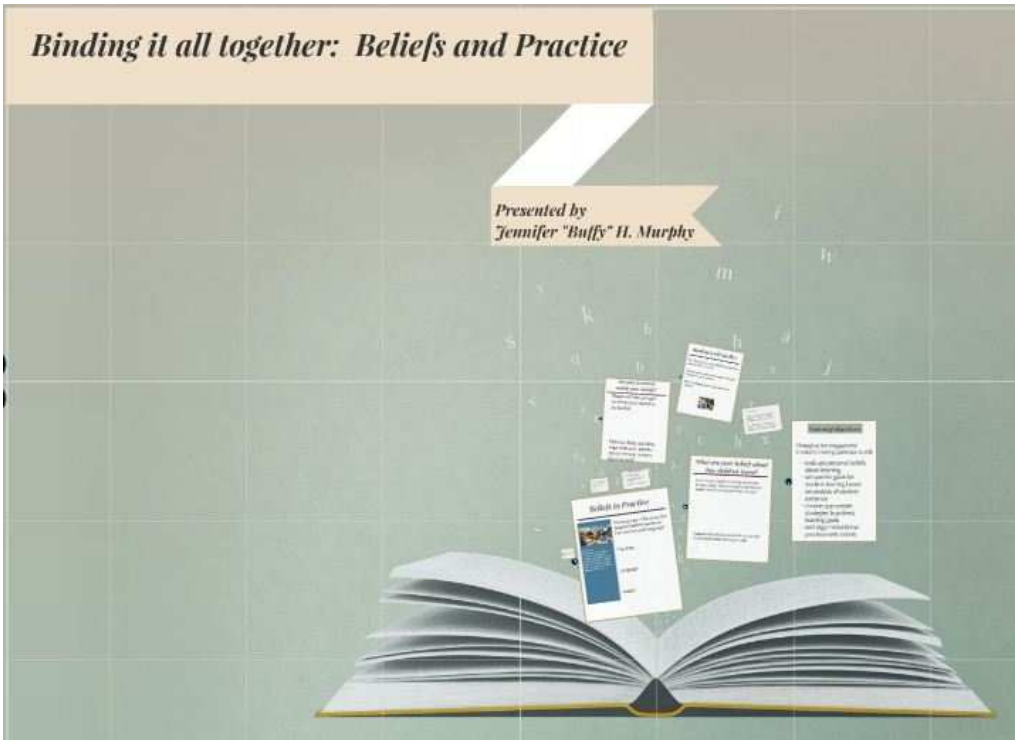
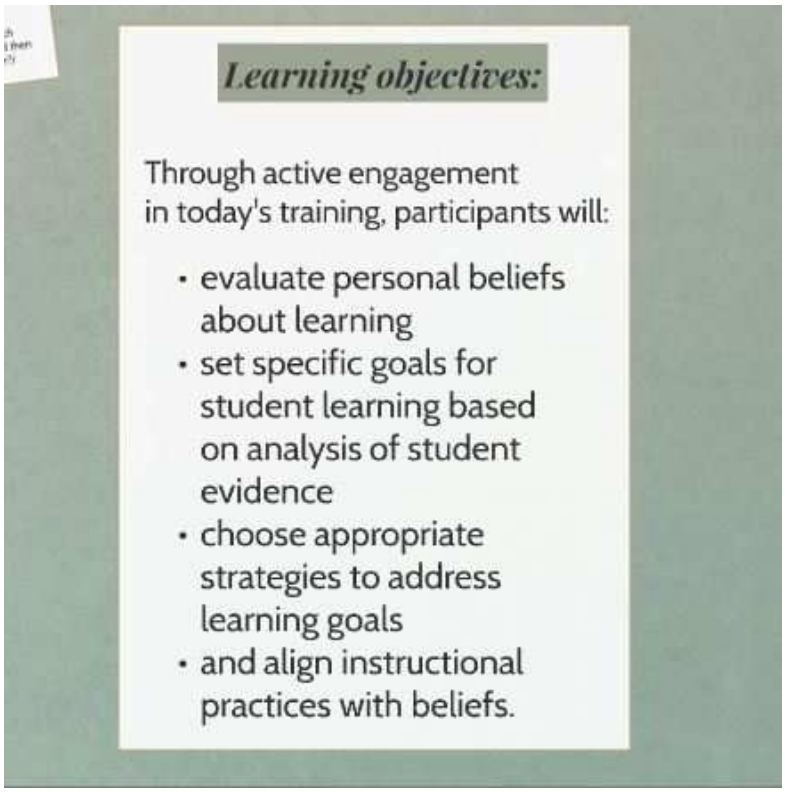
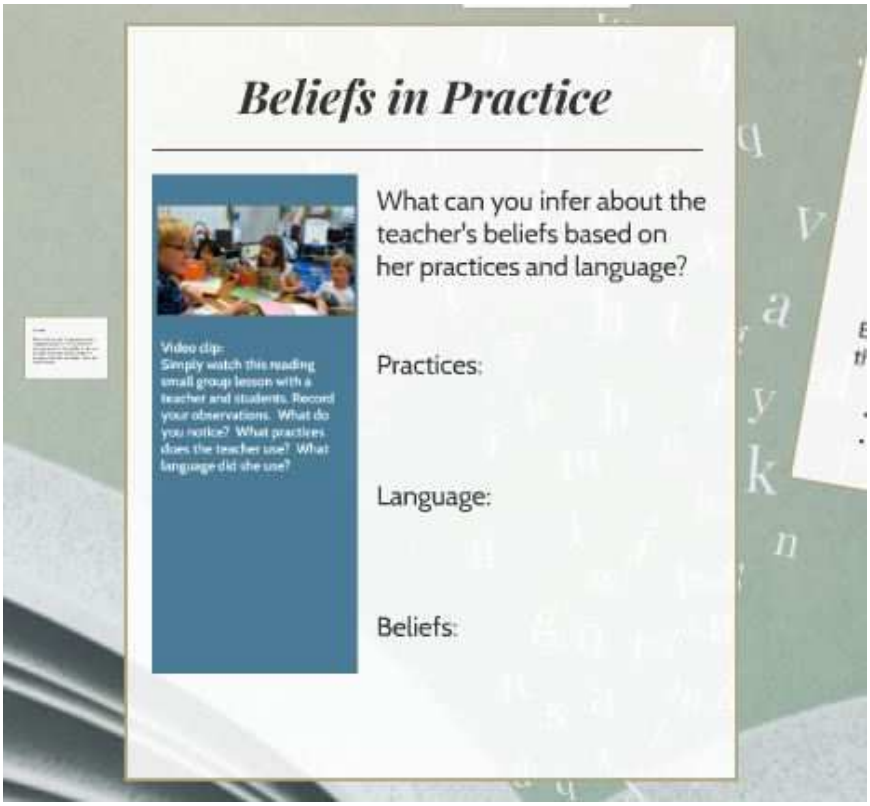
