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# Response to Intervention Teachers' Perspective of Tier 2 Intervention Fidelity

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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

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Doretha Meissner

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Walden University
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Abstract


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BS, Excelsior College, Albany, New York, 1997



Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Administration Leadership for Teaching and Learning



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Abstract

In an urban Texas school district, teachers and administrators were concerned about students' achievement and the teachers' knowledge and implementation of Response to Intervention (RTI) Tier 2 interventions with fidelity. This study addressed teachers' perceptions of the reliability of the application of Tier 2 interventions at the study site, its influence on student achievement, and the appropriateness of current professional development at the targeted campus. The constructivist concept of how people learn and the implementation theory of scaffolding instruction, meaningful experiences, and active learning provided the framework for this study. The educators provided perspectives of how the quality and frequency of the implementation impact the fidelity of Tier 2 interventions. A total of 15 teachers from Grades 3, 4, and 5, the RTI Coordinator, and administrators at the target campus who each met the criteria of more than 2 years of experience working with the RTI process, RTI training, and progress monitoring were included as participants. Data were gathered from the RTI School Readiness Survey, individual interviews, State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness for math and reading, and the state required campus and district improvement plans. The data were examined using comparative analyses, inductive generalizations, and analytical coding. The results indicated a need for sustained training to improve teacher knowledge of RTI implementation strategies and students' academic performance on grade-level content. This study will promote social change by providing teachers and administrators at the study site information on the RTI process and on the intensive professional development training needed to support student academic success.

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Dedication

I dedicate this doctoral study project to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Lord, you make all things possible in my life. This doctoral project study is also dedicated to my loving and patient husband, Truman. Thank you for providing guidance, direction, and love throughout this journey. This study is also dedicated to my supportive and understanding granddaughter; Shamira Thank you for allowing me the quiet time to dedicate to this study.

## Acknowledgments

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Section 1: The Problem

**Introduction**

Response to Intervention (RTI) is an extensive, in-depth, student-centered framework that integrates assessment and focused instruction on a multitier instructional intervention plan (Benner, Nelson, Stage, & Ralston, 2011; Castillo & Batsche, 2012; Clarke et al., 2014; Ehren, & Ehren, Proly, 2009; Fuchs, Fuchs, & Compton, 2010; Keller-Margulis, 2012; Kupzyk, Daly, Ihlo, & Young, 2012; & U.S. Department of Education, 2011). The principal, as the instructional leader, empowers teachers to be leaders in the RTI process by providing them training, tools to monitor student progress, and a plan of consistent assessments throughout the process. Fullan (2008) recognized effective leaders as those who devote their time constructing the conditions for teachers and teacher leaders to focus on effective instructional practices. Fullan also believed effective leaders gathered data on students' learning both as a method for development and as a basis for external accountability. Throughout the district and campus, leaders facilitate learning, logistics, and longevity of the instructional practices as part of the RTI team.

The qualitative case study was designed to explore teachers' perspectives of the fidelity of Tier 2 interventions at Elementary School E in Effective Independent School District, (EISD) a Central Texas school district. The EISD supports an academic environment that enhances students' development by providing early instructional support through the RTI process to address students' academic challenges in meeting grade level expectations. The goal of this study was to explore and identify teachers'

perspectives of the impact that Tier 2 intervention had on the academic areas of reading and math for third through fifth-grade students. Elementary School E was chosen because of a decline in academic achievement in reading and math for Grade 3, Grade 4, and Grade 5 students. The majority of campuses have implemented RTI with the goal to provide all students with adequate support to achieve grade-level expectations by implementing targeted interventions with fidelity ( Berkley, Bender, Gregg-Peaster, & Sanders, 2009; Clarke et al., 2014; & Kupzk, Daly, Ihlo, & Young, 2012). Harn, Parisi, and Stoolmiller (2013) stated that the presentation of an intervention with fidelity is critical for the successful implementation of research-based practices. On a normal basis, it is implicit that research-based practices implemented as designed with precision will result in enhanced conclusions whereas low fidelity or application will lead to poorer conclusions. Response to Intervention is a multitiered framework that was created to enhance the academic outcome of students through research-based interventions implemented as planned by the developer (Greenfield, Rinaldi, Proctor, & Cardarelli, 2010).

At this time, there is no method or process to check the fidelity of the implementation of Tier 2 intervention in the classroom at the local level (Azano et al., 2011; Foster, 2011; Keller-Margulis, 2012). The purpose of this qualitative case study is to discover teachers' perspectives on the implementation of Tier 2 interventions and to view how the fidelity of Tier 2 interventions impacted students' achievement. According to VanDerHeyden (2011) the principal goal of RTI is to identify and address learning challenges that students are experiencing early on in the learning process. First, it must be

verified that the learning difficulty identified was not connected to other factors such as inadequate instruction, incorrect support methods, or the availability of educational support provided to the students. Eliminating and verifying this information allows the RTI team to focus on the students academic concerns with the knowledge that instructional practices and supports are not factors in the students' challenges in meeting grade level expectations. The elementary school discussed in this study, henceforth identified by the pseudonym Elementary School E, serves elementary students in Pre-K through Grade 5. Elementary School E is a part of the pseudonymous district EISD.

## The Local Problem

In this study I addressed the school and teachers' knowledge and implementation of RTI Tier 2 interventions with fidelity. The low scores reflected an indication of this problem over several years on the state assessment of Grade 3 through Grade 5 students in reading and math. Foster (2011) stated that a school's purpose was to promote learning for all their stakeholders. The primary responsibility of a teacher, principal, professor or parent is to promote learning in others. Fullan (2007) stated that one of the most critical roles of educators is to support learning about learning. Educators are responsible for providing students with a viable instruction that promotes academic growth. Hill, King, Lemons, and Partanen (2012) stated that 30% of studies on RTI intervention found that schools were not implementing interventions with fidelity. The implementation of interventions requires leadership oversight to monitor the organization, the accuracy and timeliness of the implementation of the interventions.  In 2013, 69% of fourth graders and 60% of eighth-graders with disabilities scored below grade level expectations on the

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading test (Solis, Miciak, Vaughn, & Fletcher, 2014). In order for students to receive quality instruction the program must be implemented with fidelity 90% of the time (Harn, Parisi, & StoolMiller, 2013).

This study explored teachers' perceptions of their experiences and influences of the fidelity of implementation, intervention, and training at Elementary School E. Additional areas considered were the staff's perception of the Tier 2 interventions related to the level of challenge or difficulty in implementing the intervention, the frequency and quality that the intervention is implemented, and the academic conditions that may impact or change student's response to the intervention at Elementary School E. Decisions made about the Tier 2 individual students' intervention plan should be based on benchmark assessment data, progress-monitoring data, and performance assessments should include the collaboration of the RTI team (Harn et al., 2013).

Cook and Cook (2011) emphasized the importance of the educator's primary role as an advocate for all learners. Tier 2 interventions are the first level of support that address students' academic concerns outside of the classroom with research-based practices. It is imperative that Tier 2 interventions are implemented as developed to ensure that students' achievement gaps close and that students receive the academic support that allows them to be successful with grade-level concepts with Tier 2 support (Daves & Walker, 2012). In the study I investigated teachers' perspectives on the implementation of Tier 2 interventions, the professional development training received for Tier 2 interventions, and the progress monitoring procedures implemented for Tier 2

interventions at Elementary School E. Educators are daily confronted with the task of differentiating instruction with the goal of building student's capacity to problem solve. The federal mandates of NCLB address the responsibility of educators to provide instructional practices based on student's individual academic needs (Tomlinson, 2014).

## Rationale

**Problem Statement**

This qualitative case study examined teachers' perspectives on how RTI teams at Elementary School E assessed data and students' work, identify research-based interventions, and monitor implementation of the interventions. In this study I focused on teachers' perceptions of the actions taken by classroom teachers during Tier 2 interventions of the RTI process. The EISD had no process in place on the local level to observe, assess or evaluate the consistency, impact, and intensity that Tier 2 interventions have been applied. Two-thirds of states identify specific guidelines by tier (e.g., Kansas, Georgia, Utah, and West Virginia) for the time and frequency designated for the interventions implemented as well as which intervention is used for Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 support (Berkely et al., 2009; Greenwood et al., 2011; Zirkel & Thomas, 2010). Other states (20%), such as Iowa and Louisiana indicated that the level of intensity of interventions should decrease or increase based on the data from the RTI team as well as previous academic instructional practices of support students received in the classroom Tier 1 (Berkely et al., 2009 & Zirkel & Thomas, 2010). Additional educational support, such as time allotted for interventions, should change as students' learning needs have been identified through the RTI process (Pyle, 2011).

Still, other states (13.3%) do not recognize or identify in their state statute any explicit requirements for frequency of intervention (Berkeley et al., 2009; Greenwood et al., 2011; Zirkel & Thomas, 2010). Research-based practices are implemented in (93.3%) of states. Although the majority of states (73.3%) specify that fidelity is an issue to consider, four states had no comments on fidelity (Berkeley et al., 2009; Greenwood et al., 2011; Zirkel & Thomas, 2010). At the campus level in EISD, the use of research-based practices is implemented under the direction and guidance of the RTI team. The RTI team is responsible for gathering data from benchmark assessments, End of Year (EOY) assessments, and students' current work to outline the difficulty students have in academic concepts. The RTI team reviews the information to provide decisions based on data to meet the students learning needs. This study is important to EISD superintendents, campus principals, and teachers who have the ultimate responsibility for providing rich and engaging instruction to address the needs of students who are not successful with Tier 1 support provided in the classroom.

**Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level**

According to the Texas Education Agency (2008), research indicated that a common reason for the unsuccessful implementation of interventions is an absence of fidelity. The success of implementation of an intervention depends on many things: the level of on-going training teachers are provided with the particular program, implementation of all aspects of the program as tested and designed, and continuous monitoring of students' progress to modify and adjust the intervention based on the learners' academic need (Castillo & Batsch 2012; Harn et al., 2013; Kupzyk et al., 2012;

Sansosti, Goss, & Noltemeyer, 2010; Sansosti, Telgrow, & Noltemeyer, 2010; Wanzek & Cavanaugh, 2010). The state, district, and campus in this study recognized that RTI is a whole-school instructional framework intended to improve a student's ability to master grade level content. When using RTI the staff members are instrumental and essential in the shared responsibility of implementing interventions with fidelity to meet students' needs and closing academic gaps (Aarons, 2010; Allington & Walmsley, 2007; Bianco, 2010; Fuchs, Fuchs, & Vaughn, 2014; National Research Center for Learning Disabilities (NRCLD), 2013; Ritchey et al., 2012).

Elementary School E is a Title I school with approximately 560 students. The school's location is in an urban military community in central Texas. Over the past six years, the elementary campus for this study has applied RTI interventions. Hughes and Dexter (2011) stated that the RTI teams are accountable for studying all documentation, evaluating benchmark data and students' work, and recognizing researched-based best practices in accordance with the district's guidelines and expectations. According to Solis, Miciak, Vaughn, and Fletcher (2014) the school and district provide interventions and research-based support to students based on the level of intensity required to meet students' individual needs. The aim of the RTI team is to minimize learning challenges and to provide individual or small group support once challenges are identified to develop students' ability (Wilcox, Ramalho, & Urick, 2013).

Because EISD and Elementary School E have a large number of students who struggle with core subject areas, this study investigated the fidelity of the implementation of the Tier 2 interventions through interviews, surveys, and examining archival data from

the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) testing scores. Adequate and appropriate research-based interventions are essential to address the development, ability, and the needs of students with academic difficulties in reading and math (Allington & Walmsley, 2007; Fuchs et al., 2014; NCRLD, 2013; Ritchey et al., 2012). The Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR), (2013) has identified the reading categories which include (understanding /analysis across genres, understanding/analysis of literary text, and understanding/analysis of an informational text). Elementary School E scores are below EISD and state averages in Grade 3, Grade 4, and Grade 5 in all three categories (see Table 1). The scores from the state assessment align with the scores from the universal screenings, which revealed that the students that receive Tier 2 interventions are not meeting grade level expectations. The averages for the reading categories for EISD and Elementary School E for Grade 3 and Grade 4 ranged from 48% to 98% in the reading categories (See Tables 1 and 3).

The Grade 5 for Elementary School E averages ranges from 71% to 93%, which has shown a continuous decrease over the past couple of years (TAPR, 2014). The data from Table 1 identifies for the campus the number of third, fourth, and fifth-grade students that met the state assessment aligned with readiness, process, and supporting standards aligned to the Texas Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). These data also show the inconsistency in academic growth and progress for Grade 3, Grade 4, and Grade 5 students in math and reading over the past four years. RTI implemented with fidelity should show an increase in scores.

Table 1

*STAAR Reading Assessment Scores 3$^{rd}$, 4$^{th}$, and 5$^{th}$ Grade Elementary E Scores 2012-*

*2015*

STAAR Percent at Phase-in Satisfactory Standard

|  | | 3$^{rd}$ grade | 4$^{th}$ grade | 5$^{th}$ grade |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Reading | 2015 | 68% | 48% | 73% |
| | 2014 | 72% | 71% | 83% |
| | 2013 | 87% | 75% | 93% |
| | 2012 | 58% | 98% | 71% |

Note: Phase III Student Achievement Index Score = 75 (TAPR, 2012; TAPR, 2013; TAPR 2014; TAPR; 2015)

According to the EISD improvement plan, math is identified as a targeted area for district improvement in grades K-12. The district requires that the campus Site Based Decision Making Team (SBDM) should identify measurable goals, data collection decision points, data collection tools, and align progress monitoring with the district benchmark assessments to gauge students' progress. The TAPR (2013) has identified deficiencies in four out of the five reporting categories in math for Grade 3, Grade 4, and Grade 5; these categories include numbers, operations and quantitative reasoning, patterns and algebraic reasoning, measurement, and probability and statistics.

The district and campus averages range from 64% to 67% (See Tables 2 and 4). Based on these data in Table 1 and 2, Elementary School E has not reached the effect size of 1.07 which represents approximately 2 years of academic growth when RTI has been implemented with fidelity (Hattie, 2012). According to TEA officials, mastery of content

is represented by a score of 60 % or better. These data in Table 1 and 2 for reading and math objectives show areas of academic concern with reading and math objectives. These data show that students have not reached academic proficiency, and the data raise the questions concerning the fidelity and consistency of implementation of Tier 2 interventions.

Elementary School E has utilized the RTI process as an intervention tool for the past six years. The District and campus leadership monitor the RTI process and are actively involved in the RTI framework. Administrators have set a goal to implement practices that have an effect size of, .69 or better in instructional practices this year. An effect size is a result, or an effect, a reaction, change in one area brought about by a change in another area. In this case, it would be a change in the method that Tier 2 interventions are implemented which could produce a change in academic growth and closing learning gaps. According to Hattie (2009), RTI implemented with fidelity will result in an effect size of 1.07 of academic growth. The effect size of .40 represents one year of academic growth. RTI, if implemented with fidelity, can provide students with two years of academic growth.

The district and campus leadership team strives to ensure that all decisions are curriculum based and that through professional development and training teachers are providing delivery of expert instruction that is driven by decisions collected from data. TAPR (2013) cites these data in Table 1 and 2 to address some concerns about students' ability to reach grade level expectations in reading and math as well as the difference in the campus averages and the district and state averages. RTI is the tool implemented to

address Tier 2 academic challenges of students in the district and campus. Students that do not master grade level expectations based on data from the STAAR reading and math assessments are placed in RTI to provide additional support to address the objectives, which are not met. If RTI Tier 2 interventions are not implemented with fidelity, the gap in meeting grade level expectations will only increase; this will impact students' readiness level for the next grade level as well as for college.

The study presented the district and campus with data to base future decisions on Tier 2 interventions in addition to providing a means to revisit current practices in the RTI framework. The societal and educational context, which combines high-stakes accountability with the high standards of supporting academic, physical, and emotional needs of students, emphasizes the importance of educators advocating for engaging learning so that students can reach their highest potential (Kupzyk et al., 2012). The RTI process, when implemented with fidelity, provides relevant data that impacts the next level of support based on students demonstrated needs (Greenwood et al., 2011).

Table 2 provides campus data regarding math STAAR results for students in grades three through five for the 2013-2014 academic year. These data indicate the mastery level of students per objective on the STAAR Math Assessment. The students not meeting the student achievement index score of 70 are offered summer school in Grade 3 and Grade 4. Because Grade 5 students fall under the Students Success Initiative (SSI), they are required to attend summer school to receive accelerated instruction and to be reassessed on the STAAR assessment (TAPR, 2013).

The Texas Association of School Boards (TASB, 2012) stated that the SSI applies to students enrolled in Grades 5 and 8 in the subject areas of math and reading. Students in the SSI grades are not advanced to the next grade-level unless they have either passed the STAAR assessment, or the grade-level committee has unanimously agreed to advance the students to the next grade. The purpose of the SSI is to provide students with the instruction and the academic support they need to meet academic goals and objectives that ensure the students success in reading and math. Students who do not pass the first administration of the STAAR assessment are provided an accelerated intervention plan (AIP) to address academic concerns. Students are given three opportunities to pass the STAAR assessment. If students fail to pass the third administration of the STAAR assessment their promotion will be determined through a Grade Placement Committee or SPED Admission. Review and Dismissal (ARD) committee meeting (TASB, 2012).

Table 2

*STAAR Math Assessment Results in 3rd, 4th, and 5th Grade Elementary E 2012-2014*
*STAAR Percent at Phase-in Satisfactory Standard*

|      |      | 3rd grade | 4th grade | 5th grade |
| ---- | ---- | --------- | --------- | --------- |
| Math | 2014 | 70%       | 49%       | 63%       |
|      | 2013 | 49%       | 68%       | 86%       |
|      | 2012 | 58%       | 58%       | 93%       |

Note: Phase III Student Achievement Index Score = 75 (TAPR, 2012, 2013, 2014)

Due to the substantial increase in the level of rigor of the State of Texas Academic Readiness (STAAR) assessment, the Texas Educational Agency (TEA) has incorporated the new standards in phases (TASB, 2012). A moderate change in performance standards provides both rigor and high expectations to prepare students for college readiness upon graduation from high school. The phase-in provides opportunities for districts to align instruction, furnish additional staff training, and reduce academic gaps. An evaluation of Index 1 specifies that for the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school years, the African American, economically disadvantaged, and Special Education (SPED) groups were the lowest performing in all content areas in the district and state scores (EISD Improvement Plan; Elementary E CIP; TAPR, 2012, 2013, 2014). Students in the Grade 3, Grade 4, and Grade 5 at Elementary School E are below the district and state standards in reading, math or both content areas in the African American, economically disadvantaged, and Special Education (SPED) groups. Both the district and the campus administrators have identified interventions for RTI Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions (EISD Improvement Plan; Elementary E CIP; TAPR, 2012, 2013, 2014).

The impact of teaching and learning through the RTI process plays a visible role in providing opportunities for staff to further instructional practices and develop practical approaches to addressing academic challenges. This study explored staff's perspectives on instructional practices as well as procedures and the fidelity of Tier 2 interventions. Staff experiences provided data to assess gaps, monitor students progress, and to examine the professional development training received for Tier 2 interventions. The information gathered may assist the district and campus in gathering authentic and

relevant information to address current instructional practices, possible professional development needs, and methods of progress monitoring data.

**Evidence of the Problem from the Professional Literature**

Response to Intervention (RTI) framework focuses on improving students' attainment of new principles and experiences across the entire curriculum. The national, state, and district levels of education are endeavoring to implement new intervention models that will enhance the learning of all students (Aarons, 2010; Ciullo et al., 2010; Malatesha; 2010; Missett & Foster, 2015). RTI is a systemic and data-driven method for addressing, defining, and determining students' academic or behavior challenges (Brown-Chidsey & Steege, 2005; Fuchs et al., 2014). This qualitative case study involved third, fourth, fifth-grade teachers, and staff members' perceptions of their experiences and training related to RTI as well as the influence on student achievement. The emphasis of RTI is on high-quality general education classroom instruction. According to Bryant (2014) RTI early intervention processes can deter the amount of academic challenges of students by providing early intervention through the RTI process. Friedman (2010) said these data will help in determining whether  learning challenges are connected to students' underachievement,  the result of a learning disability, or other factors, including inadequate instruction by the classroom teacher.

The RTI process requires that staff assess individual student needs, identify goals, monitors student progress, and make databased decisions for teacher instruction and student learning (Ciullo et al., 2016; Cook & Cook, 2011; Dupuis, 2010; Riccomini & Witzel, 2010). Efficient and high-quality core teaching is necessary to provide academic

support to improve the challenges that students have in math and reading (Tomlinson, 2014). Expectations of a student's academic ability potentially will connect directly to the student's understanding and application of the concept. Response to intervention is a multitiered framework that was created to enhance the educational outcome of the learner through research-based interventions (Seedorf, 2014).

In addition to enhancing the educational outcome of the learner through interventions, educators are faced with students who lack initiative, work ethic, and motivation (Bianco, 2010). Hattie (2012) stated that students are off task and feel that the work is not challenging due to instruction that does not address the level of rigor and specificity of the standards (Hattie, 2012; Tomlinson, 2014). A significant number of students have been placed in RTI, but their lack of initiative and motivation are hindering improvement needed to reach grade-level expectations. The RTI process allows educators to ensure that the students deficiency is not due to the quality of the teaching or the level of scaffolding support they are given to move from guided instruction to independent learner (Kupzyk et al., 2012; & Tomlinson, 2014). With academic instructional methods receiving a close examination, the focus on the impact of research-based curricula and teacher instructional practices on student growth and development has increased. The importance of research-based practices should be directed toward understanding and measuring the fidelity of educational practices that best support the learning characteristics of students and interventions implemented with fidelity

 (Azano et al., 2011; Ciullo et al., 2016; Kupzyk et al., 2012). Hattie (2012) said that visible learning pertains to molding education settings where students' learning is evident to teachers; this applies clear expectations of the features that make a visible difference and acknowledge the impact that the learning has on academic growth in the school. Hattie (2012) described the effect size as a technique to compare learning influences on different process over time, between groups or individuals, or on a scale that allows multiple comparisons independent of the original concepts. Teachers' actions do matter, particularly those that teach in an intentional and visible manner.

According to the EISD improvement plan (2013) and the TAPR (2013), curriculum unit assessments, Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI), Scholastic Math Inventory (SMI) data, and STAAR assessment results, the end of year scores decreased in reading and math and did not meet the effect size of 0.40 for one year of academic growth according to state achievement standards. The growth from RTI on Elementary E and across the district did not represent the effect size of 0.40. A small number of campuses are reaching effect size of greater than 0.40; however, there are still students who have been in RTI for multiple years with minimal academic success (TAPR, 2014).

The effect size represents one year of academic growth based on benchmark and state assessments; the academic growth of students on Tier 2 interventions does not exhibit one year of academic growth. The implementation of Tier 2 interventions, according to the original plan and purpose of the RTI process, could close the learning gaps of struggling students by using targeted, intensive interventions (Buffum, Mattos, & Weber, 2009; Fuchs et al., 2014; Vaughn & Denton, 2010). Throughout the United States, the majority of districts and schools have implemented RTI with the aim of

providing students with instruction that supports their academic challenges and closes current gaps of grade level achievement (Burns et al., 2013).

The RTI design was created to heighten students' academic growth and skills by addressing those students with the strongest skills and those students with the weakest skills (Keller-Margulis, 2012). The implementation of RTI interventions with fidelity requires theoretical transparency regarding what needs to be done in addition to the actual implementation in schools to address the educational needs of students (Fuchs et al., 2014; Piasta, McDonald, Connor, Fishman, & Morrison, 2009). Schools and districts throughout the United States are challenged with the task of responding to students' educational needs through the process of response to intervention.

According to the Policy Evaluation and Research Center, the broad disparity in literacy and numeracy skills among school age and adult populations are converging into factors that will affects America's future (Kirsh, Braun, Yamamoto, & Sun, 2007). RTI, if implemented with fidelity, will incorporate interventions with the goal, of enhancing, both student and adult learning. As educators gain insight into the areas of concern connected to Tier 2 interventions this study may empower national, state, district, and school educators to work together to implement, assess, and improve the fidelity of RTI interventions.

The overarching purpose of RTI is to produce a reliable and flexible continuum of educational support to maximize the level of academic development of all students. Avid performance fidelity is required to make sound and informed data-driven decisions about student development (Kotz, 2008; Johnston, 2010; Murakami-Ramalho & Urick, 2013; Seedorf, 2014). Noell (2008) stated that interventions in educational settings are often

applied with low levels of consistency and fidelity in the absence of tools to measure information on student growth. Fidelity of implementation is the act of monitoring whether all elements of the intervention were implemented as originally designed and intended (Harn et al., 2013; Roach & Elliot, 2008; Schulte, Easton & Parker, 2009). When focusing on RTI, there is a need to monitor assessment, instruction, and the fidelity of implementation (Burns, 2013; Keller-Margulis, 2012; Ledford, & Wolery, 2013; Roach & Elliot, 2008). The qualitative case study explored teachers' perspectives on the implementation of Tier 2 interventions and examined how the fidelity of Tier 2 interventions impacted student achievement.

<div align="center">**Definitions**</div>

The definitions that are used in the RTI framework are listed to provide clarity to the readers of the content in the study.

*Adequate yearly progress*: A statewide accountability method directed by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 that calls for each state to confirm that all schools and districts accomplish adequate yearly improvement toward universal student benchmark assessments as defined by states and approved by the U.S. Department of Education (Maleyko & Gawlik, 2011; NCLB, 2001)).

*At-risk students*: Students who fall below the 34th percentile on standardized assessments and struggle with grade-level content (Buffum, Mattos, & Weber, 2010; Kuo, 2014).

*Benchmarks*: The assessments that measure academic skills of students to acquire grade-level standards at a particular time of the year (Fuchs, & Fuchs, 2009).

*Continuum of Instruction*: An instructional framework that describes the intensity of instruction within a tiered intervention system (Azzam, 2007).

*Core instruction*: Standards-based instruction that takes place in the general education classroom and is presented by a general education teacher. It is designed to meet the needs of eighty to ninety percent of all students. The classroom teacher implements research-based instructional strategies through differentiated instruction to address students' individual needs through whole group, small group and independent student work (National Center on Response to Intervention, 2010).

*Differentiated instruction*: Teachers who strive to plan lessons and instruction to ensure that struggling, proficient, advanced, and the in-between learners grow and achieve academic success every day (Tomlinson, 2014).

*Fidelity*: The methods that monitor and improve the precision and reliability of an intervention to ensure it is delivered as intended and that each section of the intervention plan or program is implemented in a similar way (Ledford & Wolery, 2013).

*Fidelity of implementation*: The accurate and consistent delivery of teaching methods according to research-based best practices or developers' instructions. (Cantrell, Almasi, Carter, & Rintamaa, 2013; NCRI, 2010).

*Frequency:* The number of times that students receive instructional support per week to implement an intervention (Fuchs, & Fuchs, 2009).

*Intensity*: The time and quality of instruction provided to students based on the number of students in a group and the level of support required to address the students' needs (Fuchs, & Fuchs, 2009; Greenwood et al., 2011).

*Intervention*: Services which address a student's needs that reflect academic challenges and have gaps in content areas, prior to being tested or identified as a student requiring special education services (Cantrell et al., 2013; NCRI, 2010).

*Progress monitoring*: Tools used to define children's particular instructional needs. These procedures are brief, easy to administer, and typically include alternate forms (Buysse & Peisner-Feinberg, 2013).

*Response to intervention*: Response to intervention is a multitiered system of continuous and essential research-based interventions for learners struggling with grade-level content (Bjorn et al., 2015; Buffum, Mattos, & Weber, 2009).

*Tier 1 (Universal) intervention*: Tier I Interventions are instructional practices presented to all students in the classroom; they do not address students' individual needs (Azzam, 2007; Bjorn et al., 2015; Howard, 2010).

*Tier 2 (Targeted) interventions*: Tier 2 interventions are implemented when assessment displays that a group of students needs extra help, and they are making minimal gains from classroom instruction (Azzam, 2007; Bjorn et al., 2015; Howard, 2010).

*Tier 3 (Intensive) interventions*: Tier 3 interventions are intensive interventions that offer a student highly efficient, meticulous, and explicit instruction in the area of assessed needs (Azzam, 2007; Bjorn et al., 2015; Howard, 2010).

*Universal screening*:  In the framework of an RTI prevention model, universal screening is the first step in detecting the students who are at risk due to learning

difficulties. It is an instrument to address students' academic needs (VanDerHyden & Burns, 2013; Jenkins, Hudson, & Johnson, 2007).

**Significance**

Response to Intervention framework focuses on improving students' attainment of new principles and experiences across the full range of the curriculum. The data from the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) testing scores and data from the Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR), (2013) show areas of the EISD where a small number of campuses are below the standard satisfactory progress, as well as below the district and state averages. These data are significant because they show the students' academic growth for the school year and if the students are showing deficits in math and reading scores, that impacts learning across the curriculum. These data align with the benchmark assessments that identify students below Lexile levels in reading and Quantile levels in math. According to district guidelines, students not responding to Tier I support were placed in RTI immediately after the benchmark assessment in September. Researchers use fidelity to offer evidence that the results obtained are connected to the implementation of the process. The emphasis is on verifying that the fidelity is high (e.g., 90% or higher) to make certain that the intervention was implemented as planned, independent of contextual variables (Azano et al., 2011; Kaderavek & Justice, 2010).

This study explored and evaluated teachers' perspectives at Elementary School E on the fidelity of implementation of Tier 2 interventions. RTI is a national, state, district, and school intervention system aimed at providing educational support to students who require additional support beyond the Tier 1 support given by the classroom teacher.

Although research exists for the component of RTI framework, there remain questions about the inaccurate level of fidelity and inconsistency in application across campuses, districts, and states (Fuchs et al., 2014; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2009; Fuchs, Fuchs, & Vaughn, 2008; Harn et al., 2013; & NCLB, 2001; (Hughes & Dexter, 2011).

