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Teachers' Perceptions About Response to Intervention Reading Strategies for At-Risk Students

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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

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Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Many students enter 9th grade as non-proficient readers who have not been successful on the state reading assessment. Response to Intervention (RTI) is a required program for teachers to use to increase students' reading proficiency. Guided by Bruner's constructivist theory and Vygotsky's theory of the zone of proximal development, this study examined the connection between these 2 theories and explored approaches to the creation of instructional delivery methods for reading to assist struggling readers. The research questions focused on teachers' perceptions about RTI implementation, training, and best practices. The participants were Grade 9 English teachers (n = 6) who were trained in RTI strategies and who taught reading to incoming at-risk students. A qualitative study design was used to capture the insights of the teachers through individual interviews, a modified version of Wilson's RTI survey, and observations. Emergent themes were identified from the data through open and axial coding, and findings were validated through triangulation and member checking. Key findings indicated that there was a general understanding of RTI; however, teachers identified a lack of training and experience with RTI. Recommendations included increased professional development in using effective RTI strategies, particularly differentiated teaching strategies and scaffolding. A school-wide recommendation was to incorporate RTI strategies in all subject area courses. A project of customized content was designed to guide English and content teachers to develop the awareness and capacity to develop improved RTI instructional strategies. Implications are that teachers will be empowered to become more deeply involved in professional development opportunities, which could influence instructional delivery to nonproficient readers.

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I love you Mom and Dad, and I thank God for giving me parents like you!

With Love and Respect.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Section 1: The Problem

Introduction

Schools have the responsibility to provide high quality instruction to all students. Effective research-based instruction helps to meet the students' academic and social needs. However, reading problems are a large concern in schools today (Murnane, Sawhill, & Snow (2012). Struggling students who do not receive reading interventions may continue to be poor readers and struggle in academics. These students risk ongoing failure in literacy. Roughly 6 million secondary students in the United States read well below grade level (Cheung, Groff, Lake, & Slavin, 2009).

In 1983, the A Nation at-Risk (ANR) Report (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) brought nationwide awareness of the need for education reform and is widely used to signify the first of several series of school reforms. According to Bicard, Bicard, Casey, and Nichols (2008), the ANR report addressed the matter of testing and the use of testing in the education system. The report recommended that certified teachers administer standardized achievement tests to students at significant transitions (Bicard et al., 2008). The baseline data from these standardized tests provided specifics to help identify the needs of the students (Bicard et al., 2008). The baseline data was also used in assessment results for the purpose of designing individualized instruction for all students (Bicard et al., 2008).

For decades, public school educators have attempted to improve the educational process, yet many students faced with literacy challenges are not adequately prepared for school and life (Borman, Kamil, Kral, Salinger, & Torgesen, 2008; Capozzoli, Faggella-Luby, & Ware, 2009; McPeak & Trygg, 2007). Many secondary students failed to meet the required standards of the 21st century in reading (Boling & Evans, 2008; Boyer & Hamil, 2011). Furthermore, the

National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (2011) found that the nation's secondary students received little instruction in improving literacy skills.

Under No Child Left Behind (NCLB; 2001), an emphasis was placed on early literacy and early intervention. Under current NCLB legislation, accountability rests on the results of annual assessments in third through eighth grade. Results from reading assessments created an opportunity for schools to help students perform with higher proficiency, thus prompting administrators to make improvements towards closing the gap among the at-risk students failing to achieve proficiency levels (DeNisco, 2013; Phillips & Smith, 2010). These types of preparations are now at the forefront of instruction in diverse classrooms.

According to the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (2011), NCLB required that annual reports be made accessible to major stakeholders, parents, community and business owners, and local elected officials as added assurance children would be able to read by the end of Grade 3 and instructed by highly qualified teachers. The legislation also provided funding to support efforts to eliminate reading deficits. School systems were allowed flexibility to use federal funding toward purchasing reading programs under the Reading First Initiative (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Despite the implementation of many reading initiatives, students continued to enter high school as nonproficient readers. According to Moje and Snow (2010), there has been very little improvement in reading assessment scores among secondary students from Grades 1 through 12 over the past 20 years.

Reading proficiency at all levels of schooling is a central indicator of possible academic success. This is especially true for those students transitioning from middle school to high school who are at-risk to drop out from the academic arena. In this project study, I focused on teacher perceptions regarding the implementation of a program in reading designed to increase the

reading proficiency scores on the Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests for a group of incoming ninth grade students in a suburban high school. These students initially failed the reading section of the state's Criterion-Referenced Competency Test in eighth grade.

At-risk students in the population settings are increasingly labeled as learning disabled and referred to special education at astounding rates (Hoover, 2012). A number of these students have been misdiagnosed largely because those same students have deficits in reading and are reading disabled, not learning disabled (Fletcher & Vaughn, 2009; Fuchs & Kearns, 2013). Reading skills deficits can be remedied through intervention strategies (Apichatabutra, Doabler, Baker, Chard, Ketterlin-Geller, 2009; Woolley, 2010). However, teachers must possess adequate knowledge and skills essential to implementing research-based interventions in the classrooms.

Literacy remains an issue in many classrooms across the United States. According to the Texas Education Agency's Academic Excellence Indicator System of 2009, archival data showed that 14% of the at-risk students failed the reading Texas Assessment of Knowledge Skills (TAKS) test and were promoted by the grade placement committee. Although 14% of at-risk students were promoted to ninth grade in 2009, 38% of the same group from this southwest suburban school district was retained in eighth grade in 2010 (Texas Education Agency, 2011).

At-risk students often experienced a different kind of challenge within the environment in which they live. Whether these students are products of single parent homes or any other challenging circumstances, attendance, transience, and credit loss are ever-present issues in many Title I schools. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1965) incorporated Title I elements, and it was intended to address the needs of low performing disadvantaged students. Federal funds are provided to Title I schools to provide a quality education to students at-risk for

academic failure (U.S. Department of Education, 2010); however, Title I school staff often struggle in helping at-risk students to achieve.

Reading classes are highly emphasized during the early years of a child's education; however, by the time the student enters high school, reading is integrated into his/her core subject classes and is no longer taught as a single subject. As students advance to more difficult subject areas in high school, they need better reading strategies in order to grasp the subject area. If nonproficient readers are not given direct instruction for reading skills at the secondary level, at-risk students may not achieve at the levels needed for graduation. Furthermore, many high school English teachers are not equipped with reading curriculum knowledge or skills to support this growing need (Jackson, 2013; Marzano, 2011; McPeak & Trygg, 2007; Schumaker, 2009).

Struggling readers need better instruction featuring effective reading methods and skilled teachers who can effectively instruct at-risk learners (Marchland-Martella, Modderman, Pan, & Petersen, 2013). Motoko (2012) suggested that reading skills instruction should occur with both implicit and explicit instruction. Explicit instruction has been found to be effective when students have direct exposure to vocabulary and individual word meanings or word learning strategies are taught (Hanson & Padua, 2011). When students possess vocabulary skills, the implicit instruction proves most effective as students enter advanced stages of learning (Akakura, 2012).

In order for teachers to maximize a secondary inclusive environment, they must be able to create a classroom culture to motivate reading. For example, Sanacore (2008) found that when teachers incorporate learners' interests into their lessons curriculum, students were more likely to be motivated and engaged, leading to improved academic achievement and inspired by the following:

1. Creating a learning environment that is encouraging and challenging;
2. Providing students with opportunities to make learning choices;
3. Increasing students' participation in classroom activities; and
4. Encouraging students to love learning. (pp. 41-43)

Being aware of the students' needs and how they learn could have positive influence on the students' ability to achieve. Teachers building positive, respectful relationships with students can accomplish this. Interactions may include the students' attitudes, feelings, social relationships and values; however, teachers continue to work towards helping students develop an appreciation for the value of reading (Gambrell, 2011; Guthrie, 2008).

Literacy has become increasingly relevant in the world of technology, career skills, and economics. Students should already possess basic literacy skills in order to communicate effectively. In fact, the Alliance for Excellent Educators (2010) stated that as technology continues to move forward, individuals must increase their knowledge base and be able to read, write, and effectively communicate at a higher level to participate in a global society. Students should possess a proficient level of literacy in order to be successful in secondary school and beyond. Young adult students must be able to make meaning through the development of reading and writing skills; otherwise, technology will surpass them. Darling and Tileston (2009) pointed out that at-risk students frequently attributed their academic failure to external characteristics, including a range of personal and societal factors that are beyond the control of educators.

Response to intervention (RTI) has noteworthy implications for high schools. High school students who lack reading proficiency at grade level in reading may also benefit from increased awareness to instructional interventions and progress monitoring. There has often been an urgent need on the part of the high schools to help students who are grade levels behind

their peers. Another facet was that continuous progress monitoring needed to occur to determine the effectiveness of interventions that could help students obtain academic achievement.

Many secondary students struggle with literacy and may experience difficulty identifying basic words typically mastered in elementary school (McNamara, 2010). McNamara further stated that secondary school presents a challenge for some students who are unable to transition from word calling to text comprehension when they have not mastered phonetics. Secondary subject curriculum often contains challenging text; without basic literacy skills in comprehension, simple paragraphs containing medium to complex word recognition will be difficult (McNamara, 2010). Burns, Callaway, and Cantrell (2009) pointed out that content area teachers believe it is the responsibility of reading teachers to instruct students in the area of reading skill development; however, teachers of content should also be interested in improving their knowledge in reading skill development in order to help students improve their reading skills. These students will continue to fall behind in content areas because they cannot read the content; therefore, they do not know the material. Many students demonstrate problems in reading content area, but they receive no help with strategies on how to understand course materials (Dicembre, Fewster, Manez, McCormick, & Pitcher, 2010).

Further, teachers should collaborate to design interventions targeting the needs of students with learning disabilities early on in their academics as well as monitor student data as they progress (Compton, Fuchs, & Fuchs, 2012; Cook & Friend, 2010; Hoover & Love, 2011). Before data can be gathered and it can be determined whether students are responding to interventions, it is essential for schools to be able to pinpoint a subgroup of at-risk students, and possible nonresponders, from data sources such as standardized test scores, report cards, or benchmark tests (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Stecker, 2010).

Finally, as students make the transition from middle school into high school, targeted instructional approaches are essential in helping them attain academic success. If an intervention program is to be successful at the high school level, student assessment data must be appropriately utilized in order to guide interventions to facilitate student progress (Epler, 2013). According to Mandel and Powers (2011), teachers should be able to support learners' personal connections to literacy by creating classroom contexts and practices that demonstrate how students should be able to connect to literacy.

This basic interpretative qualitative project study was concerned with Grade 9 English teachers' perception of instruction using RTI methodology as a means to increase incoming ninth grade students' reading proficiency. The school district in which this study took place had only recently implemented an RTI program in an effort to help these entering freshmen gain reading skills necessary to both pass the state reading proficiency exam and to thrive in their content area classes. The program aimed to increase ninth grade standardized reading data results for struggling readers, thus decreasing dropout rates in ninth and 10th grades. It was important to understand the strategies used by the instructors to help students gain reading proficiency skills. It was also important to understand why certain at-risk students received the same interventions were still unsuccessful.

RTI is an evidence-based intervention that has been implemented in schools across the United States. In particular, RTI is an early intervention and prevention model (Compton et al., 2010; Fletcher & Vaughn, 2009) that requires teachers to screen students and monitor specific outcomes through systematic, data-driven intervention (Bronaugh, Brown-Chidsey, & McGraw, 2009; Brown-Chidsey & Steege, 2010). Although a portion of the RTI process is early detection and intervention, this approach began with entry-level assessments, which can be administered to

an entire grade at the start of a school year (Friedman, 2010; Fuchs et al., 2010). Therefore, the fundamental nature of RTI is to ensure that effective research-based reading instruction is occurring in the classroom. Further, as an academic support system, RTI is used to document and measure student progress. Although RTI allows for screening and monitoring students for explicit educational results, it also provides methods for additional help for students requiring specific interventions that are examined methodically using research-based data recordkeeping procedures. Lohman (2007) explained that RTI methods help facilitate academic decisions to help meet the students' educational needs and/or determine if students meet eligibility requirements for special education services.

RTI can also be an early intervention and prevention model (Compton et al., 2010; Fletcher & Vaughn, 2009) that requires teachers to screen students and monitor specific outcomes through systematic, data-driven intervention (Bronaugh et al., 2009; Brown-Chidsey & Steege, 2010). RTI is also used as a diagnostic tool to help teachers make informed decisions regarding intervention needs for all students. RTI employs a multitier intervention model, and each tier signifies an increasing level of instruction that corresponds with the needs of the students. In order for students to move between tiers, instructional support teams determine the student's academic growth according to screening and progress monitoring.

All teachers implementing RTI should follow the constructivist framework for instruction, as it can improve teaching and learning skills. Liu (2010) stated that constructivism is learning gained through real life experiences in order to construct one's own knowledge and meaning. The zone of proximal development is one of Vygotsky's main explanatory models showing the relationship between development, cognition, and social experiences. Von Glaserfeld (1995) called Vygotsky the "founding father of Social Constructivism" because

Vygotsksy (1978) argued that social constructivism is an essential part of the way students learn. Social constructivism is based upon the interaction between students' experiences and their learning environments; therefore, teachers should embrace what students bring to the classroom. Teachers are positioned to improve opportunities for student learning when students are engaged in social interaction. Social constructivism serves as an effective method of instruction to the struggling learner (Kalina & Powell, 2009). Further, social constructivism is highly effective for all students when learning takes place through collaboration (Kalina & Powell, 2009). Bruner (1966) built on Vygotsky's ideas in that learning occurs through social interaction, especially among the older learner. Social interaction through collaborative learning in classrooms continues to be needed by learners of the 21st century.

Bruner (1966) indicated that there are four major aspects of the theory of instruction, including (a) inclination towards learning, (b) various methods by which a body of knowledge is designed so that it is likely to be comprehended by learners, (c) effective progression in material presentation, and (d) understanding incentives and punishments. The theoretical framework of Bruner argued that new ideas and concepts are achieved through a vital process and prior knowledge. Consequently, students choose information, create theories, and determine what decisions to make in the process of incorporating prior experiences and knowledge into their cognitive structure. When students connect prior knowledge to new experiences, different meanings are made. When different meanings are made, learners are able to deepen their knowledge and surpass the information provided.

Definition of the Problem

Many high school students read at below proficiency; thus, academics, employment, and self-esteem are influenced (Caverly, Cusenbary, Nicholson, O'Neil, Peterson, 2008). The

reading proficiency problem at the local level among the incoming ninth grade students was evident when some students failed to meet the passing reading standards set forth by the state (Texas Education Agency, 2011). Texas requires that students score 700 or better on TAKS to meet the reading proficiency status. Anything lower than 700 points or better places the student at-risk for potential academic failure. Reading achievement data from TEA indicated that 34% of Grade 8 students failed the state's reading assessment in the spring of 2013, 48% in 2012, and 14% in 2011 (See Table 1).

Table 1

Reading Proficiency Information for Eighth Grade At-risk Students

	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013
Grade 8 students failing to meet reading standards	14%	48%	34%

Note. 2010-2011, 2011-2012, and 2012-2013 School Year

Many students enter classrooms with various learning backgrounds. With the various learning backgrounds in mind, many successful school leaders have advocated that differentiated systems be developed and carried out through alternative, instructional- support levels, so that every student is afforded an opportunity to be successful in the classroom (Callender, 2012; Mack, Smith, & Straight, 2010).

At-risk students need effective instruction; otherwise, they will not achieve academically (Blachowicz & Fisher, 2009; Henry, 2009). Incoming ninth grade students who lack basic reading skills need reading instruction particularly in vocabulary and comprehension. Additionally, Hanson and Padua (2011) pointed out that secondary students are in need of

effective instruction in reasoning and responding to text. It was my hope that increased reading skills in English would help the students increase nonfiction content area reading as well.

School administrators have always sought ways to improve reading achievement scores through research-based approaches. However, the latest trend in differentiated education rests upon RTI. RTI seems to offer significant assistance for students experiencing academic failure, along with providing vital information regarding the teaching instruction needs of the student to be used for learning interventions (Mack et al., 2010). There are many students who share common skill deficits that lead to academic failure. Schools wishing to close the gap on academic skills have been successful through taking a proactive approach such as screening students prior to entering a classroom. Students who enroll or transfer to a particular school sometime during the school year should also be screened in the areas of reading, math, and writing (Callender, 2012). Deno, Garman, Lembke, and Stecker (2010) suggested that formative evaluations and screenings be carried out three times during the school year to all students. Results from screenings could prove helpful to the teacher and student. If the results revealed deficits, then the teacher would be able to determine immediately what intervention to implement for the student. According to Callender (2012), schools should be prepared to carry out systems to meet the academic need of all students in order to be effective. As with learning new systems, many veteran teachers may be reluctant to embrace change and continue to work alone and not look at their students individually. In fact, one of the core elements of the problem-solving process is when staff members collaborate to make educational decisions about student programming based upon student data (Deno et al., 2010).

The professional development (PD) of teachers should concentrate on the significance of broadening the understanding and skills to equip teachers with sufficient support when teachers

are required to employ instructional reforms like RTI (Kennedy, 2010; Rohlwing & Spelman, 2013). Teachers who are likely to implement instructional reforms should be able to envision purpose and significance in order for these methods to prove effective (Pietarinen, Pyhalto, & Soini, 2012; Sahlberg, 2010). Ghamrawi (2013) stated that effective PD emphasizes the further development of teacher knowledge and skills to execute instructional reforms.

Texas's English curriculum consists of textbooks and other instructional materials written for students based upon the TAKS (Texas Education Agency, 2011). Texas currently uses a three-tiered reading model, which was state mandated at this local high school during the school year 2011-2012 and was designed to ensure that all students would receive quality instruction from highly qualified teachers in their general education classrooms, thus improving their reading proficiency test scores (Texas Education Agency, 2012). Many school districts and teachers in the United States have already begun to refer to RTI for practical strategies to address students' academic and behavioral needs (Thomas & Zirkel, 2010). Teachers must be willing to be diligent in carrying out the full process of RTI in order to accurately measure student achievement. According to Moore and Whitfield (2009), RTI provides significant resources for schools and teachers to generate crucial information necessary in defining the instructional needs of students in danger of academic failure.

Because some high school students struggle with reading, the use of RTI can be considered a viable approach to reading instruction at the high school level. The intent of this basic interpretative qualitative project study was to explore ninth grade English teachers' perceptions of how the implementation of RTI strategies would help ninth grade at-risk readers improve their reading skills. A basic interpretative qualitative study was used to explain how ninth grade teachers made meaning of this phenomenon and interpreted the impact of using RTI

to enhance students' reading skills. As the researcher, I explored why reading strategies have been successful among some students and unsuccessful among other students with the intention of creating a project that has a potential solution to local educational problems. Through this basic interpretative qualitative project study, I discovered the kinds of teacher PD training teachers believed they need to successfully implement RTI components in ninth grade English general education classrooms. In addition to improving the ninth grade reading achievement scores, the implementation of RTI provided opportunities to strengthen and improve academic achievement in all subject areas.

Taylor (2012) argued that core subject area teachers must also expand their instruction and offer comprehension strategies essential for the subject areas. Cooper and Doubek (2007) suggested that there is a disparity between philosophy and practice in the way reading methodologies are taught and applied in the classroom. According to Zarrillo (2007), reading instruction should be driven by reading standards as the standards for reading achievement that have been made available to teachers as a roadmap to what learners should be able to do at grade level. Crawford, Freppon, Ogle, and Temple (2014) explained that reading standards are crucial in helping teachers to develop clear directions on the elements of the reading curriculum. Consequently, many learners remain at-risk for reading proficiency because reading elements have not been mastered. Mandel and Powers (2011) urged that there is a need to relate assessments to standards in that instruction should be connected to assessments in the way instructional decisions can be made in an effort to help at-risk learners achieve. Teachers must understand and be part of implementing a successful well-planned RTI process so that perceptions may raise awareness, as the value of a well-planned RTI process will benefit all students.

Rationale

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

The rationale for the basic interpretative qualitative project study was to help ninth grade at-risk readers improve their reading skills by pinpointing and exploring ninth grade English teachers' perceptions of RTI implementation. The objective was to help promote reading proficiency among incoming ninth grade students at-risk for academic failure.

This basic interpretative qualitative project study was to add to the body of knowledge about implementing an instructional methodology that has been shown to be successful in lower grades (Creswell, 2009). The project study was to contribute to the body of knowledge about the use of RTI training at the high school level. First, it was important to understand the Grade 9 English teacher's knowledge of the RTI instructional methodology. Secondly, Grade 9 teachers were asked for potential solutions to the problems associated with training designed to implement RTI Tier 1 reading interventions so that a project could be developed to improve district PD and contribute to the literature already in existence on RTI.

The steps to explicit instruction included direct explanation, teacher modeling (i.e., think aloud), guided practice, and application (Bender & Shores, 2007; Bronaugh et al.,2009). Further, Bronaugh et al. (2009) found that these strategies were necessary when students encountered difficult content area reading. Students' reading skills in their English classes can be improved by applying the use of these reading comprehension strategies.

Up until the 2010-2011 school year, incoming Grade 9 students did not receive direct reading instruction, and reading classes were not offered at this high school. During the in-service panel seminar 2011-2012, teachers met to discuss department business (L. Featherston, D. Roper, & J. Wyatt, personal communication, September 19, 2011). However, there was no

collaboration between English teachers and content area teachers to discuss the need for reading skills. Teachers at this secondary school were not trained in literacy; therefore, students did not receive any content area reading support.

The teacher population of the school in terms of education and years of experience are noted (see Table 2). As indicated, the ninth grade English population for the school explains the education and years of experience. Table 2 provides information on the Grade 9 English teachers for the school and includes education and years of experience. Most have been teaching for more than 4years and have a bachelor's degree in areas other than reading.

Table 2

Teacher Characteristics

	Education	Years teaching at Local High School
Teacher 1	BA English	First year
Teacher 2	BS Business Administration	4 years
Teacher 3	BA English	4 years
Teacher 4	BA English	4 years
Teacher 5	BS Communication	5 years
Teacher 6	BA in English	11 years

Note. Years of experience include the 2012-2013 school year.

All of the English I teachers at this high school, with the exception of the first year teacher, were veteran teachers. The teacher with 11 years of experience was actually in his/her 11th year of teaching at this high school. These teachers were considered to be highly qualified in the area of English Language Arts. However, these teachers had only acquired 6 hours of RTI training during in-service by the district (D. Roper, personal communication, August 28, 2011). Up until June 2013, these teachers implemented RTI strategies in English according to their own instructional planning needs (D. Roper, personal communication, October 17, 2011). However, with the hiring of a new principal, all ninth grade English teachers were required to implement RTI strategies to help nonproficient readers (E. Crump, personal communication, September 7,

2013). The teachers' RTI instructional planning was monitored by administration (D. Hucheson, personal communication, September 15, 2013).

The state test results from 2012-2013 showed that only 66% of the incoming ninth grade students met expectations in reading. Although the percentages of Grade 9 students have been reduced, they are still beyond Adequate Yearly Progress; however, one third of the incoming ninth graders were below proficiency. These results demonstrated the need for further improvement in this content area (Texas Education Agency, 2013). The results also indicated the need for teachers to become aware of the need to become trained in literacy. Teachers must become flexible in the way they help students develop reading content skills. Presently, there are no remedial reading classes at this high school, and literacy remains a problem among incoming Grade 9 students. Ninth grade English teachers have the responsibility of helping at-risk students who lack basic literacy skills and who are faced with the possibility of academic failure.

According to Capozzoli et al. (2009), it was important to examine the instructional components that targeted the fundamentals of instruction that provided relevant literacy skills to adolescents. First, teachers should be flexible in their planning to provide instructional content as well as vocabulary. Teachers can help students access their background knowledge through preteaching so that students can apply this to reading and discussion activities. Additionally, older students should be equipped with cognitive strategies and critical thinking skills to improve reading proficiencies across content areas. Students can summarize, locate the main idea, and use graphic organizers across the content areas, once they understand how to effectively use these cognitive strategies. While teachers should be diverse in creating ways to engage and improve student motivation, they should also focus on building student confidence in becoming proficient readers by encouraging ongoing use of these strategies. Literacy problems among

secondary students concerned teachers at this local high school. Furthermore, general textbook materials published in high school content area publications have readability levels beyond their abilities for at-risk students at that grade level.

The ninth grade English teachers' responsibilities have become more complex with the mandated implemented of RTI strategies to help the incoming ninth graders. When students enter secondary school, teachers expect students to have the basic literacy skills to maintain productivity in their subject matter. When students struggle with reading, every other subject area that contains difficult text is impacted. Therefore, it is essential to understand the ninth grade teachers' perceptions of the success of the RTI strategy implementation.