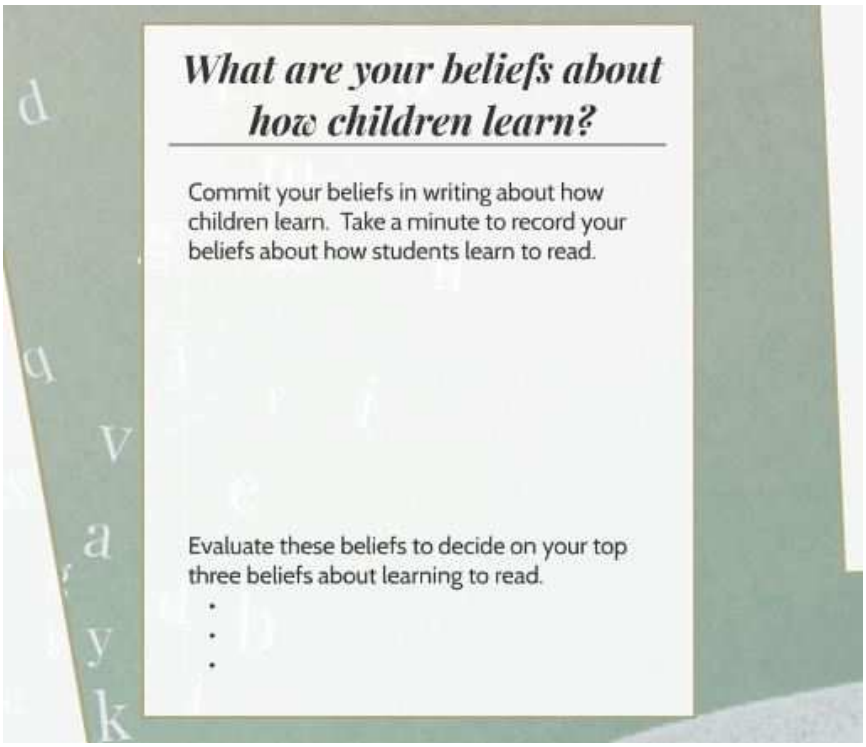
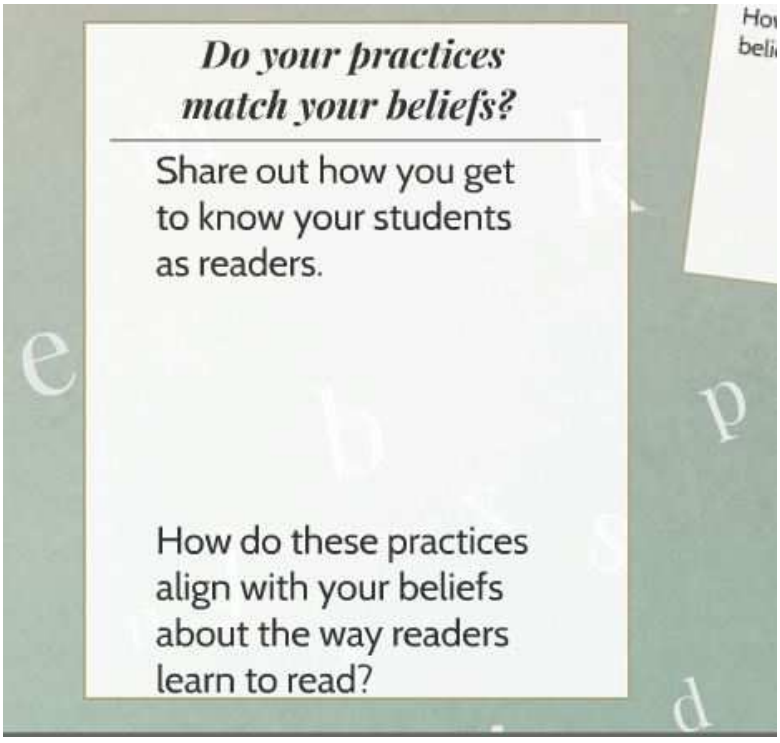