 In the public health domain, to maximize intervention effectiveness, a RE-AIM framework is utilized. RE-AIM stands for Reach, Effectiveness, Adoption, Implementation, and Maintenance. The Reach of an intervention identifies the levels of support throughout the framework. Effectiveness refers to the fidelity of the intervention. Adoption addresses the consistency and accuracy of the deliverance of the intervention. Lastly, Maintenance refers to outcomes or the next level of work on the intervention. The RTI framework and the RE-AIM framework both represent the type of support provided at each Tier throughout the framework (Yong and Cheney, 2013). The RTI model listed in Figure 1 shows that the intensity of interventions, change of the size of intervention groups, and the intensity and frequency of progress monitoring changes throughout the framework. The framework provides ongoing support through each tier to adapt the intervention to students' academic needs.

This study examined teacher's perspectives on the implementation of Tier 2 interventions. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) stated that research indicated that the most common cause of failed intervention in the RTI process is a lack of fidelity of implementation. According to Allington and Walmsley (2007), marginal results and lack of success can be attributed to teachers' lack of accountability for the academic success

for low-achieving students. The U.S. Department of Education, 2011a, enables campuses

serving at-risk students to focus on providing additional academic support to students not

meeting grade level expectations. Based on campus benchmark assessments, district

improvement plans, and data from state assessments, students in the district are not

making adequate progress in reading and math (District Improvement Plan, 2013; District

Improvement Plan, 2012; Elementary School E CIP, 2012, 2013; TAPR, 2012, 2013,

2014).

*1-3 students
*Focused and high intensity

1-5%
Tier 3

5-15%
Tier 2

*Targeted prevention of
specific challenges
*Supplemental
*Rapid response
*Continuous Tier I
Interventions
*Small Group (3-5 students)

80-90%
Tier 1

*Classroom support
*All students receive
*Preventive
*Proactive

Response to Intervention Framework

*Figure* 1. ... size of the instructional group and the intensity and frequency of progress monitoring is essential during each Tier of the framework adapted from the RTI Framework Doretha Meissner January 2016.

In 1998, the International Reading Association (IRA) was made aware of the

increasing number of students identified as having a learning disability linked to

difficulty and challenges learning to read. The IRA lobbied to have The Individuals with

Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) changed to stipulate that students should have one

year of intense or expert reading intervention prior to being referred for special education

evaluation (Wilcox, Murakami-Ramaiho & Urick, 2013). Wilcox et al., (2013) stated that

the provision was not endorsed, however; it created a pathway for future legislation. In

2004, IDEA lobbyists were concerned about the procedures used to determine eligibility

and the delay in the ability to access services to build students' capacity. In 2001, the No Child Left Behind Act was developed with the intent on ensuring that all students have access to a high-quality education while narrowing the achievement gap between students from economically disadvantaged environments and their peers. The RTI process addresses students who require additional instructional support, time, and opportunities to successfully meet grade-level expectations but do not require or qualify for special education services (Bjorn et al., 2015; NCRI, 2010).

In 2001, the federal law No Child Let Behind (NCLB) specified that all students are proficient in math and reading in accordance with grade level standards which align with national and state standards at the end of 2014 school year. According to Seedorf (2014) the RTI framework was developed to provide academic support to all students while enforcing standards that emphasize the importance of one year of academic growth for all students. Rankin (2009) recognized RTI as a necessary component in the goal to shift education frameworks in the direction of NCLB.

Speece and Walker (2007) stated that copious information is available on the methods of the RTI model, while minimum information is available on the intervention practices to service students on Tier 2 and Tier 3. When scientifically based instructional strategies are implemented with fidelity, educators can  provide students an enriched and intense program which elevates the quality of instruction while addressing the unique needs of each student (Benner et al., 2011; Gagne & Parks, 2013; Kupzyk, Daly, Ihlo, & Yong, 2012 & Young & Cheney, 2013). Successful RTI implementation irrespective of the model applied depends on well researched and data proven interventions. RTI is

intended to prevent the "wait-to-fail model" (Fletcher, 2011). RTI like differentiated instruction is not a particular approach to instruction but rather a variation of approaches aimed to meet students' individual needs (Harin et al., 2013; Solis et al., 2014; Watts-Taffe et al., 2012). Implementation of fidelity is using a guaranteed and viable curriculum aligned with standards and instructional practices consistently and accurately as originally intended.

The multitiered RTI framework contains three stages of intensity or intervention. Tier 1 is the instructional method that drives this framework; this tier includes high-quality core instruction based on consistency, effectiveness and validity of instruction for all students in the general education classroom. Tier 2 includes research-based interventions of moderate intensity on skills that are guided by data-driven decisions and instruction (Graves, Pyles, Brandon & McIntosh, 2011). The support at this level focuses on scaffolding, modeling, providing numerous hands-on opportunities daily and continuous feedback. Tier 3 includes daily-individualized interventions of increased intensity on a small number of skills for students who display minimal response to Tier 2 interventions (Fuchs et al., 2014; Kupzyk et al., 2012; Ritchey et al., 2012; Sgouros & Walsh, 2012; Vanderheyden, 2011; Yong & Cheney, 2013).

At the campus level, Tier 2 interventions are critical for those students experiencing challenges in the classroom. Quality Tier 2 interventions are essential because the interventions start from the students' zone of proximal development with differentiated instruction to address students' unique needs. Tier 1 interventions are the general classroom instruction and the support that all students receive through direct

teacher instruction and required benchmark assessments. Tier 1 instruction includes teachers adding depth, complexity, remediation, and enrichment based on data-driven decisions for each student. Tier 1 interventions support the academic needs of nearly 80% of all students (Bender & Shores, 2012; Fuchs et al., 2014). Tier 2 interventions are scientific research-based programs, strategies, and procedures designed and employed to target academic challenges or concerns regarding students' performance and success. They also are interventions that supplement and enhance Tier 1 support provided in the classroom (Smetana, 2010; & Yong & Cheney, 2013). Tier 2 interventions focus on students who are not making adequate progress with the Tier 1 support and provide students with additional instruction in a small-group instructional setting that increases the amount of time, duration, and intensity of instruction. Tier 2 interventions include approximately 15% of the student population (Bender & Shores, 2012; Fuchs et al., 2014).

Tier 3 interventions involve high-intensive individualized instruction for students with scheduled opportunities to evaluate students' progress in addition to the core instruction provided to all students (Berkeley et al., 2009; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2009; Watts-Taffe et al., 2012; Yong & Cheney, 2013). Tier 3 intervention aids the needs of approximately 5% of the student population (Bender & Shores, 2012; Clarke et al., 2014; Fuchs et al., 2014). New knowledge or information on teachers' perspectives on Tier 2 interventions is vital to design and implement such intervention in the future. The information that was gathered is critical to ensuring equal access to quality education in the public school system. This study will assist educational leaders, teachers, students,

and parents in determining whether the Tier 2 interventions are implemented with fidelity and whether the teachers are receiving all the resources needed to close achievement gaps in reading and math in EISD.

Elementary School E serves elementary students in Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 5 in a Central Texas school district. The campus and the district have a large quantity of students who struggle with core subject areas. According to the EISD improvement plan (2013) and the TAPR (2013), state assessment data over the past three years revealed that students in the target district are struggling with mastery of content in the core academic areas. Moreover, these data have demonstrated that learning gaps are on the rise. The learning gap represents a higher percentage of students not mastering the standards and objectives that are economically disadvantaged as well as special education students who are not meeting state standards (Maleyo & Gawlick, 2011).

The EISD and the campus leadership have implemented RTI interventions designated by the district. The qualitative case study examined teachers' perspectives on how RTI teams at Elementary School E assess data, student work, identify researched-based interventions and progress monitor the implementation of the intervention. When Tier 1 and Tier 2 support is effective, the number of students requiring Tier 2 support is reduced (Bianco, 2010; Gresham, Beebe-Frankenberger, & Bocian, 2000; Yong & Cheney, 2013). The daily goal of educators is to work together to increase student academic growth and development through teaching and learning. Both teaching and learning involve reassessing current beliefs, conventions, and practices and improving current approaches or methods to improve teacher and student performance (DuFour,

DuFour, Eaker & Karhnek, 2010). Teachers' perspectives on their experiences or challenges with RTI Tier 2 interventions will provide data that can be utilized to inform EISD and campus leadership regarding the fidelity of Tier 2 interventions across the district and campus to improve student performance.

According to Crepeau-Hobson and Sobel (2010) leadership is vital to successful implementation of RTI. Leadership is critical in establishing a district- or campus-level protocol for implementing RTI. When district and campus level leadership does not support RTI, important faculty and staff members including general educators, special educators, and education specialists such as school counselors typically do not support it (Marrs & Little, 2014; Crepeau-Hobson & Bianco, 2010). Buffman, Mattos, and Weber (2009) stated that the RTI process ensures that students receive appropriate interventions at the first signs they need more time and support. The RTI team endeavors to improve student performance and identify the students who need additional intervention (Burns & Vanderheyden, 2006; Fuchs et al., 2008; Haager, Klinger, & Vaughn, 2007).

Effective and high-quality core instruction are essential to address the needs of students with academic challenges in reading and math (Fuchs et al., 2014; Ritchey, Silverman, Montanaro, Speece, & Schatschneider, 2012; Yong & Cheney, 2013). The qualitative case study examined teachers' perspectives on how RTI teams at Elementary School E assess data and student work, identify research-based intervntions, and progress monitor the intervention throughout the process (Berkeley et al., 2009; & Fuchs, & Fuchs, 2009). This study explored the difficulties that teachers and staff members have experienced while maintaining the fidelity of RTI interventions at the campus level. This

study could affect social change by presenting educational leaders and teachers with information that could improve the fidelity of Tier 2 interventions and produce a better understanding of the campus RTI process, design, and implementation of Tier 2 interventions.

## Guiding/Research Question

A qualitative case study method was used to explore teachers' perceptions of the fidelity of Tier 2 interventions. Castillo et al. (2010) stated that many changes in education initiatives fail due to the absence of a cohesive application. This suggests a need to assess the degree that vital components of a multitiered system of support are enforced with long-term support. A qualitative case study design was used based on interpretive techniques, which focus on describing, decoding, translating, and identifying terms with meaning as well as the ability to study things as they exist in their natural setting (Glesne, 2011; Merriam, 2009). A case study design explored staff members' perceptions of the fidelity of Tier 2 interventions at the target campus. Participants for the study consist of Grade 3, Grade 4, and Grade 5 teachers, the RTI Coordinator, and administrators at the campus. Interviews or surveys were held with a representative group of Grade 3, Grade 4, and Grade 5 teachers who are actively implementing the RTI process in their classroom. The educators provided perspectives of how the quality and frequency of the implementation impact the fidelity of Tier 2 interventions.

The following research questions are in alignment with the research problem and purpose. These general, open-ended research questions are presented to bring clarity to the study and, at the same time, continue to be open to what will develop from these data

(Bogden & Biklen, 2011). The overarching questions addressed in this study included the following:

**Research Question 1**

How does staff perceive district/campus RTI professional development has affected their knowledge and skills related to the RTI implementation of Tier 2 interventions?

**Research Question 2**

How does staff perceive the design and implementation fidelity of Tier 2 interventions within the RTI framework?

**Research Question 3**

How does staff perceive Tier 2 interventions support student learning and progress?

**Research Question 4**

How does staff perceive the RTI framework, resources, and supports impact student success at the target site?

## Review of the Literature

### Introduction

The main focus of the proposed study was to explore staff perceptions of the implementation of Tier 2 interventions, study professional development training received, and track the progress of students throughout the RTI journey. According to the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 2004, campuses and districts are required to implement the

essential procedures with the objective that all students are proficient with state standards. The law holds educators accountable for providing every student a high-quality education. Each classroom teacher should implement research-based instruction and interventions to ensure students at all grade levels meet academic standards (Sedorf, 2014).

According to the 2001, NCLB law states are responsible for testing students in grades three through eight in reading and math. America's instructional practices has not been accountable for either ensuring that all students receive a quality education or that students are not left unattended in underachieving schools. The state legislature has increased the testing expectations for all students by raising the standards to ensure that no child slips through the system due to lack of academic support (Greenwood, Bradield, Kaminski, Linas, Carta, & Nylander, 2011). All students are required to be successful on grade level content and skills in reading and math by 2014 (NCLB, 2001). The purpose of the measure is to provide all students a fair and appropriate education in a high-quality learning environment.

Seedorf (2014) stated that a paradigm shift is needed in practice, thinking, and planning regarding RTI and the implementation of a deficit-based model. RTI is defined by Kuo (2014) as a systemic process that observes the development of students for the purpose of providing instructional interventions or educational support to meet the distinctive educational needs of at-risk students. Seedorf (2014) stated that Gifted and Talented (GT) students could benefit if the RTI process changed to providing a data-driven differentiated process that supports all students. This change would allow all

students' needs to be identified and addressed through a tiered level of instructional practices and academic support.

The objective of RTI is to identify and implement interventions that are research-based and implemented with time, frequency, and intensity to support students that struggle with core instruction. The NCLB law is implemented to provide academic support to all students and to ensure that all students regardless of their demographics or economic standing receive a fair an appropriate education. Figure 2 identifies the relationship of NCLB and the RTI framework and the arrows demonstrate the pattern and connection between the two practices.

| NCLB | | RTI |
|---|---|---|
| Testing allows staff and Parents to follow each child's Progress. | | Progress Monitoring |
| Every student should make Substantial academic progress Every year in every class | ⟺ | Universal Screening |
| Expert instructional delivery | ⟺ | Differentiated Instruction |
| Annual testing (Summative) | ⟺ | Unit Assessments (Formative) |
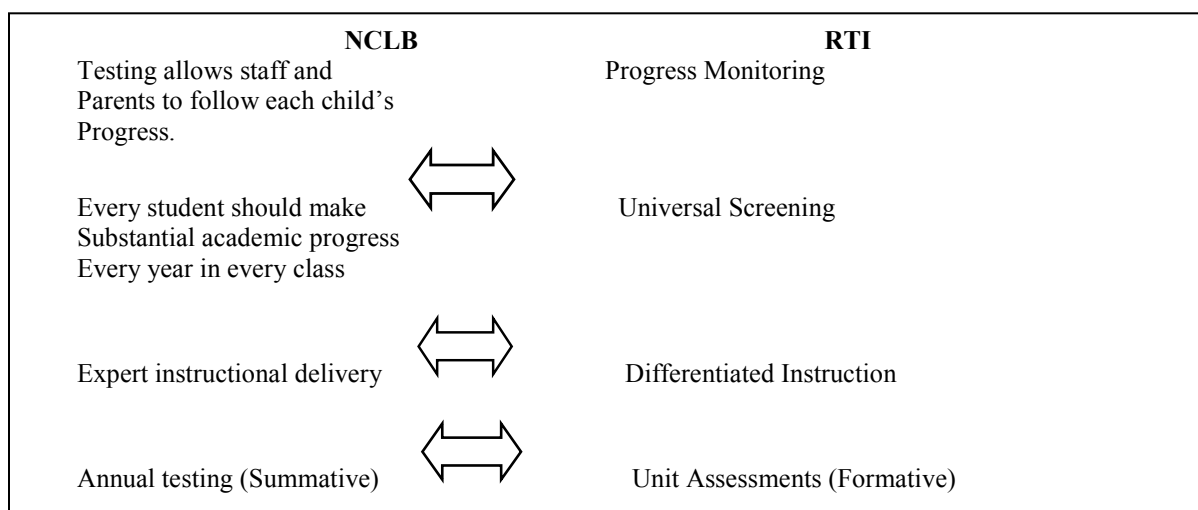
*Figure 2.* NCLB and RTI Factors that Correlate. The chart is showing how NCLB and RTI correlate with the goal of addressing students' academic needs. The two processes implemented to allow all students to receive academic support. Created by Doretha Meissner, June 2014

**Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework that guided this study is the constructivist theory and the implementation science framework that suggests students acquire knowledge and understanding based on previous knowledge, understandings, and skills. According to

Dunst, Raab, and Trivette (2013), the implementation science framework is established to differentiate between implementation and intervention and to describe the difference and similarities between the two practices and how they are connected to fidelity. Fidelity is defined as methods that monitor and improve the precision and reliability of an intervention to ensure it is applied as planned and that each part of the intervention plan or program is delivered in a similar way (Smith, Taylor, & Daunic, 2007). When identifying intervention for students, Vygotsky believed that a structured education would result in the child's intellectual development (Kelley & Goldstein, 2015; Fernandez, Wegerif, Mercer, & Rojas-Drummond, 2015).

Ultanir (2012) stated that Piaget considered learning experiences as a continuous course of action that allows the learner to systematically create and restructure information. Piaget believed that children accomplish particular skills only after they are psychologically mature. As students interact with vital practices, their schemas are altered, broadened, shaped and designed for the practice of adaptation, accommodation, and stability. Kelley and Goldstein (2015) stated that like Piaget, Vygotsky said that learning is a vigorous and productive progression. One significant aspect of Vygotsky's theory is his Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The ZPD supports the significance of teacher support and discourse and its effect on intellectual development.

When identifying intervention for students, Vygotsky believed that a structured education would result in the child's intellectual development (Kelley & Goldstein, 2015). This approach aligns with RTI interventions and the importance of

implementation and delivery of quality instruction to connect prior and new knowledge paths addressing the students' needs, and learning style. Effective teaching requires a dependable, foundational curriculum and well-organized instruction through varied approaches to engaging students (Fuchs et al., 2014; Ritchey et al., 2012; Sgouros & Walsh, 2012; Yong & Cheney, 2013). Teachers in differentiated classrooms accept and act on the premise that they must hold all students to grade-level expectations while providing numerous opportunities for students to explore, collaborate, and share in the learning process (Tomlinson, 2014; Smetana, 2010). The RTI model aligns with the differentiated classroom and the appropriate levels of support needed to address students' academic needs.

The theoretical and conceptual model aligns to the local problem in a manner that confirms the need to further analyze this problem to verify if it is a relevant and current issue impacting student success. Creswell (2014) stated qualitative research allows the researcher to form a multifaceted, complete picture, studies words, reports comprehensive views of participants and implements the study in the participant natural environment. The theoretical research design would not be appropriate for this study because the theoretical design focuses on identifying relationships between a dependent and independent variable in a population.

The theoretical design is generally descriptive (a subject is measured once) which focuses on associations of variables or experimental (subject measured before and after a treatment) and focuses on the causality of variables (Bogden & Biklen, 2011; Gay, Mills,

& Ariasian, 2009). The theoretical research design does not provide the support needed to address the research questions or the expectations of the study to examine the perspectives of staff of the fidelity of the implementation of Tier 2 interventions. Literature from varied viewpoints is included as applicable to the study. The conceptual framework provides structure to the study by determining what information is gathered, as well as, the themes drawn from this data (Creswell, 2014). The fundamental principle of constructivism is that students construct new understanding by enthusiastically constructing upon prior information and experiences (Schnoebelen, 2012). Students build meaning based on their perception and experiences, rather than obtaining meaning straight from outside sources. Constructivists are characterized by acquiring knowledge through the use of rational, insight, or acuity.

The implementation science framework focuses on distinguishing between the fidelity of implementation and demonstrating how the two are theoretically and procedurally similar (Dunst, Trivette, & Raab, 2013). The framework is based on taking into consideration that the fidelity of intervention requires attention to the developers' intent of the practice and fidelity of the techniques used to warrant the utilization of the research-based practice. The implementation framework centers on a clear understanding of the methods, procedures, and circumstances that promote or impede the transfer, adoption, and use of evidence-based intervention practices in the context of typical, everyday settings (Kelly & Goldstein, 2015).

RTI supplies a theoretical framework and pragmatic alternative to assist staff in identifying and implementing research-based practices that address best instructional

practices for reading and math instruction. The constructivist and the implementation

framework will frame the research questions for this study. The essential features of

constructivism and the implementation framework are:

- Learning is described by cognitively engaged learners

- Learning should occur in an academic setting and be structured around
  prior learning objectives or overarching learning concepts

- New learning of concepts is constructed from background knowledge

- New learning should be scaffold, applied and provided feedback

- Self-reflection on the learning process and the learning objectives is a
  critical method of building students' capacity.

The study addressed staff's perspectives of the fidelity of implementation of

Interventions, professional development training received by staff, progress monitoring

of students throughout the framework, and the impact it has on student achievement. The

questions were framed on the premises of the essential characteristics of the

constructivism and the implementation framework. Fernandez, Wegerif, Mercer, and

Rojas-Drummond (2015) discussed an extension of Vygotsky ZPD through the concept

of scaffolding. Scaffolding is a process that educators utilize to gradually release

responsibility to students in their understanding, independence, and the learning process.

The goal is for teachers to provide temporary support that allows students to gain

comprehension skills and acquire new skills that they would not master without

assistance. Ankrum, Generest, and Belcastro (2014) stated that scaffolding helps the

learner close the gap in cognitive ability found in the ZPD. The RTI framework scaffolds

the work by providing high levels of support to the learner that will decrease as the student accomplishes increasingly difficult learning goals independently with tiered support. The objective of RTI is to make the learning of complex or difficult tasks possible that may otherwise be outside of the academic ability of the student and is essential to the tiered support received through the RTI framework. The constructivism and implementation framework supports the importance of implementing interventions with the quality, frequency, and alignment that the developer designed the intervention.

**Response to Intervention Model**

Response to Intervention (RTI) is a model that integrates assessment and focused instruction on a multitiered intervention plan. The RTI team strives to improve student performance and discover which students need additional intervention (Burns & Vanderheyden, 2006; Haager et al., 2007; Fuchs, 2008; Fuchs, & Fuchs, 2009; Fuchs et al., 2014). The RTI method has been promoted nationally as a process to identify academic problems early, provide early intervention, and identify learning disabilities (Berkley, Bender, Peaster, & Saunders, 2009; Fuchs, & Fuchs, 2009; Fuchs et al., 2014; Robinson, Bursuck, & Sinclair, 2013; Vanderheyden, 2011).

The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) understands and acknowledges the impact that RTI can have on the academic achievement of all children. The goal of the RTI framework is to provide a process for educators to identify struggling learners early to create a plan of research-based interventions to assist in filling academic gaps of students (Bryant, 2014). According to CEC (2007) RTI must be a school-wide initiative with special education as an integral part of the process, crossing both general education

and special education in a collaborative manner to identify the educational and behavioral needs of students. The RTI process should not delay the special education referral of a child who exhibits learning challenges. The RTI process addresses students who are struggling in academic areas of English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics (Bryant 2014; Wilson et al., 2015).

The multitiered model is designed as a general education initiative that aligns all information based on information from multiple methods including benchmark assessments, classroom work, unit assessments, and observations (Greenwood et al., (2013). The information gathered would provide staff with data to make informed decisions that are data-driven. The RTI model requires that all interventions from Tier 2 and Tier 3 reflect research-based interventions and research best practices that require continuous progress monitoring by the RTI team.

The RTI team includes multiple teachers, interventionists, administrators, counselors, parents, and curriculum instruction specialist. The primary goal of the RTI team is to intensify students' learning and skills across the full continuum of curriculum as well as students' academic ability. Effective and appropriate research-based interventions are essential to meet the needs of students with academic difficulties in reading and math (Bryant, 2014; Fuchs et al., 2014; Keller-Margulis, 2012; Ritchey et al., 2012). Students have different learning challenges and respond to instruction differently. Keller-Margulis (2012) indicated that essential components for RTI models include multiple levels, research-based instruction, systems-level implementation, and fidelity of interventions. There is no particular method or process that can address the wide-ranging and diverse needs of all students. This study explored teachers perspectives on the

implementation and the quality in which Tier 2 interventions are implemented, the professional development training provided to prepare teachers to present the interventions with fidelity, and the progress monitoring tools that are used to ensure that the data is driving the changes throughout the RTI process.

Buffum, Mattos, and Weber (2009) specified that the RTI process ensured that students receive appropriate interventions at the first signs that they need more time and support. Interventions are planned to build upon each skill, from basic to most rigorous, and from what happens in every classroom for all children (Tier 1) to what happens for individual students who need extremely intensive, directed assistance (Tier 2). The RTI framework provides differentiated instruction and interventions to meet the needs of all students by offering the appropriate level of challenge to help all students reach their learning goals. In a tiered intervention program, benchmark assessment and progress-monitoring data are the established data sources from which the RTI team makes decisions for the student's intervention plan. Otaiba et al. (2014) stated that students are placed in tiers based on their academic performance and in less intensive tiers according to universal screening, assessments, and progress monitoring.

**RTI Tiers**

Tier 1 interventions are researched-based interventions that support students who have challenges with reading, math, and writing in the classroom setting. The primary tier of the RTI framework consists of core instruction presented in a group setting in the general education classroom. The Tier I support will continue until students show signs of inadequate progress as expected according to the instruction. The instructional practices in this tier, if adequately differentiated, will address 80-90% of the students'

needs. Assessments in this tier will occur approximately three to four times a year. The level of intensity, duration, frequency, of the intervention will reflect a short-term progress monitoring which determines movement within the tiers (Clarke et al., 2014; Fuchs et al., 2014; Hill, Seth, Lemon, & Partanen, 2012; Marrs & Little, 2014).

Tier 2 interventions focus on students who are not making adequate progress with Tier 1 interventions. They provide the students with additional instruction in a small-group instructional setting that increases the time and intensity of the instruction. The second tier provides more intensive instruction than the classroom instruction but less than the guidance provided for special education. Students in this tier receive more targeted services and interventions. This instruction is usually in a small group of three to four students or one-to-two students in a setting. The students in Tier 2 will be progress monitored more closely at least bi-weekly, and the intervention could last approximately six to ten weeks (Fuchs et al., 2014; Johnson, 2010).

Tier 3 interventions involve intensive individualized instruction for students who do not respond to Tier 2 interventions in a one-to-one setting. The interventions focus on areas of challenge that prohibit the students from moving forward (Berkeley et al., 2009; & Fuchs & Fuchs, 2009). Howell, Patton, and Deiotte (2008) stated that fidelity and accountability should be linked together in addressing students' needs. Educators have isolated the two points that impact the effectiveness of the fidelity of implementation and accountability. The classroom teacher is responsible for ensuring that instruction is aligned with the curriculum and the standards and that the instructional practices support students learning needs. Bianco, 2010 stated that educators need to study the relationship

between attributes such as instructional practices, curriculum, formative and summative assessments. The performance indicators provide relative data on the task, target, and the goals that impact Tier 2 intervention and the results of the implementation process.

The accountability system must align with the instructional practices to provide students with instruction that addresses the specificity, rigor, and depth needed to meet standards and grade level expectations. The practices in the RTI process are focused more on the documentation of the process than the fidelity of implementation of the interventions. The accountability system required educators to ensure that data-driven decisions are connected to supplementing students' learning in a rich learning environment where students track their thinking and progress. Accountability means aligning instruction and real-world connections to standards to the level of intensity, frequency, and quality that the intervention is implemented. Fidelity and accountability are equal attributes when implemented as developed. The value is in the accuracy and the level of proficiency that Tier 2 interventions are applied, and the strategic and attainable goals define students' success (Bianco, 2010; Keller-Margulis, 2012; Sansosti, Goss, & Noltemeyer, 2011).

**RTI Team**

The RTI team of Elementary School E is responsible for examining multitiered RTI forms, evaluating benchmark, end of unit, summative assessments and student work. The team is also responsible for identifying appropriate research-based interventions for

each student. The interventions focus on individual students' academic needs and provide

classroom teachers with research-based skills to implement proactively. Students are

often misdiagnosed with learning disabilities when the RTI process is not implemented

correctly causing students to move through the tiers rapidly without adequate support

(Mellard, McKnight, & Woods, 2009; Schnoebelen, 2012; Yong & Cheney, 2013). One

of the goals of RTI is to prevent past practices of referring students for special education

testing without performing academic and behavioral interventions to determine if

students might succeed with additional or alternative intervention.

The RTI team includes multiple teachers, special program staff members,

administrators, counselors, parents, and a curriculum instruction specialist. Based on the

groups' knowledge of students' academic needs the team reviews current progress to

identify a plan of action to address each student's academic challenges. The RTI team

identifies research-based practices unique to the students' learning gaps and sets

parameters to improve students performance and identify those students who need

additional intervention (Benner et al., 2011; Burns & Vanderheyden, 2006; Dexter &

Hughes, 2011; Fuchs et al., 2008; Haager et al., 2007; Keller-Margulis, 2012; Pyle

&Vaughn, 2012; Whitten, Esteeves, & Woodow; 2009). The overarching goal of the RTI

team was to ensure that intervention are researched-based, strategic, measurable, and

attainable. Based on information gathered, the team identifies the methods used to

monitor progress or challenges with the intervention plan (NCRI, 2010; Yong & Cheney,

2013).

The primary goal of the RTI team is to deepen students' acquisition of new concepts and skills across the full continuum of both curriculum and students' academic abilities (Ehren et al., 2009; Fuchs et al., 2014; Ritchey et al., 2012; Tran, Sanchez, Arellano, & Swanson, 2011). This study explored teacher perspectives of the difficulties that teachers and staff members experience while providing research-based content strategies to support student learning. The classroom teacher maintains the frequency of implementation and strives to implement interventions with the intended quality as designed by the campus level RTI team. This study enhances awareness of the steps or procedures applied by the homeroom teachers after the RTI team has chosen the interventions based on students' academic needs.

The study explored perceptions of staff application of the RTI procedures, training received for implementation of interventions, and the data-driven decision made to implement interventions with fidelity. Ockerman, Patrikakou, and Feicker Hollenbeck (2015) shared that student growth and development are the driving force when considering the effectiveness of the Tier 2 interventions in the RTI framework. As educators, we strive to match the instructional practices needed for each student's success. Our ultimate goal is to ensure that all students are successful and that they improve their love of learning. Students in the RTI process have the ability to close current learning gaps if the Tier 2 interventions are implemented with fidelity (Zirkel, 2012).

Additionally, Dunn, Airiola, Lo, and Garrison (2013) described data-driven decision-making as an orderly course of action intended to explore existing data sources

within the school, applying outcomes of the analysis to determine who needs  who needs

additional support, remediation, and who needs academic enrichment. According to

Murphy (2015) the purpose of learning is for students to construct meaning of the total

concept as well as individual parts during instruction. Students that can construct their

own meaning, rather than remember and recall information, have an increased rate of

achievement. Marzano (2009) stated that the learning process includes interaction

between the teacher, the students, and the content. Learning should address whole

concepts, not just isolated skills or parts. When students are actively engaged, and

teachers have a good understanding of content, RTI is directly connected to Piaget's

(1985) theory of adaptation and theory of knowing. Students use their background

knowledge to understand and draw meaning of new learning. For students who have

challenges with new learning and lack knowledge and experience, they find it very

difficult to achieve concepts and strategies of the new knowledge (Marzano, 2009;

Piaget, 1985). A large number of students in RTI have challenges with core instruction in

the classroom and need support beyond the Tier 1 support provided by the classroom

teacher.