Evidence of the Problem From Professional Literature

Many students lack the necessary literacy skills required to understand the increasingly difficult text embedded in high school homework assignments. Some researchers estimated that between 5% and 10% of at-risk students were in dire need of substantial and concentrated assistance in obtaining literacy skills and knowledge (Wise, 2009). This was especially significant as teachers of contents other than reading should have been able to deliver reading skills instruction to students in danger of academic achievement. For that reason, the need to provide teachers with tools to expand their knowledge about the literacy problem within a regular classroom emerged.

Further, Cantrell, Powell, and Rightmyer (2013), and Fall, Mellard, and Woods (2011) stated that the limited understanding of the secondary learners' reading abilities and specific instructional models accounted for the lack of literacy proficiency among secondary students. Improving literacy skills beyond early school age can create a foundation building block towards producing positive outcomes in future reading achievement scores.

The PD of teachers concentrates on the significance of broadening the understanding and skills to equip teachers with sufficient support when teachers are required to employ instructional reforms like RTI (Kennedy, 2010; Rohlwing & Spelman, 2013). Teachers who are likely to implement instructional reforms should be able to envision purpose and significance in order for these methods to prove effective (Pietarinen et al., 2012; Sahlberg, 2010). Ghamrawi (2013) pointed out that effective PD should place emphasis on the crucial need to the further develop teacher knowledge and skills to execute instructional reforms.

PD does not ensure that learning transfers into practice. According to Webster-Wright (2010), in order for new practices to be implemented, they must be fully understood, and teachers and school leaders should be able to embrace their purpose and value. Additionally, the new practice must be able to improve current learning situations. Darling-Hammond, Jaquith, Mindich, and Wei (2010) found that many school districts commonly offer PD opportunities without regard to the apparent needs of their teachers or the daily classroom dilemmas they face.

Teacher buy-in is an important factor that has had an impact on the outcome of PD (Fischer & Hamer, 2010). Teachers must believe in the PD in order for it to translate into classroom practice (Desimone, 2009). Fischer and Hamer (2010) explained that when teachers fully buy-in to new practices as a result of PD, they will often drive the process. Teachers are likely to transfer learning into practice when they take ownership of their own learning, as experts in their field of study. Barnett, Cochran-Smith, Friedman, and Pine (2009) explained that effective PD emphasizes the crucial need to the further develop teacher knowledge and skills to execute instructional reforms.

However, the implementation of RTI from school districts and states may vary. Although there are commonalties in the theoretical structures of RTI, the implementation of RTI

could produce very different experiences from teachers. According to Bender, Berkeley, Peaster, and Saunders (2009), states are not mandated by Individuals with Disabilities Education Act to implement RTI; however, the states can use it as an alternative to the discrepancy model for learning disability eligibility.

According to Bender et al. (2009), many states have adopted the RTI model and have begun to use all three tiers. The majority of RTI models implemented in the United States have the general education classroom as the first tier. Therefore, it is imperative that general education teachers are trained and knowledgeable about implementing RTI (Benjamin, 2011). Bender et al. (2009) also found that many states provide PD for teachers in RTI because it is believed that general education teachers do not have the knowledge and skills needed to implement RTI.

Section 1 includes a summary of the research literature related to the topic of RTI. The theoretical framework of RTI was provided in addition to the problem that the local school's teachers had limited RTI training. The purpose of the study was to determine teachers' perceptions of RTI in a high school where teachers homogeneously grouped at-risk students within a general education classroom regardless of their abilities. The study was significant because it focused on Grade 9 English teachers' perceptions of the RTI model at this suburban high school. In the next sections, I explore the collection of information regarding Grade 9 English teachers' perceptions of RTI and their expectations of student achievement. Section 2, methodology, includes the research design, setting and sample, assumptions, limitations, scope, delimitations, and the protection of the participants' summary. Research on the benefits and challenges of RTI frameworks in addition to teachers' perceptions of RTI is also included. Section 3 addresses the areas of need through this basic interpretative qualitative project study.

Section 4 provides the results of the study, interpretations of the findings, implications for practice and social change, and future research recommendations.

Definitions

The following terms are defined to explain their meaning and use in the study:

Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS): A system that gathers a gamut of facts on student performance in every school and district in Texas, every year. Annual reports are available annually in the fall (Texas Education Agency, 2011).

At-risk: Typically defined as a student who is likely to fail at school at which school failure is viewed as dropping out of school prior to graduating from high school. Traditionally, the defining characteristics of at-risk students have been identified through retrospective examinations of the students' family and school histories (U.S. Department of Education, 2011).

Literacy skills: Skills needed for reading and writing. They include an awareness of language sounds, print, and the relationship between letters and sound, as well as vocabulary, spelling, and comprehension (Burns et al., 2009).

Response to Intervention (RTI): RTI is a model that addresses the needs of all students through a range of services. It is a method of academic intervention design to provide early assistance to children who are performing poorly. It is a process of (a) providing quality instruction and intervention strategies tailored to meet the academic requirements of every student, and (b) using learning rate over time and level of performance to make important data driven educational decisions (Buffum, et al., 2009).

Texas Assessment of Knowledge Skills (TAKS): A standardized test instrument used in the State of Texas primary and secondary schools. It is an instrument used to assess reading,

writing, math, science, and social studies skills required under the standard (Texas Education Agency, 2011).

The discrepancy model: An achievement model developed to determine the difference between a student's actual achievement and their expected achievement based upon intelligence scores. The discrepancy model is based upon a statistically critical gap between intelligence and achievement scores, compared to the child's school performance. Therefore, many students were not identified until second grade or beyond, missing critical instruction that could have minimized the gap (Fisher, Frey, & Lapp, 2010).

Title I: A government-funded program for schools that enroll at least 40% of students who receive free and reduced lunch. The program also provides supplemental funding to assist in meeting the educational needs of these students (U.S. Department of Education, 2011).

Significance

This basic interpretative qualitative project study helped me to discover the kinds of PD and teacher education training that teachers believed they needed to successfully implement RTI components in ninth grade English general education classrooms. To improve learning outcomes for all students including at-risk populations, general education teachers must learn how to implement RTI effectively. Therefore, the purpose of implementing RTI inside all content classrooms is to deliver focused and systematic interventions to all students as soon as they exhibit a need. By properly implementing RTI, teachers will be prepared to document precise achievement levels of their students and adapt instruction directly toward identified academic discrepancies (Hoover & Love, 2011; Marzano, 2011).

This study was significant in that teachers are required to reflect, examine, and discuss their personal beliefs of the RTI program and its components. By doing so, teachers become

more aware of how they relate with their students. However, the focus of my study was the teachers' perceptions of the RTI program, which evokes self-reflection by which the community can engage in positive social change. As teachers reflected on the RTI program and found areas in which they could improve, they focused on perceived weak areas in order to increase student achievement. By gaining information about teachers' perceptions of RTI, students' course of life can change, whereby improving the program. Student academic performance may change, affording these students with many positives opportunities in life in turn strengthening the community.

This project study revealed benefits and concerns the local school faced implementing an effective RTI model. The factors that impeded upon successful implementation of RTI were identified, analyzed, and discussed. I am hopeful that the results of this project study will strengthen this school and others in sustaining PD to implement an effective RTI model.

Guiding/Research Question

For the purposes of the development of this project for the local setting, I chose to conduct a basic interpretative qualitative project study to investigate the perceived needs of ninth grade English teachers regarding the implementation of RTI reading interventions to incoming ninth grade nonproficient readers in this suburban high school, in the southwest. To date, ninth grade English high school teachers have been given the responsibility of implementing RTI reading strategies.

Past research has shown that there was a reduction in special education referrals when there is reading supplemental support for the at-risk student (Fuchs et al., 2010; Hoover, 2012). Research has also shown that by providing ongoing quality PD opportunities for teachers, innovative implementations such as RTI can be successful (Buffum, Mattos, & Weber, 2009).

The intent of this basic interpretative qualitative project study was to explore the ninth grade English teachers' perceptions of how the implementation of RTI strategies will help ninth grade at-risk readers improve their reading skills. The teachers have had limited training on the implementation of RTI reading interventions in the local setting. The basic interpretative qualitative project study can be used to explain how ninth grade teachers make meaning of this phenomenon and interpret the impact of using RTI to enhance students' reading skills. I sought to explore Grade 9 English teachers' perception of instruction using RTI methodology as a means to increase incoming ninth grade students' reading proficiency.

Through this basic interpretative qualitative project study, I sought to discover the kinds of PD training teachers believe they need for successful implementation of RTI components in ninth grade English general education classrooms. The following research questions were used to address RTI implementation in my school:

1. What do ninth grade English teachers perceive as the factors contributing to or distracting from the implementation of RTI in their school?
2. What do ninth grade English teachers perceive as the strengths and weaknesses of the training they received on RTI in their school?
3. What do ninth grade English teachers perceive as best practices regarding RTI?
4. What suggestions do they make for program improvement?

In 2011-2012, the RTI program at this local high school had not been implemented to address the literacy needs of the at-risk readers, nor teachers' lack of content area reading development skills. My research adds insights into the process of RTI Implementation. Answering the research questions based upon Grade 9 English teachers' perceptions of instruction using RTI methodology may determine a means to increase incoming ninth grade

student's reading proficiency. Teachers should be knowledgeable and expert in their content subject matter. However, it is important how the content is delivered so that students can achieve academic success. It is also important for teachers to be confident and effective in using a variety of teaching methods (Vacca & Vacca, 2008).

Review of the Literature

In this section, I review the literature that forms the underpinnings for the project basic interpretative qualitative project study. I focused on the conceptual framework that guided the study. The review also addresses the characteristics of low socioeconomic high school students, the demands of current legislation on academic achievement, and RTI's history and components. The goal of helping students to develop content reading skills in core subject areas presents a challenge for teachers who teach struggling readers in all subject areas aside from English. The relationship between reading development skills and content area reading skills is discussed.

There are many potential factors that contribute to students' nonproficient reading levels, including the following: (a) content area teachers are not sufficiently skilled to integrate best practice strategies and literacy skill training into their instructional support, (b) teachers use accommodations not necessarily appropriate for all students, (c) teachers lack PD that focuses on teaching reading skills development, (d) incoming ninth grade students are continuously promoted although some of them fail to meet the state's reading proficiency minimum required score of 700, and (e) parents are not involved.

Theoretical Framework

Constructivist learning theory has been the driving force in spearheading the movement towards RTI (Gordon, 2009). Constructivism is a philosophy of learning founded on experiences. The philosophy of constructivism believes that humans build their own knowledge

base of understanding of the world in which they reside (Lee, 2012; Meyer, 2009). Constructivism identifies the construction of new knowledge as a combination of prior learning, new information, and readiness to learn. Individuals decide what innovative concepts to accept and how to arrange them into their traditional views of the world (Buchinger, 2012; MacKenzie, 2011). Consequently, there have been many theorists, including Piaget, Dewey, Vygotsky, and Bruner, who have added to the educational theory of constructivism. Although their philosophies are different, together they define constructivist theory. Vygotsky (1978) and Bruner (1963) contributed significantly to the foundation of the constructivist theory; however, Piaget (1971) formulated his ideas of constructivism founded upon his understanding of the psychological development of children. He believed that children develop through phases of development, and through these progressions, they discover and construct meaning. In the same way, Dewey (1938) believed that learning follows as a result of doing or action. Dewey believed that education was to be a social process. Influenced by Vygotsky, Bruner explained that there should be a relationship between instruction theory, presentation, and how instruction is learned. A theory of instruction is also used to navigate the order of learning objectives and how they should be attained.

According to Schumaker (2009), all teachers should have a conceptual awareness comprised of the basic theories of learning to provide learning strategies instruction in diverse ways to help at-risk students be successful in the general education curriculum. Schumaker further explained that teachers have the expertise to improve the students' academic skills by helping them to master certain skills before to advancing to the next skill or concept; however, teachers should examine their teaching practices to help students gain proficiency.

These basic literacy theories, as they pertain to this basic interpretative qualitative project study, provide a practical approach to literacy instruction. Bartle (2009) identified the characteristics of students who struggle with reading include weaknesses in the five key areas of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Those five key areas of reading are the building blocks that point to academic skill development in literacy (Bartle). The teaching methods that help to increase learner competencies in literacy include diverse instruction and strategies that concentrate on the five key parts of reading (Brozo, 2009). There are many learning theories that might have been chosen, and the principles held within constructivism closely compare to that of the RTI. The RTI model and constructivism beliefs were established as a method to help at-risk students achieve academic success by delivering supplemental instruction based on student data of those unsuccessful in core curriculum (Gordon, 2009). Constructivist theory and student learning align closely to RTI. Constructivism may seem contradictory to the philosophy of the RTI model; nonetheless, the constructivist teaching strategies support the RTI theoretical foundation for improving student achievement by using data based information as the core for instructional progress. The principles of RTI could be embraced by school leadership who believe that quality constructivist teaching is part of effective instruction that can result in more students experiencing academic achievement (Aloise, Coe, Higgins, & Major, 2014)

Social Constructivism and Constructivism

The theoretical framework for this basic interpretative qualitative project study was also built on Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory. In describing the zone of proximal development, Vygotsky presented the concept of learning as taking place through social interactions with peers and adults (Hearne, 2011). Consequently, Vygotsky defined the zone of

proximal development as the stage between the specific development phase as determined by independent problem solving and the level of possible development as decided through problem solving under the assistance of an adult or in partnership with skilled peers. Finally, Bruner (1966) identified the necessity for constructivism in the classroom when he recommended a spiral curriculum, which means that students will continuously construct and interact using prior knowledge. However, learners who lack knowledge and find acquiring new knowledge more challenging, as they cannot assimilate because they do not possess the necessary antecedent. By using techniques such as mentoring and vocabulary development, as suggested by Marzano (2011), teachers can help students gain knowledge as well as experience, and if learners have the knowledge and experiences, they are able to attain new knowledge.

The review of literature on the learning theory and the theory of social constructivism offers evidence of features that impacted the interview questions, data collection methods, and data analysis techniques that were used to create the project. The features were used to create the interview protocol and to determine the documents to be collected. The framework was considered when creating and refining the research questions. As my study progressed, the features from the framework were used to organize, code, and categorize the data, generate themes, and summarize findings and interpretations.

Characteristics of Low Socioeconomic High Schools

Social characteristics. Socioeconomic status refers to an individual's overall social and economic classification, which can often be defined by demographics, education, income level, and/or occupation and perhaps housing. According to Batool, Kanwal, and Naureen (2010), the social and economic classification of the parent(s) may result in overindulgence if the parents are wealthy. However, regardless of students' socioeconomic background, many

students may experience neglect, which can impact academic success. Illiteracy can adversely impact the individual's ability to obtain employment, which places them at a disadvantage in the global society. Sokoloff (2012) found that there is direct link between literacy level and employment stability income. In fact, Sokoloff's findings estimated that 75% of unemployed adults possess limited literacy skills, which also presents a challenge in not only gaining employment, but reduces the chances of potential career opportunities.

Academic. There are some commonalities among students labeled as at-risk and low socioeconomic when it comes to proficiency in reading. A child's academic performance can be greatly affected by the lack of reading proficiency. Opportunities for an education beyond high school for students whose parents are economically disadvantaged may not be an option. In fact, Dewey (1934) stated that an environment in which some individuals are limited due to low socioeconomic factors will create conditions that prevent full development of various aspects of their lives. Children do not select the environments in which they are born. Children who live in poor neighborhoods are said to see fewer positive role models and have less access to good schools (Down, McInerney, & Smyth. 2010). These types of environments prohibit students from good social networking that often results in lack of motivation, which in turn leads to negative academic performance (Jensen, 2013).

Emotional. Lack of basic literacy skills not only affects the individual's academic needs, but social and emotional needs as well. Many ninth grade at-risk students demonstrate apathy and lack motivation after repeated academic failure. Continued academic failure could also contribute towards the high school dropout rate. MacIver (2011) found that ninth grade students who experience repeated patterns of failure in academics are not motivated to succeed in school. This has a direct effect on the student dropout rate.

Parental involvement is a key element in a child's academic success; however, parental involvement has also been linked to both negative and positive influences in a child's academic achievement (Darling, Kleiman, & LaRocque, 2011). Parents who are blessed with a wealth of resources can provide their children with all the essential tools to become successful in school. However, low socioeconomic status presents a hardship on families when trying to access the necessary resources to help their students succeed. These hardships often create undue stress in the home, especially when students are products of a single-parent household (Luther, 2012). Many of these at-risk students share these same characteristics, which could explain why they are experiencing poor academic achievement and failing to thrive under these conditions. There is a need to understand where these students come from so that they may be able to attain academic success; thus, teachers must understand possible factors affecting non-proficient readers. Positive actions to overcome the perceived deficit can indeed be constructive, and interventions have been characterized as efforts that place emphasis on a deficit model.

Demands of Current Legislative Policy on Proficiency in Reading

No Child Left Behind (NCLB; 2001). Former President George W. Bush signed the legislative mandate, NCLB, on January 8, 2002. NCLB sought to reform secondary and elementary school programs across the United States. It was also the goal of NCLB to ensure that every student, including those with disabilities, be held accountable and meet standards set by the state by the end of the 2013-2014 academic year. In order to improve academic achievement, it was necessary that every student receive equal opportunities to receive a quality education in every classroom. Under NCLB, every classroom was to be filled with teachers highly qualified in the content area. This component of NCLB ultimately became a huge controversy. Many states were required to create a plan to ensure that highly qualified teachers

were indeed experts in their field of study by the end of 2005-2006, as stated under the provisional guidelines of NCLB. Additionally, Thomas and Zirkel (2010) reported that student achievement depends greatly upon the teachers assigned to the classrooms.

After NCLB, the Obama administration called upon the aid of teachers and parents to gain their perspectives on how to implement a reform that would increase college readiness and careers. Hence, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was signed into law by President Obama on December 10, 2015. According to Russo (2016), ESSA focuses on providing support to schools rather than dictating to schools; this permits local and states governments to control their schools. While ESSA requires states to follow standards, assessments, and accountability, under this law, ESSA mandates states to test students in Grades 3 to 8 in reading and math, and again in high school to align college and career readiness standards as set by each state. The new provisions of the Act are scheduled to go into effect during the 2017-2018 school year.

Standards based education. According to Llosa (2011), the goal of standards-based reform is to cultivate the value of education for every student by increasing the rigor of standards and aligning instruction, assessment, PD, and resources to those standards. Standards influence many school systems today. Consequently, there are standards set for the amount of class time, curriculum, textbooks, and even work conditions for teachers. Through the education process, parents and students better understand expectations when standards are in place. However, Beane (2013) argued that while public schools are organized under basic standards, there seems to be no standards in place for the knowledge and skills (the Common Core of Standards) students should have gained during K-12 education in order to be successful in career and higher education. Beane further explained that while standards-based reform has brought some

coherence to a lower grade levels, systemic reform is not believed to have taken hold at the high school level.

The development of core standards outlines what secondary students are expected to learn in an English course as well as other core subject areas. However, education policies affect the way teachers are prepared for the classrooms, along with high stake testing when standards are implemented. According to Coleman and Pimentel (2012), one of the main objectives of the Common Core Standards is to help students to exhibit thorough knowledge of what they read prior to engaging their opinions or interpretations. Therefore, in order for high school graduates to have learned the necessary knowledge and skills that could lead them to succeed in college and careers, students must be able to read and comprehend written text.

The standards were not designed to dictate to teachers how to teach (Kern, 2012). However, the standards can be seen as a roadmap to success for students, teachers, and parents (Coleman & Pimentel, 2012; Kern, 2012). Teachers should be able to use the standards to build stronger lessons for the classroom to help students learn.

Reading Programs to Assist At-risk High School Readers

Research-based well-implemented programs can benefit schools seeking to increase reading proficiency (Chung, 2012). In this qualitative project study, I examined teachers' perspectives on the extent to which the program helps high school students improve their literacy skills. Cable et al. (2009) conducted a quasi-experimental study that recommended that older students with difficulties in reading problems considerably benefited from decoding, vocabulary, and fluency interventions.

Under NCLB (2001), teachers can be held accountable for making sure students are being challenged by the required state academic content standards through state assessments so that all

students can experience academic achievement. Further academic achievement may also be obtained if all students have access to challenging content and research-based instruction that is promoted as a school wide reform. In an effort to improve the literacy rate among poor readers, the demands of current legislative policy on reading programs have produced many of the following reading intervention programs.

READ 180. READ 180 is a comprehensive reading intervention program developed to meet the literacy needs of students in Grades 4 to 12, and offered reading instructions designed to meet the needs of a multitude of learners, including English language learners and students with learning disabilities (Scholastic Inc., 2011). The program aims to help students achieve communication skills and become contributors in their communities, as well as interacting responsibly as lifelong learners in our global society. READ 180 focuses on reading comprehension; however, it does not have a timeline set by which a student's success must be achieved. This program has the potential to improve the struggling reader's literacy skills and is backed by efficacy reports (Scholastic, 2011). However, when schools purchase this program, they also accept the responsibility to hire and thoroughly train reading teachers. Teachers must be adequately trained in order for students to receive highly effective instruction. There must also be buy-in from the administrator and ongoing support for teachers. Therefore, if there is no buy-in, the program is unlikely to be properly implemented.

Infused with direct instruction, reading elements, and technology, READ 180 has had a positive impact on students' attitudes towards academics and helping them gain reading proficiency by using research-based strategies. READ 180 has also had a positive effect on students who actively engaged in this program. Further, dropout rates have notably improved among low socio-economic minority students. (Scholastic, 2011).

Corrective Reading. Corrective Reading is an accelerated reading intervention created by SRA/McGraw-Hill and published in 1973 in an effort to help older students acquire and excel beyond basic literacy skills (Scholastic, 2011). High school students at-risk for becoming non-proficient readers and academic failure may possibly benefit from the design of the corrective reading program. Corrective Reading is made up of two strands that include decoding and comprehension; however, these two strands are available at various levels in order to reach proficiency levels. The comprehension strand is intended to help students reach reading proficiency by helping them develop reasoning strategies. Comprehension skills can be acquired through direct instruction from the teacher who can access the student's vocabulary and prior knowledge in order to help the student comprehend expository text (Glende, 2013). Consequently, Espin and Seifert (2012) proposed improving the reading of older students by employing direct instruction. Many students could possibly advance at a rapid rate and gain reading proficiency that allows them to catch up to the rest of their peers on grade level. Corrective Reading is typically used in special education classrooms; therefore, its effectiveness might be questioned in a regular classroom.

Questioning the Author (QtA). QtA is an approach used to help students become strategic readers and to develop their reading comprehension. It is a process that requires the co-construction of the meaning of text by the teachers. This method for text-based instruction was used the 1990s and designed to facilitate building understanding of text idea. According to Beck, Blake and McKeown, (2009), QtA requires students to intermingle with the text instead of simply removing actual information from it. QtA supports constructed meaning through classroom discussions through queries, which the authors differentiate as different from questions. Queries are common probes teachers can use in order to prompt a dialogue after

reading text material. According to Alexander, Hennessey, Murphy, Soter, and Wilkinson (2009), when students learn to question the author's text, they will be able to determine what the author is trying to convey to the reader. Students will be able to extract factual information they have read or learned and then interpret or make inferences about the meaning in the text.

QtA also encourages verbal discussion based on queries made by the teacher. The teacher is required to develop queries and help students connect to the written text through classroom discussions. QtA works with passages from all types of literature. Reading passages should come from various literary resources such as novels, textbook chapters, plays, newspapers and etc. The key concept surrounding QtA is to present the author's messages or ideas clear way. Teachers can base their classroom discussions from the following types of queries:

1. Determine from what is the author trying to say here?
2. What is the author's message?
3. What is the author talking about within the text? (Beck et al., 2009).

Once students start to understand the basis, the questions that ask why may be incorporated into these discussions.

One of the most important aspects of QtA includes classroom discussions with the use of queries in order to make inferences (Alexander et al., 2009). Classroom discussions are designed to help students feel confident in their ability to infer author and textual meaning. QtA is also designed to help students think critically and to be able at discern a deeper meaning of the author or text.

QtA is a direct method of teaching students to enhance their comprehension by showing them how to engage more actively with the text and its author. By modeling and instructing the

students in questions to ask themselves as they meet an unfamiliar passage, QtA provides students first with intra-mental strategies. Through the process of using QtA as they are actually reading the text, the students construct a greater understanding as the strategy is internalized.