Learning objectives:
Through active engagement in today's training, participants will:
• evaluate personal beliefs about learning
• set specific goals for student learning based on analysis of student evidence
• choose appropriate strategies to address learning goals
• and align instructional practices with beliefs.


Beliefs in Practice
Video clip:
Simply watch this reading small group lesson with a teacher and students. Record your observations. What do you notice? What practices does the teacher use? What language did she use?
What can you infer about the teacher's beliefs based on her practices and language?
Practices:
Language:
Beliefs:


What are your beliefs about how children learn?
Commit your beliefs in writing about how children learn. Take a minute to record your beliefs about how students learn to read.
Evaluate these beliefs to decide on your top three beliefs about learning to read.


Do your practices match your beliefs?
Share out how you get to know your students as readers.
How do these practices align with your beliefs about the way readers learn to read?

A child's approach to reading itself is guided by what they believe and think reading is.

Children get their definitions from literacy experiences in the home and/or from what is emphasized or not emphasized in school.

Children are influenced MORE by how teachers TEACH reading than by what they SAY about the purpose of reading.

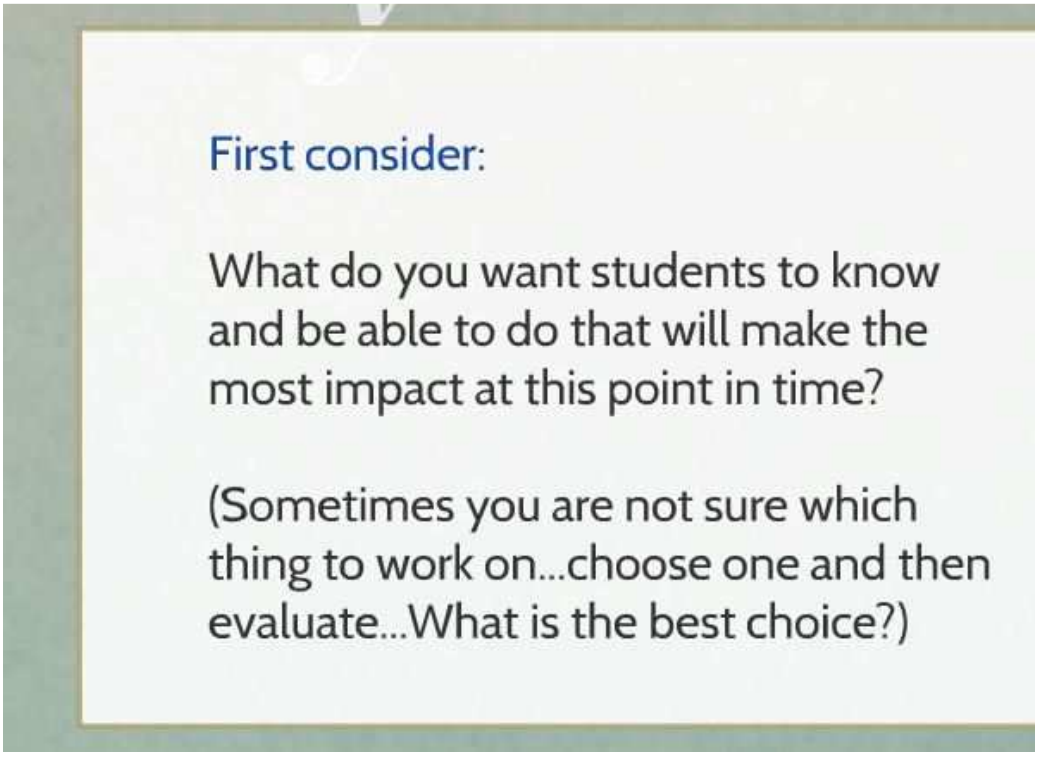
HOW DO OUR BELIEFS SHOW IN OUR PRACTICE?

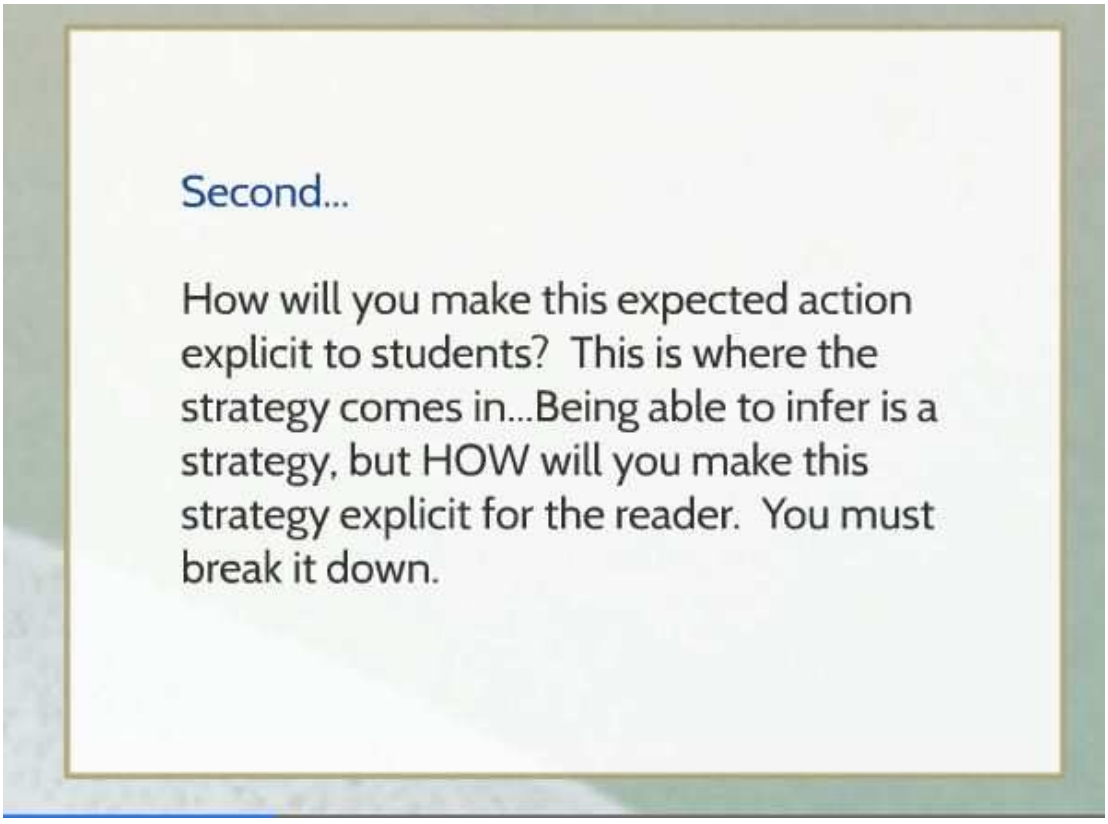
How do you use what you know about your students as readers?