**Fidelity of Tier 2 Interventions**

The research addresses the need for more information on the fidelity of Tier 2

interventions. Denton (2012) and Fletcher and Vaughn (2010), found that there is a need

for research investigating the conditions under which particular interventions are most

effective as well as which components of the interventions are essential and which are negotiable. Denton (2012) said that there must be empirical research to guide practitioners in the implementation of interventions in an RTI context, including further research on scheduling and duration.

Some critics of RTI have focused on the consideration of implementing the model with fidelity (Berkely et al., 2009; Harn et al., 2013; Hill et al., 2012; Keller-Margulis, 2012; NRCLD, 2013). However, many critical reviews are often discussed in the context of using RTI for determination of eligibility rather than refining students' academic ability. According to Castillo and Batsche (2012), there is extensive research related to the components of RTI, and questions still exist about the loss of fidelity and inconsistency in implementation when these methods are essential to the implementation of RTI with fidelity across campuses, districts, and states.

The challenges of school systems demand that any advancement, regardless of how much evidence is present associated with its use, be applied by following systems change standards (Curtis, Castillo, & Cohen, 2008; Faggella-Luby & Wardell, 2011; Hall & Hord, 2010). Through systemic change the adoption of an innovation does not guarantee that the practice will be implemented with fidelity, a check and balance system is needed to validate the fidelity of implementation of interventions. Systemic change is a vibrant practice that includes constant collaboration and assessment and will provide recommendations for curriculum, instructional practices, campus and state assessments, and professional development (Robinson, Busuck, & Sinclair, 2013). DuFour and Fullan, (2013) stated that to improve instruction and support student learning, educators must use

data to direct and guide professional practice to ensure that students who have academic challenges receive additional time that is intensive, specific, and consistent.

**Tier 2 Intervention**

Tomlinson (2014) declared that differentiation is identifying teaching and learning practices that decide what concepts to teach, recognizes that learning occurs in us rather than to us, and included practices aligned to differentiation  as well as scaffolding instruction toward acquisition of knowledge and skills. Tier 2 interventions are the first level of support outside of the classroom that students receive to address academic needs. In education, the current climate stresses that student achievement and accountability are essential for educational development. Tier 2 interventions represent baseline instruction that teachers provide students in addition to the core instruction received in the classroom (Tier I). This study explored staff members' perceptions of professional development training for RTI and Tier 2 interventions, progress monitoring tools/procedures, and implementation of interventions.

Tier 2 interventions provide students with additional instruction in a smaller group setting, in addition to assessment, feedback, and consistent progress monitoring to modify or adjust current interventions based on the learners' academic needs. It is important to confirm that students in a small-group setting have similar instructional needs and that the teacher has considered how much additional instruction is needed (Kupzyk et al., 2012). Goss and Brown-Chidsey (2012) found that classroom teachers who implement research-based instruction and explicit instruction, progress monitor

students consistently, and group students in small groups based on their instructional needs are likely to enhance the instructional experience.

**Tier 2 Implementation**

Tier 2 interventions represent the first line of support provided to students who need academic support above what is provided in the classroom (Tier I). The implementation of Tier 2 interventions based on how they were developed will provide students access to content, consistency, and the progress monitoring of the interventions conducted by the interventionist (Bender & Shores, 2012; Clarke et al., 2014; Fuchs et al., 2014). Tier 2 Interventions provide academic support to students with learning challenges.

The instructional practice of an effective Tier 2 framework if implemented with fidelity will significantly reduce the number of students who have academic challenges (Bryant, 2014). Some steps that may be taken include constructing and applying databased programs, targeting students learning needs, and including quality core instructional practices that are directed at supplying a more intensive support carried out by qualified and knowledgeable personnel (Kerins, Trotter, & Schoenbrodt, 2011; Myers, Simonsen, & Sugai, 2011; Vaughn & Denton, 2010). The Tier 2 structure also enables classroom teachers and specialists to identify which students may require more intensive Tier 2 intervention. However, because RTI is a framework, and a process not a product, it may be implemented in different ways (Denton, 2012).

**Progress Monitoring**

The progress monitoring section of the RTI framework allows the interventionist to document academic progress and provide teachers with data-driven decisions to address learning gaps (Orosco, & Klinger, 2010). Accordingly with (NCLB) and the Individuals with Disability Education Act (IDEA) legislation, schools have been directed to provide more guidance and direction for early intervention for students experiencing learning challenges. The goal of RTI is to create learning environments where all students can receive high-quality educational support at the onset of learning challenges, which were not addressed, with Tier 1 classroom support (Clarke et al., 2014; & Fuchs et al., 2014). Both laws identify the significance of providing research-based instruction and interventions that assist educators in the application of instructional practices required to initiate improvement in meeting state essential knowledge and skills standards (Dexter & Hughes, 2011).

Progress monitoring provides teachers with information about students' current progress and whether the additional instruction is providing the support those students need. For students participating in Tier 2 instruction, progress data are often collected monthly but can be collected weekly. The time spent in gathering progress data is significant because it provides valuable information to the teacher that allows the teacher to make data-based decisions for the students (Clarke et al., 2014; Goss & Brown-Chidsey, 2012; Stecker, Fuchs, & Fuchs, 2008). Progress monitoring is only effective if the data gathered is used to drive the decisions for the next level of work to address students academic needs.

The progress-monitoring tool is an essential part of the RTI framework. The study collected teachers' perspectives of their experiences utilizing the progress monitoring tool and the fidelity of the implementation throughout the RTI framework. Progress monitoring is a way to provide feedback to the staff and the students while providing an opportunity for staff to self-reflect and to utilize the data to make decisions on the appropriate interventions for students. The progress monitoring procedures are typically short and include proficient assessments to monitor whether or not the student is showing improvement toward meeting grade-level standards (Buffum, Mattos, & Weber, 2009; Clarke et al., 2014).

**Assessment and Decision Making**

The critical components of an RTI framework include assessment, instructional practices, Tier 1 and 2 interventions, and on-going decisions in response to students' needs. The National Research Center on Learning Disabilities stated that fidelity monitoring of RTI includes frequency of monitoring, methods such as universal screening and progress monitoring, and support systems through professional development training and professional learning communities (NRCLD, 2013). Fidelity monitoring, assessment, and decision-making should be planned in both predictable and unpredictable methods. This method would allow educators to collect data that reflect an accurate representation of the fidelity of the intervention and students' academic progress.

Assessment at the basic level includes universal screening that consists of an assessment of every student, often with benchmark assessments like the Scholastic Reading

Inventory (SRI) or Scholastic Math Inventory (SMI). These data are often used to decide which students need intervention to meet grade-level expectations. The implementation and the scoring of benchmark assessments must be done with accuracy to reflect students' academic abilities, training, retraining, and to make decisions about students' instructional level. The fidelity of implementation of benchmark assessments and Tier 2 interventions are critical to setting individual goals and progress monitoring goals for students' success.

**Professional Development Training**

Salpeter (2003**)** said that the pressure to find ways to support teaching and learning through professional development is essential in the current education setting. The job of classroom teachers is to apply the interventions with fidelity to address students' needs. Teacher's knowledge and skills are critical in supporting students through classroom instruction. Tomlinson (2014) stated that good teaching is not an individual achievement, rather it is the result of a collaborative culture that enables teachers to work together to improve students' knowledge beyond what any of them can attain alone. Marzano (2011) stated that the quality of a poor teacher can impact students learning for several years; and if students have a poor teacher for two consecutive years, the students' chances of closing the learning gaps are greater. The importance of quality professional development and exemplary teaching and learning provides staff with a way to implement specific, research-based instructional practices to deepen students understanding of knowledge and skills.

1. Tyke and Stonaker (2007) indicated that teachers learn best in the classroom

   setting in small workshop groups. Exemplary teaching and learning takes place

   through personal interactions. Participating in a collaborative setting where

   teaching and learning are shared among participants motivates staff.

   Communication and learning are best facilitated in small groups. Ferguson (2006)

   maintained that professional development and professional development

   environments, where learning occurs, are more likely to occur with the following

   five conditions. Identify clear expectations that address student's individual

   needs.

2. The objectives are specific, measurable and obtainable.

3. The learning experience is rich with multiple experience and opportunities to

   explore learning.

4. The educational leaders provide resources, training, and opportunities to

   collaborate with peers.

5. The learning environment provides numerous opportunities for student discourse

   and for students to track their learning.

   Professional development is a tool that provides training to increase knowledge and skills, collegiality and communication among teachers, and opportunities for staff to identify tools that they can implement on their campus and grade levels (Fishman et al., 2013). Educational leaders and teachers diligently work to implement professional development training that is best to address students' academic needs. Instructional leaders are seeking more effective and efficient strategies to provide teachers and staff

with tools that allow them to identify more effective and efficient strategies to close the learning gaps in teaching and learning (Mangin & Stoe-Linga, 2011). This study provided staff members' perception of essential information concerning professional development training that focuses more on the framework instead of practical ways to implement the interventions or the actual tools that support the RTI framework to support an increase in student achievement.

**Tier 2 Limitations**

Limitations of the study included  the RTI identification process which focuses on the lowest performing students within a classroom or grade level; does not address gifted students or other students who are not working to their full capacity. In addition, another limitation consisted of a need for more information on how to implement with fidelity research-based practices into clear, concrete, and achievable practices. Additional information should be gathered on the fidelity of the intervention in relation to the student to teacher ratio, length, frequency, and the duration the intervention should be implemented. Essential to RTI intervention is that staff must be knowledgeable of the learning goals and the instructional practices being implemented. The challenge is not just figuring out which intervention to use, but also finding out how to integrate assessment and progress monitoring into the instructional practices. The inconsistency of implementing the intervention with fidelity may limit educators' ability to provide the appropriate intervention to students.

Reaching literature saturation for this study concerning fidelity of Tier 2 interventions, progress monitoring in the RTI process, and professional development

training consisted of a sequence of steps. As a novice researcher, I first studied various professional journals from Walden's library. The next step reviews various meta-analysis on RTI and Tier 2 interventions. Keywords used throughout the review of the literature were Tier 2 interventions, fidelity of instruction, response to intervention, the fidelity of implementation, and lastly STAR assessment. I used the Walden University databases to search for peer-reviewed journal articles and project studies through ProQuest Central related to Tier 2 interventions and fidelity of RTI interventions.

These databases included Education Research Complete, SAGE Premier, and EBSCO, which I used to find the most research on the response to intervention and the fidelity of Tier 2 interventions. Scholarly resources utilized for this study consist of specific reference materials, books, and peer-reviewed articles. The authors of these sources are specialists in their fields of study. I used a copious number of scholarly peer review articles under the education title in the Walden library, and the reference pages from selected articles for my study provided a lot of additional research that addressed my topic.

**Implications**

This study focused on staff perceptions of the fidelity of Tier 2 interventions in assessment, progress monitoring, and professional development training. A possible project direction is professional development training through the professional learning community (PLC) environment. The data gathered from the study addressed existing strengths and weakness of professional development training. The professional development training provides opportunities for educators to identify areas that are

impacting the implementation of Tier 2 interventions with fidelity and other issues or

concerns that have not been addressed, but that are impacting the fidelity of the RTI

framework and the Tier 2 process.

DuFour and Fullan (2013) indicated that PLCs are helpful in developing student

performance for several reasons. First, PLCs ease the use of assessment data to direct

improvement measures. Second, PLCs help staff produce instructional verbal and

academic feedback to student learning needs. Third, PLCs changed the working culture

for teachers so that they all experienced shared accountability and efficacy. The RTI

framework is about a team of educators coming together to share data and information on

a student's educational challenges and through collaboration and input from all members

of the team a collective decision is made on how to address student's needs. The PLC

process, like the RTI process, creates a culture or climate in which teachers are willing to

share their experiences, questions, and instructional knowledge with each other. This

process builds a conducive learning environment where all team members are working

towards the common goal of students' success (DuFour & Fullan, 2013; Hargreaves &

Fullan, 2012).

The PLC process and professional development training allows educators to

reflect and collaborate with peers on their practices and creates numerous opportunities to

develop the knowledge and understanding required to implement interventions with

fidelity (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2011). For an evaluation, a formative and

summative evaluation will be conducted of the professional development training. The

district administrators will decide the educational factors that can impact the existing

practices and the fidelity of the Tier 2 interventions (Creswell, 2014). In summary, the study addressed staff perceptions of their experiences and training.

**Summary**

Schools utilize RTI to address the problems of students not meeting grade level expectations based on benchmark assessments. RTI is a three-tiered framework that places students in groups based on their particular needs. Student's needs are addressed through research-based instruction, and continuous progress monitoring and assessment are conducted to provide feedback to staff. This study collected staff  perspectives of their experiences on the implementation of the fidelity of Tier 2 interventions and the components (training, progress monitoring, and assessment) that are essential to the effectiveness of the framework. The key to the fidelity of Tier 2 implementation will be the interpretation of the data as well as transferring the data into information concerning the next level of work to meet students' academic needs (Clarke et al., 2014; Fuchs, Fuchs & Vaughn, 2014; Sgouros, & Walsh, 2012).

RTI requires the practice of data-driven instruction an educational practice that allows teachers to use results of formative and summative assessments to evaluate students' understanding of the content and students' ability to transfer the content to the next level of work. The progress-monitoring tool is imperative because assessments provide basic information but do not reveal students' progress in response to the interventions (Ysseldyke, Burns, Scholin, & Parker, 2010). Educators should have numerous opportunities to address concerns about students' development with the RTI team as well as during the PLC time allocated at the campus (Ysseldyke et al., 2010). The

dialogue and discourse shared during the RTI process, and PLCs cannot be applied in one selected classroom. Rather, the data gathered from staff members' experiences and understanding of the RTI process may provide relevant information for the campus and district to increase students' acquisition of new academic concepts and students' abilities across curriculum areas (Ehren, 2013; Fuchs et al., 2014; Ritchey et al., 2012; Yong & Cheney, 2013).

Section I includes a summary of the research literature related to Tier 2 interventions in the RTI framework. The conceptual framework and the problem address that students in Grade 3, Grade 4, and Grade 5 have shown a decrease in achievement in reading and math. The purpose of the study was to gather teachers' perceptions of the fidelity of Tier 2 interventions at Elementary School E. The remaining four sections of the study included collecting data on staff perceptions of the fidelity of Tier 2 interventions, assessments, progress monitoring, and teacher training and the impact on student achievement. Section 2 will review the description and justification of the research method, participant selection, and data collection procedures. Section 2 will also provide the results of the study, and section 3 will offer a summary of the findings, implications, and impact on social change as well as recommendations for future research.

Section 2: The Methodology

**Introduction**

The district and campus have identified research-based interventions that will be implemented at Tier 2 of the RTI framework. According to the legal framework for the Child-Centered Special Education Process, schools are directed to place more emphasis on addressing problems earlier in the learning process to identify, apply, and create academic support that is based on students' academic needs and challenges. This qualitative case study research design focused on gaining a better understanding of teachers' perspectives of the fidelity of Tier 2 intervention at the targeted campus. The RTI team strives to provide high-quality, research-based instruction and interventions, and to hold educators accountable for implementing tools or support needed to ensure all students meet grade-level standards (Lenski, 2011). The purpose of this study was to learn from the teachers in Elementary School E regarding their perspectives of the RTI process. The areas addressed include implementation, professional development training, progress monitoring, as well as their perception of how the fidelity of Tier 2 interventions on their campus impacts students' academic development.

A qualitative case study was selected as the methodology because it provides an opportunity to explore relevant circumstances and situations through staff members' perspectives and viewpoints in their natural setting (Bogden & Biklen, 2011). Creswell (2014) indicated that a "case study is a comprehensive study of a bounded system centered on extensive data collection; the case study is modified based on time, location,

and physical boundaries". The circumstances studied pertain to a particular school district and campus that could be generalized to other districts with comparable cultures and populations.

## Research Design and Approach

The purpose of this bounded collective case study was to provide a descriptive view of teachers' perception of the fidelity of Tier 2 interventions and an unobtrusive view of staff members' perception of the procedures in place at the campus and district level. Additionally, questions pertaining to staff training, teachers' preparation to implement Tier 2 interventions, and methods to progress monitor students' progress throughout the RTI process provided clarification of practices and rendered data that can be utilized by the campus to modify or adjust practices based on the data. After the collection and analysis of the data, the findings were aligned to the research questions and sub questions within the study. Throughout the interviews and the RTI survey, the participants shared their experiences and provided examples to support their responses. The arrangement of participants' experiences along with the use of direct quotes in the subsequent sections contributed to the descriptive details that are aligned to each research question. As a result, the findings were organized by research questions.

The data obtained from this qualitative case study provided answers to the guiding research questions in this study which include:

**Research Question 1**

How does staff perceive district/campus RTI professional development has affected their knowledge and skills related to the RTI implementation of Tier 2 interventions?

**Research Question 2**

How does staff perceive the design and implementation fidelity of Tier 2 interventions within the RTI framework?

**Research Question 3**

How does staff perceive Tier 2 interventions support student learning and progress?

**Research Question 4**

How does staff perceive the RTI framework, resources, and supports impact student success at the target site?

The study design and approach for this qualitative collective study included using multiple homogenous cases to explore the principal focus of the study. According to Yin (2014), the sections of the case study provide data based on: (a) the problem and questions, (b) its plans and proposals, (c) its unit of study, (d) the reasoning connecting the data to the plans, and (e) the conditions for understanding the outcomes. To ensure a collective case study approach was the correct choice for the study. I reviewed the phenomenological, grounded theory, ethnography, action research, and case study.

A case study design was the correct choice because it provides numerous opportunities to collect relevant data in the natural setting, discuss the process and

practices with active participants in the field, and it clarified some misconceptions that are in place at the campus and district level concerning the fidelity of Tier 2 interventions (Bogden & Biklen, 2011; Creswell, 2014; Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010; Maxwell, 2013; McMillian, 2012). The narrative and ethnographic research is not appropriate for this study because it is neither telling a person's story nor examining multiple perspectives of an issue. The ethnographic research study focuses on a cultural pattern that is not addressed in this study. The case study design is appropriate because it explores data over a period of time and involved multiple sources of information. To align with the chosen design and approach, teachers (Grade 3 – Grade 5) were purposefully chosen to participate in this study.

## Participants

### Population and Sampling Procedures

The setting for this qualitative case study is EISD, a public school district, in Central Texas. The district has 33 elementary schools (Pre-K - Grade 5), 13 middle schools (Grade 6- Grade 8), 4 high schools (Grade 9 – Grade 12), and two alternative schools, the EISD Career Center and several specialized campuses. The district employs approximately 6200 staff members. The district's population is approximately 43,000 students. The target sample for this study, Elementary School E has a population of approximately 570 students (EISD, 2013; TAPR, 2013). Elementary School E represents similar demographics and populations of approximately 30% of the schools in the EISD (Elementary E CIP, 2013; EISD, 2013; TAPR, 2013). Although 21 staff members were invited to participate in the study, the teachers who agreed to participate determined the

number of participants. The number of staff members who participated in the study was approximately 71%, which was equivalent to 15 staff members. Creswell (2014) shared that qualitative research only requires a small number of cases that enables the researcher to collect extensive, rich, descriptive information in their natural setting or environment.

There are some variations or differences that exist within the population for Elementary School E. For example, the campus has a high economically disadvantaged population; it is a Title I campus and 91% of students identified as Title I (See Table 3 and 4). The mobility rate of students is 41% due to family decisions to relocate rather than to military transfers. The campus has three shelters that feed into the campus, and a large percentage of the campus students' population is from single parent homes. Both the mobility rate and the attendance have impacted the academic gaps of students (Elementary E CIP, 2013).

Table 3

*2013-2014 Demographics*

| Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity | Campus | District |
| --- | --- | --- |
| African American | 40% | 33% |
| Hispanic | 29% | 28% |
| White | 20% | 27% |
| American Indian | 1% | 1% |
| Asian | 1% | 3% |
| Pacific Islander | 3% | 1% |
| Two or More Races | 6% | 7% |

*Note:* Demographics of Elementary School E and EISD.

Table 4

Campus and District Enrollment

| Enrollment by Student Group | Campus | District |
|---|---|---|
| Economically Disadvantaged | 91% | 56% |
| English Language Learners | 13% | 8% |
| Special Education | 13% | 11% |
| Mobility Rate | 41% | 30% |

*Note:* Campus and District enrollment by student groups

**Participant selection.** The study consisted of nine Grade 3, Grade 4, and Grade 5 teachers, the RTI coordinator, a Curriculum Instruction Specialist, a Counselor, Special Education teacher, Dyslexia teacher, and the English Second Language teacher, actively involved in the RTI process. Yin (2014) indicated that homogeneous samples are selected due to the similarity of characteristics of particular interest of the researcher. The participants are a representative, homogenous sample of teachers in grades three through five, along with key staff members, in the RTI process. The participants for the study were nine teachers from the third, fourth, and fifth-grade classrooms from Elementary School E in EISD. Participants also included the counselor, curriculum instruction specialist, administrators, and special program teachers. The 15 staff members were selected for this study using purposeful sampling. The primary criteria for selecting participants were as follows: (a) played an active role in the RTI process, (b) possessed

knowledge and experience in the RTI process (professional development and professional

learning communities) as well as interactions and expertise of Tier 2 interventions, (c)

considered part of the RTI team, and (d) possessed at least two years of experience with

the RTI process. The homogenous sample is utilized when the goal of the research is to

understand and identify thoroughly the similarities and different characteristics of a

particular group.

**Participant justification.** Those invited to participate in the study were educators

who are actively participating in the RTI framework. Teachers at the campus level shared

their viewpoint and experiences of the value of the RTI program. The sample size was

kept small to get a deeper understanding through inquiry of the participants' perspectives.

The goal of the sampling was to collect in-depth data about staff perspectives of the

fidelity of the implementation of Tier 2 interventions. Creswell (2012) stated that a

qualitative sampling method is based on specialized knowledge of the subject or issue

and with the capacity and the willingness to participate in the study is a type of

purposeful sampling.

**Access to participants.** To receive approval to collect research data within EISD,

in August 2015 I submitted a formal letter to the Executive Director requesting to

conduct research within the district. After I received approval from Walden University of

my study and associated documents, I notified the Executive Officer, Superintendent's

Office, to gain final district approval of the research agreement. In addition, I obtained an

electronically signed letter of cooperation (Appendix D) from the Executive Officer

(Appendix E). However, before contacting teachers or staff members to volunteer I secured approval from Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval (#**10-14-15-0352711).**

The participants selected were employees of EISD and Elementary School E. Once I received approval from Walden University's Institutional Review Board, I requested permission to conduct the study from the district, campus, and participants (Appendix D and E). Access to participants was obtained through permission from the district research department, the campus principal, and each participant consented to participate in the case study. The request stated the purpose of the study, and stipulated that participants were under no obligation to participate and that the participants could choose to withdraw from the study at any time. I mailed letters through postal mail to ensure that participants' duty day was not interrupted and the study did not yield undue influence over potential participants.

**Researcher-participant relationship.** In an attempt to build a researcher-participant relationship and to safeguard and alleviate any misconceptions or discomfort participants may be exhibiting, I met with participants prior to gaining their consent to participate. The meeting provided an opportunity to discuss with participants the purpose of the study, the volunteer nature of the study, the participant's responsibilities, expectations of confidentiality, data collection process, and the significance of their role in this study. Informed consent regarding participating in the study was the first step in building a relationship with participants. Prior to starting the research process and gaining

consent, the participants received an unsigned copy of the consent form to review throughout the data collection process (interviews, RTI Survey, and member checks). This meeting allowed the participants to feel comfortable about asking questions, and it also established an environment where participants were relaxed and comfortable to take a risk. This meeting also provided me with an opportunity to gather basic contact information (email address and a phone number) for each participant. The information was needed to ensure that lines of communication was open concerning the scheduling of interviews, RTI surveys, and member checks. Each member received and email correspondence to schedule the date for the interview, provide information about RTI survey, and to schedule member checks after the data were transcribed.

Merriam (2016) declared that qualitative researchers are instrumental in the data collection process and responsible for addressing ethical issues in the researcher–participant relationship. The participants selected for the study work within the same district but none of the participants worked with the researcher or have worked with the researcher. I am an assistant principal in the district, and I have no appraiser or supervisor authority over the participants in the study. I have no conflicts of interest or ethical issues as the researcher. Staff members were not identified by name or by any information that will reveal their identity. All information concerning the study is confidential and only discussed with district representative, campus principal, participants of the study and Walden University committee members. All information collected will be utilized for this study and will not be released to others. All data will be secured in a locked file in my

desk and will be destroyed upon completion of the study requirements for maintaining documentation.

**Protection of participants**. As evidence that I fully understand the ethical protection of all participants, I obtained a certificate from The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research (Appendix C). This research study will have a low risk level to participants, and none of the participants have ever worked with me. Participation was voluntary. A meeting was held with the school principal to reiterate the voluntary nature of the study, discuss the purpose of the study, and address any questions or concerns raised by the principal. I compiled a list of participants who met the original criteria as alternate participants in the event that a selected participant later withdraws from the study. I emailed an invitation to participate and consent letter a second time to alternate teachers, if necessary. Overall, the safety, well-being, and confidentiality of all participants are a priority throughout the duration of the study. Pseudonyms were used to protect participants' identities when reporting the findings within this project study. In addition, all electronic data collected from each participant will be kept secure by being stored in password-protected files on my home computer and all non-electronic data will be stored securely in my home desk. I will store these data for 5-years, per Walden University protocol.

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is a vital part of the study process. The study is aligned with the research questions and addressed critical areas that the IRB is concerned with such as privacy, safety from danger, and ethical issues or concerns of

Elementary School E and EISD. The submitted IRB application contained information about the data collection and the data analysis section. According to Creswell (2012), a consent form for the study should be provided to the district and campus principal prior to providing a consent form to the participant. The protection of participants is an ethical concern that was addressed in the survey information that was provided to the participants. The participants each received information that explained ethical concerns, risks, and the informed consent form (Gay et al., 2009). The participant had the right to stop participation at any time during the study and could be released at any time (Bogdan & Biklen, 2011).

Merriam (2016) stated that qualitative researchers must address ethical concerns throughout the research process. The ethical concerns were addressed by ensuring confidentiality, acquiring consent, and acknowledging researcher bias. The measures taken to protect participants' rights and to protect anonymity and elicit honest responses included confidentiality by utilizing "Participant 1" or "Participant 2" instead of participants' name. The participants were voluntary participants who signed a participation consent form after the IRB approved the study at the University. The information gathered throughout the study was locked in a file cabinet and a password protected computer. I removed all information from this study from the computer upon completion and a hard copy will be maintained for 5 years and then destroyed after the 5 years.

**Data Collection**

Throughout this qualitative case study, I carefully studied the data collection

process. According to Merriam (2016), qualitative data collection is comprised of

interviews, surveys, questionnaires, opinions, feelings, observations-based descriptions of

actions, and descriptive information. In the education field interviewing is a common

form of data collection (Merriam, 2016). The purpose of this collective case study design

was to explore teacher's perception of the fidelity of Tier II interventions. In this section,

two types of data collection methods were used interviews (Appendix C Interview

Questions) and the Response-to-intervention School Readiness Survey (Appendix B).

The data collection process took approximately six weeks and started after the IRB, the

district, campus principal, and participants granted consent to move forward. Within this

case study design, I purposefully examined the data collection process. Data collection

was critical in gathering data about teacher's perceptions of the fidelity of RTI

interventions.

The goal of this collective case study was to gather a better understanding of

teacher's viewpoint based on their experiences of the implementation of Tier II

interventions and the additional components that impact the RTI process (progress

monitoring, data collection, collaboration, and data driven decisions). Teachers'

viewpoints are critical because they are a critical component of the successful delivery of

RTI interventions. The data for the study consisted of 15 semistructured interviews, 15

RTI surveys, and the review of archival data that was located on the district, campus, and

TEA website. The archival documents reviewed were the district and campus

improvement plan and STAAR testing results for the Grade 3 – Grade 5 students. Although the archival documents did not allow me to obtain teacher's perspectives it did provide valid data on students' academic progress.

   **Semistructured interviews.** The interview provides valuable data of the teachers' personal experiences that would be difficult to gather from any other source (Yin 2014; Creswell, 2012). The significance of the interview is the researcher's ability to set the tone for the interview through structured questions. A disadvantage of the interview is the uncertainty of the credibility and reliability of the data collected (Creswell, 2014). Merriam (2016) maintained that when there is an interest in past events that are difficult to replicate an interview is conducted.

   Yin (2014) shared that having multiple participants increased the accuracy of the research study due to the information being received from more than one person. I asked two district administrators (Elementary Principal and High School Curriculum Specialist) to review and provide feedback on the quality of the interview questions in obtaining teachers' perceptions. I requested each administrator examine the relevance, clarity, and the alignment of the questions in accordance with my study. I gained their consent to participate in the study once Walden University IRB has granted approval to conduct the study. Based on the feedback from the administrators, they did not recognize any major revisions just minor points to improve clarity. Once the corrections were made, they reviewed the questions again and stated that the questions should provide quality feedback from the participants.

The interviews were conducted off campus and not during instructional time over a course of six-weeks. The interviews were semistructured 45-60 minutes face-to-face interviews that provided an opportunity to observe actions, state of mind, or how people view the world around them (Merriam, 2009). The semistructured interviews were guided by a list of questions for each participant (Appendix C) that allows flexibility in the interview process. Merriam (2016) stated that researchers utilize interviews when there is an event or information that is pertinent and that may not be replicated. The interviews were conducted utilizing a variety of sources to increase the accuracy of the research and to identify valid feedback from teachers that impacts students' success (Yin, 2014). According to Crabtree and Miller (1999) the constructivists' theory shared that one of the benefits of this process is collaboration between the researcher and the participant. The process also provides opportunities for the participants to share their stories.