Reading apprenticeship. Reading Apprenticeship (RA) was created in 1995 by WestEd's Strategic Literacy Initiative staff and two high school teachers from the San Francisco Bay Area. RA was designed to advance adolescent literacy in content-area classrooms by implementing strategies used by proficient readers utilize that draw on the student's knowledge about their subject-areas. RA classrooms where teachers and students are engaged in a shared partnership approach to learning, teachers use the text to guide their think-alouds to expose and make their thinking visible by demonstrating familiar ways to make sense of the text. Through modeling and guided practice, cognitive load will shift to the student for independent practice (Dunn, Julien-Schultz, & Maynes (2010). The key to quality modeling and guided practice is quality strategic thinking about the statements and questions that are asked. When modeling comprehension through think-alouds, the goal is to teach for metacognition, by making conscious decisions about how to regain meaning when the reading process becomes bogged down. According to Fisher, Frey, and Lapp (2009) strategies such as establishing purpose, inferring, summarizing and synthesizing, predicting, questioning, visualizing, monitoring, determining importance, and connecting should be taught using think-alouds for metacognitive awareness. When students are able to connect to things that are familiar, they can be successful using strategies.

When RA students are introduced to and begin to capture their reading processes during reading to develop metacognitive awareness, they respond to teacher elicited prompts in questions such as the following: (a) what did you notice in the text? (b) what was the most

difficult to understand within the text? (c) what strategy did you use to understand the message in the text? (Smetana & Speizman, 2011). Students are asked to share and generate a class list of reading strategies, which validates the multiple ways readers construct and build awareness of their reading. Teachers model and use think-alouds with content texts to make their thinking visible as a way to scaffold the reflective work that good readers do to achieve a coherent sense of comprehension while integrating the four dimensions of classroom life that promote reading development. The beginning metacognitive conversations about the thinking processes in which students and teachers engage expand reading with the use of scaffolding tools such as the Think-Aloud Checklist and Think-Aloud Bookmark. Teachers demonstrate modeling the strategies that are on the check-list and bookmark before asking students to utilize them in partnerships with content texts. Since metacognition requires a dual-task load on the reader, the teacher can initially take on the responsibility of the problem solving while reading and the students' cognitive resources will be free to monitor. By monitoring students' metacognitive thinking first, the process can then turn inward to learn content knowledge and metacognitive skills (Smetana & Speizman, 2011) .

Talking to the Text is an instructional routine regularly used in RA classrooms in conjunction with think-alouds. When students use this technique, verbalization occurs during think-aloud, and they are required to write in the margins of the text as a personal system of annotating text. Vygotsky (1978) asserted that this inner speech dialogue is a mental tool, which assists in coordinating thinking while thinking aloud and annotating text. Teachers frequently use the personal system of annotating text to model to students how thoughts about one's thinking can change from the invisible to the visible. When students share their Talking to the Text notes and verbalize their cognitive processing with others through conversation they have

opportunities to cultivate their inner self-directed speech. Because of repeated literacy failures, struggling readers often do not fully realize the effectiveness of strategies. Reading and attempts to construct meaning can generate disconnects and lead to frustrating literacy experiences. According to Stanberry and Swanson (2011) think-alouds and student's written notes about the strategies used during reading can aid students in becoming more cognizant of strategies that active readers use.

RTI is not a reading program; rather, it incorporates assessment and interventions designed to help the student develop skills that will improve their reading performance. Reading comprehension strategy instruction is the teaching of specific cognitive strategies students can apply to comprehend new information (McNamara, 2010; Woolley, 2010). The teacher models strategies using think aloud, graphic organizers, and being able to talk through the process followed by class discussion and guided practice. Instruction is then scaffolded so that it gradually leads to reading comprehension. Grigorenko (2009) asserted that scaffolding allows the teacher's role to change from being a source of knowledge to that of facilitator to guide the reading, writing, thinking and learning process.

Direct instruction and strategy use in terms of the comprehension in the text has been shown to be successful when working with at-risk learners (Kipper & Ruutmann, 2011). Currently, interventions used at the high school level come from RTI's Tier two. Tier two represents a culmination of what the education communities and reforms have tried to accomplish in terms of helping students achieve academic success. Unlike some of the aforementioned programs, RTI does not use technology software packages; however, it does need trained teachers in order to deliver appropriate intervention methods that meet the needs of these high school students.

Professional Development for High School Teachers

Professional development. Despite the concerns that PD programs have been offering ineffective instructional support for teachers (Brownell & Leko, 2011; Kipnis, Ryan, Sakia, & Whitebrook, 2011; Coleman & Goldenberg, 2010), researchers such as Blank (2010), and Coleman and Goldenberg (2010) argued that PD is one of the key factors to promote higher achievement. Some researchers (Moran & Moran, 2011; Ryan et al., 2011; Coleman & Goldenberg, 2010), argued that PD programs show teachers specific effective practices. Weis, Andree, Darling-Hammond, Orphanos, and Richardson (2009) revealed that a PD that is embedded in teachers' daily work will improve student learning. However, teachers must also be prepared to carry out high quality instruction in order to help students who are not currently meeting standards as put forth by the state (U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

In a study exploring how PD influences student achievement, Margolin and Roger (2011) found that teachers needed to keep up- to-date with current research-based knowledge, acquire experience, and gain insight through PD at all grade levels, to facilitate effective classroom instruction. The current basic interpretative qualitative project study will explore the teachers' perceptions as to what elements of RTI and PD could assist them through the process of reforming their reading instructional strategies.

Researchers have argued that PD programs improve teachers' practice, but not without quality components (Poekert, 2012; Blank, 2010; Knight, 2010). Hough (2011) identified five major characteristics that describe effective PD training that improves teacher practice and raises student achievement. The following components indicate quality PD:

- Time, which is the length of time or frequency necessary to devote to learning, such as providing institutes, workshops, coaching, or mentoring;

- Coherence, which is the process of supporting the school plan for improvement;
- Collective participation, which is the process by which teachers are involved in the PD training;
- Active engagement, which is the process of teachers helping lead sessions, receiving feedback, and receiving coaching or mentoring; and
- Content focus, which is an in depth study of specific concepts. (Hought, 2011, p.131).

Although Garakanidze and Kobalia (2010) endorsed the claim regarding the positive impact of PD, they believed that due to educational reform, "teachers should not only be a provider of knowledge and skills, but also have a positive affect toward innovation, feel the necessity for self-education, and adopt a student centered teacher approach " (p. 104). Educational reform requires school leaders to sustain a culture of learning for teachers and students. In order for PD to be a viable and sustainable improvement strategy for educational reform, a system must be developed. The system must include standards that address the professional competencies required and PD needs of teacher leaders (Dozier, 2007). Garakanidze and Kobalia (2010) examined the perceptions of professional competency preparedness on the part of PD leaders. Their findings indicated the PD program focused on preparing teachers to be experts in their subject matter. Geijsel, Oort, Peetsma, Sleegers,and Thoonen (2011) further added that when teachers are expert in their content areas and are adequately prepared to implement new interventions, professional learning increases and overall school conditions improve. However, Gautreau (2011) noted that schools often overlook a variety of the PD needs among faculty members and suggested that faculty meetings be used to meet the professional needs of its faculty. These findings might suggest that when specific teacher leader knowledge, skills, and dispositions are identified, teachers can be guided to work as successful change

agents. Additionally, teacher instruction can improve, whereby; students reap the benefits of a quality education.

PD creates an opportunity for federal and state legislative bodies as well as school leaders to support teacher learning. Catherine (2007) noted that the federal, state and educational organizations support teacher learning through PD. PD can improve teachers' ability to teach. According to Feixas and Zellwger (2010) teachers enhanced their own learning when they shared their experiences and skills with others.

PD is necessary for teachers to improve in their current practices in order to benefit student learning. Effective PD should have a significant impact on teacher learning (Desimone, 2009). According to the U.S. Department of Education (2009), teachers must also be prepared to carry out high quality instruction in order to help students who are not currently meeting standards as put forth by the state. Teachers must be willing to increase their skills and knowledge in order to be agents of change and be able to help students to succeed.

Specific Literacy Needs of At-risk Students

Reading problems among struggling readers in many high schools have been addressed to provide support to these students as well as helping them reach grade level proficiency through remedial reading classes. According to Texas Education Agency (2011) high school reading courses should focus on explicit instruction in fluency, word recognition, vocabulary, and comprehension strategies. These strategies should provide students the opportunity to read with confidence, competence, and understanding. Further, all strategies are applied in independent level texts and instructional levels that cross the content areas. Struggling readers need help learning new words, but they need help in developing content area word learning strategies. Taylor (2012) argued, when students develop how to identify important terms in a passage,

learning occurs. At this point, students are able to retain content, make connections through prior knowledge application, as well as apply self-monitoring techniques to track their own progress

Response to Intervention

History

RTI techniques began more than 20 years ago (Burns, Christ, Kovaleski, Shapiro, & Ysseldyke, 2009). In the 1970s, researchers were faced with the concept of standardized test underperformance. Teachers and educational researchers were trying to understand why some students were not performing well on assessments. As students continue to perform below grade level on tests, learning disabilities were presumed to be the cause of low performance scores. Children would be determined learning disabled and still expected to perform well on tests alongside their peers (Mike, 2010). These learning disabled children needed extra help with the curriculum, but educators needed to determine which individuals needed help under standards outlined in The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Under IDEA, a learning disability is defined as a disorder in basic psychological processes involving understanding in spoken or written language usage that could be revealed through a flawed ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do math operations. The term encompasses perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. However, this term does not affect children labeled with learning difficulties that are generally due to visual, hearing, or motor skill disabilities, of intellectual disabled, emotionally disturbed, or at-risk due to environmental, cultural, or economically disadvantaged (Mike, 2010).

For students to become eligible for extra help under IDEA, they need to be identified learning disabled. There are actually several different eligibility categories under IDEA under which students can qualify for help (Thomas & Zirkel, 2010). Under IDEA, an evaluation team was to be designated at each school site in order to evaluate students and determine the area(s) of need for additional support and/or services. The United States Office of Education determined that in order to put IDEA in place, each state would need to define their own levels of discrepancy (as cited in Bender, Berkeley, Peaster, & Saunders, 2009). States needed to set levels for IQ, as well as, students' current level of academic achievement. For instance, IDEA has allowed the use of RTI data as part of the eligibility process; however, all states have been using the processing and achievement discrepancy formulas as a means to diagnose as opposed to treating students. Each state is responsible for determining each level, and chosen levels vary among states (Bender et al., 2009).

As time passed, concerns grew about the discrepancy model (Renaissance Learning, 2009). Administrators were concerned about an over-identification of students in special education programs, implementation procedures, inclusion in programs, not identifying students early enough, as well as measurement issues. In order to address these issues, a reauthorization of the act became evident. President Bush put the NCLB (2001) act into place. This included President Bush's desire that every child will read by the completion of third grade (NCLB, 2001). According to NCLB, "a major benefit of this approach would be the reduced identification of children for special education services due to a lack of appropriate reading instruction in the early years" (p. 2). In order to accomplish this goal, reading instruction programs in the early years were going to be federally funded under the NCLB for those schools that qualified (NCLB, 2001).

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), signed into law by President Bush, transformed how children were identified for special education services. Schools would be responsible to inquire about whether a child responded to research-based proven curriculum set forth for the student's grade level. If the child demonstrated the need for additional support, they would then receive research-based interventions before being evaluated.

According to Buffum et al., (2009), RTI was viewed as a means to meet the legal compliance requirement of the NCLB Act (2001) reauthorization for students in the general education setting. Very little was known about RTI before IDEA was passed. According to Daves and Walker (2012), many viewed RTI as a way to meet the legal compliance requirement of the reauthorization of IDEA. Because IDEA was passed before there was much information about RTI, Orsoco and Klinger (2010) argued that administrators knew very little about how to go about implementing RTI in a practical way as there was little guidance passed along from states, districts, and schools. RTI had become a popular model for differentiation and administrators are forced to create their interpretation of the model due to a lack of resources provided when the model was introduced. Soodak and Wiener, 2008 argued that administrators are "perplexed about how best to implement RTI in practical effective ways…because little guidance was provided to states, districts, and schools about how to implement the new model" (p. 270). RTI has become a widespread model for diverse learning. School leaders are compelled to develop their own interpretation of the RTI model due to a lack of resources provided when the model was presented.

It was through the reauthorization of IDEA that RTI became effective October 13, 2006 (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). The reauthorization of IDEA did not eliminate the IQ-

achievement discrepancy to classify students with learning disabilities. However, it allowed districts to implement the RTI process when making these identifications.

RTI

RTI was realized as a result of NCLB and IDEA. Johnson, Smith, and Harris (2009) explained that these two laws necessitated the need for interventions in younger students who showed signs of falling behind academically. The interventions were meant to help close the learning gap among students who showed early signs of learning difficulties; instead of these students waiting to fail before receiving help. Compton et al. (2012) stated that the RTI process emphasized and incorporated high quality, and scientifically based classroom instruction, school-wide screening of academics and behavior, frequent monitoring of progress, implementation of research-based interventions and fidelity checks on implementation.

Components

There are three tiers in which the RTI program offers preventive measures. Tier 1 occurs in a general education setting, which is where the core is implemented, and students are provided good instruction from highly qualified teachers. In Tier 1, all students will receive small group instruction in the general education classroom. The student's learning environment is a key component and they recommended that each small group consist of no more than five students. The RTI interventions should take place three times per week for 30 minutes.

One of the first critical RTI components is the initial universal screening. Screenings are conducted to identify struggling learners and to make certain they have received quality instruction. Screening results that reveal deficits in student current academic learning should employ Tier II interventions. The initial universal screening is administered to all students. Benchmark data norms are developed for grade level by the school district. The data from these

benchmarks are collected during the fall, winter and spring. The data will also be supplied to the teachers, administrators, as well as parents (O'Connor & Freeman, 2012).

Tier 2 refers to the supplemental instruction that will support the specific needs that surface within the instruction from Tier 1. Tier 2 interventions encompass the core curriculum of instruction, and rigor. It relates to the frequency and length in relation to the interventions in Tier 1. They also include benchmark assessments and progress monitoring. Tier 2 interventions can be implemented by the general education teacher, reading specialist, or support staff, but should be implemented by a person who has received adequate RTI training on the selected intervention. Tier 2 interventions will often involve small group instruction on the targeted area of deficit. For instance, students who struggle with phonics will receive small group instruction that concentrates on this particular skill. Based on students' response to the intervention and progress monitoring, one of three decisions will be made from the following:

1. If the student reaches a level of performance that matches that of his or her grade-level peers, he or she returns to Tier 1 (back in the regular classroom, large group).
2. Should the student continue to perform at below the level of his/her peers, but makes adequate progress toward the stated goals, the student may continue on with Tier 2 intervention.
3. If the student is not successful with the intervention provided, the student will move to Tier 3. Tier 3 interventions are intensive and designed to meet the needs of the student (Griffiths et al., 2009).

There is no consistent process for measuring student responsiveness to intervention. The student's performance may be assessed at the end of the intervention, and/or growth after the

course of the intervention, or both. However, RTI is curriculum-based in terms of measurement, which is another form of ongoing progress monitoring where growth-sensitive measures will be administered to determine if further course of instruction is needed (Cicek, 2012 . The major perception behind RTI is to provide early interventions as the first sign of failure; however, (Dexter & Hughes, 2011; Allington, 2009) added that that when a child first shows signs of failure, that strategies can be implemented rather than suggesting special education referrals.

Tier 3 is intensive and highly specialized instruction that meets the significant needs, including special education (Faggella-Luby, Wilson & Yan, 2013; Compton, Fuchs, & Fuchs, 2012; Brown & Sayeski, 2011; Vaughn & Wanzek, 2009). There have been disputes between educational practitioners and researchers about who should implement Tier 3 interventions and where or not they should be implemented in a general education setting (Bender & Shores, 2007). Some researchers (Compton et al., 2012; Mandel & Powers, 2011) agree that since Tier 3 interventions are so intensive, the interventions should be implemented in special education classrooms by special education teachers.

The measure of problem areas is another RTI component designed to assess results. Results will help to determine if there are problems represented in the student's skill performance or if there is an issue in their performance. The assessment results will also reveal factors that might yield reasons why problems are occurring as well as determine if the problems are actually measurable. At this point, the universal screening component is imperative as it helps to ensure those at-risk for academic failure are matched with appropriate services (Compton et al., 2012; Salvia, Ysseldyke & Bolt, 2007).

According to RTI, the baseline data component will utilize benchmark results during the data analysis. The goal here is to determine if there are students represented in this analysis.

However, if there are no students who stand out through the data analysis then the problem could be instructional or curriculum related. The baseline data component will help to identify students who need an intervention if they are not successfully working at grade level (Burns & Gibbons, 2008; Callendar, 2007). The accountability plan is a component for which interventions are put in writing once the problem has been identified. The plan will describe in detail the specifics about the intervention. It will also outline the duration, setting and schedule of the intervention. Any necessary adjustments made to the accountability plan will be based upon measurable outcomes (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Vaughn, 2008; Johnson & Mellard, 2008).

Techniques used to describe the measurement of the skill will be measured and recorded; along with the continuance of a regular progress monitoring schedule. Additionally, progress monitoring will include data collection from other sources. This will allow evaluation of the student's performance over a period of time. Under the RTI progress monitoring component, academic, social and behavior data will be monitored and evaluated against student performance. The sixth component involves data comparison. This component will compare the pre- and post-intervention data. Through this comparison, an evaluation of the outcome of the instruction will determine the effectiveness of the interventions (Grant, Jones, & Yssel, 2012; Fuchs et al., 2008; Johnson & Mellard, 2008).

Current Trends

The RTI approach aligns with research that reveals early identification. Strong intervention strategies can help decrease future problems in reaching reading proficiency levels. Students who continue to demonstrate failure in the general education classrooms will receive ongoing interventions.

Ineffective reading strategies may impact a student's ability to gain reading proficiency. According to Park (2012), students with reading deficiencies often possess inefficient strategies; therefore, comprehension can best be achieved through strategy instruction. In upper elementary grades, teachers have departed from explicit strategy instruction to instruction that allows for offering current reading literature in a more natural constructionist way. This will enable teachers to offer strong literature experiences so that reading intervention strategies can be assembled naturally with support from the teacher. Direct strategy instruction is introduced and modeled by the teacher. Students are provided guided practice, time to apply thoughts and their own ideas on how these strategies can be utilized in other content areas. According to Allington (2009), direct instruction provides support in helping students understand text by understand what they should be do before, during and after reading and assigned text. Allington add that this part of the reading process helps student attain reading comprehension.

Benefits

The benefits of a successful RTI program can be colossal if the framework is properly implemented (Sailor, 2009). According to Dupuis (2010), Minneapolis public schools conducted research on RTI in order to determine the effectiveness of the model. The results stated the problem-solving tiered model improved student assessment and decisions regarding special education reduced referrals (Dupuis, 2010). According to Esteves, Whitten, and Woodrow (2009), RTI can improve students' academic achievement and help decrease costs related to learning disabilities as well as helping to identify students who are struggling in academics. Additional RTI potential benefits include collaborating with general education, special education, English Language Learner staff, administration and parents. Many older learners who exhibit failure can now be identified as struggling learners, and no longer wait to fail before they

are identified as struggling learners through the RTI process (Reynolds & Shaywitz, 2009). The implementation of RTI will help general education teachers increase their knowledge regarding the needs of diverse learners in their classrooms through focused PD geared toward further development of inclusive teachers. Harris, Johnson, and Smith (2009) found that the systemic process of collecting evidence and evaluating the performance, at all levels of instruction, has been invaluable in focusing efforts on improving instruction.

Not only does the RTI program provide an objective means of early identification of student needs, Harris, Johnson, and Smith (2009) stated that the information collected from: (a) description of instruction and intervention, and (b) how students responded to the interventions will provide the implementation team with a more significant and structured method of communicating concerns with parents and working to address student concerns. Friedman (2010) argued that supporters of RTI believe it can reduce the number of students served in special education. If the RTI program is properly implemented, school districts could see a decrease in special education referrals. RTI is already in place in many schools all over school districts across the United States.

Challenges using the program

There is a host of potential benefits offered from the proper usage of the RTI program, however, the RTI program is not without challenges. In fact, Brozo (2009) argued that if content teachers neglect to deliver responsive literacy instruction to benefit all students along with differentiated instruction to those who require additional help, then the preventative possibility of RTI is lost. According to Barnett, Daly, Martens, Olson, and Witt (2007), the RTI process may actually break down for students when weak interventions are implemented as a result of teachers not adequately trained in RTI. The delivery approach at any RTI level could prove

challenging if the interventions are not strong. Schools need to be able to use effective interventions that are research-based with all students. However, in the event interventions do not work for a particular student, this can potentially pose challenges for students and teachers. At any rate, schools need to be able to plan for those instances when interventions do not work for every student at any grade level. Part of the challenge, according to Ehrin (2010), is that implementing RTI at the high school level may be challenging in lower grades. This may be due to the size of secondary schools, the quantity of people involved, as well as complexities of working around credits and schedules.

Researchers have identified most at-risk readers as having low vocabulary and comprehension (O'Shea, McCollin & McQuistan, 2009). However, literacy achievement can be attained through additional teacher support and supplemental instructional material (Dewitz, Jones, & Leahy, 2009). Still, the supplemental materials are geared toward high interest in order to reduce students' frustration level, which adds more assistance in meeting the students' needs (Cooper, 2007). There is a wide range of strategies for reading instruction that could assist the non-proficient reader (Herman & Owles, 2012; Griffith-Ross & Walczyk, 2007). Consistent modeling is a strategy that is used by many teachers so that students will know how to apply it in reading. For example, teachers modeling the correct pronunciation of unfamiliar words would be a good strategy for non-proficient readers (Magno, 2010). Peer tutoring is another approach used in high school that has been successful with the non-proficient readers as it allows the proficient reader to help the non-proficient reader (Marchiando, 2013). Small group instruction that lends itself to one-on-one tutoring from an intervention teacher has also had success among the secondary students (Tyler, 2009). Meyer and Ray (2011) found that explicit instruction, allows for small group instruction that provides a productive environment for at-risk readers.

In many instances, reading intervention has failed to prove beneficial in helping the non-proficient reader (Fletcher & Vaughn, 2009). As core subject areas become increasingly challenging, many teachers do not feel responsible nor do they have time to go back to teach reading skills. According to Miosovic (2007), many lessons are heavily scripted, and the lack of success with many of these reading interventions. Therefore, many critics are concerned that scripted curriculum becomes too narrowly focused, and does not allow teachers to employ reading interventions.

Use of RTI

Mask, Solmonson, and Welsh (2011) argued that RTI strategies are preventative and proactive in nature. While teachers are implementing RTI to provide remediation for at-risk students, many school districts are also using the program to identify students who may need special education services. Hence, many educational professionals are under the impression that RTI is solely a tool for special education. Vaughn and Wanzek (2008) stated that RTI shows hope for providing prompt intervention and identification for students with reading difficulties and learning disabilities. RTI can be used for more than identifying students who meet the criteria for special education services. RTI can also be used for challenging, and rigorous instruction, so that students can excel in academics, rather than just meeting the minimum requirements, as set forth by the state. According to Buffum, Matto, and Weber (2010) at RTI's Tier 1 level, students are provided with enriched and engaging experiences. These experiences will help students analyze, evaluate, synthesize, and apply new information to their prior knowledge. According to Kaiser and Kaiser (2012), in order for students to receive increased instruction, students' instruction will be based on the following concepts:

1. More explicit instruction to help with critical skills to master a subject;

2. More intensive instruction that provides increased instruction in general education classroom;
3. More supportive instruction to provide more scaffolding to sequence skills and prompts to use necessary strategies. (p. 8)

Another essential aspect of RTI is parental involvement. The lack of parent involvement among the low socioeconomic status students is an element that points to the issue of students failing to thrive under the current conditions at this particular high school. When looking at the socioeconomic background of many of these students, we see that they come from an environment that may prohibit an opportunity to thrive. Researchers have also found that parent involvement ranks low among minorities in low-socioeconomic status groups. Reasons for the lack of involvement often range from time constraints, parent literacy levels, embarrassment, and not feeling welcomed, as they are usually not welcomed in their child 's school due to language barriers (Hornby & Lafaele, (2011). According to researchers, parental involvement plays an important role in student learning. In fact, students experience increased academic success and improved behavior when there is parental involvement (Jansom, Sheldon, Sanders, Salinas, & Simon, 2009). One of the most popular parental involvement models that serve as a tool for creating parental involvement in school programs today was developed by Joyce Epstein in 1995.

According to Epstein (2009) the following are six parental involvement types:

1. Parenting: Designed to assist families in developing stable home environments.
2. Communicating: Designed to get information out to the parents by phone, newsletters, websites, conferences, and any other method.
3. Volunteering: Recruiting parents to work with school and recruiting other parents.