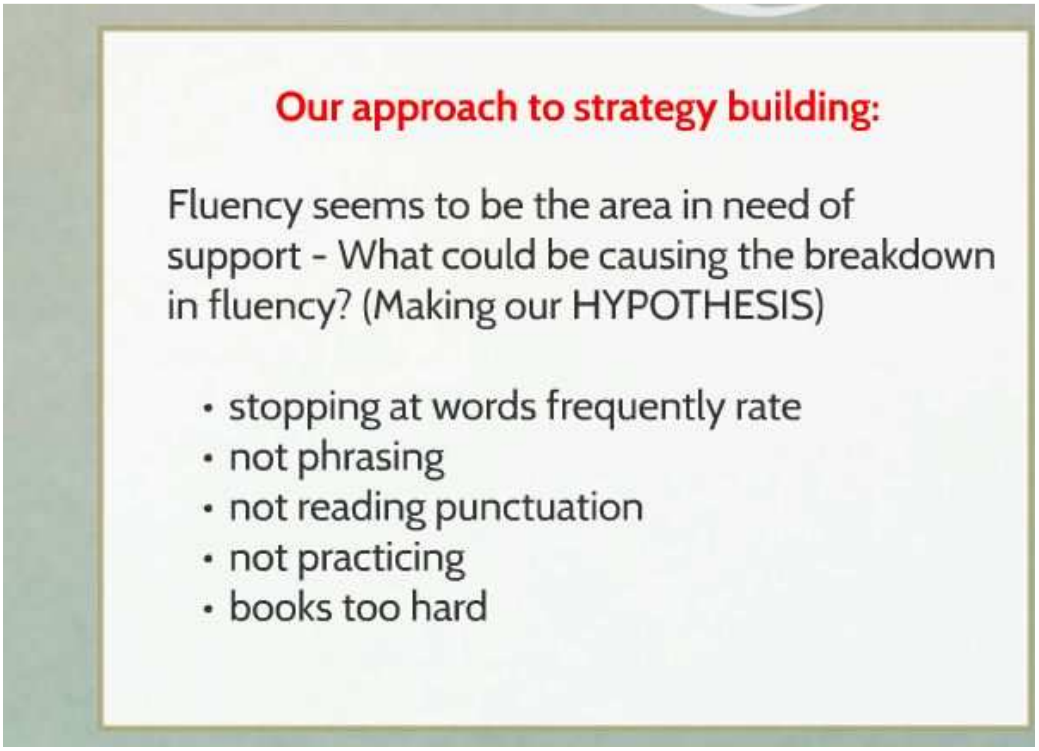
Let's revisit reading strategies:

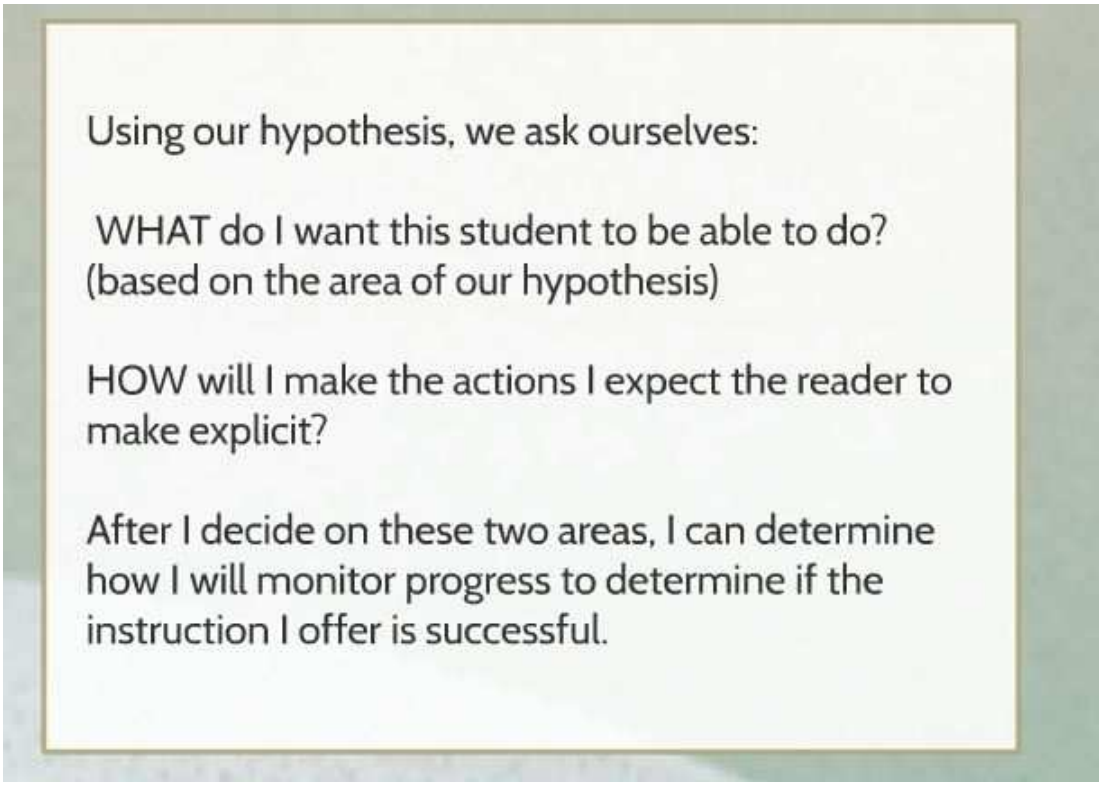
A strategy is temporary and removable and can be generalized to other situations/texts.

A strategy paves the way to accomplish a goal that has been determined.


First consider:
What do you want students to know and be able to do that will make the most impact at this point in time?
(Sometimes you are not sure which thing to work on...choose one and then evaluate...What is the best choice?)


Second...
How will you make this expected action explicit to students? This is where the strategy comes in...Being able to infer is a strategy, but HOW will you make this strategy explicit for the reader. You must break it down.


Our approach to strategy building:
Fluency seems to be the area in need of support - What could be causing the breakdown in fluency? (Making our HYPOTHESIS)
• stopping at words frequently rate
• not phrasing
• not reading punctuation
• not practicing
• books too hard


Using our hypothesis, we ask ourselves:
WHAT do I want this student to be able to do? (based on the area of our hypothesis)
HOW will I make the actions I expect the reader to make explicit?
After I decide on these two areas, I can determine how I will monitor progress to determine if the instruction I offer is successful.

Reading Process

If getting the meaning is key to reading, it is important to know HOW ***we*** make meaning when we read.

Examining our own process:

In groups of 4:
-2 people will work their way through the text.
-2 people will observe the readers and take notes about their process.

**If you are able to speak Spanish, please be one of the observers/note-takers.

Sharing Our Thinking:

Where was your focus as your worked through the text?

- Meaning (What's going on in story?)
- Visual (Did I look for visual similarities?)
- Structure (Did I rely on grammar and how sentences were structured?)

What did you rely on first? Most heavily?

One of our jobs as a teacher of readers is to make our reading actions visible to apprentice readers.

If we don't understand our own process, it is difficult to help the apprentice.

Setting a Goal

I think _____ needs to _____ because I saw _____ when I was looked at (data) and _____ when I looked at (data).

Remember: This is a hypothesis or your best educated guess based on the data.

SO, when setting a goal,

you are looking at multiple artifacts.
you are looking for patterns.

The pattern becomes the goal.

Student Artifacts

Work with a partner to analyze the data and determine strengths and needs for this student.

What does he/she have control of and what needs some additional instruction?

What would YOUR goal be?

What did you notice and decide?

Did you take your analysis deep enough?

A goal is large and may take weeks to accomplish.

Example: Working with more focus during reading workshop.

Within that single goal there are skills, behaviors, and/or processes to develop.

Example: To focus during reading workshop a student must be able to: ?