The interviews ranged from 45-60 minutes and after the first couple of interviews the interviewer had a better understanding of the introduction process which facilitated a more efficient interview process and interviews were completed in 45 minutes. The semistructured interviews were guided by 5 open-ended questions. The interview participants were each met at the mutually agreed upon location and time. I established a connection through general introductory conversation not related to the topic of the study. To confirm that all participants were relaxed and comfortable throughout the interview process, I reviewed the purpose of the study, the interview procedures, and measures in place to protect confidentiality. I provided the participant with information on how confidentiality and anonymity will be utilized to promote a safe place for candid

responses. I reviewed the information on the consent form that addresses the voluntary nature of the study and the right of participants to withdraw at any time without consequences. The interview setting allowed the participants to respond to 5 open-ended questions that allowed them to share descriptive information on their experiences and opinions of the fidelity of Tier II interventions (Creswell, 2014). Each interview was scripted and labeled with the numeric pseudonym.

Interviews were the primary method of gathering data in this study. The information was transcribed verbatim and typed into a research log in order to categorize information into a coding system (Yin, 2014). In addition, member checks or peer reviewing was used to triangulate the data through verification of the three sources (interviews, RTI survey data, and archived data) to validate the accuracy of the information and to represent the similarities and differences of teacher's opinions and experiences with fidelity of Tier 2 interventions. Organizing the information consisted of gathering data from interviews, reviewing field notes, archival documents, and reflective notes into the research log and reviewing any areas that require clarification or additional review. The data analysis portion required thoroughly reviewing the transcript from the data gathered, and it was important to look over the data several times in order to get a general understanding of the information. Merriam (2016) stated that the line-by-line coding provides clarity of the relationship between data and the research questions. Merriam (2016) said that the goal of data analysis is to locate the answers (also known as "*themes*") to the research questions.

The use of audio recordings is prohibited based on EISD research guidelines. The member checks are completed after the findings of the study are transcribed and shared with all participants from the study. This provides the participants opportunities to critically analyze the findings and comment on them. The participants will agree that the summaries reflect their view points, feelings, and experiences, or that they do not reflect their experiences. If the participants affirm the accuracy and completeness, then the study has credibility. The member checks are subject to human error, but assist in decreasing the occurrence of incorrect interpretation of data. The overall goal of this process is to provide relevant, authentic, and reliable findings of the information shared during the interview process (Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2014). To analyze and manage the data effectively during the analysis process the information was accurately arranged into a case study database.

**Response to Intervention School Readiness Survey**

The RTI school readiness survey was utilized to supplement the interviews to gather specific information on participants' opinions and the level of satisfaction with pertinent components of the RTI process. The RTI surveys were provided to the initial 21 participants during the initial meeting in an envelope with a return envelope to mail back to the researcher once completed. The survey was returned from participants through the postage returned envelope from one to six weeks from all the participants. The survey data were retrieved from all 15 participants. There were six participants who were invited to participate in the study but chose not to participate. The participants were given originally alphabet letters which were later changed to numbers to identify them and to

maintain anonymity. The data from the survey was transferred to a table and the points from the survey was transferred to the table and aggregated into the survey findings. The data were then reviewed for patterns or categories. The patterns or categories were aligned to the themes and the research questions.

To effectively implement RTI schools must understand the purposeful and specific supports (problem-solving, research based interventions that impact students' ability to master grade level competencies, and the methods used to progress monitor academic and behavior concerns). The RTI School Readiness Survey (Appendix B) is a measure created to assist schools in identifying the components that they are implementing successfully and those components that need further support. The Response to Intervention Survey was retrieved from the website RTI_Wire, an online directory of free Response-to-Intervention resources (Wright, 2010). The author of the survey has granted permission for the survey to be utilized in this study (Appendix C). The survey explored participants'prior experiences, information, and opinions about the fidelity of the RTI process based on staff member perceptions (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voetle, 2010; Maxwell, 2013). The survey addressed staff perspectives of the RTI framework, and they are aligned with the research questions as identified below:

Research Question 1:

1. Understand the RTI Model

2. Use the RTI teams to problem-solve

Research Question 2:

3. Select the appropriate Interventions for students

Research Question 3:

4. Monitor Student Progress on a continuous basis

Research Question 4:

5. Use Data to make decisions about student's interventions.

The response to intervention framework is aimed at providing support for all students in the general education classroom, to address academic challenges that students are experiencing early, to address students' needs, and, provide additional assistance in the educational setting (Bryant, 2014; & Faggella-Luby & Wardell, 2011

**Documents.** The archival documents utilized contained signs and indications of the academic challenges that students in Grade 3 – Grade 5 were having with reading and math on the state assessment (Elementary E CIP, 2013; EISD, 2013; TAPR, 2013). This data is a cumulative report of students understanding of grade level content that should have been mastered for the year. The documents provided additional insights into the various areas that students were having challenges (numbers and operations, geometry and measurement, and algebraic reasoning) and the content that had been taught throughout the year (Merriam, 2016).

In addition, the archival documents increased my understanding of academic challenges and it contained information or insights that were relevant to the research (Merriam, 2016). I discussed with each participant their opinion and observations of the Tier II interventions and overarching impact on students' progression on grade level content. One hundred percent (15) of the participants maintained that students'

performance on the state assessment was impacted by the lack of fidelity and

inconsistencies of the RTI Tier II interventions (Elementary E CIP, 2013; EISD, 2013;

TAPR, 2013; Participants 1-15, personal communication, 2015). The archival documents

(District Improvement Plan, Campus Improvement, Plan, and STAAR assessment data)

were examined for relevancy to academic challenges (Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 2009;

Yin, 2014). In addition, all archival documents were revised so that identification of the

district and campus were not accessible.

**Role of the researcher.** As a researcher and employee of EISD, it was difficult

for me to immerse myself into the data and not become affected because of some of the

experiences and biases that are related to the topic that I brought to the study (Corbin &

Strauss, 2015). I am an assistant principal in EISD and as an educator my goal is always

to do what is best for students. The knowledge and understanding of the practices

implemented within EISD and campuses in EISD are essential to changing academic

patterns of students. I strived to decrease the effects of my experiences and biases by

annotating them within a personal research journal after each interview.

Corbin and Strauss (2015) stated that maintaining a personal research journal

permitted me to recognize any biases I might have throughout the data collection and

analysis process. A personal researcher journal "documents a history of the thoughts,

activities, and viewpoints that are awakened during the research (p. 102). Although there

are numerous dominant methods often involved when teaching adults (andragogy)

paralleled to children (pedagogy), I purposefully annotated any views, actions, and

viewpoints I had during the data collection processes (Interviews, review of archival documents and RTI surveys) about the RTI process and fidelity of implementation of Tier 2 interventions within a personal research journal.

The second bias that I may have exhibited included potential physical attributes, such as facial and verbal expressions or body language. I believe that I minimized the following biases (physical attributes, facial expressions, and body language) by implementing some practices such as, maintaining eye contact with each participant during the interview process, I strived to minimize facial expressions by not showing approval or disapproval, listening to the response and then utilizing probes to gather additional information. I maintained an agreeable neutral facial expression, which did not specify approval or disapproval of any response provided by the participant. In addition, I used a normal relaxed tone and presented each question and probe without bias and without stressing any significant words or concepts.

Lastly, I reduced biases to the proposed study during the interview process by creating a relaxed setting. I endeavored to build a bond with each participant being interviewed prior to interviewing each participant by discussing topics not related to the research topic. This procedure put in place practices that diminished actions that could possibly influence the participants by sharing any personal views concerning the research topic. Additionally, I reduced the biases during the data collection processes by ensuring that questions were not related to the project study topic during the introduction phase.

The goal was to minimize any biases during the data collection, analysis process, and other stages of the project study.

## Data Analysis

Merriam (2016) maintained that data analysis is the most challenging part of conducting qualitative studies. The data analysis process involves consolidating, minimizing, and interpreting what participants have said and what the researcher has seen and read. Data analysis is the process of moving back and forth between inductive and deductive reasoning and concrete and abstract bits of information (Creswell, 2014; Lodico et al., 2010; Maxwell, 2013; Merriam, 2009). For qualitative research, issues of credibility are related to the trustworthiness, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of a study. These four concepts add the depth and specificity needed to support the interpretation of the data. Merriam (2016) stated that these four concepts ensure that the reader can trust how the study was conducted, how the data were analyzed, and that the interpretation of the data clearly reflects the accurate description of the information reviewed.

The data analysis consisted of thoroughly reviewing the transcript from the teacher/staff interviews, field notes from the RTI survey, and information from the reflective journal. To gather a good understanding of the information, I repeatedly looked over the data in order to get an overall perspective on the information. During this process, initial interpretations and documented thoughts about the data were entered in the field log. A line coding process was used focusing on connections between the data

and the research questions (Merriam, 2009). Merriam (2016) described the goal of data analysis is to locate the answers (also known as "themes") to the research questions.

The first step in the interpretation of the data process was to prepare the data for coding. A coding analysis method was applied to recognize, evaluate, and decide the categories that were possible (Merriam, 2009). The interview data and the RTI survey data were transcribed verbatim into Survey Monkey and then transferred to a Word document on my computer post hoc each interview and survey. The data resulted in 109 pages of abstract units of raw interview and RTI survey information (Creswell, 2014). To gather an understanding of the information so that themes and categories could emerge the hand written interview notes were transcribed into typed transcriptions.

The interview data and the survey data were gathered from the Grade 3 – Grade 5 teachers and select staff members. The archival data were reviewed to holistically review the research questions and document the connection, similarities, and key words received from each participant. I created a Microsoft Word document that consisted of seven separate tables. Each table corresponded to one interview question from the study, totaling five tables (five central questions). The raw data (interviews, RTI survey, and archived data) was then transcribed into one of the five tables (23 pages of data). I printed out the document and started to identify patterns of words, phrases and terminology within the data that was transferred into themes and categories.

To assist me in this process I reviewed categories related to teachers' perception of training, progress monitoring, interventions, implementation, challenges, data collection, data driven decisions, and student progress. These themes were valid and

relevant to the research questions. In addition, the categories reflected data gathered from the interviews and the RTI survey regarding challenges, training, interventions, implementations, and collaboration. Once a pattern of themes was created, I started to search for relationships within the information. I coded the information by color-coding key words and phrases within the information. I created a journal to collect my ideas, thoughts, and questions about the interviews or the RTI surveys into themes and categories. The archival documents were reviewed to explore accuracy and credibility of the interview data. I emailed the participants my typed transcriptions of the interviews to check for accuracy and to ensure the interpretation reflects their viewpoint that was shared during the interview. The participants reviewed the information; none of the participants noted any changes to the information presented in their interview.

**Accuracy and Credibility**

Gay et al., (2009) stated that credibility is taking all the information into account and considering all the difficulties that the researchers may encounter throughout the study. Additionally, the researcher will utilize peer debriefing and member checks to establish credibility. To establish credibility, I implemented peer debriefing to provide feedback about the data collection and coding process. I conducted member checks to rule out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants have shared. Merriam (2016) stated that it is imperative to ensure that data is accurate and provides a valid representation of the information gathered. A detailed inquiry involves three steps: (a) organization of the data, (b) summarizing the data as codes, and (c) interpreting the data for patterns. Member checks were used to determine the accuracy of the interviews

and to code the survey information to identify any bias or misunderstandings that the researcher may have documented.

The participants were emailed and mailed transcription of the interviews and findings of the survey during the initial data analysis phase. The participants reviewed the transcription and none of the participants needed to make changes or corrections to their responses from the interview and agreed that the information was reflective of their viewpoints shared during the interview. Creswell (2014) noted the importance of accurately presenting the participants viewpoint in the final study. It is important for the participants to verify the accuracy of the data and to be provided an opportunity to make corrections, add additional information, or to verify any misconceptions of the information provided (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2014). For this study, to increase validity of the study, triangulation of multiple sources of information was utilized (Creswell, 2012; Merriam, 2009). The triangulation of data collected from interviews, RTI survey, and archival documents validate the accuracy and credibility of the data.

**Discrepant Data**

The discrepant data enhances the credibility of the findings. An analysis was done of the 15 participants. Discrepant data represent the data collected that provide an alternative perspective of an emerging category or pattern inconsistent with other data (McMilliam, 2012). The data collection, analysis of data, and triangulation of data are critical in the credibility, transferability, dependability, and the confirmability of the study. The goal of data analysis is to present an accurate reflection of the data gathered so that the reader will understand and grasp teachers' perceptions of the implementation of

Tier 2 interventions, professional development training, assessment, progress monitoring, and the impact on students' academic development. When discrepant cases materialized, I reevaluated the information describing additional patterns or themes. Discrepant cases were presented in the findings of this study.

## Data Analysis Results

Qualitative collective case studies provide clarity about central questions and assist in determining emerging patterns. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to discover teachers' perspectives on the implementation of Tier 2 interventions and to view how the fidelity of Tier 2 interventions has impacted student achievement. Three sources of data collection were used in order to assist me in collecting a clear understanding of staff member perspectives of Tier 2 implementation, progress monitoring and professional development training. Merriam (2016) stated that analyzing data provides clarity and meaning to the research topic. After collection and analysis of the data, an aggregation of my results allowed me to organize responses to the research questions within this study. Throughout the interview process, the participants freely shared their perception of their experiences. During each interview, all participants were willing to share experiences and viewpoints of implementation of Tier II interventions, progress monitoring, professional development training and data driven decisions. The rich descriptive information from each participant was presented in direct quotes under each research question. Therefore, the results were arranged according to the research question.

**Findings**

In order to comply with the research design and to address the research questions data were gathered from interviews, RTI surveys, and interpretation of the archived data. The interviews, RTI surveys and archived data were also used to triangulate data and deliver a deeper understanding of individual participant's perspective. In examining all data received, I analyzed individual teachers' perceptions regarding RTI in order to gather a better understanding of what fidelity of Tier 2 intervention looks like based on participants' experiences. This section was arranged by research questions, first addressing the questions, themes, and concluding with pertinent section from the RTI survey. For the qualitative case study design, I performed 15 one-on-one interviews and 15 surveys with interview participants. Based on the data composed from multiple semi-structured interviews and surveys permitted me to evaluate and clarify the perceptions of each participant. In addition, conducting semistructured open-ended-questions, one-on-one post hoc interviews and surveys allowed me to gather detailed information from participants that are essential to the purpose of this study. The qualitative case study takes place in an urban school district in Central Texas. The district has a population of approximately 43,000 students ranging from Pre-Kindergarten to 12th Grade. The campus for this study, Elementary School E has a population of approximately 570 students. The case study focuses on the Grade 3 through Grade 5 population (EISD Improvement Plan, 2013; Elementary School E CIP, 2013; TAPR, 2013).

The data obtained from this qualitative case study provided the following themes that align with the guiding research questions in this study:

- Theme 1: Teacher Collaboration

- Theme 2: Clear Expectations

- Theme 3: Training on Interventions

- Theme 4: Teacher Value of RTI

- Theme 5: Effective Professional Development Training

- Theme 6: Effective Progress Monitoring

**Central Research Question**

The central research question was: What are teachers' perceptions of the fidelity of implementation of Tier 2 interventions and the impact on student achievement at the targeted campus? Based on the analyzed data, all participants believed that professional development that directly enhances their instructional practices are essential to improving the fidelity of implementation of interventions. In addition, all participants agreed that training in the various methods of Tier 2 support is essential to increase teacher self-efficacy in the RTI framework and the knowledge and skills needed to guide students through the Tier 2 interventions. In addition, all participants maintained that clear, measureable expectations for each component of the RTI process with concrete action steps may increase staff perceptions of self-efficacy and build their capacity to collaborate and work together toward a common goal for student's improvement. Participants shared that PD that focuses on the core of the RTI process and Tier 2 intervention will provide teachers with the tools to alter students' experiences creating an environment that encourages students' curiosity and risk taking. In addition, teachers agreed that collaborative PD sessions and follow-up PLC sessions that addressed

expectations for progress monitoring, tracking students' progress, and data-driven decisions improved the fidelity of Tier 2 interventions

**Evident Themes**

The analysis of the data involved the coding of the interview transcripts and survey questions, and review of archival documents. The RTI framework is an effective process that addresses struggling students in academic areas, most particularly in English language arts and mathematics. Teachers are considered the subject matter experts because they employ instructional practices to create a rigorous and engaging learning environment. The themes that emerged amid all of the participants' responses were: teacher collaboration, clear expectations, training on interventions, teacher value of RTI program, effective professional development training, effective progress monitoring tools, and on-going training on documentation and implementation of interventions (see Table 6).

Table 6

*Themes and Descriptions*

| Themes | Descriptions |
| --- | --- |
| Theme 1: Teacher Collaboration | Intervention support is directed by Admin |
| Theme 2: Clear Expectations | Staff members struggle with expectations Due to changes to RTI process yearly |
| Theme 3: Training on Interventions | Teachers receive training on program not intervention process |
| Theme 4: Teacher Value of RTI | Teachers' see RTI as another documentation tool |
| Theme 5: Effective PD Training | Training focus is on tools not on implementation with fidelity |
| Theme 6: Effective Progress Monitoring | Teachers use for data input not decisions |

Note: The themes identified are inter-connected and each has some impact on the other

RTI framework. Hattie (2012) shared that over 50% of the core instruction results of school age children stem not from public policy but from what the teacher does in the classroom. The staff members stated that the campus administrators often directed the type of Tier 2 intervention provided to students. Teachers perceived that they were provided minimal opportunities to collaborate and to apply data-driven decisions to select the appropriate intervention to support students' academic needs. The low level of collaboration about progress on the intervention and necessary changes to improve students' performance is noted in the quality of the documentation, additional training, and implementation of the RTI process. Participants stated a strong need for additional training on several components of the RTI process which included Tier 2 Interventions, progress monitoring expectations, and collaborative data-driven decisions.

**Research Question 1**

How does staff perceive district/campus RTI professional development has affected their knowledge and skills related to the RTI implementation of Tier 2 intervention?

**Theme 4: Teacher value of RTI.** Farr (2010) stated that in every highly effective classroom there is a teacher who exemplifies the characteristic of a great leader who gathers the necessary tools required to create a successful learning environment for students. The RTI framework provides teachers with the tools to incorporate instruction that is authentic, challenging, and students-centered. Through classroom observations, professional development sessions, and professional learning communities, leaders are able to provide teachers opportunities to reflect and expand their own thinking (Mangin & Stoe-Linga, 2011). According to DuFour and Marzano (2011) teacher leadership

significantly influences the climate of a school. In order to increase teacher value of the RTI process the culture must promote mutual trust, respect of other viewpoints, empowerment, that support the instructional practices to improve teaching and learning.

Participant 12 stated, "That there is not enough professional development training stressing the importance of RTI and how to implement program and interventions properly." Participant 2, 5, 8, 11, and 15 declared, "The district and the campus should provide additional training on the tier 2 interventions. Often teachers are expected to provide interventions and teachers only receive the initial training to go over the components of the intervention not the actual implementation of the intervention. As the teacher implementing the intervention, teachers have very limited information on the actual intervention and therefore when progress monitoring students' progress very basic information is provided which provides minimal assistance in the decision making process. Additional training on progress monitoring and actual exposure to the Tier 2 interventions will assist us in implementing the intervention with fidelity." Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 14, and 15 stated that additional professional development training is needed on the RTI process and the changes in process, procedures, and expectations that occur each year. RTI training is important to the quality of support that we can provide students in closing the academic gaps that delay them in meeting grade level expectations.

The participants 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 14 believed that Tier 2 has great advantages if implemented correctly. The lack of communication, lack of RTI knowledge, lack of teacher ownership and lack of year-to-year fidelity of RTI procedures impacts the

effectiveness and value of the process to teachers and students. Participant 5 shared that every year RTI looks and feels different from a teacher's perspective. Participants 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 9, 10, and 13, stated that the challenges with the Tier 2 interventions are lack of training on the RTI process, training on the implementation of Tier 2 interventions, and due to the constant changes with the RTI process each year some consistency with expectations and procedures are needed.

The participants were asked what steps can be implemented to address challenges with training, progress monitoring, and quality and frequency interventions are implemented. All of the participants felt that additional purposeful and meaningful training is required for teachers on the RTI process, the Tier 2 interventions being implemented, and the progress monitoring process and expectations. Participant 5, 6, 7, 12, and 13 stated that that training should be conducted during PLC's to address challenges with RTI and the quality of support teachers are providing students. Participants 4, 5, 7, 8, 13, and 15 stated that teachers are not sure of the value placed on the actual Tier II interventions. They believed that too much emphasis is being placed on documentation and progress monitoring but not enough on the impact of the intervention, students' progress because they have been in the intervention, and whether the intervention is addressing the students' needs.

**Theme 5: Effective PD training.** Effective professional development must happen during the stage of learning with the largest impact on students: implementation. Implementing a teaching strategy in the classroom consist of learning the strategy and the impact it will have on students' academic growth (Blackburn, 2014). Professional

development training is an effective way to implement new content and skills and tailor, modify, and customize instruction to promote optimal use of tools and resources to support sound instruction that is an essential component of best practices (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2011). Section 1 of the RTI survey addresses staff perception of professional development and whether staff members of successful RTI schools understand the RTI process and believe that this approach will benefit teachers as well as struggling learners. The participants felt that the campus principal knowledge of the process was between developing an awareness of this model and being fully knowledgeable of the model. Over 75% of the participants felt that the staff had received an overview of the RTI process and are aware of the primary procedures and the difference from traditional identification methods of identifying students with specific learning disabilities.

All participants declared that professional development training is essential to building teacher capacity to support students effectively through the RTI framework. Teachers maintained that the current training is not directed toward the implementation of the tools in the RTI process. In order for training to address teacher's professional development needs there is a need for collaboration and feedback on the challenges that teachers are experiencing in implementing Tier II interventions with fidelity.

Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15 shared that in order to address student's demonstrated needs teachers need a better understanding of the implementation of Tier II interventions and how to intensify the instruction to meet each student's academic needs. All teachers maintained that the training should also address

progress monitoring tools, documentation expectations, and collaborative data driven decisions. Sharp et al., (2016) stated that in several case studies experienced teachers found it difficult to implement new strategies during the implementation stage. In fact, studies indicate that it takes at least 20 separate opportunities to practice before a teacher masters a new skill and that number increases based on the complexity level of the skill or strategy (Mellard, McKnight, & Woods, 2009; Noll, 2013).

Professional development training can address the various ways through differentiation that teachers can utilize to address students' academic needs (Spear-Swerling & Cheesman, 2012). Noll (2013) believed that teachers are not aware that they are ineffective in the implementation process of RTI because they lack basic knowledge of the program. Berkeley, Bender, Gregg-Peaster, and Saunders (2009) found during their study that 88% of U.S. state departments of education utilized PD training to improve and address teacher's misconceptions about the RTI process.

Based on the analyzed data all staff members stated that training should be more specific and purposeful based on input from teachers and based on the level of knowledge of teachers of the RTI process and the interventions utilized at Tier 1 and Tier 2. Participant 1 asserted, "Additional training on progress monitoring and actual exposure to the Tier 2 interventions will assist us in implementing the interventions effectively." The participants believed that it is not enough to provide training, but that the training must be relevant to the expectations and changes that influence the RTI framework. The participants maintained that the majority of staff are just starting to learn and develop an awareness of the RTI model. Participant 7 shared, "The training that has been provided is

vague and not transferrable to actual RTI practices." The participants are unclear if the process is beneficial to teachers and students.

According to O'Donnell and Miller, (2011) the traditional test discrepancy approach consists of identifying a learning disability based on cognitive and academic achievement testing. When there is a large discrepancy between ability and achievement a learning disability is identified and the students qualifies for special education. The discrepancy model is intelligence based, has minimal academic expectations, implements a one size fit all support for students, and students are failing core subject areas before provided intense academic support. The majority of the staff members maintained that the district/campus have great measures in place for the RTI process, but the missing element is the professional development training provided to teachers on the implementation of Tier I and Tier II support and training on the documentation of student's progress that is meaningful and purposeful to improving students' progress.

**Research Question 2**

How does staff perceive Tier 2 interventions support student learning and progress?

**Theme 3: Training on interventions.** Tier 2 support is described by the NCRTI as small group instruction (1-5 students) that utilizes research-based interventions that are guided by instructional processes, frequency, accuracy, and quality of instruction (NCRTI, 2010). According to the NCRTI, Tier 2 has three procedures that separate it from core instruction: (a) it includes screening and progress monitoring, (b) it consists of small-group instruction, and (c) it includes a clearly scripted intervention plan that is implemented accurately, and purposefully. Based on this definition, the purpose of Tier 2

intervention is to provide students with academic challenges with targeted, purposeful support to meet grade-level expectations.

The RTI process (a three Tier System) allows all students to receive the academic support needed to close the academic gap that was not addressed through the discrepancy model (Little, 2012 & Moores, 2013). The majority of the participants are undecided at the beginning phase on whether the RTI process is beneficial to teachers or students. Section 2 of the RTI survey addresses teacher initial referrals of struggling students and the role of the RTI team utilizing a problem solving process. The participants felt that the campus was at the beginning/intermediate phase developing an atmosphere in which teachers felt welcomed and supported. The participants also stated that the campus was between the beginning/intermediate phases for the RTI team providing multiple schoolwide resources to address student's needs. The majority of the participants felt that the RTI team is in the beginning phase for setting clear, objective, measurable goals for students' progress. The majority of the participants agreed that the campus is at the beginning phase for documenting the quality of the teacher efforts in implementing the intervention and that the follow-up meetings to review students' progress were at the beginning/intermediate phase.

**Theme 2: Clear expectations**. Many of the interview participants were aware of the RTI framework in place, but felt inadequate in their ability and knowledge of how to implement the process effectively. Participant 1 stated that challenges with Tier 2 interventions knew the procedures and expectations of the campus and district. The current practice has all of the correct steps in place but the focus is on the input of the

intervention data instead of the impact of the intervention and on whether it is appropriate based on the student's needs. Participant 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11, and 14 stated that as a district and campus teachers have gotten into the bad habit of focusing on the documentation and it trickles down to the quality of how staff members implement interventions and the quality of support provided to students. The interventions are being implemented but often the time on task is not sufficient enough to show if the intervention is beneficial. Participant 7 stated, "I think that if we keep doing the same things expecting different results we are going to continue to see student's gaps increasing."

Participants 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, and 14 shared that the important steps of the RTI process (students' success) are being minimized and the focus is being transferred to the documentation rather than the actual effectiveness of the intervention. Teachers are not sure of the value placed on the actual intervention. Participants 1, 3, 5, 7, 8, 10, 12, & 15 identified a need to have numerous opportunities to collaborate about the interventions and what the RTI team should identify as the next step in implementing the interventions to meet students' needs. Participant 9 declared, "When all decisions are dictated by the leadership, the ownership or the value in the quality of support provided is reduced and impacts the quality of the support provided to students." Participant 3 stated, "Every year RTI looks and feels different. RTI is seen as a chore and not looked upon as a valuable tool for teachers or students. RTI practices seem mechanical and not directed to address student's needs." The RTI procedures/rules are not clear to teachers and many teachers do not value RTI as a tool to meet students' needs.

The participants were asked what the current challenges with implementing Tier 2 interventions were based on the district and campus expectations. Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15 agreed that the bureaucracy of the regimented process may hinder the identification of students' needs and also the intervention needed by the students. All of the participants expressed that not being properly trained on how to monitor, document, and implement interventions impact the effectiveness of the intervention and students' progress. Participant 13 shared that the responsibility and accountability of intervention is on the teacher. When the teacher who works with the students daily and is aware of the students' academic challenges has limited input about the intervention that is used, how the intervention is used, and when students receive Tier 2 support, then the response is that teachers feel they are limited on their role in the RTI process.

Participant 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11, and 14 stated, "That there was a need for additional instructional materials to address Tier 2 interventions for reading and math. Participants 2, 4,5, 6, 9,11, and 15 maintained that teachers felt that often the district assigned interventions did not align to students' academic challenges and that there was no additional intervention resource available beyond the interventions designated by the district for Tier 2 support. The classroom teachers and the staff members that provide interventions have relevant information on student learning challenges, learning style, and learning needs that should be considered when choosing the appropriate research-based intervention.

**Research Question 3**

How does staff perceive Tier 2 interventions support student learning and progress?

**Theme 2: Clear expectations.** Kouzes and Posner (2010) stated effective leaders recognize that in order to meet the demands of supporting teachers and students it requires all individuals who have a desire, passion, and purpose to engage students and create a learning environment where critical thinking and problem solving is present. Blau (2011) stated the success of any task or concept depends on the commitment and persistence of the educators implementing the task. The collective staff focusing on student learning rather than just the teachers teaching directs expectations and guidance. The instructional practices of classroom teachers during intervention and the learning experiences of students must be data-driven and aligned to the research-based interventions. One important factor is ensuring that the intervention is implemented according to time, frequency and the quality of the intervention as designed to encourage on-going improvement (Marzano, 2011).

Participants 1, 3, 6, 7, 9, 10, 14, and 15 maintained that the RTI process in the district and campus changes from year to year without any fidelity and continues to be confusing and chaotic without proper guidance of the changes in expectations and procedures. Teachers are confused, uncertain and frustrated with the constant changes and emphasis on documentation of student progress for the intervention. The emphasis is placed on the percentage of students in Tier 2 interventions not on individual student performance but rather the overall percentage that must be met based on percentages in each tier. Participant 10 stated that interventions could possibly be implemented

accurately if the correct time and guidance was being placed on how the intervention is implemented. The intervention cannot be successful if it is not being implemented consistently and if the intervention does not match the student's academic needs.

The overall perception of the participants is that the district is continuing to provide changes to the current RTI practices based on the data that shows students are not meeting grade level expectations on benchmark assessments, unit assessments, and state assessments. The data from the (CIP, 2012, 2013; TAPR, 2012, 2013) indicates that benchmark assessment show challenges in reading and math in Grade 1 – Grade 5 students. Students in the RTI process have shown minimal progress in reading and math.

The RTI process when conducted with fidelity according to Hattie (2013) should show up to two years of academic growth. The pattern has been that various students continue to show minimal changes in reading comprehension and basic number concepts. The participants maintained that the district and the campus need to ensure that professional development training is required of all staff members and implemented to ensure consistency across the district on the quality and the level of intensity that the intervention is implemented and that the intervention is based on what is best for the students based on data driven decisions. The participants felt that the campus principal and teacher leaders are in the process of modifying campus procedures to support teachers in the RTI process. There is a need for clarity on school-wide resources, clear measurable objectives, documenting the quality of effort in implementing the intervention and holding follow-up meetings to review student progress to determine the effectiveness of the intervention.