4. Learning at home: Information and resources are made available to parents as to how to assist students with homework assignments, and other curriculum activities by pooling background knowledge.
5. Decision-Making: Parents will take an active role to serve as representatives on district/school committees.
6. Collaborating with the Community: Schools are provided resources to benefit school, parents and the enhancement of student learning. (p. 128)

According to Jansom, Sheldon, Sanders, Salinas, and Simon (2009), the experience and knowledge shared between parents and teacher can greatly build towards a strong collaboration in developing diverse ways to meet the needs of all students. Consequently, when parents are visible in schools and are deemed as a key component in decision making and partner with teachers to assist students with homework, then education is transmitted to the student from the parent that often results in academic success for the student (Epstein et al., 2009). Brennan, McCarthy, and Vecchiarello (2011) believed that shared visions and goals between school families through collaboration help students achieve academic success.

Teacher collaboration is another crucial characteristic of RTI. Student success may be achieved when general and special educators collaborate to come up with interventions, discuss instructional strategies, and work together to meet the needs for all students. According to Mask et al. (2011), professional growth can occur when teachers work collaboratively to improve student achievement.

Perceptions of RTI

RTI methods may differ from district to district; however, RTI is generally implemented using one of two methods, problem solving and standard treatment approach (Stuart, Rinaldi, &

Higgins-Averill, 2011). The problem solving method is used in an effort to target the student's greatest need, and standard treatment method uses one basic intervention. When school leaders decide upon what interventions will be used to help student succeed, many teachers feel they are no longer part of the drivers of reform, but driven (Fullan, 2010). According to Swigart (2009) the views and opinions of teachers may influence ways RTI is implemented among all students. Further, Swigart (2009) emphasized that if classroom teachers do not fully buy-in to the RTI program and believe that it will increase student achievement, and improve teachers' instructional ability that RTI may not be properly implemented. Noll (2013) further explained that many teachers believe that the RTI process might not be an easy program to implement. In fact, McCormick (2010) stated, "When a new teaching method or process comes about, such as RTI, some teachers resist change while others jump in with full enthusiasm" (p. 3). New programs must be properly implemented in order prove effectiveness, and if there is no buy-in from teachers, this change might not yield positive results. According to LaRocco and Murdica (2009), teachers must embrace change such as new programs, and examine their own practices, and make modifications to their instruction, if necessary.

Many teachers might not readily embrace change and may exhibit a lack of enthusiasm, and skepticism, so school leaders should take into account the teachers' perspectives and concerns before carrying out change. Additionally, it is vital that teacher perceptions of RTI are duly noted and serve as evidence and data for future RTI implementation model for other school districts. According to Butikofer, Nunn, and Jantz (2009) researchers have demonstrated that teacher efficacy is important to the success of many educational programs for both teachers and students.

Teachers' Perceptions of RTI

RTI is in the beginning stages for most schools. However, researchers are now focused on how teachers view the implementation process and the impact RTI has had on schools and teachers (Martinez & Young, 2011; Jantz & Nunn, 2009). Effective methods in implementation can have a profound effect in further developing teachers who are experts in their content area.

The teachers' perspective of the use of RTI as a part of classroom instruction is another aspect to be examined. RTI has been publicized as a tool to identify students who may qualify for special education services. However, many teachers may not be aware that RTI could be implemented in order to meet the needs of struggling students who may not qualify for special education services. According to Fechtelkotter (2010), the greatest possible benefit of RTI may be its capability to address the needs of every student regardless of any academic need, and find that many educators are confused about the purposes of RTI. It may be useful to consider the opinion and perceptions of teachers to ensure that RTI is understood, as well as guidelines that should be followed in order to meet the needs of all students.

After one period of RTI implementation, Cardarelli, Greenfield, Proctor, and Rinaldi (2010) studied teachers ' perceptions of RTI in an urban school, and found that many of the teachers did not understand how to make necessary changes to their current teaching practices. Many teachers might benefit from more RTI PD training in order to help teachers make the transition. Because the RTI process requires a lot of time to complete forms and other paperwork, Buffum (2010) explained that teachers are not likely to implement the RTI process in their classrooms.

There are various perceptions among novice and veteran teachers that impact teaching practices and student learning. According to Stuart (2011), many teachers indicated that they

saw fewer special education referrals among struggling learners and improved teaching practices using the RTI model between the first and second year of implementation. Griffiths, Lilles, Skokut, and VanDerHeyden (2009) found progress monitoring useful in discovering what interventions to use on students as well as identifying students who needed academic support. According to Jantz and Nunn (2009) teachers reported that they did not feel left out of this change, but felt empowered in the way RTI should be implemented in each classroom and school. This was largely due to administration collaborating with teachers in making them agents of change. According to Unal and Unal (2012) there are correlations between amount of teaching experience and the difficulties in making adjustments to classroom practices while adhering to a new approaches. Nevertheless, many schools and teachers who embrace RTI are experiencing success from this program.

Many secondary teachers find RTI difficult to implement. Zelenka's (2010) RTI study found that many teachers do not adhere to the RTI structure due to scheduling, lack of additional support to provide interventions, and teachers' inabilities to make the research-based instruction and interventions useful in the classroom. Bartle (2009) found that some teachers did not feel adequately equipped to handle the diverse academic needs of many students in a RTI. Hernandez's (2012) study found that many of the general education teachers found the RTI process rather lengthy and that they did not gain enough information to implement with expertise. These findings might explain the need for thorough RTI training in order to transition from current teaching practices to ensure they reap the benefits of what RTI could possibly offer.

Many teachers do not feel as though they have received adequate RTI training in order to implement it properly, as well as additional time to prepare paperwork and preparation time. Rogers (2010) examined RTI training and teacher perceptions of preparedness and concluded

that teachers who have received training in RTI do not necessarily have higher levels of self-efficacy than teachers who have not received intensive training. In order for teachers to feel confident in implementing new intervention programs, teachers should be afforded the necessary time to be trained, prepare, and plan meaningful lessons.

After conducting the comprehensive review noted in the beginning of Section 2, there is sufficient research regarding benefits of RTI. However, research does not show enough research on actual teachers' perceptions and expectations of the RTI framework from a qualitative standpoint.

Administrators' Responsibilities in Implementing RTI

In order to implement RTI effectively at any school level, the principal should assume the role as an instructional leader. As instructional leaders, principals must also distribute leadership among all teachers, as well as facilitate collaboration and communication. According to Whitten et al., (2009) RTI as a practice, is dependent on the total collaboration and teamwork of school personnel, parents, and students. Messages from principals about the efficacy of RTI for school improvement are likely to be embraced by staff, and parents, if RTI can help raise student achievement (Chester & Shores, 2009). When principals are equipped with thorough knowledge about RTI, and committed to the implementation of prevention and evidence-based practices, then RTI can be successful (Buffum et al., 2009). As with any other process, it takes time for principals to be fully trained and skilled enough to becoming a resource for their teaching staff in order to meet the academic needs of the students. According to Friedman (2010) principals need to be fully knowledgeable and skilled in RTI in order to inform parents about the RTI model and the level of involvement for their students. Leadership delegated among teachers at different Tier levels that involve parents could accomplish this task.

Ackerman, Donaldson, Mackenzie, and Marnik (2009) believed that principals be afforded the opportunity to learn alongside their teachers. According to Jackson and McDermot (2009), principals should not be limited to evaluating assessments and evidence-based practices but should continue to learn with and from teachers as many principals value their positions as instructional leaders and view colleagues in the same manner. Full implementation of RTI depends on their leadership and involvement. Although administrators can offer opportunities for teachers to work collaboratively and learn from each other, they can also produce a framework for teacher leaders to coach other teachers who may be acquiring new skills. Administrators can provide release time for teachers to learn from colleagues in other buildings who have also implemented RTI in an effort to assist teachers to manage their time to learn RTI. Jackson and McDermott (2009) noted that administrators can create internal structures to provide professional learning communities (PLCs) with time to be effective in order to learn from others along with school based PD to match the skills needed to deliver effective interventions to their students.

Implications

This basic interpretative qualitative project study seeks to document and analyze teacher perspectives on RTI implementation, as well as what teachers view as challenges. The unit of analysis for the basic interpretative qualitative project study is the teachers and their interpretation of what they perceive as their best practices in helping students learn to read within the implementation of the RTI program. The anticipated findings of the study could lead to developing a more useful approach to the poor literacy issues among the ninth grade at-risk students, by supporting ninth grade English teachers at this local high school implementing RTI. If teachers are expected to implement literacy interventions in their classrooms, appropriate

training will be necessary. However, I strongly believe that, with adequate training, teachers will be able to accomplish this task. Although this basic interpretative qualitative project study will not focus on the perceptions of the school administrators, the results of this project study will help them to make decisions in the best interest of the teachers, as well as all students.

Summary

Title I schools must align with state academic standards in an effort to meet the growing need of low achieving students, and close the achievement gap. At-risk students face many challenges. The goal of improving ninth grade at-risk students' reading proficiency is key. Before many of these students enter high school, they are already grade levels below their peers. Many students face challenges due to their low socioeconomic status, lack of motivation, or lack of literacy training among teachers, all of which may be contributing factors that impede academic proficiency achievement. However, the lack of basic reading skills affected many of the other content areas and might be addressed by English teachers, as well as the many other content teachers. For example, Kreeps and McCross-Yergian (2010) stated that core subject area teachers report that they are not amply proficient to integrate intervention strategies and literacy skills into their daily lessons. In fact, content teachers are more often concerned with the delivery of content rather than implementing content reading strategies into their curriculum (Bintz, O'Connor, & Murray 2009; Greenleaf & Heller, 2007; Block & Parris, 2007). For example, Burns, Callaway, and Cantrell (2009), and Bundick, Corso, Haywood, and Quaglia (2013) suggested that many secondary teachers do not feel it is their responsibility to help students read more effectively (2013). Bintz, O'Connor, & Murray (2009) further explained that reading challenges do not fit into the secondary classroom where content is deemed as paramount. It is through professional and staff development that teachers can partake and learn

from experiences that can be put into their teaching practices. In every effort of proposed reforms, PD opportunities are greatly emphasized as a vehicle that facilitates change and improvement; otherwise, the core of what it means to teach and learn may not occur. Section 2, methodology, will include the research design, setting and sample, assumptions, limitations, scope, delimitations; along with the protection of the participants' summary.

Section 2: The Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this basic interpretative qualitative project study project was to explore Grade 9 English teachers' perceptions of their own instruction using RTI methodology as a means to increase incoming ninth grade student's reading proficiency. Prior strategies have failed to help students attain this goal. There is evidence that reading strategies used during RTI programs at the high school level may offer best practice instruction in an effort to help at-risk ninth grade readers improve their skills sufficiently to gain proficiency levels based on the state's standardized assessment for ninth grade reading. This basic interpretative qualitative project study focused on RTI teachers' self-reported assessments of the best practices to be used during RTI reading intervention. This section consists of the following sections: research design; setting and sampling; instrumentation and materials; data collection and analysis; assumptions, limitations, scope and delimitations; and ethical issues.

Research Design and Approach

The use of a basic interpretative qualitative project study research design was chosen because it was the best approach to see how ninth grade RTI teachers explain their experiences and how they understand their instructional process. The following are the guided research questions:

1. What do ninth grade English teachers perceive as the factors contributing to or distracting from the implementation of RTI in their school?
2. What do ninth grade English teachers perceive as the strengths and weaknesses of the training they received on RTI in their school?
3. What do ninth grade English teachers perceive as best practices regarding RTI?

4. What suggestions do they make for program improvement?

In the analysis of this research, I attempted to provide a deep understanding of professional instructional decision-making.

A basic interpretative qualitative project study places emphasis on smaller groups of participants within a large group to document experiences in a particular setting (Merriam, 2009). Using this research design enabled me to detail descriptions of the participants' individual experiences. Basic interpretative qualitative project studies are created to describe, clarify, and evaluate a phenomenon (Merriam, 2009). Basic interpretative qualitative project study narratives can provide a thorough account about the subject's perceptions about a phenomenon. Within the qualitative construct, I was able to gather information gleaned from field notes, interviews, and surveys to help understand how the participants understand and interpret the world. Since the unit of analysis is the teachers and their interpretation of what they perceive as their best practices in helping students learn to read within the implementation of the program, basic interpretative qualitative project study best suited my research. Because there are a limited number of teachers involved in the program, the study reflects the qualitative quality of a finite data collection, which makes the study bounded (Merriam, 2009).

Nagy Hesse-Biber (2010) explained that basic interpretative qualitative project study designs can be used to help the researcher investigate accuracy and involvedness of single studies and understand its activity within key conditions. There are other types of qualitative research that might have been considered, but I rejected them for many reasons. A grounded theory approach was not considered because I was not trying to draw conclusions to construct a theory. Ethnographic studies involve the observing of a group over time, in which I would need to be an observer or participant; therefore, this format was not entertained. Finally, historical

research was not used since that format relies on artifacts, records, diaries, oral history, and other information that explains a conclusion.

Quantitative research methodology was rejected since such inquiry generally involves a problem that can be directly addressed by understanding variables that influence an outcome (Creswell, 2003). Atieno (2009) believed that quantitative research offers information that is scientifically based and empirical in nature. Quantitative research uses deductive reasoning and outlines particular questions the researcher is trying to resolve. Since my research used an inductive process and did not require precise measurements to explain or test a theory, a quantitative research would not have provided the information I attempted to gain.

Participants

Purposeful sampling is primarily used in basic interpretative qualitative project studies (Merriam, 2009). The participants in this study were the same six full time faculty members of a suburban local high school who teach English to incoming ninth grade students, and who also participated in the surveys, interviews, and observations. These teachers volunteered to join the study as they represented the informed group from within the school (Creswell, 2007). Merriam (2009) stated that purposeful sampling offers information that focuses on the predetermined criteria. The participants selected were Grade 9 English teachers, trained in RTI strategies, and taught incoming at-risk students for reading.

Eight study participants completed and returned the Informed Consent. According to the theoretical needs of the study and met by the characteristics of the participants, a purposeful sampling enabled the selection of suitable participants for the study. In qualitative investigation, attention to sampling was critical for the achievement of rigor that occurred during the course of the research process. The Informed Consent form provided background information on the

study, the nature of the study, the research methodology, any risks or benefits from the study, and confidentiality concerns. The basic interpretative qualitative project study format enabled me to study the limited number of participants available for the study. The use of the purposeful sampling provided assurance that the participants would be knowledgeable about the components of the RTI program and the students' academic characteristics in their classrooms.

The method of establishing a researcher–participant working relationship with the sample teachers was achieved by sending letters via email. In these letters, teachers were informed about the intent of the study, their role in the study, and the benefits provided for them. Then, on the day of the interview, I explained my role as the researcher and the teacher/participant role. I also reviewed confidentiality and the significance of integrity during the interviews. The participants were assured that the information collected during the interviews was used for the purpose of producing the project study.

Protection of Participants

An IRB application was submitted for approval to Walden University. The IRB application (# 04-22-14-0125667) outlined detailed information about the data collection and analysis methods chosen. Participants who were asked to participate in the study received information regarding background information of the study, procedures, voluntary nature of the study, risks and benefits of partaking in the study, confidentiality, and contact information. Participants in the study were kept anonymous, and identifying factors were kept confidential. Study participants were asked to sign a consent form prior to their participation. Potential risks and benefits to the participants were reviewed prior to the interview. Participants were also informed that they were free to discontinue their participation at any time. I took steps to ensure that all information was kept confidential and that participants

experienced no psychological stress, social or economic loss, privacy violation, perceived coercion, experimental deception, or health effects.

Data Collection

The data for this basic interpretative qualitative project study used the steps noted by Creswell (2007), which enabled me to find a site for the research, establish access, locate a sample population, collect data, record the information, resolve any field issues, and securely store the information gathered. I used several data collection tools in order to secure information: a survey, field notes taken during observations, and face-to-face individual interviews. Surveys, observations, and interviews were used to gain the participants' perceptions on the information concerning best practices, improvement of students' scores after the implementation of RTI strategies, factors contributing to or distracting from the implementation of RTI, and strengths and weaknesses of the training teachers received on RTI. Additionally, observations enabled me to assure that the interviews were reliable and relevant.

Interviews were essential to this basic interpretative qualitative study as they helped me to disclose participants' perceptions of life experiences and provided strong data (Creswell, 2007; Janesick, 2004). The triangulation of the data allowed me to assure that information gained was accurate and valid for the questions being asked. Member checking improved the credibility of the individual's responses for the study.

The data collection was completed on May 30, 2014. In keeping with the basic interpretative qualitative research design, initial data collection was used to produce categories. Additional data collection was used to perfect and validate categories. Following a basic integrative qualitative research process, data collection and data analysis was performed concurrently and ongoing throughout the study. All participants were apprised about how the

data collection was used, no names were used, and each participant was given a coded letter to protect the participants' anonymity and confidentiality. All information collected is kept in my home, in a locked file cabinet, for a total of 5 years.

I provided the participants with an overview of the entire project study (see Appendix A) and reviewed copies of the consent form for participants at the beginning of the interviews. When all questions and concerns were addressed, I began the interviews. I maintained a relaxed posture during the interviews, as well as giving particular attention to nonverbal cues and communication such as head nodding, eye contact, facial expressions, and body language. Paying attention to body language was essential in developing connections that facilitated a reliable and positive interview process. Further, I solicited input from the participants to clarify the purpose of the study, distribution of findings, confidentiality, and storage of the collected data.

Attitudinal Survey

After I obtained permission from my principal, an invitation and survey (see Appendix C) were emailed to the prospective participants. Participants were given an option to complete the survey, and by doing so, provided their consent to take part in the study. A modified form of Wilson's survey (2012) was used. Permission was gained via email from Wilson (see Appendix B). The survey was adapted to align with my research questions. I formulated some questions to more specifically address my research questions.

Observations

The act of observing comprises data collection "when it is systematic, addresses a specific research question, and when it is subject to checks and balances producing trustworthy results" (Merriam, 2009, p. 118). Merriam (2009) explained that observations are methods that

produce data for various purposes. An initial observation in a classroom setting may prompt events that may be predictable to the participants involved in this type of environment. Merriam further explained that observations allow the observer an opportunity to document behavior real time in a specific setting, which makes this type of document collection a good source to obtain rich data as opposed to interviews.

Lastly, Merriam (2009) explained that the research uses observations, interviews, and data analysis work to triangulate data as triangulation necessitates the use of a several data collection sources to validate findings. Merriam suggested fair warning when performing observations in the following areas:

- "The physical setting – What is the physical setting like? How is space within the setting utilized? What is included in the setting (e.g., objects, technology)?
- The participants - How many people are in the setting? Who is in the setting? What are the roles of the people in the setting? Why are certain people in the setting? What are the characteristics of the participants in this setting?
- Activities and interactions – What are the interactions of people like? Describe activities that are occurring. What time did the activity begin and end? Is this activity something that is routine or typical to the setting? Who is interacting with whom? In what way are participants interacting?
- Conversations – Quotes should be taken verbatim in the setting. Conversations should also be summarized. What does the non-verbal behavior look like?
- Subtle factors – Describe activities that were unplanned. Include information regarding nonverbal communication including how individuals' were dressed.
- Researcher's behavior – Researchers should include information pertaining

> to their behavior in the setting. Researchers should also include reflective notes (that are indicated as such) within their field notes." (Merriam, 2009, p. 70)

I completed 12 observations (see Appendix C), two per teacher, in the research setting in order to attain a variety of patterns linked with the topic that emerged. Each observation session lasted 45 minutes during the regular 90-minute instructional period. The observation times were coordinated with the teachers, but I did not engage with students during these times. I conducted classroom observation to identify key components of RTI approaches currently used in classrooms for the purpose of comparing participant responses to questions and their classroom practices. The reflective component of field notes included my "feelings, reactions, hunches, initial interpretation, speculations, and working hypothesis" (Merriam, 2009, p. 131).

Individual Face-to-Face Interviews

Eight individual face-to-face interviews were arranged and conducted at times convenient for the each participant. The participants were given a choice of before school, after school, or on weekends for interviews. I was the only interviewer and I followed Interview Protocol for Ninth Grade English Teachers (see Appendix D) when conducting the interviews. I used my personal laptop to record the interviews and a spiral notebook and pen to write handwritten memos during the interview. I recorded the interviews using a tape recorder and transcribed for content analysis. Participants were advised that participation in the study would be voluntary and confidential.

The participants responded to 14 open ended interview questions, and follow-up questions were used to encourage participants to provide rich and descriptive data (Lewis, Saunders, & Thornhill, 2009). The question categories aligned with the study's research questions and included the teachers' perceptions about RTI for ninth grade at-risk students

reading achievement. The individual face-to-face interviews were conducted in the local school's conference room, a private area to maintain confidentiality and comfort, which was located inside the local school. Participants were advised that the individual interviews would last 25 minutes.

Systems for Keeping Track of Data

The identity and information all participants were kept private and confidential. I was the only one conducting and handling the interview cassette tape and transcripts. All paper copies and a flash drive with electronic copies are kept in a locked file cabinet in my home. Security provisions to protect the data include passwords and a locked file cabinet. The originals of all forms and interview notes are on paper copies. Originals of all forms, typed notes of the interviews and my notes are kept electronically on a password-protected laptop.

After transcription, the audiotape of the interviews were kept in my home and stored in a locked file cabinet. E-mails to the research site administrator have been saved electronically. Correspondence with interview participants, via e-mail, is kept electronically or as paper copies.

Role of the Researcher

My role as a researcher was to collect, record, transcribe, analyze, and store data collected from various data collection sources. Since I am a colleague of the eight English teachers, employed by the district in which the research was done, I have a working relationship with this staff, but I do not have any supervisory role. Glesne (2011) explained that researchers may experience obstacles when doing research within their own environment such: as strained working relationships, the researcher and participant unable to separate the personal relationship and the relationship of participant/researcher, and possible skewed data. I will manage this potential problem by ensuring a neutral position while collecting data, by managing my biases

through a reflection journal, and by maintaining ethical and confidential behavior when recording, analyzing and reporting data.

Since collegial conversation fostered my interest in the research topic, I was certain that participating teachers would be willing to discuss the nature of this topic. Therefore, the results of the study would be of interest to all school staff in hopes of making possible positive social changes to the school's vision of helping incoming 9th grade at-risk students to read.

Data Analysis

This basic interpretative qualitative theory data analysis followed three essential stages and allowed me to sort data into themes or categories, combine and connect categories in order to classify a key category, and develop and offer theoretical propositions (Merriam, 2009; Creswell, 2009). The process of line by line, open, axial, and theoretical coding was used to analyze the data and develop theoretical propositions (Creswell, 2009). According to Merriam, 2009) coding is a procedure that moves solid statements to analytic explanations and is an analytic structure for the analysis. Simultaneously, the coding procedure, data, codes, and categories would be continuously compared in order to enhance and progress conceptual understanding. Data analysis was an ongoing process of reflection (Creswell, 2009) directed by my research questions.

The surveys, observations, and interviews were open coded in order to classify emergent categories and their properties (Lodico, Spalding, and Voegtle (2010). The initial open coding will progress line-by-line coding that will feature the main structure of the analysis. An initial open coding is a large, and helpful tool that will facilitate full theoretical analysis of the data. The codes will be kept uncomplicated, concise, and methodical. As I begin to gather and assess more data, specific codes can be added. In order for categories to fit, work, and be significant, a

devising approach will be used to classify the data in various ways so that all possibilities of the data can be exhausted (Atieno, 2009; Merriam, 2009; Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Open coding led to axial coding; this process promoted the reexamination of the original categories. Comparable categories that could stem from the open coding procedure will be linked to structure core categories and subcategories. Connections between categories and subcategories will be recognized (Creswell, 2009; Kimberlin & Winterstein, 2008). The connections will include causal conditions, context and intervening conditions, participants' actions and interactions, and results of these actions and interactions (Creswell, 2009; Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Axial coding is the opposite of open coding as its core function is to unify data once removed during open coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Throughout the process of axial coding, the understanding and interconnection of the categories were detailed in full for a deeper perception. To enhance the clarity of my data coding and analysis, I maintained notes to increase connection to the data (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). For example, Lodico et al. (2010) urged the researcher to stop and immediately note ideas about code and relationships as they emerge.