- choose just right books
- monitor their own engagement
- refocus
- develop stamina

Strategies are "how" to accomplish this.

How would you model "Choosing a Just Right Book" to a child and monitor this?

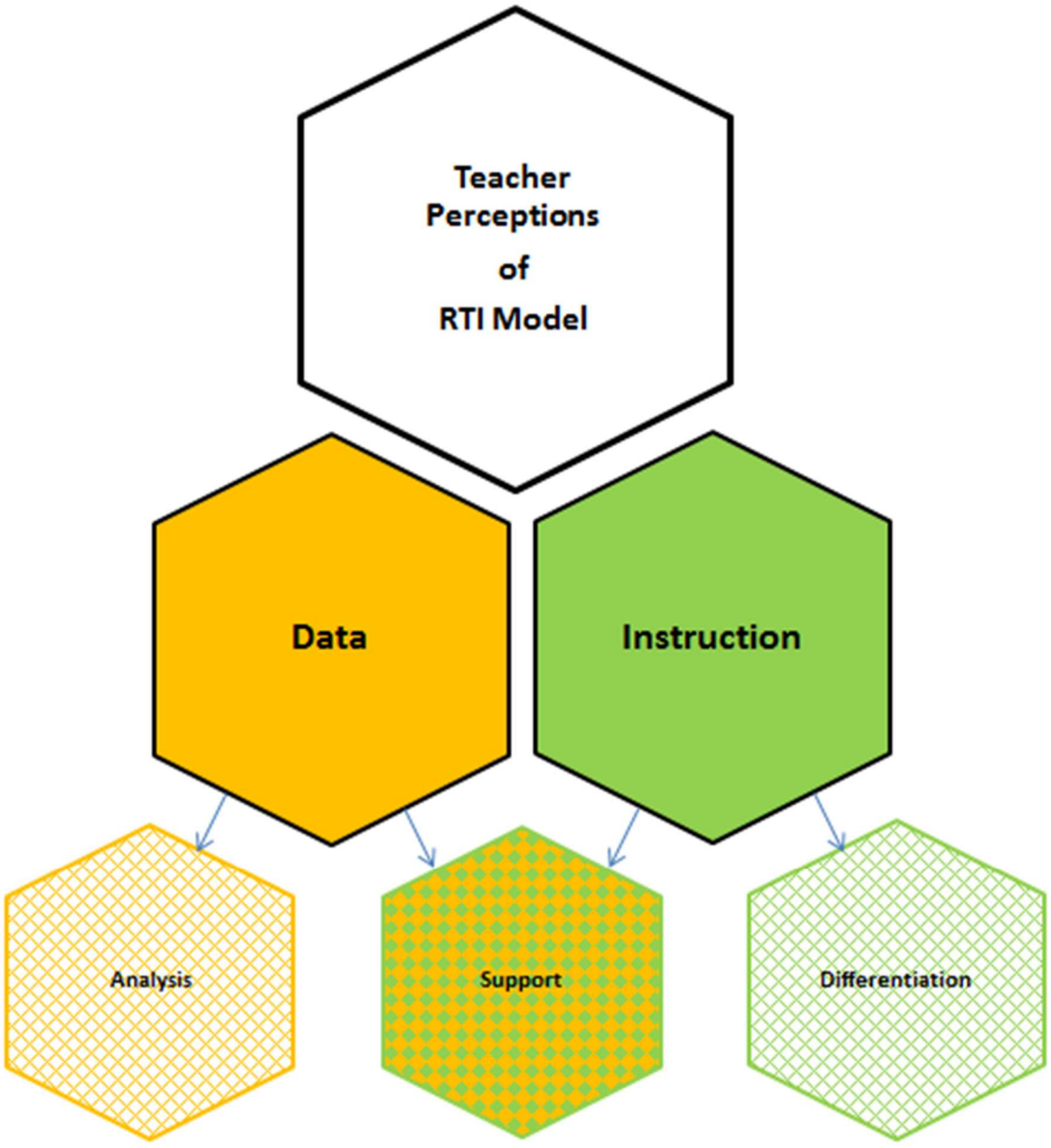
How would you help a child who loses focus?
What would you model for them?
Do you know why they are losing focus?
How could you find out that information?


Binding it all together
Turn back to your top 3 beliefs about how children learn to read.
Look at your selected strategies through the lens of your beliefs.
How do your practices align with your beliefs?