Section 3 of the RTI survey addresses selecting the appropriate interventions to match students' underlying needs with scientifically research-based interventions and whether the interventions are appropriate based on the available resources. The participants stated that the campus was between basic/beginning phases for establishing a library of effective research-based interventions practices for frequent students' referral concerns. The participants were split between basic and with beginning/intermediate for identifying student's academic challenges and selecting the appropriate intervention to address the concern. The majority of participants were split between basic and with beginning/intermediate on whether the RTI team tailored the intervention to individual student's needs. The majority felt that the current interventions were between intermediate/advanced for teacher friendly scripts to allow the teacher to easily understand how to implement the practice. The participants were split between basic and with beginning/intermediate or follow-up with teachers after intervention is implemented to ensure the intervention is stated and is implemented correctly.

**Research Question 4**

How does staff perceive the RTI framework, resources, and supports impact student success at the target site?

**Theme 1: Teacher collaboration.** For meaningful collaboration to occur, schools must utilize a viable curriculum and provide teachers with additional time to examine and discuss instructional practices based on current data. In traditional instructional practices, it was common practice for classroom teachers to spend the majority of their day isolated from others, working independently with their students.

Now, it is understood that effective instructional practices are those that include

collaboration and collegiality in a community where there is a culture of shared

responsibility for student achievement. DuFour, DuFour, and Eaker (2010) stated that as

professional learning communities move forward, the primary focus of all educators

should be to answer three essential questions that will guide the next level of work in the

professional learning community:

- What do we want students to learn?

- How will we know when students have learned it?

- How will we respond when a student's experience difficulty in learning?

The RTI process is centered on these questions when implementing interventions,

reviewing progress monitoring data, and planning future professional development

training. Pil and Leena (2009) in their study of over 1,000 4th and 5th grade teachers in

New York City, found that when teachers were in an environment of trust and

collegiality, and collaborated with their peers about math practices, students showed a

substantial increase in math achievement. Participants 1, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11 maintained that

the RTI framework provides instruction that is authentic, challenging, and student-

centered. Through classroom observations, professional development sessions, and

professional learning communities, leaders are able to provide teachers opportunities to

reflect and expand their own thinking (Mangin & Stoe-Linga, 2011).

Participant 15 stated, "If we are to reach all students and address their learning

needs we have to be more intentional about what we are doing, how often we are doing it,

and what our next step should be." The purpose of RTI is to provide collaborative

feedback on students' current progress and next steps to address the students' needs. Participant H stated that, "I believe that there must be time for collaboration throughout the RTI process to effectively address student needs. Meetings should be more directed about the intervention and the student's response to current interventions." *Participant* 11 shared, "I think that intervention time should be monitored and observed to ensure that what is expected in the intervention is happening. Teacher buy-in does not happen when all decisions are directed by leadership team."

The participants declared that support from the RTI team and administration in the decision making process is essential. The participants maintained that teachers should be treated as professionals with valuable insight on the students' academic abilities due to relationships with their students, understanding their students' learning styles, learning needs, and what intervention will support their students' learning needs. The participants preferred that the collaboration during RTI meetings be more student centered than data centered. The participants stressed that the data is important, but the majority of the participants felt that more emphasis was placed on the data than on the students' abilities, progress, or challenges. Participant 10 declared, "That authenticity and transparency is looking at current practices and reevaluating how teachers utilize the input.

An effective RTI meeting requires the team to trust the information shared by teachers and to listen to what they are sharing about interventions and seek out alternative ways to differentiate the support provided when the tools do not address students' needs." Section 4 of the RTI survey addresses whether the school has the capacity to collect baseline data to conduct frequent progress monitoring of students' academic progress.

The participants stated that the campus was at the basic and with beginning/intermediate phase on conducting structured classroom observations of students to determine the rates of on-task academic engagement, work completion, and positive or negative interactions with teachers.

The participants felt that the campus was split between basic and with beginning/intermediate on collection and assessment of student work to evaluate the completeness and accuracy of the work and the amount of time spent on the work. The participants were at the intermediate/advanced phase for administering and scoring unit assessments/benchmark assessments in basic skills areas in the core subjects of reading, math, and writing. The majority of the participants were at the beginning/intermediate phases for the campus providing a customized format that allows teachers to input information on students' performance on the intervention.

Section 5 of the RTI survey focuses on whether the campus is identified as a successful RTI school that routinely transforms progress monitoring data into visual displays such as time-series graphs to share with teachers, parents and others progress of the students and whether the students are benefiting from the intervention. The participants were split evenly from basic to advance on whether the campus converted progress-monitoring data into visual aids to assist in instructional decision-making. The participants were divided between basic and with beginning/intermediate on whether graphic data is used to provide feedback on the effectiveness of the interventions. The participants felt that structured observations of student work and interaction with the teacher needed to be conducted. Additionally, the rate, quality, and frequency that the

intervention is implemented should be monitored/observed and assessed. The participants unanimously agreed that visual displays of data could assist in instructional decision-making and provide visual feedback to RTI committee members about the effectiveness of the intervention.

Participant 13 stated, "Teachers need to have a collaborative voice about the interventions and what the next step should be in assisting students. When the leadership dictates all decisions what is the ownership or the value in the quality of support provided. Participants 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11, and 14 stated that more professional development training is needed on the RTI framework and the current changes for documentation and implementation. Clarity on these areas will create a common understanding and a common language of implementation standards and how to incorporate the training and conversations in the PLC process.

The participants were asked whether the interventions that were assigned were adequate to meet students' needs based on his/her academic challenges. Participants 1, 3, 6, 7, 10, 14, and 15, shared that the district is continuing to provide changes to the current RTI practices based on the data that shows students not meeting grade level expectations on benchmark assessments, unit assessments, and state assessments. The students that are in RTI for several grade-levels should show a decrease in the academic gaps each year. The pattern has been that various students continue to show minimal changes in their academic gaps.

Participants 3, 5, 6, 7, 11, and 12, maintained that the staff member implementing the interventions needed to ensure that the quality and the level of intensity that the

intervention is implemented reflects the student's needs based on data driven decisions. Participant 3 stated that, "the research-based interventions are purchased by the district and the district has designated which intervention will be used for Tier 2 support for reading and math but often the intervention does not address the level of academic support that the students need. Teachers need to be part of selection of interventions because they have knowledge of the students' abilities and their areas of need and there should always be alternate options for interventions to meet students' needs".

**Theme 6: Effective progress monitoring**. The participants were then asked what type of additional support is needed to ensure that the interventions are implemented with fidelity and documented consistently. All of the participants shared a need for all interventionists to be trained on their campus every year to ensure that everyone is running the intervention appropriately. Participants 1, 2, 3, 5, and 7 shared the importance of receiving RTI training at the beginning of the school year to review expectations, changes, and available interventions. Participant 9 stated, "There is no fidelity in data if everyone runs the same intervention differently." Teachers also recommend additional training on what documentation represents purposeful and measurable data that can assist in assessing the effectiveness of the intervention and the next level of work to move the students forward. Participant 1 stated, "Interventions can't be cookie cutter, one size fits all that staff must be diligent about actually differentiating the support based on student's needs."

Over 80% of the participants suggested that additional training is needed on implementation of the interventions to get the maximum impact from Tier 2 interventions

and additional training on progress monitoring to ensure there is a way to measure or
track the effectiveness of the intervention. Additional opportunities to meet with the RTI
team to change or adjust the intervention plan immediately when data shows intervention
is not addressing student's needs. Finally, the participants were asked to list components
or procedures of the RTI process that hinder implementation of Tier 2 interventions at the
classroom level and that can be addressed through professional development. The
participants shared the following points:

- Training at the beginning of the year should cover expectations,
  implementation, and progress monitoring.

- Conducting follow-up meetings between the initial and progress
  monitoring meetings should be more collaborative about the student's
  abilities.

- Minimizing the changes made yearly to the RTI process and increasing
  effective communication about data-driven decisions.

- Increasing teachers' self-efficacy of the value of the RTI process.

- Providing purposeful documentation that will allow staff to evaluate
  student's progress in each level of the RTI process.

The participants all agreed that the process is important but the inconsistency in
procedures and expectation has impacted teachers' self-efficacy and confidence in the
value and effectiveness of the RTI process. Additional professional training is essential to
build teachers' capacity to implement and progress monitor students' progress
effectively. The participants declared that the data showed that students are not making

adequate growth with the Tier 2 interventions. The majority of the participants agreed that the effectiveness of the Tier 2 support could change with additional professional development on the RTI process and Tier 2 intervention.

**Dealing with Discrepant Cases**

According to Yin (2014) studies are strengthened by identification of inconsistencies. During the collection and transcription of the data, I did not identify any discrepant cases. Throughout the data analyses process, I made an effort to ensure that the data were valid, relevant, and a representation of the findings. The member checking process verified that the transcription of the information was a valid representation of the interviews and none of the data that was collected was discarded at any point during the research period.

**Evidence Accuracy and Credibility**

The data analyses process included various procedures and steps to maintain the accuracy and the validity of the information that was gathered. The research measures that were sanctioned by the Walden University's IRB were implemented throughout the case study process. The interviews were transcribed and checked by participants for accuracy of the research process. The member checking provided the participants and opportunity to ensure that the data presented in the findings were an accurate representation of what was shared during the interviews and the survey and to minimize researcher bias during the transcription process.

**Summary**

Teachers are daily faced with challenges to provide quality instruction that engages students in the learning process instead of using the traditional lecture-based teaching approach (Kelley & Clausen-Grace, 2011). Vygotsky believed that teacher observations about students' academic abilities were as effective as test results (Mooney, 2013). The findings provided valuable information on teacher's perceptions of the RTI framework which reflected a need for additional professional development training, teacher input throughout the RTI process, student-centered instead of data centered meetings, and additional practices to monitor, observe, and assess the quality, frequency, and the impact the intervention is having on students in Tier 2 interventions.

The participants shared that additional professional development training that is purposeful and intentional may assist the classroom teacher in creating instructional experiences that align with curriculum, teachers' observations, and data-rich environments (Ankrum, Genest, & Belcastro, 2014). Smetana (2010) stated that teachers should have a conceptual awareness of learning concepts and learning skills, understand the characteristics of struggling learners, include universal screening, implement high quality research-based instruction, and progress monitoring to determine the level of assistance or interventions. The data gathered from this study showed that teachers and staff need additional training and assistance in making more-informed decisions about the students' movement between the RTI tiers.

The purpose of this study was to explore staff member's perspectives of the fidelity of Tier 2 interventions, progress monitoring, and professional development

training and its impact on student achievement at Elementary School E. I conducted a school readiness survey and interviews with participants to gain a better understanding of their perception of their experiences. I reorganized the findings and listed them under each research question to provide clarity in how the data answered the questions. The results from the data analysis revealed several themes (See Table 6). Findings from the study revealed several areas that can impact current practices and improve the support provided to teachers and students. The need for additional professional development training that focuses on the RTI framework and that focuses on the actual implementation of the Tier 2 support is essential to build teachers' capacity to meet student needs.

The district and campus guidance and direction when changes are implemented that impact the expectations of the process as well as the requirements to perform the task can be addressed through professional development training that aligns to the new expectations. Application of the interventions, the documentation, and the progress monitoring needs additional training that could be conducted through the PLC venue. Teachers would like to have a better understanding of what best practices for documentation, progress monitoring, and implementation of Tier 2 interventions should look life. As educators we model everything for our students but very little for our teachers.

Spear-Swerling and Cheeseman (2012) shared that professional development training can significantly impact teacher's understanding and performance of the methods to implement the RTI framework. Professional development training is a tool utilized to build the capacity of classroom teachers through structured learning experiences that

provide teachers with resources, formal learning goals, and that can result in teachers

being more effective in the RTI process and the fidelity that they implement interventions

(Burns et al., 2013). Additional professional development training that is focused on

teacher skills of monitoring students' progress, implementing interventions with fidelity,

and focused and intentional documentation will build teachers' instructional capacity and

better meet the varied needs of students (Fuchs & Vaugh, 2012). One of the key concepts

found in both the literature review and throughout the case study is that collaboration of

leadership, staff members, and the RTI team is essential in ensuring that all members of

the RTI process are able to share their concerns, their experiences, and their ability to

make quality decisions about what is best for student's success. The professional

development training will allow teachers to not only receive valuable, relevant

information, but will also facilitate collaboration with colleagues on processes and

procedures that are essential to increase the effectiveness of the RTI process for

Elementary School E.

## Conclusion

In Section 2, I reviewed the methodology of the study. The methodology

consisted of topics, such as design of the research and research approach, participants'

population, data collection process, data analysis procedures, and findings. To align the

purpose of the study specified in Section 1, the qualitative case study design was selected

to contribute to our increase of knowledge of the central phenomenon. According to the

findings of this study, a professional development design was chosen to increase

teachers' growth mindset and self-efficacy of implementation of Tier 2 interventions,

progress monitoring, data-driven documentation that impacts decisions on student's

intervention plan. In Section 3 of this study, I discussed the project, a consolidation of

professional development training and ongoing PLC's sessions, founded from the

findings of this study. Additionally, I shared a vivid description of the goals for the

training, the rationale, literature review, and implementation and evaluation method of

the project. Lastly, I reviewed the significance of this project including implications on

positive social change.

Section 3: The Project

**Introduction**

In this study, I focused on teachers' perspectives of the fidelity of Tier 2 interventions and the impact it has on student achievement. The study's findings indicated the need for additional professional development that focuses on the fidelity of implementation of the RTI process, the interventions, and ensuring that all decisions are data-driven. The data analysis from this study identified key areas of focus regarding creating a collaborative setting in which teachers can provide input and feedback on current interventions and students' successes or progress. The campus and district are providing guidance and training on expectations of the role of each member as part of the RTI team. Additionally, the participants suggested additional training on the components of the RTI process (implementation of Tier interventions with fidelity, progress monitoring expectations, and PLCs where data-driven decisions were discussed and implemented).

Section 3 conveys succinct descriptive data about the problem addressed in this study and how the professional development project (see Appendix A) focuses on the data collected in the study. This section will clarify and expound on the project goals and the reason for selecting professional development as the project. The literature review will address current research that supports the objective of this project. Section 3 includes subsections to address the implementation methods, study barriers, and social change implications connected with this project.

Bianco (2010) stated classroom instruction meets most students' needs, but research-based best practices are essential to address the academic needs of students through the RTI

framework. Drummond (2015) shared when reviewing best practices and the 150 instructional methods that exist including exposure, dialogue, collaboration, and modeling, it is crucial for educators to recognize and understand every student in their classroom has specific learning needs. The RTI framework is a tool that can assist them with this task.

The project will address the impact professional development has on the fidelity of RTI Tier 2 interventions and how student learning and success can be influenced by the teacher's instructional practices and overall classroom climate (Alsharif and Yongyue, 2014). The project will address data from the case study and literature review to offer the district and campus administrators and teachers at Elementary School E some strategies to strengthen implementation of Tier II interventions. The information will allow the educators to adjust or modify current practices to support the academic needs of students provided through the RTI process. The section concludes with data that focuses on an analysis of the project, project implications, and the impact it has on social change.

<p style="text-align:center;">**Description and Goals**</p>

An examination of the perceptions of 15 elementary staff teachers' permitted me to triangulate interview data, survey data, and archival documents using a common inductive method to determine patterns in the data and create categories and themes. A review of the study findings indicated a specific need for professional development (PD) focusing on increasing teacher self-efficacy through collaboration during the module training and the follow-up PLC sessions. The project for my doctoral study is professional development training for third-grade through fifth-grade staff members on

the RTI framework and the fidelity of implementation of interventions. The goals of the professional development project (see Appendix A) were directly related to Elementary School E's research problem of no processes or procedures implemented at the targeted campus to track the fidelity of Tier 2 interventions. The purpose of the study was to gather teachers' understandings of the implementation of RTI Tier II interventions with fidelity, the progress monitoring process, and professional development training on the RTI framework and RTI Tier II interventions.

This training will increase teachers' understanding and knowledge of the root of various challenges connected with Tier II interventions and the capacity in which the interventions are currently implemented. The primary goal of this project is to provide training to increase teachers' knowledge, understanding, and attitudes, making sure that their implementation of the process is done with fidelity and reflects a better understanding of supporting students' academic needs. The findings and conclusions of the case study can assist the campus and the district staff members in addressing areas that are limiting the influence that RTI can have on student achievement.

**Project Goals**

For the goals to be meaningful, they should be precise, measurable, attainable, purposeful, and timely (S.M.A.R.T) (Conzemius & O'Neill, 2005). The project for my doctoral study is a professional development training incorporated with PLC sessions. The training modules will consist of an intensive 4-day training session and follow-up with five PLC sessions for Grade 3 – Grade 5 teachers who are currently responsible for RTI support and implementation. Staff members come

with varying experiences and training on the RTI framework, which can impact students'
academic performance and response to RTI interventions. This professional development
training will highlight fundamental goals of the RTI process, available tools of the RTI
process, and the purpose and intention of each process in the RTI process.

Finally, the training will consist of in-depth conversations with teachers in the
PLC setting to reflect on the process and procedures implemented. Peer conversations
and discussions will be used to implement interventions with fidelity. It is essential
participants identify the means to hold each other accountable during each phase of the
framework, which may assist in addressing the number of students who are in RTI for
multiple years with minimal academic progress. The goals of the project are to:

1. Enhance the intervention sessions for Tier II students.

2. Increase staff engagement through clarity and understanding of the framework.

3. Assist staff in identifying and employing interventions and RTI tools with fidelity
   to address various learning needs.

4. Improve documentation and progress monitoring of Tier II students based on data.

The findings addressed within this study revealed that ongoing professional
development aligned to core instruction could strengthen the instructional core and
improve the fidelity of instruction and implementation of interventions. Participants
shared that teacher self-efficacy has impacted the implementation of Tier I and Tier II
support. 85 % of the participants agreed that the PD training presented was not relevant to
their current role and responsibilities in implementation of Tier II support.  Participant 1,
3, 5, 6, 9, 10, and 14 maintained that there has been minimal training on the quality of the

implementation of Tier level support over the past six years. 95% of the participants

stated that the training received focused on the components of the framework instead of

have to implement with fidelity based on the intensity for that tier. Based on the findings

of the study participants would positively respond to PD that focuses on implementation

of the components of the RTI framework with fidelity. The goal of every educator is to

provide instruction to meet students' needs. The PD training will improve teacher self-

efficacy, which could improve students' level of success in all core subject areas.

**Rationale Project Genre**

Findings from the qualitative case study presented in Section 2 served as the

determining element for the selection of the Professional Development /Training

Curriculum and Materials genre.  First, information from the District Improvement Plan

(DIP) and the Campus Improvement Plan (CIP) for the 2013-2014 academic year stated

that RTI was not being implemented with fidelity based on data received from Texas

Education Agency (TEA) audit of SPED data (EISD, 2014).  The data shows 49% of

students tested to identify a learning disability did not qualify for any special education

services. Hence, the district is reviewing the RTI process to see how such a large number

of students were not supported through the RTI process and what areas in the RTI

process are not being addressed with fidelity (EISD, 2014). The CIP (2014) did not

identify RTI professional development training for staff members to review the campus

expectations of the RTI process and to clarify any misconceptions that staff members

may have about the process.

Secondly, the decision to provide professional development training also stemmed from findings in Section 2 that show the current implementation of Tier II interventions does not reflect the substantial improvement in students' academic skills. Also, Participant 3, 5, 7, 9, and 12 shared that Elementary E had an increase in intervention support and scheduled intervention time was blocked off for each grade level, but the CIP, 2014 and TAPR, 2014 indicated that students made minimal growth on benchmark assessment and the STAAR assessment for reading and math (TAPR, 2014).

Finally, based on the results of the interviews in Section 2, approximately 85% of the participants indicated the support the district has provided Elementary School E for Tier II interventions is limited in addressing students' individual needs. Moreover, staff members have not received training on   implementation of the program, progress monitoring tools, or how data from the interventions will be used to determine the next level of work for both teachers and students.

The professional development training is designed to assist in discussing the misconceptions that teachers have about the Tier II interventions and clarify the appropriate implementation of Tier II interventions. Additionally, the training will provide clarity about the program and implementation measures, as well as the progress monitoring tools, and how the data will address students' academic needs.

In this study I show that the availability of professional development is not an issue (Bleach, 2014; Wang & King, 2006). In a recent study, researchers found that over 90% of teachers stated they participated in professional development, but the majority of the teachers were unable to transfer the information back into the classroom (Darling-

Hammond et al., 2009). Spear-Swerling and Cheeseman (2012) shared professional

development training can significantly impact teachers' understanding and performance

of the methods to implement the RTI framework. In building the capacity of teachers, it

is understood that if teachers can increase their knowledge and understanding of the

process, that they can transfer that new knowledge to their students. The goal is teachers

being more efficient in the RTI process and the fidelity in which they implement

interventions (Burns et al., 2013).

Additional professional development training dedicated to monitoring student

progress, implementing interventions with fidelity, intentional documentation will build

teachers capacity and meet the varied needs of their students (Fuchs & Vaugh, 2012).

Throughout the literature review and the case study collaboration has been essential in

ensuring that all members of the RTI team can express their concerns, share their

experiences, and make effective decisions about what is best for student success.

Therefore, the real challenge is providing professional development that changes

teachers' instructional practices to improve student learning. The goal is for the

professional development to provide information targeted at creating opportunities to build

teachers' comprehension of the RTI framework. Also, the training should develop

instructional practices in the implementation of Tier I and Tier II interventions so that

they, in turn, can improve students' depth of knowledge and students' ability to think

critically.

**The Problem**

Professional development should provide teachers with a number of pedagogical practices and simultaneously support them as they implement the research-based practices into their classroom. Educators recognize that implementation with fidelity is the most challenging learning stage for teachers (Blackburn, 2014). Knight and Cornett (2009) found in a study of 50 teachers that those who received coaching support, along with an introductory workshop, were more likely to implement the new teaching practices in their classes than teachers who were only introduced to the practice during the workshop. Bengtson, Airola, Peer, and Davis (2012) indicated that it takes from 3 to 5 years for teachers to perform instructional practices at the mastery level.

The traditional direct teach method of instruction will not facilitate student learning at levels of high engagement. The teacher as a facilitator of knowledge requires instruction at highly efficient and effective levels (Ewing, 2011). Professional development along with the PLC process will allow teachers to have those deep conversations about the training received and provide opportunities to create a plan on how to implement the training in the classroom. The use of coaching and co-teaching are two scaffolding tools that increase the rigor in the classroom and improves teachers' instructional practices (Blackburn, 2014). Professional development training and PLC collaboration will enhance the implementation of scaffolding tools to support teaching and learning.

The goal of this project is to provide teachers with a clear understanding of the Tier II interventions, the implementation of Tier II interventions, collaborations through

the PLC process utilizing progress monitoring tools, and the impact of making data-driven decisions. Several important features make the proposed project valuable. First, during the training sessions, participants will understand teacher's perspectives of the fidelity of Tier II interventions. Secondly, during this training educators will become aware of the differences between RTI implementation, progress monitoring tools, and data-driven decisions in the PLC environment. Thirdly, teachers will practice using student scores from progress monitoring tools, performance assessments, and Tier II interventions to modify and adjust instruction based on students' academic needs. Finally, participants will become acquainted with collaboration through the PLC process to evaluate, discuss, and address concerns of the practices reviewed during the professional development training.

The flexible nature of a professional development session will provide the latitude to address the teachers in an informal manner to inform and influence the understanding of teacher's perspectives of the fidelity of Tier II interventions at the local level (Batt, 2010). The professional development training in a PLC setting will provide teachers a well-organized process in which teachers work together collaboratively towards impacting their classroom practice, student engagement, and student discourse. The training will provide ways that will support and lead to growth for students and staff which leads to changes in the fidelity of Tier II interventions for their school (DuFour & Marzano, 2011). The professional development focuses on providing staff members and administrators in Elementary School E with research-based findings and knowledge about the current status of the campus in implementing Tier II interventions with fidelity.

Activities will provide opportunities for staff members to collaborate toward

systematically improving the fidelity of Tier II interventions at the campus and district

level.

This project was driven by the following goals:

1. To assure that participating staff members will understand the importance of RTI

   implementation of Tier II interventions with fidelity as a way to improve

   academic attainment of all Elementary School E students.

2. To familiarize Elementary School E staff with critical aspects of RTI.

3. To help teachers understand how to use progress monitoring and collaboration

   during PLC to make data driven decisions on instructional practices.

4. To share the results of this qualitative case study so that the staff and

   administrators can create a plan on how the data can be applied to make

   adjustments to their current practices and also identify those things that teachers

   shared that the campus is currently doing well.

## Review of the Literature

This section starts with the discussion of the conceptual framework that guided

the project development and continued with a thorough evaluation of recent peer-

reviewed publications that focus on the need to provide additional professional

development to the staff of Elementary School E in the implementation of Tier II

interventions with fidelity. Subsequent sections focus on specific parts of the RTI

framework such as data-driven decisions, progress monitoring, collaboration, and

implementation obstacles. In this review of the literature, the focus is on components of a

professional development session in a PLC format, the recognized project for this

doctoral study. Selected literature directly addressed related to the genre of PD included

face-to-face PD, PLC, and teacher self-efficacy.

The professional development serves to communicate the findings from the

qualitative case study and relevant information about Elementary School E's

implementation of Tier II intervention with fidelity. Additional data stemmed from the

literature review in this section and Section 1. Also, the professional development

provides the staff and administrators at Elementary School E with a collective

understanding of their present reality and the impact it has on RTI practices and student

achievement. In the review of professional development literature, I will clarify the

significance, explain the suitability of professional development for addressing the

problem, and describe the major components of the professional development. The

literature review will contain additional information on Implementation of Tier II

interventions, professional development methods, and PLC components that are essential

to addressing the data from the case study and the development of the professional

development project.

The literature review was created and derived from articles and publications

retrieved from Walden University Library's electronic databases, and academic texts. The

EBSCOhost databases searched during this literature review were the Education Research

Complete, SAGE Premier, Education Resources Information Center, and ProQuest

Central databases. Key search terms included *professional development, professional*

*learning communities, Tier II intervention, RTI intervention, RTI framework, Texas's RTI*

*model, urban schools, fidelity of RTI, professional development challenges, and PLC*

*collaboration.* The subsections within this review of relevant literature were explored in

order to support the fidelity of implementation of Tier II interventions, as well as enhance

teachers' self-efficacy regarding the use of the components of the RTI framework during

daily instructional practices and in a PLC setting.

**Conceptual Framework**

Given the changes in the classroom educators are seeking ways to improve and

enhance student learning. The constructivist learning approach is a method that can

improve the quality of learning for staff and students (Kenney, 2012). Earlier empirical

studies supported this application and method that revealed that efficacy and fidelity of

RTI implementation were considerably higher in the learning environments that provided

additional professional development training for the entire staff (Berkley, Bender,

Peaster, & Saunders, 2009; Kenney, 2012; Reeves, 2010). The things that Knowles

identified about adult learners are prevalent in our instructional practices for the student.

The concepts include creating an environment where students are a part of the instruction,

creating a risk-free environment, an environment that is relevant and can be connected to

real world scenarios, and creates an atmosphere of problem-solving and critical thinking

(Blackburn 2014; Kearsey, 2010).

Blau (2011) stated that the constructivist approach encourages interactive learning

that extends students' cognition and develops high-order skills and problem-solving

skills. The information discussed will provide recommendations for the current

challenges and related practices. Moreover, the professional development training will

challenge teachers to re-examine their understanding of academic failure that is not based on student's inability to learn, rather teachers self-efficacy of their own instruction and the importance of differentiation of instruction to address varying needs of their diverse learners (Buffum, Mattos, & Weber, 2009; Sparks, 2015).To effectively influence students with distinctive academic needs, educators have to provide the correct instructional practices. Professional development training offers educators with instructional tools to explore vital information about the efficacy of their teaching and offers approaches for implementing essential changes in an efficient manner (Ysseldyke, et al., 2010). Researchers also suggest that effective professional development happens when teachers are engaged in collaborative learning communities that are focused on improvement of instruction and student achievement (Wei et al., 2009a).

The conceptual framework stands on the understanding that students acquire knowledge based on previous knowledge, lessons, and experiences.  Piaget (1985) measured learning skills as an uninterrupted sequence of action that permits the learner logically to produce and reorganize information. Like, Piaget, Vygotsky (1962) understood that knowledge is a determined and concrete progression.  One central aspect of Vygotsky's theory is his zone of proximal development (ZPD).  The ZPD reinforces the significance of teacher guidance and direction and its impact on intellectual development. Montessori believed that the acquisition of knowledge and learning was about constructing meaning in contrast to passive reception and suggested that learning was achieved through self-directed learning. The teachers' task is to facilitate the child's learning and act as a guide (Ultanir, 2012).

The RTI model provides opportunities to work with students identified as at-risk based on benchmark assessments or state assessments. This study examined teachers' perspectives on the fidelity of implementation of Tier 2 interventions, based on students' needs, implementation of research-based interventions and the process of documenting and monitoring students' academic growth. Piaget (1985) suggested that teaching and learning is a process that extends the learner's ability and skills to build new information and transfer that information to future learning. As students engage in hands-on exploration, their schemas are changed, expanded, and formed through the repetition of integration, accommodation, and balance. When staff makes collaborative decisions about student's interventions, Vygotsky believed that well-thought-out teaching would lead to student's intellectual development (Hia Liu & Matthews, 2005; Singh et al., 2012). When learners experience the successful completion of challenging tasks, learners gain confidence and motivation to embrace more complex challenges This theory supports the RTI framework and the significance of implementing with fidelity quality instruction to connect previous learning experiences with new knowledge that differentiates instruction based on students' academic needs and learning styles (Corte, 2012; Erden et al., 2014).

While conducting my research, I considered the Constructionist theory of learning. Chitanana (2012) stated that the constructionist learning focused on the learner constructing mental models to understand the world around them. The constructionists believe that learning can happen when people are also active in making tangible objects in the real world. Presentation "Thought of the Day," Aristotle said: "For the things we

have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them. The Pragmatist theory was another theory that I considered due to the belief that teaching and learning are social and collaborative procedures, and therefore, the school itself is a social organization through which social restructuring can and should take place (Moeller & Faltin Osborn, 2014). Dewey believed that students strived in an environment where they are allowed to experience and interact with the curriculum and that all students can take part in their learning (Crick, 2010).