How and When Data Were Analyzed

The data analysis process began after I gathered all surveys. I recorded the electronic survey responses in a frequency distribution table using Microsoft Excel. I assigned a number to each individual tape-recorded interview in order to preserve confidentiality. All data were transcribed word for word, within 24 hours of each interview, using Microsoft Word. Files relating to this study will be kept on a password-protected laptop, and I will remove all identifying information. Memos were written in a spiral notebook or typed on my laptop after the interviews and/or at different times during the study. This was an ongoing process in the way

that I recorded data especially when probing and asking follow up questions. For example, Creswell (2009) found that applicable probes and follow-up questions could be asked, and unplanned, yet insightful thoughts might expound concepts that could make for further investigation. Following each observation, I reviewed my notes and entered information about the physical classroom arrangements and the teaching approaches used into a graph to indicate each participant's attention to components of RTI instruction. I recorded and analyzed data on an ongoing basis throughout my study as this helped me to refine emerging themes that required additional interpretation as my study further developed.

The themes that emerged from the data respond to the four research questions and to the problem that prompted the study. First, I searched the relevant data for repeating words and phrases and for conflicting responses. Repeated words and phrases were found in the surveys and interviews. I also searched my notes from the observations for repeated information. For example, participants used the words "reading comprehension", "vocabulary", and "literacy" 18 times in all forms of data collection, they identified "need more PD" 26 times, and they referenced "consistency across all classrooms" 25 times, indicating the perceived need of students for consistent instructional strategies across content area classrooms. I then organized the groups of repeating words and phrases into key categories and then into common themes. The data were reviewed by using a process of continuously reading and reviewing the text from the surveys, interviews, and observations until groups of themes emerged. This process resulted in six themes that addressed the four research questions; I used axial coding to identify relationships among the themes. The research questions, themes, axial codes, and findings are listed in Table 3.

Table 3

Research Questions, Themes, Axial Codes, and Findings

Research questions	Themes	Axial codes	Findings
1. What do ninth grade English teachers perceive as the factors contributing to or distracting from the implementation of RTI in their school?	1. Teachers need more PD to implement focused teaching strategies 2. Teachers benefit from working with colleagues to plan and to share ideas. 3. The school leaders need to provide resource personnel to guide teachers and model lessons. 4. All teachers (English and content teachers) must provide consistent practices for students.	Teachers need PD and time to plan collaboratively	Finding 1: At-risk students need more instruction in reading comprehension and vocabulary skills. Teachers need to provide more emphasis on these skills. Finding 3: Teachers lack required training for effective RTI reading instruction Finding 4: All content areas teachers need to incorporate RTI instructional strategies in their classrooms
2. What do ninth grade English teachers perceive as the strengths and weaknesses of the training they received on RTI in their school?	5. Teachers need an RTI tool kit with ideas and teaching strategies for specific learning needs. 6. Teachers need follow up training sessions. 2. Teachers benefit from working with colleagues to plan and to share ideas.	Teachers need specific PD to incorporate literacy skills into all lessons.	Finding 1: At-risk students need more instruction in reading comprehension and vocabulary skills. Teachers need to provide more emphasis on these skills. Finding 2: Differentiated teaching approaches and scaffolding identified as two important RTI strategies Finding 3: Teachers lack required training for effective RTI reading instruction
3. What do ninth grade English teachers perceive as best practices regarding RTI?	4. All teachers (English and content teachers) must provide consistent practices for students 5. Teachers need an RTI tool kit with ideas and teaching strategies for specific learning needs. 6. Teachers need follow up training sessions.	Teachers need to provide all students with differentiated instruction and scaffolded learning.	Finding 2: Differentiated teaching approaches and scaffolding identified as two important RTI strategies Finding 4: All content areas teachers need to incorporate RTI instructional strategies in their classrooms
4. What suggestions do teachers make for program improvement?	1. Teachers need more PD to implement focused teaching strategies 2. Teachers benefit from working with colleagues to plan and to share ideas. 3. The school leaders need to provide resource personnel to guide teachers and model lessons. 4. All teachers (English and content teachers) must provide consistent practices for students 5. Teachers need an RTI tool kit with ideas and teaching strategies for specific learning needs. 6. Teachers need follow up training sessions.	Teachers need: a. PD, b. time to plan collaboratively, c. specific PD to incorporate literacy skills into all lessons, d. provide all students with differentiated instruction and scaffolded learning.	Finding 1: At-risk students need more instruction in reading comprehension and vocabulary skills. Teachers need to provide more emphasis on these skills. Finding 2: Differentiated teaching approaches and scaffolding identified as two important RTI strategies Finding 3: Teachers lack required training for effective RTI reading instruction Finding 4: All content areas teachers need to incorporate RTI instructional strategies in their classrooms

Evidence of Quality

To ensure credibility of the data, the participants were asked to engage in member checking. In member checking, I solicited participants' views of the credibility of the findings and interpretations by taking data, analysis, interpretations, and conclusions back to the participants (Creswell, 2007). After receiving the participants' approval, the transcripts were used to uncover themes and ultimately assist in the creation of the project study. Participants were assigned identifiers to protect their privacy and the privacy of the local school. Finally, the triangulated data from the interviews, surveys and observations ensured the multiple sources of data provided corroborating evidence for the identified themes. All of these efforts showed evidence of quality procedures that ensured accuracy and credibility of the data.

Procedures for Discrepant Cases

It was imperative to address any discrepant cases. Creswell (2003) explained that real life is made up of many different perspectives that do not always blend; however, discussions regarding conflicting information will make a credible account. My plan for dealing with any discrepant cases was to discuss the evidence for the identified themes as well as overall perspectives that refuted the themes with the participants. The participants were also asked to approve or retract the interview transcripts in an effort to clarify any misconceptions, which helped to check for discrepancies.

Findings

The purpose of this study in this local school was to examine grade nine English teachers' perceptions of RTI. Following the collection of data, the data were analyzed to develop the findings. By examining the coded data, I discovered commonalities which identified the themes. Six participants were surveyed, interviewed and observed to collect their perceptions of

RTI reading intervention instruction. All six of the participants had similar responses about their lack of knowledge and training in RTI, and shared many of the same concerns. Among their concerns were time constraints, lack of training, district funding, and poor student response to current teaching practices.

The survey was comprised of 17 questions (see Appendix C). The purpose of this survey was to collect initial information from participants about RTI. The questions were organized into six categories of information: teacher needs; instruction needed by students; training received; RTI strategies used by teachers; suggestions for content teachers; and additional PD needs. The survey responses from each participant were similar; the most frequent responses are identified in the following summary (see Table 4).

Table 4
Teachers' Responses to Survey Questions

Questions	Teacher Response Summary
1.Teacher needs	Training More PD District support
2.Instruction needed by students	Time to plan & implement RTI test taking More RTI instruction in content areas.
3.Training received	Initial RTI training at beginning of program Teacher manual distributed, but not explained No follow up training No district contact for support
4-12.RTI strategies used by teachers	Reading comprehension Grouping students Cooperative learning strategies Teacher modeling Peer partnering Guided practice
13-14. Suggestions for content teachers	Vocabulary instruction for concept understanding Reading for understanding Content teachers need to be equally responsible for RTI strategies. Work more closely with English/Reading teachers.
15-17. Additional PD needed	District support through time, money, and training Process monitoring of RTI Training for all teachers in RTI process and monitoring.

Individual interviews were conducted with all participants. The questions focused on gaining information about the concerns of teachers charged with implementing RTI, the needs of teachers to improved instructional delivery for struggling students, and the current instructional practices of teachers. Teachers expressed common concerns about lack of preparation and training in RTI procedures and instructional methods, and they expressed a common need of more PD to implement RTI effectively (See Table 5).

Table 5

Summary of Categories From Interview Data

Participants	Concerns	Teacher Needs	Useful Strategies Currently Used
Participant 1	Teacher manual distributed, but not explained No time provided for team meetings	New strategies to work with students More training Time for team planning/collaboration Support of content teachers	Scaffolding Graphic organizers Cooperative group structures
Participant 2	Training was minimal No follow up training Low functioning students Social promotion of students	Test taking More RTI instruction in content areas. Teacher training in methods to: - Group students - Use cooperative learning - Peer coaching Observe model lessons/approaches	Simplified vocabulary Differentiated writing assignments Read aloud Summarizing Vocabulary building exercises Dictionary study
Participant 3	No training Does not understand RTI process or requirements. More RTI instruction	Initial RTI training at beginning of program District resource contact for support Time for team planning/collaboration	Peer tutoring Small group teaching
Participant 4	No training provided. Relies on prior teaching experiences for teaching approaches to address learning difficulties	PD One contact person for RTI help Follow through by content teachers Strategies to focus on student learning needs Time for team planning/collaboration	Note taking Vocabulary building
Participant 5	Little training Specialized teaching strategies are too time consuming Not enough emphasis on reading comprehension	Vocabulary instruction for concept understanding Reading for understanding Content teachers need to be equally responsible for RTI strategies. Work more closely with English/Reading teachers.	After school tutoring Peer tutoring Student partnerships
Participant 6	Limited PD More literacy skills instruction needed RTI requires additional meetings and paperwork.	District support through time, money, and training Process monitoring of RTI RTI instruction in all classes Training for all teachers in RTI process and monitoring.	Optional learning activities Provide students with activity choices Cooperative learning groups

I conducted classroom observation to identify key components of RTI approaches currently used in classrooms for the purpose of comparing participant responses to questions and their classroom practices. I conducted two observations in each participant's classroom. The observations focused on the physical classroom arrangement and the teachers' instructional approaches (see Table 6). My notes reflected that each teacher used the appropriate structure of lesson arrangement and that they used appropriate RTI approaches; however, the participants did note in their interviews and observations that they were often "going through the motions of implementing RTI," but that they did not clearly understand how they might be making better connections with students. For example, while participants created flexible learning spaces, they were unclear how this could serve student learning when paired with appropriate teaching strategies.

Table 6

Summary of Teacher Practices from Observations

Participant	Flexible classroom arrange-ment	Flexible student grouping	Varied instructional activities	Multiple teaching approaches	Room displays student reference material	Student work is displayed and highlighted	Teacher meets with groups and individuals	Lesson plan references assessment information as a guide.
Participant 1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Participant 2	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Participant 3	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Participant 4	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Participant 5	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Participant 6	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Answers to Research Questions

This qualitative project study explored ninth grade English teachers' perceptions of how the implementation of RTI strategies would help ninth grade at-risk readers improve their reading skills. The research questions that guided this project were:

1. What do ninth grade English teachers perceive as the factors contributing to or distracting from the implementation of RTI in their school?
2. What do ninth grade English teachers perceive as the strengths and weaknesses of the training they received on RTI in their school?
3. What do ninth grade English teachers perceive as best practices regarding RTI?
4. What suggestions do they make for program improvement?

Three sources of data (surveys, interviews, and observations) were collected to generate answers to the research questions. The triangulation included findings from surveys, face-to-face interviews, and observations. Cross verification of data allowed assurances for validating accuracy to the research the questions.

Research Question 1. Research question 1 asked, "What do ninth grade English teachers perceive as the factors contributing to or distracting from the implementation of RTI in their school?" Based on the data collected from three sources, findings indicated that (a) ninth grade English teachers perceive lack of training, and time constraints as the factors contributing to or distracting from the implementation of RTI in their school, and (b) lack of experience with RTI reading instruction, and how it should be used in their classroom as well as other content areas. Concomitantly, teachers were unanimous in their requests for additional training and resources.

Research Question 2. Research question 2 asked, "What do ninth grade English teachers perceive as the strengths and weaknesses of the training they received on RTI in their school?"

Based on the data collected from the three sources, the findings showed that the participants believe that teachers lack the required training necessary to implement effective RTI reading instruction in their classrooms. Participants indicated that RTI training sessions are typically one day sessions held at the beginning of the school year with no follow-up or refresher training sessions for teachers who seek help beyond the initial startup. While teachers indicated that district provided manuals were helpful, they did not offer enough information for teachers new to the RTI process. Teachers also identified that by receiving sustained training in RTI would provide them with the tools and strategies to improve their instructional delivery.

Research Question 3. Research question 3 asked, "What do ninth grade English teachers perceive as best practices regarding RTI?" Based on the data collected from the three sources, the findings showed that differentiated teaching approaches and scaffolding are two important RTI strategies that help at-risk students. Participants indicated that these two strategies have been a successful as part of classroom instruction but that they would benefit from additional training. The findings also indicated that strategies such as note taking, rereading text, and using a dictionary have aided students in developing a stronger vocabulary. These practices are all used within the RTI program.

Research Question 4. Research question 4 asked, "What suggestions do they make for program improvement?" Based on the data collected from the three sources, the findings indicated that participants agreed that they had not received sufficient RTI training in way that could be easily understood. Participants believe that the RTI program could be improved if participants received thorough training to ensure a full and complete understanding and to accommodate the diverse educational needs of students. Additionally, findings also revealed that

a follow-up RTI training would be beneficial in helping teachers understand the RTI model as well as how to effectively implement the program.

Finding 1: At-risk Students Need More Instruction in Reading Comprehension and Vocabulary Skills

Students at-risk in reading proficiency require education geared towards helping students acquire reading comprehension, differentiated learning strategies, and vocabulary skills. The members shared their approaches to reading comprehension and vocabulary skills instruction within their classrooms. Most of the participants have encouraged rereading, recalling, and questioning the text, discussion, word banks, dictionary usage, collaborative grouping, highlighting, and note taking. Although participants indicated that different methods work best with some students, teachers regularly monitor and seek practical strategies in order to meet the need for every student. One teacher said that she gave an assessment to her entire class at the start of the school year to determine where her students are in terms of reading and writing levels. She said that she wanted to “meet them where they are," in an effort to find instructional methods and strategies to help these students improve reading comprehension.

The interviews revealed that struggling readers need help learning new words, but, more importantly, they need guidance in developing content area word learning strategies. One member commented that learning content vocabulary is different for many students because of the low-frequency of foreign words associated with challenging content subject areas. Participant 2 explained that it was difficult for some students to make connections with vocabulary they do not ordinarily see in other content areas. One participant explained that her students found it difficult to grasp the text and become frustrated when they do not understand the vocabulary. Another member stated that she encouraged her students to use a dictionary

when it comes to understanding word meaning within the text. Other participants agreed that content teachers should teach new vocabulary words prior to reading the textbook. They indicated that most students labor to figure out word meanings of new terms/words, and will be unable to comprehend

complete reading passages. The results showed many students are struggling in the areas of reading comprehension due to weaknesses in vocabulary.

During a 45-minute observation in one of participant's classroom, I watched students enter the classroom in an orderly fashion, sitting in their assigned seats, and immediately focusing on the instructions given by their teacher. The teacher presented the objective of the day and explained to her class about a vocabulary activity that they would play as a game with new vocabulary words. Students were attentive and became excited about this event. The teacher explained the strategies that they would be using were reinforcing effort and providing recognition by having students match the correct word definition to the correct vocabulary word. I noticed that the students became competitively challenged and eager get correct answers. When the students made incorrect choices, the teacher did not automatically tell them they were wrong, rather she encouraged her students to try again by giving clues to make a better choice. In this particular class, students were engaged in cooperative learning and were eager to help other students if they needed assistance. The students wanted to continue with this activity, but the teacher ended this part of the vocabulary lesson after about 30 minutes. When the teacher assigned the next assignment to the class, students began using the new strategies they had just learned with the vocabulary activity. Based upon this observation, students were presented with engaging, cooperative learning activities that are both challenging and competitive. It appears that when the lesson activity is interesting and engaging, students are more likely to participate.

For students who struggle with reading comprehension and vocabulary skills, activities of this nature can be effectively used in both language arts and other content area classes.

During observations, students became off task and curious about my presence in their classrooms. However, teachers continued with their lessons, they gave a couple of redirects to the students, and students quickly regained focus. The teacher was able to sit briefly with the students who needed extra help; thus, she offered additional assistance with the assignment through tutorials. When the teacher arranged the students in groups, I noticed that the teacher routinely gave students an opportunity to compare and share notes after her lecture. A student raised his hand and asked how to spell a word. The teacher encouraged the use of the dictionary, but the student required more assistance. Some teachers set up systems for students to support one another through peer coaching or team partnerships. One participant indicated that placing students in small groups for instruction in reading comprehension strategies increases confidence and comprehension, reinforces strategies that can be applied across the curriculum and demonstrates the need for more instruction in comprehension and vocabulary skills for at-risk students.

Finding 2: Differentiated Teaching Approaches and Scaffolding Identified as Two Important RTI Strategies

The findings indicated that participants identified differentiated teaching approaches and scaffolding as two important RTI strategies among at-risk students. The at-risk students were non-proficient readers, and they have did not meet the standards to pass the state reading assessment. The interviews revealed that participants agreed that there are two strategies that have been successful as part of their classroom instruction. Scaffolding enables a student's ability to build on prior knowledge and internalize new information. For example, participant 1

said that she uses scaffolding in her classroom by using graphic organizers in order to provide a visual framework for integrating new information. Participant 2 had a very talkative classroom; however, the students showed a positive reaction to the teacher guiding them in making predictions for what they expected would occur in the story they were reading. I also noted that many teachers routinely explained key literary terms before reading and/or getting into their lessons, and they modeled activities for their students before assigning similar activities.

When asked about the strategies used during RTI instruction, participant 2 said, "Having students work with a partner, reading an article which they will discuss using think/pair/shares and think/pair/write/shares. They have to connect the reading to writing so that they understand it and they're able to respond to it." However, when I asked, "Why did some strategies work, while others did not?" participant 2 said, "I think that some strategies did not work because of the low level of the students. They were just not at the level where they were able to perform some of the strategies, and activities." Another person said, "Whether they think it's easy or too much work, the students think, well, I already know how to read, or I'll just read it, and I should be able to answer the questions. They don't get that there may be more to the text they don't actually comprehend. I also have them use dictionaries, because sometimes they may not know the words and they'll just skip over the words if they don't know them."

Further, participants felt as though students would not benefit from scaffolding techniques if teachers are not trained in scaffolding instruction. Participants indicated the importance of knowing where your students are academically, otherwise scaffolding will not work if students are not evaluated and pushed to the next level in their academics. Participant 5 explained that she found scaffolding difficult to implement in a large classroom because it is time consuming, especially at the high school level, due to lack of training in scaffolding

instruction. Another participant said that she could only sit with an individual student for a brief moment in class, and that she could not devote a lot of individual attention to those students who really needed assistance, and suggested to the students that they attend her tutorials after school. There was some frustration among some students when they could not receive the extra help from the teacher. One student simply stopped working on the assignment, and placed his head on the desk, and a couple of other students became disruptive. I also observed a number of special population students who had individualized education plans, for which the teacher had to refer to often. There were other students without an individual plan, but the teacher did not plan for those students or offer tutorials.

Teacher lesson plans, which were evident during observations, showed evidence of planning from assessment data. When asked, "How did you use differentiated learning in your instruction?" One participant explained that she typically assigns the same content reading assignments at different reading levels. All students were assigned questions pertaining to the reading passages; however, the struggling reader will respond to questions worded differently, which usually means fewer words and more white space. I observed students asking for highlighters and dictionaries. The teacher walked by each student's desk frequently, monitoring progress. Additionally, the teacher specifically asked the struggling readers to repeat instructions to insure they each understood their assignment. A couple of the participants felt as though asking questions during reading encouraged deeper investigation of concepts. For example, one participant said, "I think teaching students to question the text helps them to reach for a deeper understanding of the text." When asked, "How did you use differentiated learning in your instruction?" Participant 1 said, "I think the biggest way to do that is to work in collaborative groups. To make sure you have different types of skill levels working together." Participant 5

responded, “Pairing the students in groups with different skill sets, but I’m careful not to pair in too wide a range”, She further explained, “Sometimes if they are grouped with too wide a range, it is not helpful. So, you have to take a closer look at the way you are grouping the classes, because often you end up teaching to the middle and not to the students who really need help.”

Differentiated instruction involves teachers considering the learning levels of students, and making modifications to the curriculum, teaching approaches, resources, and learning activities in order meet the needs of every student. Participants were asked, “How do you use differentiated learning in your instruction?” A couple of participants explained that they differentiate instruction in the classroom by offering choices to students during instruction. Hence, students were afforded an opportunity to access their own reading by reading a book, listening to books/lecture on tape, or by participating in an interactive assignment online. One participant further explained that because some of her students’ grasp material faster, she differentiated instruction by targeting lessons to address the needs of struggling students. Further, another participant stated, “I think that one way to do that is by having the students work in groups with various levels of skill sets.” She further explained that having kids work in collaborative settings helps students learn through being social. Participant 2 said that she assigns writing assignments to all students by differentiating the assignments and providing the struggling learners with simplified vocabulary.

Finding 3: Teachers Lack Required Training for Effective RTI Reading Instruction

Participants agreed that teachers lack the required training necessary to implement effective RTI reading instruction in their classrooms. When participants were asked to describe the training teachers receive regarding the implementation of RTI Tier I reading interventions, Participant 4 said, “Well, honestly, I know very little about RTI. We never got beyond the initial

startup, and we were given a few handouts during the beginning of the school year. Training typically included an overview of the program during a one-day session at the beginning of the school year. There was never anything that was talked about, and no further training, so that is as much as I know about that program. Because the training was so brief, my questions came later after the initial training." The participant further explained that a refresher training session might have been useful since the training had taken place so long ago. However, when asked how long it had been since she had receive RTI training, she could not remember the exact date, but felt as though if there had been ongoing RTI training, she might have been able to better assist her students. One participant said that she was not familiar with RTI, and that no one has trained her on it. I then asked the participant, "Would you have changed your teaching style if you had been thoroughly trained in RTI?" One participant responded, "Having something new to help the students would be my concern; however, it would not necessarily change my teaching style, but perhaps I would gain new strategies to teach my students, but I don't consider that to be a change in teaching."

When asked about RTI training, participants agreed that they have not received sufficient training. One veteran participant felt as though the brief RTI training she had received had not been presented in "an understandable way." When I asked for clarification, she further explained that if she had understood the initial training, she might have had complete buy-in. Additionally, she said that if there had been a follow-up RTI training, she might have understood the RTI model. Another participant explained that not having a full understanding of this program would be difficult for students to reap the benefits of the RTI model, not to mention how teachers could effectively implement this program.

According to the survey, a couple of participants felt that as though RTI training was not the priority at this high school. When asked about training on the implementation of RTI, one participant responded, "No, we have not received sufficient training." She added that she "did not know if they were ever trained." She felt that there had been plenty of official training by the district on other profession development initiatives, but not RTI.

The participants interviewed voiced genuine concerns about the limited amount of PD opportunities that focused on reading instruction. When asked to describe the training they received regarding the implementation of RTI Tier I reading interventions. The participants felt that they received an insufficient amount of RTI training during in-service at the beginning of the school year. One participant suggested that it would be nice to "have training on how other schools in the district and outside the district structured their RTI training." Participants indicated that not having a clear understanding of how and what RTI should look like warrants more training on campus, as well as other schools in the district. One participant said, "I know very little about RTI reading instruction, we never got beyond the initial startup, and a few handouts during at in-service during the beginning of the school year. Training included an overview of the program during a one-day session at the beginning of the school year. There was never anything that was talked about as far as training, so that's as much as I know about that program." The participants said they needed more support in order to maintain the initiative. Another respondent added, "The training is usually brief and my questions came after the initial training, and there was no one to go to for these questions." Participants agreed that effective training would make a difference in the success of all students if RTI was something that all teachers are required to do in their classrooms. Participants expressed that without sustained PD

opportunities, clear expectations, and accountability provided by the district office, the RTI will not succeed.

Finding 4: All Content Areas Teachers Need to Incorporate RTI Instructional Strategies in Their Classrooms

The responses from the participants support the fact that there is a need for all content area teachers to become trained in literacy. When asked, "How would you suggest content area teachers incorporate the successful strategies into their instruction," one participant suggested that content area teachers use pre-reading strategies, and word walls, as strategies to help students in every content subject area. My research findings indicated that English teachers want students to have instruction that is more consistent across all classes and that content area teachers would benefit from instruction in RTI strategies to aid students in content learning. When asked, "How would you suggest content area teachers incorporate strategies into their instruction," one participant explained that content area teachers do not typically teach literacy skills; however, content area teachers can help students develop reading skills, understanding, and thinking skills in order to gain knowledge as well as learn from challenging content area text.

Participants indicated that secondary students could benefit from the use of RTI instructional strategies in contents. When asked, "Which strategies used in the RTI program would you suggest content areas teachers use to assist at-risk students who are struggling in reading?" Participant 4 said, "Not only is note taking encouraged, but this school year it was made mandatory, and I also encourage my students to reread text, and use the dictionary to help them gain a stronger vocabulary." A couple of the participants suggested the use of activities that correspond and reinforce their lesson. Their reasoning was that many of the students who

have difficulty in their English classes are poor readers with low vocabulary, and by improving literacy skills through good instructional support; students can improve in other subject areas. When I asked, "What comprehension strategies help struggling readers become better readers?" Participant 2 said, "I think having students read out loud in all classes will help to improve their fluency and also paraphrasing and summarizing what they've read can help them to get a better understanding of the content that they're reading about." However, another person made an interesting point when she stated, "I would suggest content teachers encourage students to read aloud from content based material to improve their fluency. I would also suggest that every student write in complete sentences by just having them be able to answer their questions and to support it with textual evidence."