Professional Development Reflections and Evaluation:

What worked?
What changes would you make?
What questions do you have?

Appendix B: Perceptions Analysis Concept Map



Appendix C: Survey Questionnaire

RTI Perceptions and Experiences Survey Questionnaire

1 / 3

1. What is your role at your school?

- General Education Teacher
- Special Education Teacher
- Reading Interventionist
-

Other (please specify)

2. What grade level do you teach?

- Pre-K
- Kindergarten
- 1st grade
- 2nd grade
- 3rd grade
- 4th grade
- 5th grade

Other (please specify)

3. How many years have you been teaching?

- 0-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16-20 years
- 21-25 years
- 26-30 years
- 30 + years

Next

The following questions pertain to your experiences in the RTI process.

4. What tier(s) of the RTI process are you involved with in your current role?

- ☐ Tier 1
- ☐ Tier 2
- ☐ Tier 3a
- ☐ Tier 3b
- ☐ Not applicable

5. How comfortable are you with the RTI process as a whole?

- ☐ Extremely comfortable
- ☐ Comfortable
- ☐ Somewhat comfortable
- ☐ Not very comfortable
- ☐ Not applicable

6. Have you received any of the following training and/or supports specific to Tier 1 interventions?

	Yes	Limited	No
Specific professional development regarding development of Tier 1 interventions	☐	☐	☐
Specific professional development regarding monitoring Tier 1 interventions	☐	☐	☐

	Yes	Limited	No
Resources to assist in development of Tier 1 intervention plans	☐	☐	☐
Resources to assist in monitoring Tier 1 intervention plans	☐	☐	☐
Targeted support from interventionists in development of intervention plans	☐	☐	☐
Targeted support from interventionists in monitoring intervention plans	☐	☐	☐
Collaboration from colleagues in development and monitoring of intervention plans	☐	☐	☐
Planning time for development and monitoring intervention plans	☐	☐	☐

Other (please specify)

7. How confident are you in the following RTI processes of Tier 1 development, implementation, and monitoring?

	Extremely confident	Confident	Somewhat confident	Not very confident	I am not involved
Using data to identify students needing Tier 1 interventions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Setting appropriate instructional goals for Tier 1 interventions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Implementing effective Tier 1 strategies to meet the instructional needs of identified students	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Monitoring responsiveness to Tier 1 interventions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Making decisions regarding a student's movement through the tiers based on responsiveness to intervention	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

8. Overall, how effective do you feel you are in implementing Tier 1 interventions with fidelity?

- Extremely effective
- Effective
- Somewhat effective
- Not very effective
- Not applicable

Prev Next

3 / 3

Please share any additional thoughts you may have at this time.

9. Are there additional supports or resources specific to Tier 1 differentiation that would be helpful in your role in the RTI process?

- Yes
- No
- Do not know

Other (please specify)

10. What additional comments or information would you like to share at this time regarding the RTI process and Tier 1 implementation at your school?

Prev Done

Appendix D: Interview Protocol and Follow-Up Questions

J. Murphy's Interview Guide for Teachers

Questions to ask:	Interviewer's notes:
Explain the RtI process at your school. Explain the data sources used to determine the effectiveness of core instruction at your school. Explain the support that is provided for implementation of modifications to core curriculum. Explain your understanding of how data are used to identify students in need of Tier I differentiation and/or intervention? What is your responsibility in Tier I interventions at your school? How do you develop differentiation strategies for Tier I interventions?	

How do you determine if the selected strategies to be used are effective?	
How do you monitor progress of the Tier I interventions you implement?	
Explain your competence with creating and implementing effective Tier I interventions based on students' needs.	
Explain your motivation to monitor progress of the interventions you implement at the Tier 1 level.	
Explain your level of confidence (extremely confident; somewhat confident; not at all confident) in analyzing data of the interventions you implement to make instructional decisions at the Tier I level.	
Explain the benefits of RtI at your school.	

Explain the challenges of RtI at your school.	
Do teachers perceive that sufficient training on implementing Tier I interventions has been provided? Please explain.	
Please describe the training you received to teach in the RtI model.	
Do you feel that implementation of Tier I interventions could be more effective? Please explain.	
Is there anything else you would like to add in regards to the RtI model at your school?	