Reviewing the purpose and the intentions of the RTI process, I noticed that the Pragmatist and the Constructionist theory of learning are addressing the students' ability to make connections, draw inferences, and explore the learning environment. The RTI process requires the teacher to guide the student with a very structured plan to improve academic achievement. The ultimate goal is to build student to the constructionist and pragmatist theory of learning, but the academic challenges that these students are having does not lend time initially to address the two learning theories. RTI is a more direct intervention plan that increases the level of support as the students' level of progress or support is not sufficient to improve the student's level of academic achievement.

**Andragogy content knowledge.** Andragogy is a method of learning that predominantly focuses on adult learning and heightens the learners' ability to acquire and retain information in a way that makes sense to the learner and their unique learning strategy. Professional development conducted at schools or districts often require experts of their field to provide guidance and support on new standards, practices, and techniques (Blackey & Sheffield, 2015). Districts and campuses seek assistance from the learning

education agencies that have experts that can be brought in to assist with professional development or to train the trainers. In other cases, more extended interaction (contracted coaches) with a particular type of expertise (science, math, or writing) as needed (Peterson & Ray, 2013). Andragogy theory was first introduced by Knowles in 1968 and stated that a person's life experiences and self-identity are essential components when learning new concepts (Knowles, 1970). Knowles maintained that adult learners become more independent and responsible as they mature and through hands-on exploration they demonstrate clarity of the concept or skill. According to Knowles et al. (2012) teachers' experiences and learning style determine the emphasis or the level of fidelity the concept or skills implemented.

Teachers are often unable to engage in deeper professional learning if they feel that their needs are not being considered or met.  For instance, research on teacher leaders has shown that relationship building, trust, collaboration, and knowing that the leaders care about them and that leaders are willing to help teachers through clarification of instructional practices impacts the response to the training and information retained during the training (Mangin & Stoe-linga, 2011). Andragogy is critical in identifying the specific needs of adult learners and addressing them when conducting professional development training. Educators impact student learning by mobilizing the team to work toward specific, intense, sustained methods of learning for all students (Fullan, 2014).

Christensen, Horn, and Johnson (2011) maintained that students should be taught in a monolithic approach, providing individualized support where possible, and then monolithically testing to identify the number of students who can exhibit understanding

of some percentage of the information delivered to them. Braun (2008) shared the following facts in their study on ways to increase the campus focus on instruction and student achievement:

1. Recognizing that true merit of an education system starts with teachers.

2. Effective teaching leads to better-quality instruction.

3. Exceptional instruction through systemic progress and focused expectations establishes parameters to ensure that all students receive excellent instruction.

Griffin, League, Griffin, and Bae (2013) specified that one aspect that impacts student achievement is the influence a teacher has on their students. They also indicated that the primary focus is maintaining a student-centered classroom that offers numerous experiences with exploration, creativity, and challenge that promotes inquiry and problem-solving skills in the classroom. Fulton, Yoon, & Lee (2005) stated that teachers can no longer teach in isolated classrooms. Teachers impact students by improving the quality and equity of the instruction and building a collaborative culture where all students learn. Professional development training provides teachers with the knowledge and skills needed to build students capacity in acquiring grade level content and transferring the knowledge and skills to real-world scenarios.

Fowler-Finn (2013) emphasized the importance of leaders assisting teachers by analyzing their current instructional practices, exploring through observation the evidence of student learning for indications of areas that represent the strengths and weaknesses in their instructional practice. Leigh, Whited, and Hamilton (2015) declared that learner-centered approaches increase learning by adults. The learner-focused approach should

relate to program development, instructional methods, and formative and summative assessments of students' work (Steiner et al., 2010). Professional development that increases teacher's knowledge and transference of skills to students include influences such as reflection, self-awareness, and self-evaluation. The andragogy theory maintains that adult learners are self-directed, take personal responsibility for their learning, require less extrinsic motivation, and values collaboration (Murray, 2014). Conner (2004) referred to andragogy as learner-centered practices and pedagogy as teacher-centered instruction that focuses on the delivery of content subject matter, while andragogy has a focus on building a clear understanding of analyzing and applying the content and its application (Batson, 2008; Blackley & Shelffield, 2015).

**Pedagogy content knowledge.** Pedagogy is the skill (and discipline) of teaching. A common misconception that leaders make is the presumption that when teachers attend a workshop or conference and obtain useful knowledge and skills that they will apply this new knowledge when they return to their classroom. Smart leaders recognize that sustainable change involves both new knowledge and systemic change and address both the attainment of knowledge and organizational changes in a methodically coordinated manner (Wilcox & Murakami-Ramalho, 2013). Teachers use a variety of teaching approaches because there is no single, universal approach that addresses all circumstances.

Different tactics used in different settings with different groups of students will increase learning results. Some methods are more appropriate for certain skills and levels of understanding than are others. Some tactics are better suited to individual student

experiences, learning styles and competencies. Effective pedagogy includes an assortment of instructional practices that support scholarly engagement, global participation, caring and a risk-free learning environment, and acknowledgement of diversity applied across all core subject areas (Hattie, 2015). Effective pedagogical training confirms the academic success of students, teachers and the school community. Professional training enhances students' and teachers' self-assurance and builds their sense of purpose for being at school; it creates community confidence in the fidelity of teaching and learning. Professional development training allows teachers to expand the essential pedagogical content knowledge to ensure that the instruction consist of creativity, rigor, challenge, and depth and complexity of the content with the goal of meeting the needs of all students (Dobozy, 2012).

**Teacher self-efficacy.** Teacher self-efficacy has repeatedly connected to previous research results with teacher efficiency, more chances to acquire new knowledge, and additional promising student outcomes (Gibbs & Powell, 2011). Teacher self-efficacy is identified as an intellectual instrument that controls performance (Bandura, 1997), increasing as educators improves in self-confidence, acknowledging the level of proficiency necessary to accomplish projected results. Supplying teachers with relevant and efficient professional development options may enhance their abilities to implement the standards and content, strategies and techniques, and visible self-efficacy (Carlisle, Cortina, & Katz, 2011). Influences that align with the efficiency of the professional development may impact the construction, application, and the assessment of professional development training (Darling-Hammond & McLughlin, 2011). The plan for

professional development is designed to achieve academic success and should influence teacher self-efficacy through participation in long-term professional development.

**Professional Development Models**

**Face to face.** One model of professional development is face-to-face. Face-to-face professional development is when the facilitator and participants are together, typically in a classroom setting. One key aspect of participating in face-to-face PD is the social interactions that occur among the participants (Moon, Passmore, Reiser, & Michaels, 2014). "People naturally have a tendency to seek out interpersonal contacts and cultivate possible relationships. Social interactions among fellow teachers create a level of trust that can foster authentic learning experiences (Tseng & Kuo, 2010). These authentic learning experiences, along with face-to-face discussions may increase teachers' self-efficacy and willingness to implement new instructional methods in the areas of reading and math.

**PLC.** The credibility and quality of education and instruction in schools have been a concern for local, state, and federal governments, and continues to increase as the expectations for preparing students to be college-ready increases. The global goal is to improve education, and one primary method relates to investing in teacher professional development. DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, and Many (2010) describe PLC as a continuous practice in which educators work collaboratively in repeated phases of shared analysis and action research to attain better outcomes for the students they work for. PLCs function under the notion that continuous, job-embedded instruction for teachers is the key to improved learning. The study proposes that professional development that includes

teachers in the instructional analyses process over a prolonged period through supportive professional learning communities (PLCs) is effective in refining instruction practices and addressing student's academic needs.

The challenge is that most professional development short-term workshops presented are not successful in altering instructional practices. Obstacles to the implementation of PLCs consist of ineffective focus during meeting times and lack of fidelity of implementation of expectations for areas of concern or common goals and interests (McConnell et al, 2013). Many short-term or mini-workshops involve teachers from all grades and subject areas in the same activities without regard to the instructional needs of teachers. Research has revealed that teachers want professional learning training that targets practical classroom strategies that address their specific needs (Lomos et al., 2011; Siguroardittir, 2010). Reeves (2006) shared that effective school leaders understand that academic achievement is the measure for analyzing teaching practices, the curriculum, and assessment strategies with strategic regularity. Every leadership decision made must be seen through the lens of the impact it has on building students' capacity as 21st century learners.

## Project Description

The professional development-training program is appropriate for all staff members implementing Tier II RTI interventions. The program consists of three full day training modules and five follow-up PLC sessions that will examine the purpose and goals of RTI to; identify and provide academic support for students not meeting grade level expectations. The training will provide staff tools to develop and implement with

fidelity Tier II interventions, and apply and evaluate the accuracy of the documentation and progress monitoring process. These primary goals will promote staff and student engagement, improve students' academic achievement, and reduce the number of students that are unproductive in the RTI process.

**Potential Resources and Existing Supports**

The training program activator will collaborate with campus administrators, Curriculum Instruction Specialist (CIS) and selected staff participants. The training activator will send an invite through email to each participant with the primary goals and objectives of the training. Also, the activator will provide the agenda for each training day and follow-up PLC sessions. The participants will be able to sign-up for the training to receive Continuous Professional Education (CPE) credits. The school district, EISD, also has an elementary curriculum instructional specialist for ELAR and Math. In addition, current EISD teachers have access to online resources located on the district website. The district and individual schools will support additional support materials and resources necessary to effectively conduct the PD. The support materials and resources that might assist the teachers during the PD include, but are not limited to: writing tools, technology, RTI handouts, daily checkout forms, and Texas Education Agency (TEA) website, with state information on RTI.

- Additional existing supports include state and national teacher organizations. The teacher organizations, which are listed below main goals, are to clarify content, update news and information to support quality RTI information and tools to

educators. National Center on Response to Intervention:

http://www.rti4success.org/

- RTI Action Network: http://www.rtinetwork.org/

- National Center on Intensive Intervention: http://www.intensiveintervention.org/

- Center for Parent Resources and Information:

  http://www.parentcenterhub.org/repository/rti/

National Center on Student Progress Monitoring: http://www.studentprogress.org/

The first day of the training program will begin by identifying RTI practices:

- Definition of RTI

- Research on RTI

- Benefits of implementing RTI

- Components of RTI

- Research on RTI

- Benefits of implementing RTI

- Barriers to implementing RTI

- Changes to be expected when implementing RTI

- Required commitments and resources needed to implement RTI

The goal of the first day of training is to establish clarity about the purpose and shared vision that

Response to Intervention (RTI) is an education initiative for all students led by campus administrators

and select staff members. The sessions will emphasize that the purpose is to challenge students to high expectations for learning while helping them learn to problem solve, and allowing them to demonstrate how much they have learned through multiple opportunities which can result in productive and equitable levels of growth for students. The first day will conclude with collaboration, reflection, and a review for the next training day.

The second day of the training will allow participants to identify the RTI support structures essential for systemic planning and implementation. The training sessions will allow participants to develop a common understanding concerning the latitude of RTI implementation. Participants will analyze instructional strategies that all students have access to and that all teachers have been trained (Tier I Support). The next sessions will provide opportunities for participants to analyze instructional initiatives and strategic support (Tier II). The training day will allow participants to view and interact with instructional strategies (Tier I and Tier II) and to make connections to the data and next level of work.

The third day of training allowed participants to gather a better understanding of the progress monitoring tools available and documentation of students' progress. The participants addressed misconceptions of both processes and identified ways to improve the current process. The breakout sessions and small group discussions allowed participants to collaborate and define strategic instructional practices that will increase productivity in progress monitoring and documentation of students' progress at various stages throughout the process.  The training also included a question and answer session, breakout session, and a small group session that allowed participants to consolidate all

the information learned during the training with discussion of future support needed from

the district and campus. The participants reviewed the three-day training sessions and

were provided an opportunity to reflect and share feedback about the training.

Follow-Up PLC Sessions: February, March, April, May, and June

Table 7

RTI Fidelity Observations

| Topics | Outcomes | Time Needed |
|---|---|---|
| Team Norms | State team norms/ Reflection of Intervention time | 10 minutes |
| Review Tier II Interventions | Review questions about instructional practices at Tier I and Tier II to deepen the understanding | 15 minutes |
| Progress Monitoring Tools and Documentation | Increased clarity of RTI Tools: Review work to evaluate progress monitoring Procedures and review teachers RTI Documentation as a group to establish Consistency and clarity of expectations | 60 minutes |

Note: PLC follow-up sessions is a tool to increase fidelity and rigor in a collaborative setting

The follow-Up PLC sessions will be utilized as a tool to review procedures and expectations,

clarify misconceptions or challenges, and to review RTI tools to improve the fidelity of

implementation. The sessions are scheduled for 90 minutes and will be conducted one

session per month. The collaboration among colleagues will provide unmeasurable

support based on current experiences and challenges with the RTI process.

**Solutions to Potential Barriers**

A significant barrier is the dedication of support and allotted time in addition to

previous commitments on the master schedule. The campus is directed to create a

momentum plan that identifies the professional developments sessions throughout the

year. Obtaining four full days of time and follow-up PLC sessions can be overcome by

the campus administrator's support and commitment to the training. While the requirement for this training is critical for the transformation of staffs understanding and application of the RTI process, staff members may resist due to previous training experiences. A strong feeling of uncertainty of the impact of the RTI process and framework may challenge staff members to see the value and worth of this training. Staff members may feel overwhelmed with the current responsibility related to RTI and be concerned that this training will add additional responsibilities to existing expectations.

Also, some faculty may feel that they already know everything that they already know about the RTI framework. Often, faculty may feel that the training received is not essential to their development or growth as educators. Therefore, it is essential to provide this training to build the capacity of staff members and change the mindset that RTI is just another task, but instead an effective method of increasing staff members' knowledge of new processes or changes to existing policies and procedures for teachers and students.

**Study for Implementation and Timetable**

The project is prepared for implementation during the 2016 school year at Elementary School E where the data for this study were composed. The timetable for the training:

1. Provide the results of the study to the district and participants who will partake in the professional development training that will address the need for clarity and understanding of The RTI framework.

2. Get consent for professional development training for staff members and all stakeholders.

3. Meet with campus administrators and campus curriculum instruction specialist to establish a schedule for four full days of PD and five follow-up PLC sessions.

4. Coordinate with campus instruction specialist/technologist to secure the facilities and technology (projectors, Power Point clickers, audio equipment, and projection screens) needed for the training session.

5. Provide one packet of the training materials to the curriculum instruction specialist. Each participant present at the training will receive one packet.

6. Perform the PD sessions based on the campus-training calendar from January 2016 to June 2016.

7. Conclude each professional development session with a reflection and question and answer session to address any unanswered concepts.

In addition, teachers will have a better understanding of the expectations of the follow-up PLC sessions. The face-to face portion of the PD will begin at 8:00 am and conclude at 4:30 pm based on scheduling that will be determined by EISD. The PLC sessions of the PD will include five follow-up sessions over a 5-month time period. The goal of this section of the PD will be for teachers to review information from the PD sessions, checkout notes, and interventions practices to collaborate about the challenges that are still limiting the fidelity of Tier II implementation.

The sessions allow the staff to work through the challenges and then problem solve utilizing data-driven decisions to manage the changes. The team will have several opportunities to observe intervention time and provide after action input to improve the intervention practices that they observed.  The PLC sessions will be broken

down into two groups during the observation and each group will observe two intervention sessions. The team will return and create data for the teachers to share the findings and identify whether the interventions were aligned or misaligned to the learning target, goal, and task. Once the teams have presented their data, as a team each person will complete a checkout form reflecting on their experience and identify any suggestions for improving the learning experience.

**Roles and Responsibilities of Student and Others**

**Student**. I will make certain that the implementation of each phase of the timeline is followed. I will also be the presenter for each professional development session during the 2016-2017 school year due to my knowledge of the case study and the expectations for the professional development training. I will provide the campus administrator with feedback throughout the training session. I will coordinate with the district to obtain the location of the training. I will organize and prepare all documentation for the training and present information to participants in a timely manner. I will coordinate with the district elementary curriculum specialist to set up sessions so that teachers can receive CPE hours for training. Ultimately it is my responsibility to ensure that the training provides clarity of RTI concepts and procedures and improves instructional practices for teachers and students.

**Others.** The campus administrator along with the curriculum instruction specialist will determine which teachers from 3rd grade through 5th Grade will participate in the training sessions. The district and campus administrators will decide on the length of the sessions (i.e., full- or half-day sessions). The campus administrator will make an effort

to ensure that the teachers who begin the training will be able to complete the training. Training participants will meet with the training facilitator to review the expectations for the training and the anticipated outcome.  The district coordinator will establish a budget code for substitutes to cover classroom during training. The district coordinator will also ensure that the training is connected to the DIP and the CIP.

## Project Evaluation Plan

An evaluation was developed to evaluate the participant's perception of the professional development training. The instrument that will be used to measure participants' response to the training will be a summative Likert-type survey that will be provided to participants at the end of the training. The results will be presented to the campus administrators and stakeholders as a tool to plan future training. I developed a 5-point Likert-type scale summative evaluation to measure the value, relevance and importance of the training sessions.  The 5-point Likert-type scale was chosen to easily sum up the participants ratings of the training. The ratings will be 0 (not important), 1 (*of little importance*), 2 (of average), 3 (very important), 4 (absolutely essential). The Likert-type scale evaluation will contain four questions about the entire professional development training to obtain the opinions of the participants.

The data gathered will identify the perception of the participants meeting training goals. The summative evaluation is confidential and will exclude all personal information. After the completion of the project the participants' perception of the training will measure the effectiveness and success of the training. Additionally, the effectiveness will be observed through walk-throughs, fidelity observations, and the

follow-up PLC sessions. Evidence will include the fidelity of Tier 2 interventions,

progress monitoring tools, and documentation to drive the decision of the next level of

work toward student's academic success.

## Project Implications

### Social Change

The staff and students at Elementary School E will see a change in the

implementation of Tier II interventions, the progress monitoring tools, and the

documentation process that will drive the RTI plan for individual students. The project

will clarify misconceptions that staff members have about the RTI framework and will

provide professional development training to improve and increase the effectiveness of

current RTI procedures. The students at Elementary School E will see an increase in

academic growth and differentiation of instructional practices based on students data

gathered during progress monitoring and documentation. The professional development

will increase the consistency and the fidelity of Tier II interventions to address the

various needs of students in RTI at Elementary School E.

### Local Community

The project presented in this study was designed to ensure that based on the data

received, training sessions and PLC sessions will change the instructional practices to

ensure that students are receiving interventions with the intensity and depth it was

designed and intended. Tomlinson and McTighe (2006) indicated that quality curriculum

and instruction are the foundation of education and that skillful instruction is imperative

to good teaching and learning. The problem that participants shared impacted the fidelity of interventions in the campus and district-learning environment are:

1. Direct teach methods that support one size fits all interventions.

2. High-quality instruction is in some of the classrooms not all classrooms.

3. Differentiated instruction should be based on the needs and abilities of all students.

4. Interventionist limit students thinking skills by not activating background knowledge and utilizing problem-solving and critical thinking skills.

The importance to addressing the instructional challenges is ensuring that the necessary foundational conditions, such as rigorous instruction and clear expectations are implemented with fidelity every time an intervention is provided. Elmore & City (2007) highlighted the significance of leaders assisting practitioners as they develop plans to assess and evaluate methods and procedures used as tools to improve how teacher perform their work. The instructional plan is designed to develop performance indicators that assist in evaluating interventionist tools used to strengthen the participants understanding of grade level content through the gradual release of support.

**Far-Reaching Implications**

The project will be beneficial not only to the school where the research was conducted but also to other schools throughout the district. The dissemination of the study on the ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global database will provide data to other researchers seeking clarity on the fidelity of Tier II interventions. Additional benefits include ensuring that staff members are implementing Tier II interventions based

on students' academic needs. Also, the campus administrators and staff members at Elementary School E could possibly utilize the findings and recommendations to improve current practices, change practices, and overall to improve student achievement through the RTI process. As identified in the literature review, teacher self-efficacy and collaborative support from staff members are essential to the success of the RTI framework. The professional development training can provide clarity about the purpose, benefits and the expectations of the RTI process and the Tier II interventions when implemented with fidelity. The findings in this study, quality training sessions, and improving teacher self-efficacy through an informative session to improve the fidelity of Tier II support. However, Tier II support is the foundation to the instructional core and teachers should have a certain clear understanding about how to differentiate instruction effectively during reading and math instruction, which minimizes the number of students that need Tier II support. In addition, based on the findings in this study, this project is a valuable resource to improve teacher self-efficacy and effective implementation of Tier I and Tier II interventions.

## Conclusion

This section was a summary of Section 3 based on the qualitative data gathered. The professional development training addresses the needs of the staff and students of Elementary School E as an effort to bring about social change by providing campus administrators and staff members clarity about the RTI framework. Also, the training will review the RTI tools available to support staff and students, and explore how the documentation can be utilized to drive the decisions for the next level of work in the RTI

process.  The information in section 3 provides a detailed description of the professional

development training and concludes with information on how the participants will

evaluate the training and the impact it can have on social change.  Section 4 will present

the reflections and conclusions of the project study.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

**Introduction**

This qualitative project was designed to clarify misconceptions based on teachers' perceptions and provides participants a deeper understanding of the teachers' thoughts and opinions concerning their experiences with RTI and the support provided to students. The findings of the data showed that there was a need for professional development (PD) that improves teacher self-efficacy, communication throughout the RTI process, and utilizing the RTI tools with fidelity. I designed a training session titled *Response to Intervention Digging Deeper* after I reviewed teachers' insights of RTI procedures and instruction.

In this section of the study, I review and reflect about the findings of this study. The reflection includes the strengths of the project, possible limitations of the project along with recommendations for future changes to practices, and the direction for future research. The findings shared the importance of utilizing the information gained as a tool to increase the awareness of activities, resources, and instructional practices that impact teacher self-efficacy and students' academic development. In addition, I recommend consideration of incorporating more teachers in decisions involving selection of the appropriate intervention to address students' needs. Finally, I reflect on my responsibility as a scholar practitioner and self-analyze on what knowledge I have gained about scholarship, project development, and leadership and change.

**Project Strengths**

In a setting of academic accountability, the implementation of researched-based practices is essential to student success. To validate that an instructional practice is researched-based, valid and relevant signs of rigorous practices should be demonstrated with fidelity (Missett & Foster, 2015). Elementary School E exhibited challenges with the implementation of Tier II interventions with fidelity. Participant L stated that there is no procedure in place to ensure fidelity of interventions. Teachers implement intervention according to their understanding of the application (Participant L, Personal communication, November 7, 2015). One strength of the project is that it was created to provide participants with opportunities to explore through hands-on-activities, open discussions, and Tier II technology in a face-to-face learning environment.

The NCLB (2001) intentions were to improve the outcomes for students who were in historically underperforming schools and represented low income and minority students. Due to the emphasis on accountability and responding to students' needs campus and district have implemented the RTI process to provide support to all students. The strength of this project is the emphasis on addressing misconceptions and providing clarity and knowledge of the purpose and the expectations of the RTI framework. The project provides staff members with focused directed training on the RTI tools and how to implement tools with fidelity.

The training includes follow-up PLC sessions that will allow educators to continue the learning by providing feedback through collaboration on current practices and reviewing students work and staff members' documentation. The ultimate goal is to

establish consistency across the campus to ensure that students are held to high expectations and can demonstrate the learning in a supportive learning environment. The project was strengthened by staff members' willingness to share their opinions, experiences, and perceptions of the support, training, and experiences of the RTI framework at Elementary School E. The literature review was utilized to present the findings and results to demonstrate strategic instructional practices that addresses the challenges identified by staff members. The training was designed based on the data analysis and literature review.

## Project Limitations

One of the project's limitations in addressing the problem is the significant likelihood of participants resisting changing their instructional methods. The staff members identified several challenges with the current RTI program consisting of staff members understanding of the RTI framework and expectations for staff members through the process. Application of the various RTI tools (initial referral process, progress monitoring, documentation process, and fidelity checks to ensure implemented with fidelity) requires clarity to ensure that the district operational guidelines for RTI are followed and implemented with fidelity. The staff also identified a need for additional training throughout the year for all staff members to ensure that consistent procedures are implemented and followed by all members of the RTI team. The staff members expressed that the current training on RTI relates more to the components of RTI rather than the implementation of the RTI components. The limitations that could be possible are:

- Challenges to adding the training to the campus calendar in lieu of all the training already designated based on the campus momentum plan and campus improvement plan.

- Challenges in allocating additional personnel (substitutes or Instructional assistants) to cover classes during the four-day training.

- Challenges in allocating additional funds for substitute teachers during this four-day training.

The training provided will improve teacher's instructional practices, knowledge of the expectations and implementation of the RTI framework, and improve student's success due to the fidelity of implementation of the RTI framework. The primary purpose of the professional development training is to provide staff members with training that increases their ability to identify, address, and support students' academic needs through the RTI framework.

## Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

Professional development training for most educators is the primary method utilized to assess new knowledge, instructional practices, and clarify misconceptions about previous learning. The professional development training provides guidance on skills, practices, and resources available to effectively address students' academic needs. The professional development training for this project was created for Elementary School E to broaden staff members understanding of the RTI framework and provide an opportunity for staff members to expand and refine their knowledge of RTI tools and practices through the various sessions. The magnitude and the impact of this training are essential

for teachers and students. A few options that can be utilized if the limitations are too

great to implement the four-day training at this time:

- After school training extended over the next 90 days to facilitate the quality
  and the intensity needed to meet teacher's needs.

- Saturday RTI camps that will allow teachers the flexibility to participate in
  the training (camps could be half day or whole day).

- Record the training and teachers can access on line (Schoology) and include
  area to have live discussions, questions, and answers.

According to the findings the district could implement a few other

remediation options. The district could incorporate RTI training in the

professional development cycle for all teachers throughout the year. Model

expectations and changes to the framework to ensure consistency of application

and fidelity of implementation of the RTI tools. The district could also include

training on fidelity observations to ensure that the interventions and the RTI

framework are being implemented according to the districts operational

guidelines.

Strickland (2009) stated that high-quality professional development training

represents implementation of researched-based practices in how we teach and

how we learn. Addressing the needs of adult learners requires leaders to consider

interests, learning styles, and staff member's commitment to work together as

dedicated and enthusiastic learners in a professional learning community. The

training in this project primary goal is to enrich the lives of the participants with

knowledge and skills that can be transferred to the classroom and in their daily work ethic.

## Scholarship, Project Development, and Leadership and Change

**Scholarship**

Scholarship is a method utilized at all levels of education. Scholarship starts with inquiry about a challenge or concern. In this study, my journey begins with several questions concerning the quality, quantity, and intensity of Tier II support utilizing research-based interventions. The data showed there was minimal progress made in reading and math for third-grade grade through fifth-grade students. After an extensive evaluation of archival data, participants interview and surveys, I was able to identify an area of concern within my school district. The next step involves reviewing relevant data and literature after the problem is identified, scholarship involves researching relevant data and peer-reviewed literature to identify possible solutions to the problem.

My doctoral experience has increased my abilities as a scholar practitioner. I have a better understanding of research methods that change the quality of instruction for the teacher and students. The scholar practitioner is a change agent that utilizes data to increase social change for members of the learning community. This study has provided me with a clear understanding of how social change can impact all members of the learning community.  As a scholar practitioner I am able to take the data gathered through the various learning experiences on this journey and transfer the knowledge and skills to my daily work experiences. My goal throughout this learning experience was to grow as a learner and facilitator of learning. The journey has increased my knowledge and

understanding of teaching and learning and how quality work will always render some form of social change. Social change goes deeper than the project that we complete for this program, it goes into everything that we do and say as educators and ensuring that the research that we utilize to support our decisions, actions, and viewpoints have been checked for credibility and validity

The knowledge and information that I have received from Walden University has changed my outlook on my profession and my life. The university leadership has done a great job of acquiring outstanding professors and supportive staff to address the needs of each individual student throughout the course work.  During the study and project the chair, second chair, University Research Reviewer (URR) member, and the IRB committee ensured that the standards of high quality education were enforced through each stage of the process. The project was developed based on the data gathered from archival documents, the interviews and the RTI survey of staff member's opinions of their experiences with the RTI process, training, and RTI tools. The findings showed a significant need of professional development training that was noted throughout the analysis of interviews, coding of data, and the developed themes. Based on the findings, professional development was the appropriate selection to address staff members concerns, misconceptions, and current challenges with the RTI framework.

**Project Development and Evaluation**

This project was developed based on challenges that teachers were having with the RTI process and my desire to gather clarity on the fidelity that interventions are being implemented and the support provided by the district and campus to staff members in the

implementation of the RTI process. Bellanca (2015) stated that deeper understanding

prepares students to master core curriculum, engage in critical thinking problem-solving

skills, communicate successfully, and acquire skills for self-directed learning. I trust that

the research will provide staff members with methods and procedures that result in

students learning at deeper levels. DuFour and DuFour (2015) stated that deeper learning

is the ability to take the knowledge learned and transfer cognitive, intrapersonal, and

interpersonal knowledge to new situations.

Throughout the project development phase, I used peer-reviewed articles to gather

clarity about the strategic process in place and the challenges that staff members are

experiencing during the RTI process. I believe that this new knowledge and information

will allow me, as an administrator, to facilitate teaching and learning for staff members

and students through purposeful and meaningful professional development training. The

qualitative case study collected data from interviews and surveys, analyzed and coded

data into themes that addressed the research questions, and guided the literature review

and the subsequent RTI project. As I acquired more information, I was able to develop

and refine those goals. Aligning my goals, the research study's problem, and review of

peer-reviewed literature addressing the project, increased the credibility of the project and

provided evidence in order to understand why aspects of the project were developed.

Maintaining a systematic process allowed me to reflect on each stage of the project

during the development process. As a project developer, I learned that my review of

relevant, current, peer-reviewed literature assisted me in determining whether the

participants would achieve the goals. In addition, I learned that the formative and

summative evaluations of aspects of my project should be specifically and explicitly discussed. As the developer of this project, it is important to determine whether participants achieved each goal and to what extent.

**Leadership and Change**

Swanson and Lloyd (2013) stated that the educational system that was in place for the baby boomers generation is not equipped to prepare students for the 21st century. Effective leadership of change includes purposeful and planned task with a clear emphasis on what is essential, supportive, and has a capacity to nurture collegiality in a risk-free environment (Tourish, 2012).   Educational leaders of change create environments that exude personal qualities such as honesty, reliability, flexibility, originality and the ability to make connections (Cardno, 2012).