Participants felt as though content area teachers could benefit by collaborating with the English department because content area reading instruction is a critical component in the secondary curriculum. One participant said, "It would be great if teachers from different content areas could meet to discuss the students and their need to learn how to comprehend their textbooks and how to learn vocabulary." While observing a class reading a story from their literature book, I observed students demonstrating problems in decoding words, learning vocabulary words, even if the textbook has ready provided a definition. After the students finished completing their assigned reading assignments, the teacher guided the students by identifying and/or articulating the main idea in their own words. I noticed that some of the struggling readers skipped over words that were difficult in the reading passage. The teacher provided correct pronunciation, but she did not stop to explain the word and its relationship to the text.

Research findings also suggested that content area teachers support students' reading development within the RTI model if it is fully implemented. The research findings above were also the driving factor in the creation of the project. By using the research questions as a guide, I was able to separate into parts the most significant items from the data to ensure the project offered a substantial solution to the perceptions and concerns of the participants interviewed.

Conclusion

I explored the perceptions of teachers implementing RTI reading intervention instruction in their classrooms for this project study. Participants increased their awareness through being engaged in the data collection process: surveys, interviews, and observations. The purpose of this basic qualitative interpretative project study was to understand the perceived needs of secondary teachers in a suburban school district in southwest Texas. These teachers had the responsibility of implementing RTI reading interventions in their classrooms without adequate training on the implementation of the RTI model. I used an inductive process to analyze the data. All participants expressed the need for sustained PD opportunities that addresses RTI reading intervention instruction for at-risk students.

The research findings above were the driving factor in the creation of the project. By using the research questions as a guide, I was able to disaggregate the most important features from the data to ensure the project offered a substantial solution to the perceptions of the grade nine English teachers who were interviewed. I used the exact words of teachers from the interview transcripts. This offered a way to convey the teachers' feelings and justify my interpretations as research findings.

In Section 2, four findings materialized from the research that served as the guiding views that lead toward the development of the project. The first finding was the need for at-risk

students to receive additional instruction in reading comprehension and vocabulary skills. The second finding was the identification of differentiated teaching approaches and scaffolding identified as two important RTI strategies. The third finding was teachers who lack required training for effective RTI reading instruction. The fourth finding was that all content area teachers need to incorporate RTI instructional strategies in their classrooms.

My goal throughout this project study was to determine the perceived needs of ninth-grade English teachers in the local setting who have had limited training on the implementation of RTI reading interventions. The ninth grade English teachers have a responsibility to implement reading interventions, and as stated in the problem statement, these teachers have acquired only six hours of RTI training during in-service by the district (D. Roper, personal communication, August 28, 2011). By making this my goal, I hoped that the findings from the project study could be used to create a project that addressed the teachers' perceived needs with respect to RTI reading intervention instruction. It was also my goal to support teachers in their implementation of RTI reading intervention instructions by creating a project comprised of PD opportunities that the school district can put into place in order to support all content area teachers. The professional literature review also supports successful implementation of RTI reading interventions. PD sessions, focused on the implementation of RTI reading interventions, were recommended. The PD sessions are available through school-based professional learning communities throughout the year. I recommend that staff developers provide teachers with up-to-date information about RTI: what it is, what its purpose is, and how pyramid tiers work. Training could also include teachers from all content areas sharing implementation strategies. I would also recommend peer coaching, in which teachers observe one another and debrief on the effectiveness of RTI teaching methods.

Following are Section 3 and Section 4. Section 3 of the study details the project, a literature review, and implementation, resources, and supports. Section 4 is the final section, and it details my reflections and conclusions of the study.

Findings from this study indicated that teachers strongly believe that there is a need for training in the area of reading interventions instruction, but there is also a need for PD opportunities directly related to RTI reading intervention instruction. The guiding research questions for this study were:

1. What do ninth grade English teachers perceive as the factors contributing to or distracting from the implementation of RTI in their school?
2. What do ninth grade English teachers perceive as the strengths and weaknesses of the training they received on RTI in their school?
3. What do ninth grade English teachers perceive as best practices regarding RTI?
4. What suggestions do they make for program improvement?

The interview questions were created to in order to answer the above-mentioned research questions. The findings indicated that ninth grade English teachers perceive lack of training, and time constraints as the factors contributing to or distracting from the implementation of RTI in their school. Furthermore, all participants admitted to not having any experience with RTI reading instruction, and how it should be used in their classroom as well as other content areas. Additionally, many ideas such as note taking, collaborative grouping, and critical thinking strategies, were discussed as they pertain to reading comprehension instructional practices. Finally, the participants communicated the need for additional PD opportunities for RTI reading intervention instruction that addresses non-proficient grade nine readers, and reading strategies

proven to be successful in classrooms across the nation. The suggestion participants made for program improvement was more RTI training across all the content areas.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

The research findings from Section 2 informed decisions about my project. The problem that prompted this study was that many of the incoming Grade 9 students lacked basic reading skills, and these students had also been unsuccessful on the state reading assessment. These students needed reading support; however, the teachers at this local school lacked PD in literacy training. Using the findings in Section 2, I provided the description, goals, and rationale for my project in the form of a PD plan, which includes training modules to improve the basic abilities of all teachers at XYZ High School in teaching literacy skills. The findings revealed that teachers perceive the successful implementation of literacy strategies and skills as something that requires adequate training and time to incorporate within the classroom, and having ongoing PD would make this possible. Additionally, each of the participants expressed concerns about the use of literacy skills instruction within their classrooms, stating that content-area literacy instruction should be practiced in all areas of study. Moreover, interviewees discussed enrichment activities as they pertain to literacy instructional practices. Providing teachers with adequate training on how to help students gain reading proficiency is essential. The purpose of this study was to investigate teacher perceptions about RTI practices and to explore ideas to improve students' reading achievement. This includes strategies to create authentic lessons that can be effectively implemented within the classroom.

Description of Project

The project is a PD plan with training modules for Grade 9 English language arts teachers and other content area teachers at XYZ High School. The purpose of this project was to develop teachers' proficiency in teaching literacy skills to promote student success. In order to serve at-

risk students, teachers in this Southwest school district are required to implement the RTI model in their classrooms. The project addresses the lack of PD training for secondary teachers in the implementation of RTI: Tier I reading interventions in a suburban school district in Southwest Texas. The project includes a comprehensive RTI PD Workshop that the local school district can adopt to address this issue. The PD workshop consists of the following elements:

- Measurable goals and objectives,
- An implementation timeline,
- Training modules with activities and instructional formats,
- Materials and resources to ensure success, and
- An evaluation tool.

These elements are consistent with the data collected from participants in the local setting, the findings that emerged from the data, and the literature that addressed the design and development of effective PD for teachers in general and PD for effective RTI implementation specifically (Barufaldi & Cormas, 2011 ; Lutrick & Szabo, 2012; Valerie, 2012;). Lutrick and Szabo (2012) conducted a study on PD. They interviewed principals and assistant principals. In the findings from their study, they discussed the importance of PD to teachers. The findings indicated that school leaders believe that teaching practices can improve when teachers are provided with effective ongoing PD opportunities. These qualities strengthen teaching practices and student learning. Further, Valerie (2012) was guided by the data collected, and she concluded that successful PD, which included collaboration, reflection, implementation time, and practice, had a positive impact on teachers' perceptions and practices. Barufaldi and Cormas (2011) suggested that an effective characteristic such as increasing the teachers' ability to meet the needs of diverse learners through PD is linked to student achievement. In the interviews, teachers

indicated that they needed more PD opportunities on the topic of RTI in order to help students gain reading proficiency. One teacher participant summed up this need by stating the following:

> Providing teachers with effective PD opportunities encompasses improving teaching practices that can benefit students in all content areas. I think that a lot of content teachers view reading instruction as a challenge because of their lack of training, especially when they are focused on teaching the main content subject areas (like Geography or Physics) along with the issue of time constraints, because these teachers do not have time to go back and teach students basic literacy skills.

During classroom observations, I witnessed that several teachers had difficulty explaining content area lessons that required specific literacy skills and knowledge to help students navigate through different types of texts. One skill that these teachers could have employed was building text-specific knowledge by providing students with information from the text prior to reading, and I noted that this should be captured in my project. The project study PowerPoint (Appendix A) is intended to be a learning resource for teachers. It provides a model on how to implement the following key findings from the data analysis: (a) differentiated instruction, (b) vocabulary instruction, (c) scaffolding instruction, and (d) RTI reading instruction among content-area teachers.

The PD series design includes measurable goals and objectives. The implementation timeline provides a scope and sequence of the series. The training modules offer context for the actual training sessions that will take place. Resources that support the PD modules are provided to ensure efficacious implementation of the PD series. Lastly, the formative and summative evaluations are included to measure the quality and effectiveness of the PD series.

Goals of the Project

The goals of the project are as follows: (a) teachers will learn how to use literacy activities in their lessons to encourage participation by students who struggle with reading comprehension and vocabulary skills; (b) teachers will learn how to use differentiated teaching instruction based on student's interest, learning preference, and presentation preference; (c) teachers will acquire instructions in scaffolding and learn how to provide scaffolding strategies to help students build on prior knowledge and integrate new information; (d) teachers will have clear expectations of effective RTI training; and (e) content-area teachers will learn how to instruct students in literacy by incorporating literacy strategies into their lessons. These goals were derived from the findings that resulted from the data analysis. For example, during the interviews, a veteran participant explained that the needs of teachers and students are affected by the district's budget cuts. The veteran participant further explained, "Inadequate planning, poor training, lack of materials and scant resources are the heart of past failures to implement RTI Tier I reading interventions." Another participant, new to the education profession, was interviewed and echoed similar feelings. She stated, "Being able to have access to curriculum maps, guides, applicable materials, and PD throughout the year would really help." To the question, "How would you suggest content-area teachers incorporate strategies into their instruction?" one of the participants responded, "Content-area teachers do not typically teach literacy skills; however, content-area teachers can help students develop reading skills, understanding, and thinking skills in order to gain knowledge as well as learn from challenging content-area text." These types of responses influenced the development of Goals A and E above. B was written to equip teachers with improved teaching practices and instruction to help improve academic achievement among struggling learners in the way each learns. Goal C was

written in response to a several participants' comments indicating that teachers need to be able to improve instruction delivery by offering students scaffolding instruction to enhance the way new information is acquired. Finally, goal D was inspired by the following comment made by a third year participant, "There needs to be ongoing commitment and support from the administration and the district if we are to increase the sustainability of Tier I reading interventions." Five other participants echoed this opinion.

Rationale

The XYZ High School currently has no PD plan to help teachers with content literacy skills instruction; therefore, such a plan is an appropriate project for this study because it has the potential to improve English language arts and other content-area teachers' knowledge for teaching literacy skills instruction. Based on the findings presented in Section 2, professional training was chosen as the project genre to address the educational problem that anchors this study. According to Forbes and Zint (2011), a PD series that is implemented appropriately and has set goals can be an effective conduit in improving both teacher and student performance. The selection of the PD project genre is supported by the following data and findings. Participants in this study indicated that they had received minimal RTI reading comprehension instruction through the district. Several participants expressed that they had not been trained in RTI reading comprehension instruction, and that they could benefit from a sequence of training sessions that might help them to acquire skills necessary to integrate reading comprehension instruction into their classrooms. Hence, the findings from this project study supported the creation of PD opportunities. I used a methodical process of line-by-line, open, axial, and theoretical coding to analyze the data and develop the findings. The topic of PD was identified repeatedly as a weakness in the district program.

First, the district mandated the implementation of RTI but provided little training in how to do so. This created a common need among the participants. A novice participant stated, "Before we can have total buy-in from teachers and administration, there need to be a few things we have come to master, along with in-depth implementation, rather than a lot of things with weak implementation." Similarly, another participant said, "In-depth implementation is vital. We need to make a list of all the initiatives we have implemented and discontinue doing those that have little impact on student achievement." These comments are indicative of many participants' sentiments. The comments seem to indicate that when there is no sustained PD, no clear expectations, and no accountability provided by the district, new initiatives and processes may have less of an impact on student achievement.

Second, without adequate PD training, the participants did not believe they were adequately prepared to implement RTI in their classrooms. According to a veteran participant, "Budget cuts, inadequate training, and no real focus in regard to materials and resources are the heart of our failures in implementation." Further, when teachers engage in high quality PD, their knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs are affected, and they gain the capacity to encourage all students to learn at high levels (Marrero, Riccio, Schuster, & Woodruff, 2010; Reeves, 2010). Teachers need sustained professional training to implement newly acquired practices in order for the skills to transfer into action in the classroom. A second year participant said, "Being able to participate in ongoing training throughout the implementation process would make a big difference in the success of implementation and student achievement." This, along with similar comments provided by the other participants interviewed, supports the perception that more PD training is necessary.

Third, the participants believe content-area teachers need PD training in providing differentiated instruction and literacy instruction. Participants also communicated that students are experiencing academic failure due to poor reading comprehension and low vocabulary skills. According to a veteran participant, "Many students are performing poorly in many of their content areas, like math and science, due to their low reading comprehension skills and low vocabulary skills, and they require some form of instruction modification." Another participant commented, "Many of our high school students feel overwhelmed due to the complexity of the texts they are expected to comprehend, experience failure, and give up on school altogether." Bursuck, Lazaroff, and Robbins (2010) indicated that low reading comprehension leads to students' inability to succeed in subject matter classes. Lenski (2011) found that as learners transition to high school, they are expected to analyze a wide range of complex texts and make informed decisions in their content classes; such tasks overwhelm students with low reading comprehension skills. Bolin and Thompson (2011) explained that a significant number of U.S. secondary students failed to reach proficiency in core academic areas such as math and science, and many of them have dropped out of high school. Other participants offered similar observations, which indicated that content-area teachers could benefit from literacy instruction that would likely improve teaching practices, as well as students' vocabulary and reading comprehension skills.

The findings from this project study supported a framework for creating a series of PD opportunities including the following topics: designing effective research-based lessons, implementing reading comprehension instruction within the classroom, sharing ideas with teachers, and implementing skill training of instructional strategies. Furthermore, this project study may guide teachers toward improved instruction delivery skills to increase student reading

proficiency. Finally, improving literacy skills instruction can help teachers prepare students for postsecondary education, workforce entry, and for successful navigation in a global society.

The project addresses the problem of the lack of PD training for high school teachers in the implementation of RTI in the following ways: First, the project will provide teachers with a quality, sustained PD training plan. Second, the project will allow for feedback on the fidelity of implementation by district staff and school administrators. Finally, the evaluation will determine the effectiveness of the project and provide suggestions for improvement.

Review of Literature

PD is a vital requirement in today's educational setting. Teachers are faced with rapid and continuous changing environments within their field that include new studies on teaching and learning, and new mandates that push teachers to achieve. Since the No Child Left Behind legislation (2002), and a legislature that pressed for every classroom to contain highly qualified professionals (Bush, 2002), teachers are held accountable for demonstrating increases in student learning. Unfortunately, NCLB legislation, while sound in theory, created a flurry of teaching to the test issues, whereby actual teaching and learning were replaced with attempts to achieve administration- and legislative-pleasing test scores. In 2011, President Barack Obama announced a waiver system that allowed states a reprieve from the NCLB mandate (Klein, 2012; McNeil, 2011). States approved for the waiver no longer had to meet the 2014 deadline of having all third graders reading on grade level, but they were required to create a plan for targeting college and career readiness and be willing to set higher and more reasonable academic expectations than those outlined in NCLB (Gewertz, 2011; Klein, 2012. Since educators are required to demonstrate the rigorous academic standards, they could benefit from improved instruction strategies to enhance student performance on academic standards (Klein, 2012). The following

subheadings of this literature review were identified from the data collected in surveys and interviews and from findings derived from the present study's analysis. The findings support that teachers believe they need (a) differentiated teaching instruction training, (b) instructions in scaffolding, (c) clear expectations of effective RTI training, and (e) content area literacy instruction.

Professional Development

High quality PD can improve teaching instruction and student learning (Calhoun & Joyce, 2010). Bryck (2010) maintained that the quality of a school is connected to highly qualified teachers. Further, Bryck explained that high quality PD is a vital element in any endeavor to support schools, teachers, and students. Educational PD is a process that enables teachers to learn and collaborate with colleagues. According to Pella (2011), PD opportunities are used as a method to enhance professional learning while offering skills to enhance student learning and bring about continuous ways for educators to improve by embracing change. According to Trust (2012), teachers who are effective gain new knowledge continuously through PD and demonstrate best instructional practices and new skills to improve instructional delivery.

Professional development is the highest expenditure of many school districts. According to Odden (2011), more than 20 billion dollars is spent on PD. Many school districts already spend $4000 - $8000 per teacher on PD (Odden). He further explained that 20 states in the Midwest and the East provide more funding than the required recommendation; however, 20 other states provide less (Odden). Many school leaders feel secure in investing in high quality PD opportunities, because quality PD is connected to student achievement (Alton-Lee, 2011). PD permits teachers to cultivate fresh knowledge and skills to improve student learning (Brooks & Gibson, 2012). Effective PD is the underpinning for improving the relationship between

student learning and teacher delivery by providing teachers with effective instructional strategies. According to Desimone and Hochberg (2010), at-risk students stand to gain academic success when teachers participate in PD. PD is an appropriate way to increase student learning opportunities, which is why this particular genre is the best method to use in addressing the problem presented in this project study.

The project genre of PD was chosen based on the findings from the survey, interviews, and classroom observations. I identified and explored the perceived needs of secondary content teachers in the local setting. Again, the participants represented teachers who have had limited training in the implementation of RTI. Hence, this project was created with the intention of providing a solution to this local educational problem.

Benefits to Teachers

PD has several benefits for teachers. According to Katz, Popovich & Zueger (2014), teachers can enhance personal and professional careers when they are afforded ongoing PD growth opportunities. Graebner and Lindekens (2014) echoed a similar response, explaining that PD opportunities can provide learning enrichment opportunities for teachers seeking to enhance their own teaching kills in their expert subject areas. Therefore, PD is an appropriate intervention in improving teachers' work skills.

PD leads to reflective inquiry and dialogue about educational issues and problems that arise with applying new knowledge and concepts (Freidus, Halton &, Lyons, 2013). With high expectations of teachers' knowledge and expertise in schools, administrators understand the stake teachers have in the school and students (Dexter & Jones, 2014). This creates a feeling of collective responsibility for student learning.

Teachers are invested in student academic achievement. By providing PD that is focused on the school and that is sometimes led by teachers from that school, administrators provide a benefit that influences how teachers teach and how students learn (Frunzeanu, 2014). This process allows teachers to examine problems that arise during instruction. It is also beneficial in that this process allows teachers to share situations from their classrooms with other teachers who might teach students with similar needs. It provides a base of knowledge so the teachers own the teaching strategies and tools provided during PD sessions. These teachers can see how PD will benefit their students, as it is focused on their situations (Hameiri, Inbar & Nir, 2014; Angelle & Derrington, 2013). School-based PD, initiated by the teachers, provides benefits to the school by focusing on issues that concern the community, such as graduating students who are able to communicate in reading and writing in a global society, as well as securing jobs and advancing in their careers. PD can offer a forum to help teachers learn from one another and to gain insights about learning and teaching strategies. This can provide change not only in the school and district, but also in the teaching profession (Hameiri et al., 2014**)**. Many teachers have become life-long learners; like many of their students, they seek opportunities to learn supported through school environments. Through sustained PD, teachers and students can all benefit and grow individually and as a group (Adams, Ross & Vescio, 2008).

Reflective practice can be a beneficial process in teacher PD. It recognizes the importance of dialogues for learning. Reflective practices stress the importance of collaboration, encourage active learning between teachers, and inspire teachers to reach common goals of the learning process. If teachers are to reap the benefits of data collection and working in collaborative groups, they should know how to communicate effectively, especially about data-driven instruction and new teaching strategies.

Croft (2012) acknowledged that PD is crucial to ensure teachers use new teaching practices and skills effectively to significantly improve the academic achievements of students. She claimed that PD affords teachers opportunities to create dialogue to usher in topic discussions for creativity and possible solutions to educational issues and concerns. Therefore, while PD is beneficial in helping teachers gain insights, it may also prompt change among school districts so that all teachers may benefit and ultimately help students achieve academic success.

Teacher-Led Professional Development

Teacher-led PD is a common practice among schools, but some educators are skeptical about the benefits of using teachers in this way (Knight & Richardson, 2011). Knight and Richardson (2011) believed that skepticism regarding teacher-lead PD is derived from the lack of visibility among small learning communities. Regardless of the skepticism, utilizing the schools' own staff is significant and should be promoted among colleagues who enjoy collaborating on some of the same educational problems and concerns (Bergom, Knight, & Lattuca, 2015). In order for teachers to be effective PD leaders, the teacher-learner should focus the training on the use of collaborative teams and the guidance of teacher ownership of their individual PD.

These best practices could be applicable to individuals leading or participating in a PD session. First, teacher leaders are in a position to voice the importance of PD activities and the need to tailor it to the needs of the adult learner. The use of learning teams can help design suitable activities and build adult teachers' ownership of their PD and their perceived needs (Knight & McNeill, 2013). Davis and McLachlan (2013) pointed out that the needs of teachers may not be met if they do not participate in planning and delivering PD programs. A best practice for teacher-led PD is to allow time for teachers to reflect, collaborate and problem-solve about a system-wide issue. Additionally, some teachers may be able to transfer the content

covered in a workshop to their classrooms (Kalafatis & Ledden, 2013). Further, Iqbal (2015) found that PD could be broken down by topic based on goals and on growth and learning. Owen (2014) indicated that true growth and learning often do not come from district mandated offerings; rather, true growth and learning come from collaboration and dialogue.

Teacher-led PD encourages teachers to network through collaborative efforts. As it relates to this study, teachers who are concerned with reading comprehension may develop networking or collaboration. Additionally, teacher-led PD opportunities permit teachers to advocate for their own learning in order to help their students become academically successful. According to Stacy (2013), teachers are able to address their own needs and concerns among their colleagues when they assume accountability to discovering solutions to the educational issues and concerns and experience growth and learning as a result.

Effective Teaching Strategies

Differentiated instruction. Differentiated instruction is a teaching philosophy that accommodates and supports the learning needs of all students regardless of students' individual performance and capacity levels (Little, McCoach & Reis, 2014). Differentiated instruction creates a learning environment that accommodates students' individual learning needs and has proven successful in many schools (Tricarico & Yendol-Hoppey, 2012; Bailey & Garner, 2010). The interview data collected for this study indicated that when collaborative groups of students with an array of skill levels work together, students could be more productive at task completion and skill acquisition. In fact, Liftig (2010) noted that differentiated instruction using specific strategies and a multiplicity of activities would produce learning at all levels. Servilio (2009) indicated that differentiated instruction focuses on the varying needs of students; this aligns with the views reported by several teachers the participant group. Further, Servilio (2009) emphasized

that when teachers incorporate differentiated instruction into their daily lessons, students are able to respond and attain academic success.

Differentiated instruction is considered to be an effective best practice for implementing RTI, and it is supported by the constructivist theory that serves as the theoretical framework of this study (Demirsky-Allen & Goddard, 2010). In fact, differentiated instruction emphasizes student-centered instruction and individual differences (Dee, 2011). According to the definition of constructivist theory, differentiated instruction is an integral component and is identified as an active learning process by which teachers provide students with learning opportunities by using different materials, different tasks, and different homework (Geijsel, Oort, Peetsma, Sleeger, & Thoonen, 2011). For differentiation to be successful, teachers must start slowly to ensure they are meeting the needs of all students (Wu, 2013).

The data from the interviews for this study indicated that teachers had a need to understand differentiated instruction and strategies. To effectively implement differentiation, teachers must be able to recognize the learning differences of each student and provide instruction that will meet each student's needs (Geijsel, et al., 2011); however, teachers in this research study indicated that it has been challenging to create such a balance. The findings also indicated that most of the teachers had a basic awareness regarding the importance of using differentiated instruction. However, the teachers indicated that they felt challenged when it came to actually creating a viable plan and implementing a diversified instructional program. The data from this study's interviews indicated most teachers believed that training in the area of differentiated instruction would provide a foundation to which skills could be added, and that research-based differentiated strategies would assist them in the implementation process.