The training sessions for this project focused on providing staff members with clarification of the RTI framework and the expectations and procedures for implementation of the RTI tools and Tier II interventions. Campus leadership sets the tone for all training sessions presented throughout the school year. The leadership is crucial to staff commitment, dedication, and engagement during the training as well as the transfer of knowledge after the training. The findings of the study if implemented and addressed will impact systemic change for the district, campus, staff members and students. The impact of this change will modify and adjust current practices with the intent and purpose of improving the fidelity of RTI practices as well as improving strategic processes for teachers and students.

**Reflective Analysis**

My doctoral experience has been enriched with learning experiences that have been applicable and transferable to my daily work experiences. The level of work, discourse with professors and students, and the high expectations for every learning experience has made this journey of great value and worth. The opportunity to culminate the learning with a research experience solidifies the significance and the need for such a creditable program for educators. My goal throughout this learning experience was to grow as a learner and facilitator of learning. The journey has increased my knowledge and understanding of teaching and learning and how quality work will always render some form of social change. Social change goes deeper than the project that we complete for this program, it goes into everything that we do and say as educators and ensuring that the research that we utilize to support our decisions, actions, and viewpoints have been checked for credibility and validity.

**Analysis of self as a scholar.** As I reflect back over my journey at Walden University, I can see my own personal growth and knowledge of how to address, engage, and incorporate adult learners in the learning environment. I have a deeper understanding of how social changes can alter the instructional practices of a campus and district. I also recognize the importance of readers being the facilitator of knowledge. Throughout this journey I have been challenged to see outside of the box, to see through the lens of others, my doctoral experience has been enriched with learning experiences that have been applicable and transferable to my daily work experiences. The level of work,

discourse with professors and students, and the high expectations for every learning experience has made this journey of great value and worth.

The opportunity to culminate the learning with a research experience solidifies the significance and the need for such a creditable program for educators. My goal throughout this learning experience was to grow as a learner and facilitator of learning. The journey has increased my knowledge and understanding of teaching and learning and how quality work will always render some form of social change. Social change goes deeper than the project that we complete for this program, it goes into everything that we do and say as educators and ensuring that the research that we utilize to support our decisions, actions, and viewpoints have been checked for credibility and validity. Through the course work and the scholarly research, I have gained a better appreciation and understanding of the researcher's responsibility to maintain confidentiality and the protection of participant's rights throughout the research process. I have obtained a new level of knowledge and respect for the RTI framework and the importance of teachers' perspectives in providing clarity about their experiences and the impact that it has on student growth.

The research process has taught me how to be patient and flexible during the data collection process and the importance of input from your chair and second chair member. This learning experience has strengthened my desire and capacity to gather data and seek out information, which will assist me in my responsibility as a facilitator and instructional leader. The comradery that was gained during the course work allowed me opportunities to collaborate about academic challenges and to see the education process through the

lens of educators all over the world. The knowledge that I have learned throughout this journey will enable me to bring about social change in my current work endeavors, future work endeavors, and future leadership roles.

**Analysis of self as practitioner.** The Walden University journey has challenged me to apply the learning concepts to my daily interactions with staff and students. The culminating project was enriched by the weekly interactions with my chair who directed and guided me through the various stages with high expectations and due diligence. The ability to receive feedback from my chair and methodologist was essential to my growth and development. The work that I was able to perform throughout this doctorial process reflects the professors who were relentless and firm about the dispositions that Walden University have in place, and they refused to allow me to succumb to substandard work ethics. I am thankful for the support, guidance and direction that my committee members provided me throughout this journey.

I am grateful for the direction and the support that my district's executive officer provided me in clarifying the district guidelines for research, quick response to any questions that I may have had during this process, and her support in organizing/restructuring my request for research. The success of this finished project would not have been possible without the participants who set aside time to interview with me and complete the RTI school readiness survey. They opened up their hearts and shared their experiences and thoughts on current practices implemented for RTI and Tier II interventions. The greatest impact of this project and my journey at Walden University

will be to see the changes implemented at Elementary School E and throughout the district.

**Analysis of Self as Project Developer.** Through the well organized and planned course of study I have developed the knowledge and skills required to study the literature, connect data to a theory or conceptual framework, create a prospectus and study, consider ethical concerns for research participants, obtain IRB approval, collect the data, analyze the data, and present the findings with a culminating evaluation project to address the findings of the research. As a project developer, I have learned how to look at research though a different set of lenses (researcher and the readers). The project selected for this study begins with my own personal experiences as a parent, classroom teacher, and administrator with the RTI process. As an educator the goal is to meet the needs of all students every day.

The RTI process is a tool that if implemented with fidelity can provide academic support to address the needs of students who are struggling with grade level content. The desire to gain an understanding of teachers' perspective of current processes and the impact that it has on students' growth was increased when the district began to emphasize that students were not making the academic growth although they were receiving Tier II interventions. As I completed my course work and began working with my chair and committee members on my project the level of intensity of the work and the expectations increased which required me to stay focused and committed. I learned how to remove myself from the equation and to strive to provide an accurate representation of the staff member's opinions and experiences. The Elementary School E in this study is

representative of several campuses in my district with similar demographics and academic challenges. The project may provide relevant and valid information that will be a catalyst for social change throughout the RTI process in my district.

## Reflection on the Importance of the Work

The development of a project that specifically focuses on a viable component of the education system is critical in changing the support that we provide all students. The RTI framework addresses the needs of all students at all levels of the learning spectrum. The professional development training and the PLC follow-up sessions will provide teachers with new information to change or increase the quality, quantity, and frequency of interventions. The opportunity to collaborate with other educators throughout the professional development training will increase teacher self-efficacy during Tier I and Tier II support. Teachers across the United States are all at different points and places in the implementation of RTI. The challenge to close achievement gaps and provide students with instruction that provides them all with a fair and appropriate education is a responsibility of all educators.

The fidelity of implementation is essential to improving the level of support that teachers provide in core instruction and during intervention. The participants within this study shared a concern in implementation of the RTI tools (progress monitoring, data-driven decisions, and implementation) according to the design and fidelity as designed by the researcher. The PD focuses on increasing teachers' self-efficacy, collaboration skills, and knowledge and understanding of the components of the RTI framework. All the participants in this study agreed that the PD sessions would increase teachers' abilities to

implement the interventions with fidelity thus increasing student's achievement and closing the achievement gaps. The project is important because as educators, student success is a part of our mission and vision. The training will allow participants to become more knowledgeable through various activities that incorporate hands on exploration with the Tier II interventions, which will clarify misconceptions about the interventions and increase teacher's abilities to support students during Tier I and Tier II support.

<div align="center"><strong>Implications, Applications and Directions for Future Research</strong></div>

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

The qualitative study revealed that professional development training and follow-up PLC sessions could address the challenges that Elementary School E identified. The training offers staff a broader understanding of the RTI process and the implementation of Tier II interventions with the goal of increasing the capacity of teachers and students. The data showed that the Previous RTI training did not address teacher's ability to implement the interventions with fidelity and RTI training was only presented at the beginning of the school year, and the RTI training only focused on the components of RTI not the changes to the RTI operational guidelines. The professional development sessions will provide teachers with clarification of the skills needed to apply the RTI tools according to student's needs.

The training will also provide staff member's guidance on how to evaluate current procedures to ensure that they are being implemented accurately, frequently, and with the quality to produce academic growth. The training will include 4 days of training and five follow-up PLC sessions that will provide educators with the tools to synthesize Tier II

intervention goals, focus collaborative meetings around student's growth, and identify standards for the quality of work accepted and implemented. In addition, the training will focus on examining data, dedicating the resources for interventions, and attending to the needs of a diverse population (Blackburn, 2014).

**Applications**

Based on the training sessions and the follow-up PLC sessions, I believe that the staff will transform the quality of the implementation of interventions, which will render an increase in student's achievement on benchmark assessments and state assessments. The purpose of RTI is to help all students meet grade level expectations including struggling students (NASDE, 2010). One application is to implement the project at Elementary School E or one of the other campuses with similar demographics and Social Economic Status (SES). I would also like to present the findings to the Local Education Agencies (LEA) and peer-reviewed educational journals to share staff member's perceptions and experiences.

The campus will benefit because staff members' ability to collaborate in the follow-up PLC sessions will continue the learning process where the teachers no longer serve as the sole source of knowledge but the PLC committee work corporately to address individual student's needs according to the training sessions, data from progress monitoring, and documentation of students' work.

**Directions of Future Research**

Future research may increase the range of this project to decide whether the PD increased teachers' ability to implement Tier II interventions with fidelity. In addition,

follow-up research can be implemented to determine if the core instruction and Tier I support is provided with fidelity and the impact the instruction has on Tier II support. I believe that the knowledge of staff member's misconceptions will assist leaders in the direction to move for additional professional development training.  An additional direction for future research could involve research at the primary level (K-2nd) to explore if the implementation at the primary grades is similar or different from the intermediate grades (3rd-5th Grade). Finally, leadership could implement an instructional rounds approach to observe, analyze, and provide direct feedback to adjust, modify, or change practices with suggestions on the next level of work at each network visit.

## Conclusion

This study provided insight on how professional development training can provide clarity about the RTI framework and the implementation of the RTI tools to support students' academic needs. The training will address implementation of intense instructional practices and the importance of the quality, frequency, and the fidelity that supportive measures are implemented according to data-driven decisions. The ability to reflect and review the findings supports the findings that this training was developed to address the needs of the teachers and the students at Elementary School E. The impact on social change will be measured by the changes in teacher's instructional practices and students' academic growth on benchmark and statewide assessments.

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Appendix A: The Project Study
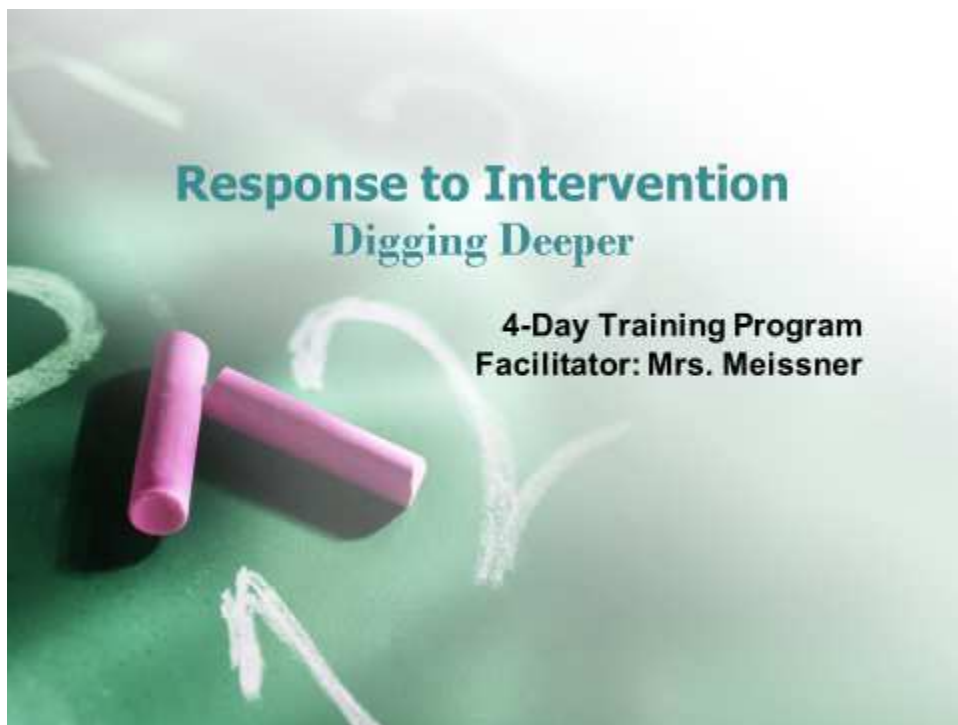




*The quality of a school as a learning community can be measured by how effectively it addresses the needs of struggling students."*
(Wright, 2010)

The goal of the project is to offer a comprehensive overview of RTI framework to address the challenges with implementation and the fidelity of interventions. Recent studies verified that efficacy of RTI implementation rest on support by the entire staff (Shapiro, 2010).

Take 2-3 minutes on the tablet at your table and define what RTI means to You.

After you have shared with your table your definition come up with one definition that represents a consensus for your table

## Define RTI

Response to Intervention (RtI) is an approach that schools use to help all students including struggling learners. The RtI approach gives Texas students opportunities to learn and work at their grade level. The idea is to help all students be successful.

-TEA website

"Without high quality initial instruction, significant numbers of students will require supplemental instruction and intensive intervention that are costly and time consuming...

A troubling misapplication of RtI is that Tier 2 supplemental support is often used to mitigate ineffective core instruction."

Fisher and Frey, 2010

RTI is a **student-focused** process that provides services based on student need without waiting on a label or waiting for failure, and **strengthens the core curriculum** and challenges educators to implement proactive, preventative, early interventions.

*"Without high quality initial instruction, significant numbers of students will require supplemental instruction and intensive intervention that are costly and time consuming...*

*A troubling misapplication of RtI is that Tier 2 supplemental support is often used to mitigate ineffective core instruction."*

Fisher and Frey, 2010

Research from Katie Haycock at the Education Trust indicates it takes two years for a student to recover from a poor teacher. With two years of poor instruction a student never recovers. The strength of the learning environment comes from the quality instruction of the core curriculum. Turn and talk with your shoulder partner regarding how Haycock's research connects with Fisher and Frey's research.

## Day 1 Agenda

| | |
|---|---|
| 8:00 am – 9:00 am | Outlines of the Training and lite breakfast |
| 9:00 am – 10:30 am | Team Building Activity/Jeopardy RTI Knowledge |
| 10:30 am –11:00 am | RTI Overview and Purpose |
| 11:00 am –11:30 am | Make a Connection/Reflection |
| 11:30 am –12:00 Noon | Review video of RTI process/table talk |

**Afternoon Session**

| | |
|---|---|
| 12:00 Noon -1:30 pm | Working Lunch |
| 1:30 pm –2:00 pm | Discussion of the RTI Operational Guidelines |
| 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm | Review RTI Tools Campus/District |
| 3:00 pm –4:00 pm | Review Tier I and Tier II Support |
| 4:00 pm – 4:30 pm | Reflection, Review and Closure |

## Goal of Training

It is the goal of the planned training sessions, that participants will exhibit the following behavioral outcomes:

- Participants will be able to identify student with academic challenges and implement Tier I support effectively

- Provide interventions based on students academic needs (Tier I support is ongoing).

- Participants will interpret progress monitoring tools, unit assessments, and classroom course work as documentation to show students progress.

## Goals of Training

- Participants will recognize differences between Tier I and Tier II support.

- Educators will be able to justify changes to intervention plan based on data driven decisions.

- Teachers will understand how to properly document students progress to validate progress.

- Participants will observe fidelity of implementation of interventions to manage students growth.

Team 1

# Team Building Activity-Jeopardy

| Problem Solving Model | Acronyms | Basic Knowledge | Why RTI? | Tiers |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| 200 | 200 | 200 | 200 | 200 |
| 300 | 300 | 300 | 300 | 300 |
| 400 | 400 | 400 | 400 | 400 |
| 500 | 500 | 500 | 500 | 500 |

To assess where we are we will participate in a Jeopardy game. Your table can collaborate to select the topic and the amount for the question. Answer must be submitted by one table mate and prior to the time running out. Educators we are very competitive, so remember what we tell our students this is a learning experience to increase our knowledge and everyone will not win every time they play or participate in a game.

Team 1

# Team Building Activity-Jeopardy

| Problem Solving Model | Acronyms | Basic Knowledge | Why RTI? | Tiers |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| What is measurable baseline data? | What is RTI? | What is a triangle? | What is don't wait for children to fail? | Intensive instructional or behavioral interventions |
| What is the first step of the PSM? | What is CBM? | What is Benchmark Assessment? | What are two Federal laws guiding RTI? | The CORE curriculum for all students |
| What is Develop a Plan? | What is NCLB? | What is Differentiated Instruction? | What is the Discrepancy Model? | Supplemental instruction or behavior strategies for small groups |
| What is Implement the Plan? | What does IDEA stand for? | What are the 5 "Big Ideas of Reading"? | Who are the stakeholders involved with the RTI team? | Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI) and Do the Math |
| What are the four steps in the problem solving process? | What are SMI/SRI? | What is Research Based Interventions? | What is fidelity of intervention? | Beginning at Tier I and throughout all Tiers of the RTI Process |

# Team Building Activity-Jeopardy

Team 1

| Problem Solving Model | Acronyms | Basic Knowledge | Why RTI? | Tiers |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| What needs to be analyzed when beginning the problem solving process? | What is Response to Intervention? | What is the geometric shape that represents the RtI Model? | What is Response to Intervention? | What is Tier III |
| What is the first step of the problem solving process? | What is Curriculum Based Measures? | The benchmark assessment (min 3Xper year) of all students compared to age or grade level standards. | What are NCLB and IDEA? | What is Tier I |
| What is the second step in the process to collaborate and develop a plan | What is the No Child Left Behind Act? | Instruction that matches specific strengths and needs of each student | What is the previous model used to determine LD eligibility? | What is Tier II |
| What is the third step in the process put the plan into action | What are the Scholastic Math Inventory and Scholastic Reading Inventory | Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Fluency, vocabulary and Comprehension | Who are parents, teachers, administrators and special staff members | Tier II research-based interventions |
| Define the problem, develop a plan, implement the plan, assess & evaluate the plan | What is the Individual with Disabilities Education Act? | Instructional programs, strategies, methods, and materials that have been proven to work. | What is implementing the intervention with the quality, frequency, and quantity recommended by developer. | At what Tier should parents be informed of their child participation in interventions? |

To assess where we are we will participate in a Jeopardy game. Your table can collaborate to select the topic and the amount for the question. Answer must be submitted by one table mate and prior to the time running out. Educators we are very competitive, so remember what we tell our students this is a learning experience to increase our knowledge and everyone will not win every time they play or participate in a game.

# Eggspert

A Eggspert will be located at each table Participants will buzz in to answer question.

**RTI is.........**

the process of providing students high-quality
instruction/intervention based on student needs
*and*
using rigorous learning over time
And quality of work with fidelity
*to*
make data driven decisions
Individualized for each student

In all RTI implementations, there are some things that are constant and some things that differ from school to school. These components are systematic to all RTI implementations. The sequence of implementation when done with fidelity produces quality or work and ease of implementation. Researched-based interventions/instructional practices are presented to increase students' academic success and close achievement gaps. The extent that they exist. Data-driven decisions are collected over time for all students who struggle. These data form an important basis for instructional decision making. Decisions in RTI are made based on student progress, not opinion. Stated simply, when we use data, we make better decisions.



**RTI is....**

- **About ALL kids**
  - *Begins with universal screening*
    - **Calls for collaboration and teamwork - - focused on student learning**

## Tiers of Framework

### Tier 1 is

* **the core curriculum**
  * *All students are Tier 1*
  * *Everything that is done everyday by effective classroom teacher to meet the needs of all students*

➤ *80-90% will make progress and be successful in Tier 1.*

## Tier I Support

* On Easel Make a T-Chart on one side put Tier 1 Support and the other side Why?

* You Have 3 minutes to list as many Tier I supports that you can think of as a group.

* Discuss with your table mates your list. Now share your list with the group at the next table.

* You have 3 minutes to justify why these are Tier I support methods.

Developments in instructional practices has increased educators processes in addressing students' academic needs. The knowledge of instructional practices has changed and we have a better understanding of what works with students' academic challenges.

# Tier 2 Request Form

- Student_____ ID_____ Grade_____
- Campus_____ Teacher_____ Date_____
- Person making request_____
- ⬜ Parent ⬜ Teacher ⬜ Other _____
- Service(s) Requested (Check all that apply):
- ⬜ Academic Assistance
- ⬜ Behavioral Assistance
- ⬜ Other _____
- 
- Comments (Be specific about concerns with student):
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- 
- Signature of Person Making Request _____
- Request for
- RtI Tier 2 Initial Meeting

# Tier 2 Form 1 Initial Request

Think about that one student that you worked with all year and tried various scaffolding strategies. This is your opportunity to describe this student and their challenges to the RTI team on the handout at your table Form 1 take 3 minutes and provide information that will allow the RTI team to see the academic challenges of this student,

**Talking Poker Chip**

- Each person will get two chips out of the container at the center of your table.
- You are only allowed to talk while you have the chip
- Each person will share there information about the student identified on Form 1. Active listening no talking.
- Share what data supports the students challenges

**Tier II Referral**

- Initiated by a staff member.
- Complete top section and bottom sections
- Comments: Specific concerns about student
  - ➢ Cannot multiply two digit numbers.
  - ➢ Cannot follow directions exceeding three steps.
  - ➢ Cannot sequence events after reading a three paragraph passage.
- Submit to Campus RtI Coordinator

**How does specific detail assist in determining student's needs? Share with a partner what happens when you don't have specific details.**

## Specific Detail

- Using the graphic organizer identify specific details for reading and math for Tier 2 support
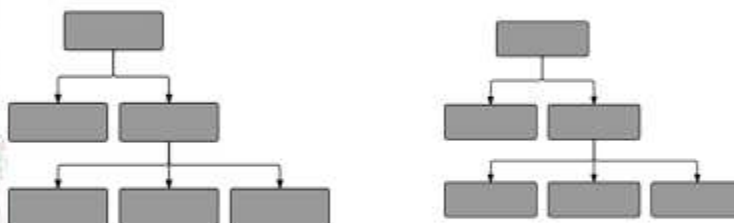
Your Table mates will identify if the information is specific or need more detail. Be prepared to share 1 reading and 1 math with the whole group.

Tier 3 = more intensive intervention

- Smaller group

- Increased time and frequency

- More explicit instruction

The small percentage of students that fall in Tier III are students who will need core instruction PLUS something supplemental in order to become proficient. This tier is often called intensive instruction. That is focused on one to two areas, direct instruction that is intensified by time and quality of instruction and that increases the frequency that the student receives the academic support.

## Make a Connection: Read the points below:

1. All students are part of a educational system.
2. Use scientific, research-based instruction
3. Use formative/summative assessments
4. Use collaborative RTI team to evaluate, assess and make decisions on changes to interventions or level of support provided.
5. Decisions are based on a continuum of students needs
6. Quality of professional development supports effective instruction for all students
7. Leadership is vital

Do you **agree** or **disagree** with the statements? Why? Think, Turn, Talk and be prepared to share with group

Watch Video RTI Data in Action and table talk about the video and share questions or thoughts relating to our reality

Working Lunch: Read the Operational Guidelines and be prepared to discuss after lunch.



# RTI Operational Guidelines

1. Provide RTI training to teachers and other campus staff summer of each year and ongoing as needed

2. All students in Pre-K-8 will participate in benchmark screenings in reading and math 3 times per year

3. Collect relevant work samples ongoing throughout the RTI process at least two samples per week.

4. Preconference with parent regarding progress on classroom interventions prior to initial RTI meeting.

5. Conduct RTI meetings according to Tier II and Tier III problem solving agendas. The RTI Team will review data to decide on correct placement.

## RTI Operational Guidelines Cont'd

6. Classroom teacher conference with parents of targeted student about concerns and interventions ongoing throughout the process.

7. Document interventions in student success plan at a minimum 3 x per week.

8. Campus RTI Coordinator monitors all documentation and provides supervision and training to teachers regarding documentation as needed.

9. Administrators will monitor RTI process to ensure compliance and to verify that appropriate supports are being provided to students.

**Each table will have a large copy of the operational guidelines.**

## RTI Tools Tier I

- Differentiated Instruction
- Graphic Organizers
- Small Group Work / Cooperative Grouping
- Questioning Strategies
- Student Discource
- Additional / Modified Practice
- 1:1 Feedback and Redirect
- Parent Contact / Parent Conference

## Tier II Interventions

**Reading**
- Accelerated Reading with approved curriculum
- Comprehension at the Core S.G.I.
- Leveled Literacy Instruction (LLI)
- Rosetta Stone
- Wilson Reading

**Math**
- Carnegie Math
- FASTT Math
- Fraction Nation
- Do the Math
- Strategic Math

**Take a laptop from the cart and using the login information login as a student for one of the Tier II interventions. Identify how you feel placed on an intervention with no information about the intervention.**

## Tier II Interventions

- Work with a partner and follow the lead of the Curriculum Instruction Specialist.
- Interventions implemented with fidelity- work for the next 25 minutes on Tier II interventions.
- Hands on exploration prior to implementation

- Specific instruction based on
- students needs

- Targeted Tutorials

- Time on Task No Time to Waste

**Share with your partner how working with the intervention has changed your perspective of the benefit to your students.**

## Reflection Questions or Thoughts

Share with table group your thoughts about the
items discussed. On the paper provided
create a list of your groups reflections. Place your
questions on the post-it stickers
provided and place on the right side of your sheet?
The yellow card
Is your ticket out today to share one point that you
will
implement immediately when you return to campus

Day 2 Agenda

| Time | Activity |
|---|---|
| 8:00 am – 9:00 am | Critical Learning, Discussion of Initial Referral |
| 9:00 am – 10:00 am | Review of Tier I Instructional Support |
| 10:00 am–10:35 am | Breakout Session (Implementation Phase Tier I Tools) |
| 10:35 am –11:00 am | Presentation of Strategic Support Tier II |
| 11:00 am –12:00 Noon | Small Group Session: Utilizing Tier II Interventions |
| 12:00 Noon –1:30 pm | Working Lunch |
| 1:30 pm – 3:00 pm | Large Group Forum of Similarities/Differences of Tier I and Tier II Support |
| 3:00 pm – 3:15 pm | Break |
| 3:15 pm – 4:00 pm | Small Group Session: Data Based Decisions/Next Level of Work |
| 4:00 pm – 4:30 pm | Reflection, Review and Closure |

## Data Review:
### Response to Intervention is a data-based, data-driven process.

### 1. Universal Screening:
- Assessment of all students with the purpose of identifying those students who have not or are not making acceptable progress in the core curriculum.

- Those students are targeted for classroom and/or campus interventions.

Reading Screen:
- 1st –2nd          TPRI
- 3rd, 4th, 5th     SRI & STAAR
- Kindergarten      Mid-year TPRI

Math Screen:
- K-2nd              MCLASS:Math (kindergarten mid-year)
- 3rd, 4th, 5th      SMI & STAAR

## Tier I Process and support

Students not meeting standard receive classroom differentiation and Tier 1 interventions right away.

A grade level ranking is determined—(98 out of 100 students or bottom 5%, 10%).

After 4-6 weeks, if a student is not responding to instruction and interventions, the teacher

- conferences with parent about concerns and interventions

- compiles work samples/assessment data (running records, common assessments, writing samples, fluency probes, any work that provides evidence of student's lack of progress)

- consults with RtI Coordinator and completes a Tier 2 RtI Meeting Request FORM 1

- completes Section I of RtI Folder – places in classroom RtI file

- has nurse complete the Health Information FORM 3.

Form 1

## Request for
## RtI Tier II Initial Meeting

Complete and return to RtI Coordinator (Please print)

Student_____ ID_____

Grade_____

Campus _____Teacher _____Date

_____

Person making request_____

☐ Parent ☐ Teacher ☐ Other _____

Service(s) Requested (Check all that apply):

☐ Academic Assistance

☐ Behavioral Assistance

☐ Other

_____

_____

---

## Form 1 Continued

Specific about concerns with student learning:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Tier I interventions provided and results (include frequency and duration):

_____
_____
_____

List dates of parent contact:

Signature of Person Making Request

_____

For RtI Coordinator use only:

Classroom observation assigned to

_____on _____ (date).

## Initial Referral Tier I

Classroom teacher along with the RTI coordinator will review Referral and All Data Gathered (work samples/assessment data, *running records, common assessments, writing samples, fluency probes, any work that provides evidence of student's lack of progress)*

The RTI committee will review the data presented by the classroom teacher and determine Placement

If Placed, The RTI Team will develop Intervention Plan
1. Identify Goals
2. Plan Intervention (duration, frequency, responsibility)
3. Schedule Progress Monitoring
4. Schedule Follow-up Meeting5
5. Create Student Success Plan
6. Print SSP, Sign, and Place in Folder
7. Communicate Interventions & Expectations to All Parties

Discuss at your table what this process looks like based on your experiences. How is it similar and how is it different. Be prepared to share out with the whole group.

## Tier 1 Interventions

- Positive growth mindset language
- Learning tasks at application/DOK Level 2 or above
- Higher- Level questioning

Support and scaffolding:
- Modeling, think aloud, worked examples, success criteria, rubrics
- Activating and building on prior knowledge
- Think time, talk time
- Pre-teach vocabulary
- Graphic organizers, anchor charts, word walls, math models
- Chunking, gradual release

Demonstration of learning:
- Student responses, discourse, questions, and language are at the application level or higher
- Students are taking ownership of their learning by interacting with the academic content though discourse and collaboration
- Students are articulating purpose, relevance, and success criteria
- Students are tracking, monitoring, justifying, and celebrating their progress.

Table Discussion: At your table discuss the Tier I interventions and on the paper provided provide examples of Growth mindset language utilized in your instruction, processes or procedures that you utilize to support and scaffold students learning and how will students demonstrate the learning provide at least 2-3 examples.

**Take a laptop and try another Tier II intervention**



Working Lunch: Continue your discussions of the Tier II interventions and be prepared to share one point of new information that will help you be more effective with implementation of the Tier II interventions



Large Group Forum of Similarities and Differences of Tier I and Tier II Support

Learning Objective:

1. Table groups will review "Classroom Instruction that Works" And "Rigor and the Classroom" Each group will be assigned a chapter that aligns to two of the Tier I and Tier II support methods. (20 minutes to read and 15 minutes to discuss chapter with group).

2. Table groups will have 15 minutes to create charts: graphic organizers and visual aids can be utilize to clarify your groups points. Ensure that you make connections to reading and math for your Tier I and Tier II support methods on your chart.

3. The table group will have 30 minutes to share their information with other groups and each group will add information from their reading that aligns to the support method presented.

4. After learning about similarities and differences of Tier I and Tier II support methods participants will get in groups with their grade level and propose the Tier I and Tier II support methods that fits the needs of learners at their grade level (30 minutes to collaborate).

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Break 3:15- 3:30

Data Based Decision: The Next Level of Work

Group Discussion: Identify at your table a list of the reasons data based decisions are essential to the next level of work.

## Transforming Data

- Data into information
- Information into knowledge
- Knowledge into understanding
- Data clarifies issues or concerns
- Data to identify cause
- Data to monitor or adjust work
- Data to inform and guide discussions
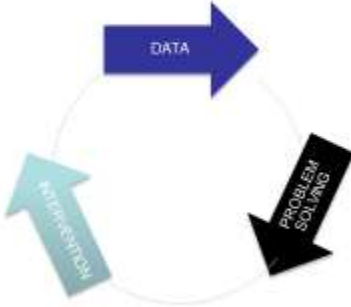
# Possible Tier II Interventions

- Reading
  - Accelerated Reading with approved curriculum
  - Comprehension Tool Kit
  - LLI
  - Wilson Reading

- Science / Social Studies
  - Classroom Interventions

- Math
  - FASTT Math
  - Fraction Nation
  - Do the Math
  - Strategic Math

20%

## What is Response to Intervention?
### *The Big 3*

DATA

PROBLEM SOLVING

INTERVENTION

June 2011

Liz Angoff, PhD,
Oakland Unified School

## The Big 3 Cycle

- This cycle happens over and over until we find the problem and can solve it.
- Notice data is at the top. This is probably the biggest change when it comes to "doing RTI" – data becomes the center of your practice.
  - Benchmark and CST is not enough
  - We need immediate and formative data
- Blood pressure metaphor –
  - our screening data lets us know who is at risk and we know the standard protocol interventions,
  - further diagnostic data let's us know any specific difficulties they have or needs

**Progress Monitoring- Share at your table one experience**

## Tier I – Possible Interventions

- Differentiated Instruction
- Graphic Organizers
- Small Group Work / Cooperative Grouping
- Questioning Strategies
- Before / After School Tutorials
- Additional / Modified Practice
- 1:1 Feedback and Redirect
- Parent Contact / Parent Conference

100%

Reminder: just because a student is on Tier II, we do NOT stop the Tier I interventions for the child; they run concurrently.
Progress Monitoring happens-on-going at every Tier



## The RTI Pyramid
### Data, Problem Solving, Intervention

TIER 3
Data: Add'l Diagnostics/PM
Problem Solving: SSP
Intervention: Intensify

TIER 2
Data: Diagnostic Assessment/Progress Monitoring
Problem Solving: Collaborative Team
Intervention: More time + more targeted

TIER 1
Data: Universal Screening
Problem Solving: Professional Learning Communities
Intervention: Core Curriculum & Small Group Instruction

Created by Liz Angoff, PhD, Oakland
Unified School District, June 2011

## Tier II – Progress Monitoring

- Intervention Teacher
  - *Implement intervention with fidelity*
  - *Record student progress according to Tier II Plan in SSP*
  - *May record additional Notes*

- Classroom Teacher
  - *Record continued classroom interventions in SSP*

As part of the progress monitoring, teachers must document in SSP with the frequency as indicated by the RTI committee. Any paper-based documentation to support commentary in the SSP needs to be scanned and placed in the student's electronic folder.  Teachers must provide the works samples to the RTI Coordinator for scanning.

## Tier II – Follow up Meeting(s)

- Review Student Progress

- Based on progress, make recommendation:
  - *(MS) Met Standard: remove student from intervention*
  - *(MP) Making Progress: continue intervention and monitoring*
  - *(I) Insufficient Progress: adjust plan and/or move to Tier III Interventions*

- Update SSP, print, sign and place in folder

- Communicate Interventions & Expectations to All Parties

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*RtI is so much more than the required thing to do.*

*It is the right thing to do for students.*

*It calls for all of us to join hands in this important work of ensuring the learning of all students.*

**Evaluation Tools**

Evaluation of the professional development session will concentrate on the usefulness of the professional development sessions in increasing teacher understanding of Response to Intervention (RtI): Tier II interventions and RTI tools incorporated to improve students level of understanding and application of grade level content.

Each professional development session will conclude with a summative evaluation of the session. Each participant will complete a questionnaire that captures the perceptions of the effectiveness of the training sessions.

# Why RTI in EISD?

Response to Intervention is one of the ways EISD is increasing the academic support provided to students.

We aim to:
- *Identify challenges on the onset*
- *Provide support and resources*
- *Solve small concerns before they become big issues*

- RTI allows us to start helping students NOW
  - *We can help students performing below grade level before they fail*
  - *We can provide students with interventions and the tools to access grade level content through Tier support*
  - *We can identify students who need additional assistance and intensify support based on students needs*
  - *We can increase students confidence and cultivate their love for learning*

Appendix B: Response-to-intervention School Readiness Survey

This survey will explore and collect data on teachers perception of the RTI process and

the challenges teacher have when implementing and documenting Tier 2 interventions

and maintaining fidelity of the process.

Last Updated: 19 January 2006



Response-to-Intervention School Readiness Survey

Introduction: To implement RTI effectively, schools must become familiar with

specialized set of tools and competencies, including a structured format for problem-

solving, knowledge of a range of scientifically based interventions that address common

reasons for school failure, and the ability to use various methods of assessment to

monitor students' progress in academic and behavioral areas.

The *RTI School Readiness Survey* is an informal measure designed to help schools to

identify those elements of RTI that they are already skilled in and those elements that

need additional attention.

   Directions. This survey is divided into the following sections:

1. RTI: Understand the Model
2. RTI: Use Teams to Problem-Solve
3. RTI: Select the Right Intervention
4. RTI: Monitor Students Progress
5. RTI: Graph Data for Visual Analysis


Complete the items in each section. After you have finished the entire survey, identify
any sections in which your school needs to improve its performance.

Next, go to RTI_Wire, the online directory of free Response-to-Intervention resources at: *http://www.jimwrightonline.com/php/rti/rti_wire.php*

| *1. RTI Understand the Model* | 0<br>Lack skills or basic knowledge of this model | 1<br>Just starting to learn this model (Beginning Phase) | 2<br>Developing an awareness of this model (Intermediate Phase) | 3<br>Fully knowledgeable in this model (Advanced Phase) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Staff members of successful RTI schools understand the RTI model and believe that this approach will benefit teachers as well as struggling learners. | | | | |
| At my school: | | | | |
| ♦the principal strongly supports Response-to-Intervention as a model for identifying educational disabilities. | | | | |
| ♦the staff has received an overview of the RTI model, understands its general features, and knows how RTI differs from the traditional 'test discrepancy' approach | | | | |
| ♦the majority of the staff (80 percent or more) appears ready to give the RTI model a try, believing that it may benefit teachers as well as students. | | | | |

| | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ◆all programs or resources that are intended to improve students' academics or behaviors are inventoried and organized into three levels, or Tiers.<br>(Tier I contains programs available to all students, such as class wide tutoring. Tier II addresses the needs of students who show emerging deficits and includes individualized intervention plans designed by the school's Intervention Team. Tier III is the most intensive level of assistance available in a school and includes special education services as well as such supports as Wrap-Around Teams for psychiatrically involved students.) | | | | |

| *2. RTI: Use Teams to Problem-Solve* | 0<br>Lack skills or basic knowledge of this practice | 1<br>Just starting to learn this practice (Beginning Phase) | 2<br>Developing skill with this practice (Intermediate Phase) | 3<br>Fully competent in this practice (Advanced Phase) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Successful RTI schools support teachers in the RTI process by encouraging them to refer struggling students to an Intervention Team. This Team is multi-disciplinary and follows a structured problem-solving model. | | | | |
| My school's Intervention Team… | | | | |
| ♦ is multi-disciplinary, and has members who carry a high degree of credibility with other staff in the building. | | | | |
| ♦ follows a formal problem-solving model during meetings. | | | | |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ♦ creates an atmosphere in which the referring teacher feels welcomed and supported. | | | | |
| ♦ collects background information / baseline data on the students to be used at the initial Intervention Team meeting. | | | | |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ♦ has inventoried school-wide resources that it can use in Team interventions. | | | | |
| ♦ selects academic & behavioral interventions that are 'scientifically based' | | | | |
| ♦ sets clear, objective, measurable goals for students' progress | | | | |
| ♦ selects methods of assessment (e.g., Curriculum-Based Measurement, DIBELS) to track students' progress at least weekly during the intervention. | | | | |
| ♦ documents the quality of the referring teacher's efforts in implementing the intervention ('intervention integrity'). | | | | |
| ♦ holds 'follow-up' meetings with the referring teacher to review students' progress and judge whether the intervention was effective. | | | | |

| ## 3. RTI: Select the Right Intervention | 0<br>Lack skills or basic knowledge of this practice | 1<br>Just starting to learn this practice(Beginning Phase) | 2<br>Developing skill with this practice (Intermediate Phase) | 3<br>Fully competent in this practice (Advanced Phase) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Successful RTI schools select interventions that match the student's underlying deficits or concerns, are scientifically based, and are feasible given the resources available. | | | | |
| My school… | | | | |
| ♦ has put together a library of effective, research-based intervention ideas for common student referral concerns--such as poor reading fluency and defiant behavior. | | | | |
| ♦ considers the likely 'root causes' of the student's academic or behavioral difficulties (e.g., skill deficit, lack of motivation) and chooses intervention strategies that logically address those root causes. | | | | |
| ♦ tailors intervention ideas as needed to be usable in real-world classrooms while being careful to preserve the 'treatment' qualities that make each intervention effective. | | | | |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ♦ formats intervention strategies as step-by-step teacher-friendly 'scripts' containing enough detail so that educators can easily understand how to put them into practice. | | | | |
| ♦ follows up with teachers soon after a classroom intervention has been put into place to ensure that the instructor has been able to start the intervention and is implementing it correctly,. | | | | |

| *4. RTI: Monitor Student Progress* | 0 Lack skills or basic knowledge of this practice | 1 Just starting to learn this practice (Beginning Phase) | 2 Developing skill with this practice (Intermediate Phase) | 3 Fully competent in this practice (Advanced Phase) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Successful RTI schools have the capacity to collect baseline data, as well as to conduct frequent progress monitoring of students in academic and behavioral areas. | | | | |
| My school can… | | | | |
| ♦ conduct structured classroom observations of students to determine rates of on-task behavior, academic engagement, work completion, and rates of positive or negative interactions with adults. | | | | |
| ♦ collect and assess student work products to assess the completeness and accuracy of the work--and to estimate the student time required to produce the work. | | | | |
| ♦ administer and score curriculum-based measurement (CBM) probes in basic skill areas: phonemic awareness, reading fluency, math computation, and writing. | | | | |
| ♦ use local or research norms (e.g., CBM), or criterion-based benchmarks (e.g., DIBELS) to judge the magnitude of a student's delays in basic academic skills. | | | | |
| ♦ create Daily Behavior Report Cards (DBRCs) or other customized rating forms to allow the | | | | |

| instructor to evaluate key student academic and general behaviors on a daily basis. | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *5. RTI: Graph Data for* Visual Analysis | 0<br>Lack skills or basic knowledge of this practice | 1<br>Just starting to learn this practice (Beginning Phase) | 2<br>Developing skill with this practice (Intermediate Phase) | 3<br>Fully competent in this practice (Advanced Phase) |
| Successful RTI schools routinely transform progress-monitoring data into visual displays such as time-series graphs to share with teachers, Intervention Team members, parents, and others. These displays demonstrate whether the student is benefiting from the intervention. | | | | |
| My school can… | | | | |
| ♦ convert progress-monitoring data into visual displays such as time-series graphs to aid in instructional and behavioral decision-making. | | | | |
| ♦ regularly share charted or graphed information with students, teachers, parents, and administrators as feedback about the effectiveness of the intervention. | | | | |

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Appendix C: Letter of Consent from Author

**Jim Wright <jimw13159@gmail.com>** 4:28 AM (9 hours ago)

to me

Ms. Meissner

Thanks for your email! You have my permission to use my RTI School Readiness Survey in your doctoral research. There is no charge for your use of this instrument.

Also, the RTI School Readiness Survey contains elements of RTI readiness that research shows that schools should have in place to promote RTI success. I have used the survey extensively in my own consultation with schools. However, I have carried out no studies to determine the validity or reliability of this instrument.

I wish you good fortune in your doctoral studies!

Best
Jim Wright
RTI/CCSS Trainer & Consultant
New York State-Certified School Psychologist & School Administrator
Website: http://www.interventioncentral.org/workshops

On Thu, Mar 12, 2015 at 5:22 AM, Intervention <noreply@interventioncentral.org> wrote:
Submitted on Thursday, March 12, 2015 - 05:22
Submitted by user:
Submitted User Agent: Mozilla/5.0 (compatible; MSIE 9.0; Windows NT 6.1; Trident/5.0)

Submitted values are:

Your Subject: Permission to use the RTI Survey Document in Doctoral Study
Your Email Address: doretha.meissner@waldenu.edu
Your Message:
Good Morning Mr. Wright,

I would like to thank you for the information that you have provided on Response to Intervention. I would like your permission to use the RTI school readiness survey as a tool to collect data from participants in my study on teachers' perspectives of the fidelity of Tier 2 interventions. Do I have

your permission to make explicit copies of the survey for my study? If there is a fee or any other requirements that need to be addressed could you provide me with the specifics. The university requires a written response from the copyright holder before permission will be granted to include the survey in the study. Could you please send me a response to this email to [doretha.meissner@waldenu.edu](mailto:doretha.meissner@waldenu.edu) granting permission to utilize the RTI school readiness survey in my study? Thank you in advance for all that you do to support educators in gathering data on staff's perspective of campus readiness. This information will be essential to identifying areas of concern and areas that require change in current practices.

Doretha Meissner
Doctoral Student
Walden University

Appendix C: Letter of Consent from Author

Tue 5/24/2016 5:40 PM

Dr. Liz liz@drlizangoff.com

Re: FW: Permission to use RTI slides in doctoral plan

Hello Doretha,

Thank you for contacting me - yes, please use the slides! All I ask is that you credit them to me. Good luck to you and your doctorate!

Take care,

Liz

--
Liz Angoff, PhD
Licensed Educational Psychologist
(510) 423-3329 (office)
www.DrLizAngoff.com

Offices:

61 Avenida de Orinda, #100
Orinda, CA 94563

3036 Regent Street
Berkeley, CA 94705

CONFIDENTIALITY NOTICE: This electronic mail transmission may contain privileged and/or confidential information only for use by the intended recipients. Any usage, distribution, copying or disclosure by any other person, other than the intended recipient, is strictly prohibited and may be subject to civil action and/or criminal penalties. If you received this transmission in error, please notify the sender by reply e-mail or by telephone and delete the transmission.

On Tue, May 24, 2016 at 12:10 AM, Meissner, Doretha <Doretha.Meissner@killeenisd.org> wrote:

**From:** Meissner, Doretha
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 24, 2016 2:07 AM
**To:** 'elizabeth.angoff@ousd.k12.ca.us' <elizabeth.angoff@ousd.k12.ca.us>
**Subject:** Permission to use RTI slides in doctoral plan

Good Morning Dr. Angoff,

My name is Doretha Meissner, and I am completing my Doctorate in Education Administration in Teaching and learning at Walden University. I ran across your slides as I was preparing my doctoral project. I would like your permission to utilize the three attached slides in my power point slide. The information identified aligns with the information I am presenting in my study. Your assistance in this matter is greatly appreciated.

Doretha Meissner

East Ward Elementary

Assistant Principal

"Leadership is a calling not a vocation"

Appendix D: Interview Questions

The interview questions will explore and gather data on staff members' perception of the RTI process, RTI professional development training, processes for implementing and documenting assigned interventions, and maintaining fidelity of implementation of Tier interventions.

1.  What are the current challenges with implementing Tier 2 interventions based on the district and campus expectations?

2. What steps can be implemented to address challenges with training, progress monitoring, and quality and frequency interventions are implemented?

3.  Based on data and research based practices were the interventions that were assigned adequate to meet students' needs based on his/her academic challenges? If no, what could be done to improve or correct this challenge?

4.  What type of additional support is needed to ensure that the interventions are implemented according to the original design, documented consistently, and implemented with fidelity? List components or procedures of the RTI process that hinder implementation of Tier 2 interventions at the classroom level that can be addressed through professional development?

Appendix E: National Institute of Health (NIH) Certificate

**Certificate of Completion**

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that **Doretha Meissner** successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course "Protecting Human Research Participants".

Date of completion: 05/14/2015

Certification Number: 1761601

Appendix F: District Application to Conduct Study

DISTRICT CONSENT FORM

You are invited to allow select staff members to take part in a research study on teachers' perspectives of the fidelity of Tier 2 interventions, the RTI training received, the RTI resources provided to address students' needs in the Response to Intervention (RTI) process, and the impact it has on student achievement. Your campus was chosen for the study because your campus has participated with the district in the RTI process over the past six years, your staff members have relevant information on the process and procedures used and the challenges with these processes. This form is a part of a process called "informed consent" to allow you to gain clarity about the study before deciding whether to participate. You may already know the researcher as an Assistant Principal, but this study is separate from that role.
This study is being conducted by a researcher named Doretha Meissner, who is a doctoral student at Walden University. This study is being performed as part of a doctoral requirement.

**Background Information:**
The purpose of this study is to explore teachers' perspectives of the steps or procedures applied by the homeroom teachers after the RTI team has chosen the interventions based on students' academic needs. The objective of this study is to explore teachers' experiences with the application of the RTI procedures and actions taken while implementing Tier 2 interventions. Additionally reviewing the quantity and quality of the training received for implementation of interventions and documentation. The final part will address progress monitoring and data-driven decision making procedures used to track students' progress. The goal is to examine current practices through interviews and surveys to discover current challenges and gather data that can improve the RTI process so that all students receive the instructional assistance to ensure that all students can meet grade level expectations.

**Procedures:**
If you agree to be in this study, your staff members will be asked to:

- Participate in one interview that will take about 35-45 minutes on non-duty time. The interview will be conducted with teachers and select staff members who are active participants in the RTI process and have been for at least 2 years.

- Participate in The *RTI School Readiness Survey* that will take about 30 minutes. This survey is an informal tool designed to help schools to identify those elements of RTI that they are already skilled in and those elements that need additional attention.

- Participate in one member check to review transcripts of your interview for validity that will take about 20 minutes.

Here are some sample questions:
1. What are the current challenges with implementing Tier 2 interventions based on the district and campus expectations?
2. What steps can be implemented to address challenges with training, progress monitoring, and quality and frequency interventions are implemented?

3. Based on data and research based practices were the interventions that were assigned adequate to meet students' needs based on his/her academic challenges? If no, what could be done to improve or correct this challenge?

4. What type of additional support is needed to ensure that the interventions are implemented according to the original design, documented consistently, and implemented with fidelity?

5. List components or procedures of the RTI process that hinder implementation of Tier 2 interventions at the classroom level?

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:**
Your staff members' participation in this study is voluntary. This means that everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you want to participate in the study. No one at Killeen Independent School District or Elementary School E will treat you differently if you decide not to have your staff members participate in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later during the study. If you feel stressed during the study you may stop at any time.
**Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:**
The information gathered in this study will provide data to improve current challenges that educators are having with documenting and implementing current interventions. The ultimate goal is to provide relevant information to district and campus educators to improve, modify, or adjust current practices to provide students and teachers with guidance and direction to assist in closing gaps in teaching and learning practices. As a participant in this study your staff will not be exposed to risk to their safety or well-being.

**Compensation:**
There is no compensation for this project other than the data gathered to improve the RTI process which will assist staff and students in closing the achievement gap and improving the RTI process.

**Confidentiality:**
Any information you provide by your staff members will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this

research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in any of the study reports. All participants in the study will be identified as participant 1, 2, or 3. All collected data including recordings will be stored in a secured file cabinet and data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years as required by the university. An additional tool that will be used to organize and store the data will be the Survey Monkey software program. The Survey Monkey software will assist in managing and organizing data in a secure manner.

**Contacts and Questions:**
You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via email: [doretha.meissner@waldenu.edu](mailto:doretha.meissner@waldenu.edu) or by phone at 254 245-1140. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 612-312-1210. Walden University's approval number for this study is **10-14-15-0352711** and it expires on **October 13, 2016.** The researcher will give you a copy of this form to keep.

**Statement of Consent:**
I have read the above information and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my campus involvement. By signing below I understand that I am agreeing to the terms described above.

Printed Name of Principal

Date of consent _____

Principal's Signature _____

Researcher's Signature _____

Appendix F: District Application to Conduct Study

Greetings,

Your request to conduct research in KISD is approved provided you strictly adhere to the research guidelines sent in an earlier email message and outlined below, and provided you ***ensure participants are made aware that their participation is voluntary***.  Please pay particular attention to the highlighted item below.

•        **Students may not be involved without parental permission.**  (Not applicable for your research)

•        **Student or employee names or other individual identification information may not be used**.

•        **If you are planning to use an electronic survey (via email) to collect data, no survey may be sent to all KISD employees, that is, no widely distributed survey may be used.**

•        **KISD's internal email system or campus/department hard-copy mail distribution system may not be used by a district employee to "internally" survey staff or collect information.  Researcher must use his/her own personal computer and home email to send surveys or requests for information from employees or use regular U.S. mail.  Researchers may send information requests/surveys to district email addresses but employee responses must be done after work hours, if the employee chooses to participate.**

Please let me know if I may be of additional assistance in any way.

Thank you for your interest in KISD!
Ramona

*Ramona L.B. Bellard*

Executive Officer
Office of the Superintendent
Killeen ISD
254-336-0004 (Office)
254-247-4528 (Cell)


**From:** Meissner, Doretha
**Sent:** Tuesday, August 04, 2015 2:59 PM
**To:** Bellard, Ramona
**Subject:** RE: Research

Mrs. Bellard,

Thank you for your quick response.

Doretha

**From:** Bellard, Ramona
**Sent:** Tuesday, August 04, 2015 2:44 PM
**To:** Meissner, Doretha <Doretha.Meissner@killeenisd.org>
**Subject:** RE: Research

Hello Doretha,

Thanks so much for checking! I don't need anything else.  I should have an answer for you by Thursday this week.  Please do feel free to email me if you haven't received anything from me by Thursday late afternoon.

Ramona L.B. Bellard
Executive Officer
Office of the Superintendent
Killeen ISD
254-336-0004 (Office)
254-247-4528 (Cell)

**From:** Meissner, Doretha
**Sent:** Tuesday, August 04, 2015 7:26 AM
**To:** Bellard, Ramona
**Subject:** Research

Hi Mrs. Bellard,

I was wondering if additional information is needed concerning my research or if there were any questions that I needed to respond to about my request to conduct research. Thanks for your assistance.

Doretha Meissner
Assistant Principal
East Ward Elementary

Appendix F: Invitation to Participate

To: RTI Facilitators,

You are invited to participate in a research study on teachers' perspectives of the fidelity of Tier 2 interventions. The purpose of the study is to increase our understanding of your perspective of the RTI training received, the RTI resources provided to address students' needs in the Response to Intervention (RTI) process, and the impact it has on student achievement. As a RTI facilitator you are in an ideal position to give us valuable first- hand information from your own perspective.

The interview and the RTI survey will take around 30 to 45 minutes and is very informal. The interview and the RTI survey will be used to capture your thoughts and perspectives on the fidelity of the implementation of Tier 2 interventions. Your responses to the questions will be kept confidential. Each interview and RTI survey will be assigned a number code to help ensure that personal identifiers are not revealed during the analysis and write up of findings.

There is no compensation for participating in this study. However, your participation will be a valuable addition to our research and findings could lead to greater public understanding of teacher's perspectives of the fidelity of implementation of Tier 2 interventions and how it may impact student's academic growth. If you are willing to participate please suggest a day and time that suits you and I'll do my best to be available. This study is being conducted by a researcher named Doretha Meissner, who is a doctoral student at Walden University. This study is being performed as part of a doctoral requirement. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact Doretha Meissner, at doretha.meissner@waldenu.edu.

Thanks!

Doretha Meissner
Doctoral Student
Walden University

Appendix F: Teacher's Consent to Participate

CONSENT FORM

You are invited to take part in a research study on teachers' perspectives of the fidelity of Tier 2 interventions, the RTI training received, the RTI resources provided to address students' needs in the Response to Intervention (RTI) process, and the impact it has on student achievement. You were chosen for the study because as an instructional leader, administrator, curriculum instruction specialist, and teacher, you have relevant information on the process and procedures used and the challenges with these processes. This form is a part of a process called "informed consent" to allow you to gain clarity about the study before deciding whether to participate. You may already know the researcher as an Assistant Principal, but this study is separate from that role.
This study is being conducted by a researcher named Doretha Meissner, who is a doctoral student at Walden University. This study is being performed as part of a doctoral requirement.

**Background Information:**
The purpose of this study is to explore teachers' perspectives of the steps or procedures applied by the homeroom teachers after the RTI team has chosen the interventions based on students' academic needs. The objective of this study is to explore teachers' experiences with the application of the RTI procedures and actions taken while implementing Tier 2 interventions. Additionally reviewing the quantity and quality of the training received for implementation of interventions and documentation. The final part will address progress monitoring and data-driven decision making procedures used to track students' progress. The goal is to examine current practices through interviews and surveys to discover current challenges and gather data that can improve the RTI process so that all students receive the instructional assistance to ensure that all students can meet grade level expectations.

**Procedures:**
If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:
- Participate in one interview that will take about 35-45 minutes. The interview will be conducted with administrators, counselors, curriculum instruction specialist and teachers who are active participants in the RTI process and have been for at least 2 years.

- Participate in The *RTI School Readiness Survey* that will take about 35-45 minutes. This survey is an informal tool designed to help schools to identify those elements of RTI that they are already skilled in and those elements that need additional attention.

- Participate in one member check to review transcripts of your interview for validity that will take about 20-30 minutes.

Here are some sample questions:

6. What are the current challenges with implementing Tier 2 interventions based on the district and campus expectations?

7. What steps can be implemented to address challenges with training, progress monitoring, and quality and frequency interventions are implemented?

8. Based on data and research based practices were the interventions that were assigned adequate to meet students' needs based on his/her academic challenges? If no, what could be done to improve or correct this challenge?

9. What type of additional support is needed to ensure that the interventions are implemented according to the original design, documented consistently, and implemented with fidelity?

10. List components or procedures of the RTI process that hinder implementation of Tier 2 interventions at the classroom level?

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:**
Your participation in this study is voluntary. This means that everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you want to participate in the study. No one at Killeen Independent School District or Elementary School E will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later during the study. If you feel stressed during the study you may stop at any time.

**Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:**
The information gathered in this study will provide data to improve current challenges that educators are having with documenting and implementing current interventions. The ultimate goal is to provide relevant information to district and campus educators to improve, modify, or adjust current practices to provide students and teachers with guidance and direction to assist in closing gaps in teaching and learning practices. As a participant in this study you will not be exposed to risk to your safety or well-being.

**Compensation:**
There is no compensation for this project other than the data gathered to improve the RTI process which will assist staff and students in closing the achievement gap and improving the RTI process.

**Confidentiality:**
Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in any of the study reports. All participants in the study will be identified as participant A, B, or C. All collected data including recordings will be stored in a secured file cabinet and data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years as required by the university. An additional tool that will be used to organize and store the data will be the Survey Monkey software program. The Survey Monkey software will assist in managing and organizing data in a secure manner.

**Contacts and Questions:**
You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via email: [doretha.meissner@waldenu.edu](mailto:doretha.meissner@waldenu.edu) or by phone at 254 245-1140. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 612-312-1210. Walden University's approval number for this study is **10-14-15-0352711** and it expires on **October 13, 2016.**
The researcher will give you a copy of this form to keep.

**Statement of Consent:**
I have read the above information and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By signing below I understand that I am agreeing to the terms described above.

Printed Name of Participant

Date of consent

Participant's Signature

Researcher's Signature

Appendix G: Evaluation Form

At the conclusion of each Professional Development Session, participants
are to complete the evaluation form and turn in to the facilitator. The
responses will be used to make adjustments to the session content and
presentation of information.

**Professional Development Session Questionnaire**

**INSTRUCTIONS**
Please check the answer that best reflect your perception of the
training.  Rate sections on a scale of 1 to 5:
1 = "Strongly Disagree," or training did not address needs
2 =  "Disagree"
3 = "Neither Agree nor Disagree," or neutral about the training
4= "Agree"
5 = "Strongly Agree," or training can be transferred back to classroom
and students
Choose N/A if the item does not apply to training provided. Your
feedback is sincerely appreciated. Thank you.

**TRAINING CONTENT** (Circle the best answer to each statement.)
1. The goals and objectives of the training were clear and relevant 1 2
3 4 5 N/A
2. This training addressed current challenges with RTI. 1 2 3 4 5 N/A
3. The training content is relevant to current challenges with RTI 1 2 3
4 5 N/A

**TRAINING DESIGN** (Circle your response to each item.)
4. The purpose of the training was clear and meaningful to me. 1 2 3 4 5
N/A
5. The training activities challenged me to be reflective. 1 2 3 4 5 N/A
6. The activities in this training provided numerous opportunities to
collaborate. 1 2 3 4 5N/A
7. The training expectations were clear and attainable. 1 2 3 4 5 N/A
8. The pace of this training allowed opportunities to consider other
options. 1 2 3 4 5 N/A

**TRAINING FACILITATOR** (Circle the best choice for each item.)
9. The instructor was knowledgeable and observant of participants needs.
1 2 3 4 5 N/A
10. The instructor was resourceful and provided great feedback. 1 2 3 4
5 N/A

_____

**TRAINING RESULTS** (Choose the best response)
11. I am more knowledgeable about RTI tools. 1 2 3 4 5 N/A
12. I .will transfer learning to classroom and students 1 2 3 4 5 N/A
**TRAINING DELIVERY** (Choose the best response.)
13. The training setting was conducive to optimal learning. 1 2 3 4 5
N/A
14. How would you improve this training? (Check all that apply.)
___Provide poser point slides before the training.
___Chunk the learning objectives.
___Reduce the days of the training.
___Increase the hands on exploration of the training.
___Incorporate on-line training sessions.
___Create webinars to be reviewed for training.
15. What additional areas should be covered in this training?
16. What area of the training did you feel was not beneficial?
17. What part of the training was an Aha moment for you?


18. One thing from the training session that I need clarification on
is⋯⋯.. _____
_
_____
_____
_____
_____