The teachers in this study indicated they needed adequate time to plan differentiated lessons as well as to implement best practices. There should be a relationship formed between the amount of time teachers share planning lessons and the quality of the lessons. For example, Gurgur and Uzuner (2011) found that the more time teachers spend together, the better their lessons can be. As indicated by this study's data, the general education teachers voiced that having ample planning time with colleagues would help in the implementation of RTI. Fitzpatrick and McFall (2010) found that time management was problematic for teachers. They stated that many teachers lacked the skills to collaborate and plan effectively; however, this problem is compounded when teacher schedules do not have sufficient periods of time for attending meetings (Fitzpatrick & McFall, 2010).

Teachers in this project study indicated that they wanted to gain knowledge about differentiated instruction strategies that were applicable to their instructional practices. Concomitantly, researchers have found that differentiated instruction is necessary to successfully implement RTI instruction (Mojavezi &Tamiz, 2012). Data from the interviews of this project study suggested that teachers believe that learning differentiated strategies would improve their ability to implement RTI. Tiered instruction can be used in the classroom to make certain that teaching is provided based on the academic needs of the student. Tiered instruction is a research-based, differentiated instruction strategy that has proven to be effective at the student's level to promote academic achievement (Mojavezi & Tamiz, 2012).

Scaffolding. Scaffolding is a process in which teachers model or demonstrate the strategy or skill to be mastered, then step back and offer support as needed.

The principle benefit of scaffolding instruction is that it facilitates participation from the student (McLeod, 2010). Many students are non-responsive when teachers are presenting

information; however, Lui (2012) found that teachers use scaffolding strategies to motivate students to build on their prior knowledge and construct new knowledge. Further, current research supports the concept of the zone of proximal development in relation to scaffolding and reading instruction. For example, in a case study, Parsons (2012) examined the scaffolds that teachers used as they adapted reading instruction for students. Parsons (2012) collected data from classroom observations, lesson plans, and interviews, and found that teachers used several kinds of scaffolds in order to assist students in improving their reading comprehension. It was concluded that when teachers used various types of scaffolding, students showed improved performance and, consequently, they displayed more independent behaviors than they did when scaffolding was not used. Additionally, students were able to pursue difficult text and make the necessary connections to the text (Parsons, 2012).

In a study about the reading experiences of students who are non-proficient readers, Broemmel and Brown (2011) observed how teachers use scaffolding through added support before, during, and after reading a passage. This approach assists students to comprehend what they are reading. An example would be to activate prior knowledge: Teachers provide students with a title and an illustration. Students will then begin thinking about what they already know about new text before they start reading the chapter of a new lesson. Broemmel and Brown (2011) found that teachers who are successful with reading instruction with struggling readers implement various types of scaffolds throughout their lessons, and design them to help students understand the text they read on their own.

Research studies support scaffolding as an effective strategy to improve student learning (Brooks & Gibson, 2012; Edwards & Huggins, 2011; Evans & Waring, 2011). A study conducted by Edwards and Huggins (2011) suggested that by providing assistance and support to

students through instructional scaffolding enhances student learning. Hence, students may be able to successfully achieve reading comprehension as they connect to the printed text. In an action research study conducted by Edwards & Huggins (2011), they revealed that graphic organizers used as a scaffolding strategy tool in the classroom improved students' reading comprehension by helping them connect to the printed text. One study revealed that as teachers gain new knowledge and skills to support students by teaching them scaffolding strategies, student learning will increase (Brooks & Gibson, 2012). According to Evans and Waring (2011), scaffolding has been used assist students to overcome learning barriers in order to achieve learning goals. Frey and Fisher (2010) explored how to determine instructional decisions during guided practice. They concluded that teachers choose to explain during the initial step of scaffolding instruction while they are demonstrating tasks to students. Later, when students completed the assigned task, teachers questioned the students about the differences and similarities of their specific task. In a related study, Suan, Sulaiman, and Veerappan (2011) examined the effects of scaffolding techniques on writing, and they found that when teachers guide the assigned task, after demonstrating an ideal end result, students typically improve. However, Suan et al. (2011) recommended that teachers should always offer positive feedback.

Content Literacy

Content literacy is defined as the ability to use literacy skills for the acquisition of new content in a given discipline (Alvermann, Gillis, & Phelps, 2010). Content-area teachers can help at-risk students gain reading proficiency and become experts in their specified subject area. Secondary teachers require more training to teach higher levels of literacy. Consequently, Burns, Callaway, and Cantrell (2009) stated, "For decades, researchers and educators have extolled the value of integrating literacy instruction into content-area classes for the purposes of improving

both literacy and content-area learning for adolescents" (p. 76). Teachers indicated through the interview data that content-area teachers could incorporate successful strategies into their instruction beyond the use of a dictionary by providing instruction in content literacy skills when determining meanings of terms embedded within the context reading passages. Regardless of a student's literacy level, all students need instruction in content areas that allow them to learn. Further, content literacy instruction should come from teachers who are trained in RTI instructional strategies who can impart content literacy instruction and skills.

Many secondary classroom teachers are not skilled in implementing content-area reading instruction because their daily routines are filled with delivering content. As a result, many teachers do not feel it is their responsibility to teach basic literacy skills. In fact, Grisham, Smetana, and Wilson (2009) explained that teachers "do not see a connection between literacy skills and content information, as these skills appear to be inconsistent with the traditional goals of the secondary curriculum" (p. 708). Lesley and Matthew (2009) found that many content teachers believe that there is little relevance and applicability of literacy in subject-area learning. Basically, content-area teachers might demonstrate a high degree of effectiveness in their area of expertise; however, they sometimes do not believe they have the necessary knowledge to incorporate literacy instruction into their content areas to meet the literacy needs of at-risk students. Hence, teachers need more training to incorporate RTI instructional strategies in their classrooms.

Content-area teachers must address the literacy needs of students who lack basic literacy skills. Bintz, Murray, and O'Connor (2009) believed that teachers need support and PD in teaching reading comprehension. Research shows that 80% of at-risk students are currently receiving instruction from general education teachers, and that many teachers do not have the

skills to integrate literacy instruction into their daily lessons (Cronin, 2014; Fitzpatrick & McFall, 2010). While reading and writing are necessary literacy skills, understanding the need for reading instruction is essential. If students are given an opportunity to receive reading comprehension strategies during instruction, they can perhaps achieve content-specific learning success. When students have time to practice strategies in the classroom, they have an opportunity to gain reading proficiency. As at-risk students progress to more challenging content areas at the secondary level school, they will require effective reading strategies in order to reach proficiency in a given subject area. Hence, this study will be useful to all teachers in an effort to serve all students who lack basic reading proficiency skills. While content area teachers are expert in their fields, acquiring literacy skills instruction would likely improve teaching practices and increase students' academic achievement.

Content-area teachers may help at-risk students gain reading proficiency and help students improve their performance in subject area content. According to Jones and Lee (2014), content literacy instruction should come from teachers who are adequately trained in literacy to benefit all students regardless of their reading levels. Jones and Lee (2014) further indicated that secondary teachers are restricted by factors such as time, and they often cannot provide literacy instruction as part of their daily curriculum. Jones and Lee (2014) stated, "Teachers in departments are seen as specializing in that subject and as such, teachers and departments have some autonomy to implement strategies as each sees fit. These organizational factors make it difficult to implement changes needed for literacy across the curriculum" (p. 246). However, some teachers do realize that non-proficient readers need to develop literacy skills. Many of the participants believed that content teachers could provide students with literacy skills when they are provided with adequate PD opportunities, which is at the heart of this project.

How the Search Was Conducted

Teachers need to be able to participate in a PD offering in the area of RTI, as it is aimed at reflecting the findings of the data analyzed from the interviews. There is a need for clear and consistent teaching practices within the particular school. Given the evidence from the collected data and the review of literature that supports comprehensive training for teachers, PD is an appropriate intervention for the project.

The review of literature relates to PD aimed at meeting the perceived needs of teachers. I accessed the following databases for this review of literature from Walden University's online library: Google Scholar, ProQuest, EBSCO, Sage, Education Research Complete, and ERIC. The search terms included *professional development, collaborative learning, training the teacher, qualitative professional development, effective professional development, secondary professional development, scaffolding, differentiated instruction, content area literacy instruction, different types of professional development, adult learners and professional development,* and *parameters of professional development.* This review of literature covers the purpose of PD, process of PD, characteristics of PD, and teacher collaboration. Additionally, I included a majority of sources published within the past five years in the literature review.

Project Description

Potential Resources and Existing Supports

Needed resources. The resources needed to implement the proposed project include human, physical, technological, and financial resources. The identification of these resources are consistent with the findings of the study. One of the grade nine participants commented, "When there are clear communications, a shared vision, the necessary resource support, and PD, RTI will provide us with the results we are looking for." A veteran grade nine

teacher said, “Limited funding, inadequate training and planning, and a lack of effort with regard to materials and resources are the root of our failures in implementation.” Human resources are needed to deliver the PD modules. I will serve as a trainer along with human resources personnel. We will also perform follow-up observations to safeguard the fidelity of implementation in the classroom. Developing and collating copies of PowerPoint slides, handouts, and evaluations will also require human participation.

The largest physical resource, which I will need to implement the proposed project is the facility where training sessions will be held. I will also need to use district resources to prepare copies of professional literature and workshop materials. The technological resources needed are a media cart complete with computer, projector, and audio speakers for the delivery of the PD sessions, all of which are available through the local school. The three-day PD workshop will take place during a normal workday, and everyone will be compensated through his or her regular salary.

Existing supports. Existing supports include PD days that are built into the annual school calendar. Although the district has accounted for PD opportunities, the participants expressed that a PD offering is typically a one-day training event that includes an overview of the program or initiative with no follow-up. This was confirmed by reviewing of the district’s PD annual plan. These days could otherwise offer an opportunity for quality, ongoing PD sessions concentrated on the implementation of instruction on RTI. Another existing support is a PD coordinator at the district administration office. The coordinator could participate in the training sessions and may choose to expand the use of this project to other schools in the district. Additionally, each school site has curriculum support personnel (master teachers, teacher quality specialists) who could be trained and prepared to deliver the PD sessions and support teachers in

their implementation. One participant in this study stated, "I usually have questions after a one-day training, and there is no go-to person or a follow-up that would allow professional growth. I would like to have the opportunity to ask someone about those questions and concerns." The curriculum support staff could help with this service.

Potential barriers. The human, physical, technological, and financial resources are all vital to the implementation of the project. If any of the resources are disregarded, the project will not attain its goals: (a) offering resolutions for recognized needs of teachers required to implement RTI Tier I interventions in their classroom; (b) training teachers in delivering instructional strategies essential to implementing effective RTI Tier I interventions; (c) providing feedback and accountability measures on the implementation of the reading intervention strategies in the classroom; and (d) improving student success.

Potential barriers of the proposed project will include a lack of funding sources, potentially unwilling participants, and an absence of commitment from the school district. If funding to cover the necessary resources becomes an issue, the proposed project could likely fail. I recommend that the district administrators allocate a portion of the Title I PD funds to support the implementation of the proposed project.

There will be teachers who may be reluctant to participate; however, if they the district permits teachers to make the decision as to whether or not they will participate, those who are willing to do so are likely to increase the effectiveness of the project. One of the findings from the interview data, however, was that the district lacks consistency and accountability. One participant explained that district support, commitment and on-going monitoring are crucial to increasing the sustainability of Tier I reading interventions. Participants also acknowledged that they have taken part in many programs and initiatives, but they acknowledged that when there

has been a lack of commitment on the part of the district, these programs and initiatives disappear. A grade nine English teacher explained that teachers need the support of the district in order to prepare and meet the needs of every student. Another participant explained that helping students achieve academic success should be a joint effort of school and teachers. If teachers are given a choice about participating in the PD sessions, this problem will continue. A system change is likely to occur if all teachers decide to participate in the project. I also recommend that the district administrators make teachers' participation in PD sessions mandatory. To maintain teacher morale, PD sessions should be job-embedded and not scheduled after school.

Roles and Responsibilities of Researcher and Others

The researcher. My role and responsibilities are to create the proposed project, make recommendations on implementation, propose a timetable for implementation, and serve as the trainer for the PD workshop. I will provide the teacher participants, principal, and district (stakeholders) with a project proposal detailing PD sessions. Formative and summative evaluations will be included to improve the presentation for future use. The implementation plan and timetable will offer the stakeholders details on the delivery of the PD sessions, and suggestions for fidelity observations.

District personnel. The role and responsibilities of the district personnel are to work cohesively to create a calendar that corresponds with the implementation timetable. The participants indicated in the findings that the typical PD offerings are one-day training sessions that provide an overview of the program and initiative with no additional follow-up. It is essential for the calendar to include dates for PD sessions. Teachers will be provided with the additional opportunities to participate in book studies; this effort will support and enhance the PD program throughout the school year. The school district superintendent will be responsible

for providing the funds to purchase necessary materials required for the implementation of the project. The purchase of the professional literature and paper for copies is necessary. The school involved in this study is a Title I school; therefore, the school receives federal money to be spent on PD. This funding might also be used to purchase the materials mentioned that involve financial resources. The materials include copies of PowerPoint presentations, handouts and other professional literature. If the district superintendent decides to implement this project district-wide, the individual school administrators will be responsible for selecting PD trainers and locations for meetings. Lastly, the district curriculum director has the responsibility of overseeing the fidelity of implementation of best practices. A recursive theme within the data collected is that teachers need to accept their accountability for student academic outcomes, but they seek district support to learn and develop best practices.

Building principal. The roles and responsibilities of the building principal are to work cohesively with the district personnel to develop a calendar that correlates to the implementation timetable. The calendar must include dates for the PD sessions. The building principal is accountable for the selection of possible PD trainers and will also be prepared to serve as a PD trainer, if needed. Master teachers at this school could also be trained to deliver the PD sessions in order to offer support to teachers in the implementation of the project. Conducting observations to ensure the fidelity of implementation of best practices is also a responsibility of the building principal.

Teachers. The roles and responsibilities of the teachers are to attend the PD sessions. The district will determine the requirements for participation. Professional growth is essential for all teachers, and often impedes the teachers' daily teaching schedule. In order to accommodate teachers who are unable to attend PD sessions, the district may opt to investigate alternative

methods to deliver content virtually or during the summer. The participants interviewed for this study indicated a concern about the lack of PD opportunities before an initiative or practice is projected to be implemented. Participating in the PD series will preclude this perceived need. Teachers are also responsible for implementing the strategies learned during the professional sessions and book studies. The participants expressed that a core curriculum, implemented with fidelity and delivered using a balanced approach to literacy and reading comprehension instruction, would have a positive influence on student achievement. Finally, teachers are responsible for collaborating with colleagues and working to influence student achievement.

Project Evaluation Plan

Formative Evaluation Measure

I will employ a formative method to determine the effectiveness of the project. Formative assessments will serve as a tool that will allow me to monitor students' progress as well as deliver ongoing feedback. Ongoing feedback is available to other teachers seeking to develop skills to improve their teaching practices and the learning of their students. Formative evaluation seeks to determine if the PD sessions are an appropriate solution to bring about the necessary changes identified during the data analysis.

Formative evaluation data from the PD sessions will be gathered as teachers and PD facilitators will provide feedback by way of exit slips and exit interviews. At the close of each PD session, participants will evaluate their involvement by completing an exit slip. A sample exit slip is included in the project. The exit slip contains four questions targeted to determine if participants achieved learning objectives, whether or not they have any additional questions, to what extent this training session pertained to their daily work, and if any changes should be made to the daily session. The goal of the PD sessions was to provide the campus administrators and

RTI teachers with information to assist with future RTI decisions. The exit slips present a formative evaluation to gain feedback on the project. According to Ducette, Schiller, Stull, and Varnum (2011), participants are able to recognize learning that has and has not occurred when they participate in a formative evaluation. Exit slips offer insight into the teachers' thoughts and needs as they contemplate implementation of the strategies in their classrooms. Formative evaluation can be useful for teachers and students. In fact, Ducette et al. (2011) explained that teachers are able to assess if instruction was beneficial or if there are areas that need to be improved through the process of exit slips. The PD facilitators completed the exit slips as well, which could also provide insight into the needs of the facilitators for future sessions.

The formative evaluation measure will be used to determine the effectiveness of the PD sessions to increase teacher knowledge of implementation of RTI: Tier I reading interventions in the general education classroom. The formative evaluation measure of exit slips was chosen because information can be collected promptly in a way that is non-threatening. The use of formative evaluations provides interactive feedback from the participants and can play a significant role in determining the effectiveness of a project (Black & William, 2009). The advantages of this measure also include anonymity in gathering information as well as cost effectiveness. The findings from the exit slips will be used to enhance the PD sessions for future offerings.

Summative Evaluation Measure

Summative evaluation measures are typically quantitative in nature and result in numeric score. Summative evaluation measures are used to determine the effectiveness of a project after the completion of all project activities (Trochim, 2009). Summative evaluations are usually presented in the form of a questionnaire and are used to confirm what participants know, and

they demonstrate whether or not the project has met the participants' expectations. They may reveal how each participant's experiences aligned with those of other participants (Earl & Ussher, 2010).

A final summative evaluation will be given to the participants two to three weeks after the completion of the three-day workshop. This evaluation allows for participants to provide feedback to the facilitators by expanding on their experiences once they are in the classrooms. The evaluations will help facilitators know what worked well in the sessions and classrooms as well as the need for changes.

To determine if an activity, or in this case, project, has had the intended impact, the evaluation should be accompanied by specific goals. A summative measure was selected because the evaluation seeks to determine if the PD series is the right solution to bring about the changes needed as identified by the data. Demsey and Reiser (2007) defined summative evaluations as, "Evaluation measures generally occurring at the end of a unit or training; it allows instructors or instructional designers to see how well the learners met/understood the learning objectives from instruction" (p. 95). Summative evaluations are all about the outcomes. A summative measure will take the form of a questionnaire. Summative evaluation measures are used to confirm what participants know, to demonstrate whether or not the project has met participants' expectations, and to show how each participant's experience relates to those of other participants (Earl & Ussher, 2010). Summative evaluation data of the PD series will be collected once all modules are complete. At the end of the PD series participants will complete a project evaluation questionnaire that will capture the perceptions of the impact of the PD series on their teaching practices. Questionnaires help a facilitator measure how well the participants are learning, how the participants might apply their new skills and knowledge in the work place,

and how the participants experienced the training, including suggestions for training improvement (Trochim, 2009). The summative evaluation measure of a questionnaire was selected based on the need to gather information quickly and anonymously.

The project development was guided by specific, measureable, attainable, realistic, and timely (S.M.A.R.T) (Bachman, 2013). The goals of the project evaluations are three-fold. The first goal of the project evaluations is to verify the impact of the project. The evaluations should determine if the proposed project addresses the concerns identified from the data. If the project is successful, the formative and summative evaluations will reveal that the PD series served as a support to teachers asked to implement RTI: Tier I reading interventions in their classroom. Participants in the PD series should gain the benefit of increased knowledge about the implementation of RTI: Tier I reading interventions. Next, the project evaluations should determine whether the project is being delivered efficiently. By identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the project, modifications can be made to the project to make certain resources are being used efficiently. Finally, the third goal of the project evaluations is to offer the stakeholders with data validating the outcomes of the project. The data from the formative and summative evaluations will provide information that can be used to conclude if the goals of the project were accomplished. Based on the findings of the evaluations, the stakeholders can decide whether to fund project implementation in the future.

Description of Key Stakeholders

The stakeholders in this project study are the recipients of the information provided in the PD sessions. These stakeholders include the English and reading teachers who were participants in the study, subject area content teachers, school administrators and the school superintendent. The superintendent and administrators are key stakeholders, as they can exert influence over the

project and its outcome. These key stakeholders can also decide whether the project will be funded in the future. The participants represent stakeholders who are actively involved in the project along with the district superintendent and administrators who have a vested interest in the outcome of the project.

Project Implications

Possible Social Change Implications

The community of the XYZ school's district is comprised of members of the school board, students, parents, faculty, and staff. This project has the potential to have an important implication for social change. First, students may bfenefit academically from teachers who make improvements and changes in teaching practices and instructions. This could result in student encouragement and motivation stemming from improved academic performance. The at-risk students are on the receiving end of these implications, as they may experience academic success beyond initial expectations. Additionally, teachers have an opportunity to benefit by improving their practices and by gaining new knowledge and skills to be able to engage more students. This structure could provide an opportunity for teachers to consistently work together on their instructional practices. Teacher success and student accomplishment can be directly increased through the application of this project.

This proposed project study is comprised of the PD workshop sessions, and formative assessments. Along with those components, the use of this proposed study is likely to advance the implementation of RTI: Tier I reading interventions in general education classrooms. The strategies in the PD sessions will assist in helping teachers as they set out to improve students' academic success each day. Teachers could be viewed as a clearinghouse of educational information, as they are often provided many

opportunities throughout the school year and summer break to participate in new initiatives and programs. Effective, ongoing PD is what confirms the foundation of intiatives and programs and permits true social change to transpire. The PD sessions and professional literature review were created and conducted, respectively, as an outcome of the collection of data from the participants in the study. The PD sessions represent an effort to support teachers in implementing RTI: Tier I reading intervention instruction. The sessions and supportive strategies will supply teachers with a plethora of information on this subject. These RTI: Tier I reading interventions are also supported by resources that can be accessible without difficulty. Academic success of the student should increase as an outcome of the implementation of the RTI: Tier I reading interventions. Improved academic success of the student will encourage positive social change between present and future generations.

Importance of the Project to Local Stakeholders and Larger Context

The stakeholders are English and reading teachers and subject area content teachers who are the recipients of the information provided in the PD series. These stakeholders are also implementing RTI interventions in this suburban high school. The school district and school administrators might likewise benefit from participating in the PD sessions. Teachers can experience success when implementing RTI interventions when knowledge is made available regarding the strategies necessary to raise students' reading proficiency skills. Effective, ongoing PD could likely produce success among teachers and students.

The results from this study could have an impact on PD opportunities offered to teachers in the current district and others struggling with the implementation of RTI

reading interventions. The project offers ideas for PD that will inspire instructional strategies to cultivate differentiated classrooms that are concentrated on students and that lead to improved student achievement. By offering a source of new ideas and strategies for improving the education of at-risk students, this project may be adapted for use in schools across the country where teachers express a need for best practice teaching strategies. Providing teachers with effective, ongoing PD may empower them to engage in a collaborative community of learners who network across school lines with a common purpose of improving student achievement nationwide.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Project Strengths and Limitations

Project Strengths

The project that I created will provide teachers and district leadership with a blueprint of a PD that can positively impact teaching practices and promote student learning. The project was created from the study findings, which indicated most teachers believed that training in the area of differentiated instruction would provide an underpinning from which skills could be added and that research-based differentiated strategies could assist them in the implementation process. The teachers in this project indicated they needed sufficient time to plan differentiated lessons, implement best practices, and provide content literacy instruction. A teacher's ability to assist students with their literacy capabilities may provide the foundation for success in all other academic areas. The strengths are evident in the project, and they discussed below.

The first strength of the project is that the PD workshop addresses the teachers' primary needs as identified during the face to-face interviews. Teachers in the local setting wanted to know how they could best meet the needs of their students. They disclosed the need for quality, sustained professional training in the area of RTI: Tier I reading interventions, in order to assist students reading proficiency skills. One of the grade nine teachers confirmed,

> After teachers begin an implementation of new instructional strategies, we find that, more PD is necessary. There is lots of training required at the beginning of the school year which leaves little time for teachers to absorb, reflect, and ask questions.

Another participant agreed stating,

> When we are not able to follow-up with questions about new teaching instructions and interventions, there is no true professional growth. I usually have more questions after

the initial implementation and would like to be able to ask someone about my questions and concerns.

The teachers require support from district leadership and administration to check the fidelity of implementation and to hold teachers accountable for student achievement. One grade nine English teacher said, "Commitment, support, ongoing quality monitoring from the district and administration are essential to increasing the sustainability of Tier I reading interventions." According to Alton-Lee (2011), many district leaderships are confident in investing in high quality PD opportunities, due to PD connection to student achievement. During the PD workshop, teachers will learn how to implement RTI: Tier I reading interventions in their classrooms and opportunities to discuss proven success, challenges, and concerns with colleagues. Desimone and Hochberg (2010) explained that PD training is an appropriate way to increase student learning opportunities. Further, Stacy (2013) indicated that teachers positioned to address their own needs and concerns among their colleagues through PD opportunities when they assume accountability to discovering solutions to the educational issues and concerns and experience growth and learning as a result.

Additionally, Brooks and Gibson (2012) believed that PD allows teachers to gain fresh knowledge and skills to improve student learning.

The second strength of the PD workshop is the research-based underpinning from which it was created. My research in reading instruction was used to create the project and it offers classroom teachers with the knowledge of literacy, best-practices, and RTI: Tier I reading interventions. The training on differentiated instruction and scaffolding approaches, comprehension, vocabulary skills, and content area literacy instruction, may help teachers in their daily planning. According to Johns and Lenski (2011), differentiated instruction and

scaffolding approaches are the foundational ideas that support RTI: Tier I reading interventions. By using the research-based methods and strategies shared during each module, teachers may acquire the tools necessary to plan and effectively deliver RTI: Tier I reading interventions. PD modules have been developed to provide teachers with all of the information they need in order to meet the needs of all students.

Thirdly, the project offers a design for PD that may be used to address implementation of RTI: Tier I reading interventions in the local school site and, possibly, in a larger educational setting. The modules within this workshop can be used by professional learning committees during the school year, for summer enrichment training, and as required training for novice teachers. As revealed through the data collected from the face-to-face participant interviews, prior and present training opportunities provided by the district lacked the involvement of participants and the training required to implement RTI: Tier I reading interventions effectively in the general education classroom. As previously stated in my review of literature, Klein (2012) indicated that it would be advantageous to teachers to have instruction on reading strategies in order to enhance student performance on rigorous academic standards. According to Reeves (2010), in order for a new initiative to take hold and impact student achievement results, there must be a 3-year commitment in order to experience implementation achievement.

Limitations

The PD series developed for this study has limitations that may influence its appeal to participants within and outside the local district for which it was intended. Project limitations are discussed below.

One limitation of this project is that there is only one trainer for this local school. It may be advantageous to train other content teachers and provide information for this project study by

grade level. However, this could be remedied if the administrator could provide a substitute teacher during PD workshops. By doing so, the project could be directed towards smaller groups.

A second limitation involves the sample size of the study. As it pertains to this study, there were only six participants. The small sample size might have limited the identified needs, whereas a large number of participants might have yielded additional diverse findings (Yin, 2010).

Next, participants may need additional training. Many of the participants in the PD series will be content with the information provided during the face-to-face venue. During the face-to-face interviews, participants were able to ask questions and have open discussions about their successes, challenges, and pending concerns, all of which allowed for an in-depth study of particular components of RTI: Tier I reading intervention.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

Many teachers face various challenges in today's classrooms. According to Palumbo and Sanacore (2009), one of the greatest challenges is how to provide quality instruction and interventions to accommodate the struggling learner. In order to assist teachers in meeting these challenges, they should be equipped with knowledge of the students' backgrounds as well as practices and strategies that have been proven successful. This qualitative project study was designed to examine the perceived needs of high school content teachers and to help them acquire the skills to provide RTI: Tier I reading interventions in their classrooms,

One alternative to the PD series would be to create a manual or guide with the information from the PD workshop. This document could be consistently used and modified each school year. The same source might also be used as something to reference to as needed.

Another alternative to the PD workshop would be to create a video series of master teachers implementing RTI: Tier I reading interventions in their high school classrooms. The teacher participants in the interviews indicated that they need to be taught how to adequately and successfully implement these strategies in the classroom. Additionally, having an organic experience might prove effective. While teachers should be experts in their content areas, they also spend time developing ways to learn and how to meet the needs of their students, as organic learning is active learning. An organic process may occur when there is ongoing collaboration among teachers in order to refine the learning opportunities and understand the adjustments and accommodations they can make during classroom lessons. As teachers implement strategies in their classrooms, they are afforded opportunities to see how students learn.

Scholarship, Development, and Leadership and Change

Scholarship

I have learned about myself as a learner and a researcher throughout my coursework and my journey at Walden University. The coursework in the doctoral program helped me learn the foundations of educational research and how to become a learner in a virtual community. As a learner in a traditional classroom setting, I missed having that person each weekwho would hold me accountable of my work. I have learned that even in a virtual community of learners, there were instructors who held me accountable. Throughout my project study and coursework, my research skills and my ability to synthesize information to develop cohesive, research-based claims have improved by using feedback and examples provided by my committee members. I have learned that through the processes of reading, analyzing, and synthesizing literature, I remained current with research and trends within my topic. I also discovered that as a researcher, there is always a need for further research, as my colleagues share new ideas and new

perspectives with me every day. This provides me with opportunities to model action research within my classroom and among my peers.

My study began as a quantitative study, but due to the nature of my problem and research questions, I discovered that a qualitative case study would be the best design choice. At first, I could not see the importance of qualitative research. Initially, a quantitative design appealed to me because I enjoyed working with numbers and analyzing statistical data. After I chose this important and critical problem that exists within my work setting, I learned that qualitative data collection methods, such as surveys, interviews, and observations, could provide valuable information to investigate real problems. I now appreciate being asked to make this study a qualitative project study, as I was able to examine authentic, passionate responses of teachers and to identify the themes and findings that emerged.

One of the biggest challenges I faced was finding enough people to commit to this study. It was interesting for me to hear excuses from many of the same individuals who also voiced frustrations about the local problem. I did not understand their resistance to getting involved and to being the voices that could offer possible solutions to the problem. I am thankful to the participants who did a great job in providing helpful information. I plan to continue to build upon this study, by encouraging teachers to continue to dialogue and to share best practices and working strategies.

Another area of growth that resulted from my participation in this study is my knowledge and understanding of carefully planned and executed data collection and data analysis procedures. Qualitative data collection and data analysis were two aspects of research that were time consuming and required attention to detail. The time that I spent in the analysis allowed me to understand and appreciate how perspectives can contribute to findings that inform decisions.

This was not possible until I collected and analyzed the data for this project, which resulted in a project that is grounded in research and data.

I viewed the doctoral process as one huge challenge that provided me the opportunity to become a scholar-practitioner who has acquired the knowledge and skills to be able to identify a real-life, systematic problem. From my involvement with this study, I now understand that it is possible to find solutions to teaching and learning problems within my own district. Finally, my skills as a critical thinker have been enhanced, and I have gained the ability to be objective and nonbiased in my research; this was especially difficult for me in the beginning. I am empowered by my gained knowledge and confidence through this doctoral program to serve as a teacher leader and to possibly attain leadership positions beyond secondary education.

Project Development

This project progressed from teachers' perceived needs shared in face-to-face interviews and a review and analysis of data to a scholarly based project with future implications for professional training in the RTI: Tier I reading interventions with special focus on content area literacy skills. This project focused on the pertinent aspects of an effective PD design. I learned that PD opportunities must be of a particular level of quality, grounded in research, and sustained over time in order to improve the effectiveness of teaching. After scholarly research and participant feedback, the following project was developed: Professional Development Workshop. The project included the following elements:

- Purpose, goals learning outcomes, target audience;
- Outline components, timeline, activities, trainer notes, and module formats;
- Materials (PPT) implementation plan and evaluation plan;

- Professional literature; and
- Hour-by-hour detail of 3 days of training.

The elements are consistent with the interview data from the participants in the local setting and literature that addresses the design and development of teachers in particular and PD for effective RTI Tier I reading interventions (Hirsch, 2009; Reeves, 2010).

I have learned that conducting research is quite an undertaking as well as a rigorous process. Before I began the doctoral program, I was hesitant as my experience with research and scholarly writing was limited. Additionally, the degree programs I have completed were somewhat basic and not substantive enough to provide me for what I was about to encounter from a doctoral study. There were many layers of the research process that I had to work through; however, after the coursework was completed, the writing of the proposal began and then the actual doctoral project study provided me with the knowledge and techniques to be able to meet the challenge. I would be remiss if I failed to mention my doctoral committee members. The necessary feedback from my committee yielded much to reflect on, as well as ongoing revisions.

During my course work, I was encouraged to investigate the education problem that I sought to find an answer for. It was through the saturation of current literature in relation to my topic that drew my interest and caused me to contemplate the direction of my study. I learned through this undertaking about patience and perseverance as there were times it would have been easier to quit. I gained knowledge about the various types of data and the many usage of each method. After examining these methods of data collection, I was now ready to prepare for my proposal and finally my data collection and analysis for concluding my study. I never thought I

would learn so much about the process and practice. In fact, it felt like one huge class exercise of practice. However, I can truly say that I learned a great deal about the purpose of a doctoral study. The purpose of a doctoral study is being able to add to the body of knowledge whereby making a contribution to the education community in which I am a member. It is my hope that my doctoral project study will provide schools a thorough PD series that will help teachers to have a greater impact on the academic success of all students learning.

Overall, the development of professional training materials to assist teachers in their journey to become effective practitioners was a challenge as well as enjoyable. The challenge comes from the lack of experience of not being a classroom teacher, rather a special education teacher. As a special education teacher, I understand the need to provide content teachers with quality research-based techniques that would help meet their perceived needs. With my career path in mind, I am able to visualize and develop an action plan to help me to attain my professional goals. This action plan includes capitalizing on my doctoral degree in teacher leadership to develop teachers' professional capacity.

Leadership and Change

I learned a great deal about leadership and change in my personal life as well as my academic studies. When I began the doctoral program in 2007, my only child had just graduated high school and I had just completed my master's degree. I had not planned on my first grandchild in 2011 and another grandchild in 2013. In fact, my plans were to be completed with the program by 2011, but instead my daughter and grandchildren moved into my home. My empty nest was full again, but I still needed to complete my studies. Early on in my study, I received a new chair. I did not feel that change, because I had not yet begun my paper. My classes were going along rather smoothly, and then another change, a new committee member. I

received a new URR and more changes were asked of me, which included the change of my methodology from a quantitative to qualitative study. Life indeed is about change. We learn how to make decisions to respond to those changes. The fact that I am writing about it means that I survived.

Throughout this doctoral process, it has become clear to me that true leaders are those individuals who inspire others to push themselves to their greatest potential, so their lives and the lives of others will be heightened. Being a leader means challenging the ways things have always been done, so that new ways of thinking can be explored. Educational leaders believe student success is a goal and only actions that support that goal are pursued (Lunenburg, 2010). Leaders seem to be proactive and often step up to offer their expertise, rather than waiting for something to happen before being called into action.

Analysis of Self as Scholar

I began this doctoral study with the expectation of growing as a professional, but I had no idea of what would be required of me upon entering into this prestigious scholarly circle. I continued to be humbled by the experience and I realized early on that this journey would be no easy feat and it would require persistence, courage and time. I had to become a true student in every way, especially when it came to listening and following directions from my committee members in order to accomplish this professional chapter in my life.

My analysis of myself as a scholar stems from what I learned during this life-changing journey. Education is a challenging profession and it requires able to offer an honest critique of one's self. True scholars constantly investigate what has been successful and unsuccessful, regardless how difficult of revealing the truth may be (Lewis, 2011). As a doctoral student with 15 years of teaching experience, I believe that I have made significant learning gains through my

scholarship. There were times when I thought I could not continue this journey; I have been challenged by continuous revisions and by lost data. Although the journey seemed impossible, I kept pushing onward. I was inspired by a statement made by President Barack Obama as he struggled with the strong party division in Congress, "The future rewards those who press on. I do not have time to feel sorry for myself. I do not have time to complain. I'm going to press on" (Gormley, 2012, p. 243). By reminding myself of this quote each time I feel like giving up, I am recharged and rejuvenated.

I have learned that acquiring knowledge means nothing if the knowledge, if I do not apply or share that knowledge for the good of oneself and society. I have also learned that I can help others by listening to their perceived needs and using research and evidence that will guide me into creating solutions. Finally, as a scholar, I have learned that the impact of my work is greatest if it directly benefits others. I am a scholar and my desire is to address the public's concerns and offer possible solutions.

Analysis of Self as Practitioner

As a practitioner with 15 years of experience, I have had the opportunity to develop professionally and personally. Currently, I am a high school special education teacher for a suburban high school in the Southwest. In this role, I mentor and assist teachers on their instructional practices with at-risk students. As a practitioner, I have learned from my colleagues and discovered that knowledge carries little weight when it is not actually put into practice. As a practitioner, I have learned a great deal from my participants. I have learned that allowing individuals to voice their needs and concerns is critical and should be prevalent to make certain for a positive teaching and learning atmosphere. In order to become an effective teacher, I believe that teachers should value each other's thoughts, feelings, and ideas.

I have learned from the best: my committee members and mentors. They have taught me to be thorough and scholarly in my thinking and my writing. Throughout this journey, I am blessed with committee members who have pushed me as a scholar and as a professional. As a practitioner, I continue to search for ongoing opportunities to grow. Lewis (2011) explained that when you question yourself with tough reflective questions, your responses should result in positive statements that may serve as attainable goals that can be swiftly addressed. I have learned the significance in exercising the skills that you want others to possess. It is equally imperative to share your expertise with those around you. Additionally, I have learned that in education, it is not about the happiness of my colleagues; rather it is about the academic achievement of the students. For students in our high school classrooms, it is the teachers' responsibility to help them become positive contributors to society.

Finally, I have learned that I am great educator. I am a great educator because of

the high expectations that I hold for myself and that I promote in those around me. I have a lot to share and it is my intention to continue to grow as a practitioner and to partner with those that want to embark on the journey with me.

Analysis of Self as Project Developer

When I began this project, I really did not fully understand that it was going to be such an undertaking; however, it has been most rewarding. During my tenure in the education field, I have participated in tasks that pertained to teacher support, but I never dreamed of generating something that would offer support to teachers as comprehensive as the PD sessions for RTI training. I have stayed awake many nights stressing of over whether or not my paper was good enough for submission; however, it was all worth it and it all means so much more to me as I look at everything that went in to creating this the final product. I have strived to achieve a long-term goal as a developer, but I also had to learn to celebrate small victories. It was the small victories that helped me to remain encouraged to move forward to the end result.

The rationale for the PD project study is to improve the effectiveness of high school teachers in their implementation of RTI: Tier I reading interventions by changing instruction practices by providing teachers research-based training on best practice strategies. The goals are as follows: (a) teachers will learn how to use literacy activities in their lessons to encourage participation from students who struggle with reading comprehension and vocabulary skills; (b) teachers will learn how to use differentiated teaching instruction based on student's interest, learning preference, and presentation preference; (c) teachers will acquire instructions in scaffolding and learn how to provide scaffolding strategies to help student's ability to build on prior knowledge and internalize new information; (d) provide teachers with clear expectations of effective RTI training; and (e) demonstrate to content area teachers how to instruct students in

literacy by incorporating literacy strategies into their instruction. The ultimate goal of the project is to increase teacher effectiveness in the implementation of RTI: Tier I reading interventions. Though the goals of the project were the driving force behind its creation, as the project developer, I had to respect the uneasiness and intimidation I felt facing the challenge at hand. I needed to focus and create a project that would have great impact in the local setting. As Kotter (1995) said, "We live in a world where 'business as usual' is change" (p. 1). My being a creature of habit, I embraced the change; this was one of my greatest accomplishments.

Reflection on the Importance of the Work

As I reflect back on my work, I am reminded that this project allowed me to give voice to my participants, who are also my colleagues at this local school. I was able to witness firsthand the resistance and apprehension of teachers when I asked them to sign on to this study at XYZ high school. I have heard teachers' express frustration about having to learn new teaching practices, because it meant time away from lesson planning in order learn interventions and strategies, which they were not likely to implement in their classrooms. While hearing about these unfortunate situations, I wanted to do something to make a difference. This project was important because it helped me to gain an understanding of implementing RTI from various perspectives and to find solutions to improve teaching practices at XYZ high school.

I learned that being able to provide teachers with a voice permitted me to prepare a PD program that addressed their concerns and needs, while honoring their commitments and enthusiasm for improving their skills. I learned that many teachers do care about their own practices, and they want to acquire new knowledge and skills. Many of these teachers simply want to have the time to effectively implement new strategies in their classrooms and to help students experience academic success.

It is my belief that if this project is made part of XYZ high school's PD training for all content teachers, it could influence how teachers design their curriculum, their daily lessons, and their classroom assessments. It is also my hope that my work will serve as a tool for teachers to sharpen their skills as professionals to improve classroom practices with a goal to increase student learning and to build opportunities for students to achieve higher education and careers.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

Potential Social Change Implications

A potential social change that could arise from this study is a revised and improved format for designing quality ongoing PD for high school that has the propensity to impact teachers' knowledge in all core content areas. This format provides opportunities for teachers to increase the amount of continued collaboration regarding their instructional practices. The PD series could be used to assist novice teachers, to build PD hours, and to influence school improvement plans. This project provides ideas and strategies to increase quality instruction while meeting the required state content standards. The application of this project has the potential to positively impact teacher effectiveness and student achievement.

The project is aimed at improving the implementation and delivery of RTI: Tier I reading interventions in the general education classrooms across the district. Teachers are afforded many opportunities to experience new initiatives and programs. Additionally, effective ongoing PD is key in making sure that initiatives and programs form a foundation to permit social change to take place. The PD series will provide teachers with a plethora of information on RTI: Tier I reading interventions reinforced by resources that are readily available. Student achievement should improve as a result of the fidelity of implementation of RTI: Tier I reading interventions.

Improved student achievement may promote positive social change among current and future generations.

The PD program is designed to increase teachers' knowledge and skills, so they will incorporate RTI: Tier I reading intervention instruction as part of their daily teaching practices. The goal for this type of instruction is to help teachers create a variety of ways for students to learn (Imbeau & Tomlinson, 2012). The participants interviewed in this study indicated that differentiation increased student engagement, self-efficacy, and academic achievement. Similarly, Santangelo and Tomlinson (2009) explained that differentiated instruction forms a learning environment that meets the needs of individual students and improves student achievement. Therefore, improving teachers' knowledge and skills in differentiation and content literacy instruction would empower these teachers to close the achievement gap that exists for many of the students enrolled in this district.

Schools are successful when their students are successful. When teachers are engaged in effective PD, the positive effects spread to classrooms and schools (Hirsh & Killion, 2011). Closing the achievement gap is a goal for the district. Therefore, empowering teachers to meet the needs of the students may benefit the district as a whole, which is important to district stakeholders.

This project can be used as a presentation at the state and national level by submitting proposals to the National Reading Conference, Literacy for All Conference, the National Boards for Professional Teaching Standards conference, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development Conference or other similar conferences. Exposing teachers to effective reading intervention strategies could increase the achievement of students nationally.

Applications

This basic interpretative qualitative project study encompasses significant methodological and theoretical implications because the problem focused on RTI teachers' self-reported assessments of the best practices to be used during RTI reading intervention. Possible solutions to this problem materialized from current teaching practices and perceptions of the participants in this study, sustained by scholarly research. The methodology used in this project study permitted me to attain data from the participants by way of a survey, face-to-face interviews, and classroom observations. By providing participants with forms of data collection to reflect upon the research questions that guided this study, they were able to provide me with their perceptions. I determined that a basic interpretative qualitative study design was the appropriate choice in order to gain knowledge of the participants and what they viewed as vital information regarding teaching practices, and RTI: Tier I reading strategies to improve reading achievement among students who lack basic reading proficiency.

The theoretical foundation for this study is anchored in a constructivist approach to education. The theoretical framework for this basic interpretative qualitative project study was based on Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory. Dewey (1938) believed that education is a social process. However, Vygotsky (1978) helped me to understand that students not only learn from interaction with the physical environment, but also from interaction with others, specifically adults.

With the theoretical framework in mind, I was able to read through the transcripts repeatedly and understand how to analyze emerging data and determine the themes. Theoretical implications from this study indicated that results from this study could influence PD opportunities offered to teachers in the current district and beyond.

Directions for Future Research

This project demonstrates how a solution can stem from identifying a local problem and gathering data to determine the best way to solve a problem based on the perspectives of those at the forefront of the problem. Future research may be able to prove that a PD workshop series should serve as a model for PD training beyond the local setting. With further research and some adaptations, this project could be used in settings with similar demographics with similar identified PD needs.

Although this project study provided a deep and rich understanding of the perceptions that secondary teachers possess as they pertain to quality PD, further research is needed to understand how the PD program may influence teacher efficacy. Further qualitative research on teacher perceptions of the effectiveness of the PD project that was offered here, along with quantitative research to measure student achievement, would be warranted.

Conclusion

As I reflect on this project study, I reaffirm the benefits this project has to offer teachers. This study has the potential to benefit our greatest assets, the students. I have gained great deal of knowledge as a researcher to become an agent of change. Moreover, I have taken a closer look at the value of my project's effect on social change and what could be addressed in future research. This project study has had a positive influence on me as an educator. I have gained skills that will help me to affect change with great confidence for a lifetime of learning.

There is a direct correlation between quality PD and student achievement (Abou-Assali, 2014). PD makes transformational differences to student learning (Alton-Lee, 2011). When teachers attain knowledge and skills, students' academic achievement increases (Odden, 2011).

By providing teachers with the skills to meet the learning needs of their students, I hope to improve the performance of students.

It is my hope that XYZ high school can serve as a model for schools with at-risk students in general. I am a champion of change, and I will improve academic achievement for all students at the local level and beyond. Performing this project study has renewed my passion as a professional educator and as a teacher leader in my school and district. This process has been a journey of enlightenment, of frustration at times, and of satisfaction to know that the work I have done, with the assistance of others, could make a positive difference in the lives of many. My hope is that this project will be used to improve teacher efficacy and student achievement for this local school that was studied, the entire state, and beyond.

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Appendix A: The Project: Professional Development and Materials

Purpose

- The 3-day professional development plan was created to address a larger need to improve teachers' differentiated instruction. The professional development plan will addressed the findings of the study through research-based teaching strategies designed to help teachers understand how to differentiate teaching instruction through scaffolding to improve comprehension and vocabulary skills in order to academic needs of all learners. It is great hope that this training will bring about long-lasting change in teaching practices as well as student achievement.

Goals

- Provide teachers with clear expectations of effective RTI training;
- Teachers will learn how to use literacy activities in their lessons to encourage participation from students who struggle with reading comprehension and vocabulary skills;
- Teachers will learn how to use differentiated teaching instruction based on students' interest, learning preference, and presentation preference;
- Teachers will acquire instructions in scaffolding and learn how to provide scaffolding strategies to help student's ability to build on prior knowledge and internalize new information; and
- Demonstrate to content area teachers how to instruct students in literacy by incorporating literacy strategies into their instruction.

Learning Outcomes

- Improve understanding of the implication of RTI: Tier I Reading Interventions to teaching and learning.
- Improve differentiated teaching instruction through scaffolding to improve students' reading comprehension and vocabulary skills.
- Improve student reading proficiency, and overall academic achievement.
- Improve understanding of how literacy skills are integrated into content as a whole and teachers' responsibility for addressing these skills in their teaching practice.
- Improve capabilities of identifying appropriate differentiated teaching instruction based on student's interest, learning preference, and presentation preference;

Target Audience

- English language arts and other content area teachers at XYZ High

Timetable for Implementation

- The plan includes three trainibg modules, each 6 hours in length, to support the equivalent of at least 3 days of professional development training. One module is used for each six-hour training sessions. The modules are designed to be implemented in sequence.

Session	Module #	Date	Hours of Training
1	Getting Started with Response to Intervention	Pre-Opening Teacher In-Service	6
2	Differentiated Instruction and Scaffolding	Pre-Opening Teacher In-Service	6
3	Content Area Literacy	Pre-Opening Teacher In-Service	6
			Total - 18 Hours

Instructions for Use of Professional Development Materials

All sessions will serve as a separate workshop that consists of (a) an agenda for the timeline of each session, (b) a PowerPoint with instructor notes, and (c) handouts where applicable, for the participants.

Suggested Format for Workshops

1. Welcome participants
2. Start Begin the PowerPoint presentation by going over the purpose of the period of instruction, the goals of the workshop, and the agenda for the session. There will be scheduled breaks. Inform participants that they may step out at anytime that they need to do so. Additionally, tell participants that they may ask questions at anytime during the session.

3. Conduct opening activity provided in the PowerPoint. Use the presentation notes to guide the activity.
4. Follow the presenter notes to introduce RTI: Tier I reading intervention instuctions.

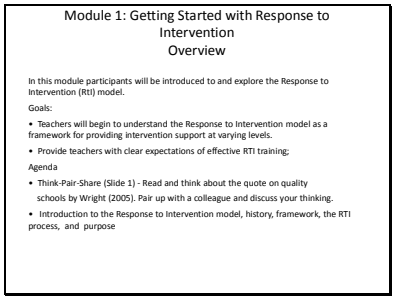
   Throughout the presentation, refer participants to the examples.

   After each strategy, give participants time to discuss how they could use they strategy in their classes and allow participants the opportunity to share ideas.
5. Conduct modeling activity with participants.
6. Allow participants to work with peers to develop their own RTI Tier I reading strategies. If time permits, allow the participants to share the developed RTI Tier I reading strategies with the group.
7. Ask participants if they have questions or comments about RTI: Tier I reading intervention instuctions before moving forward.
8. Conduct the evaluation provided in the handouts.

Slide 1

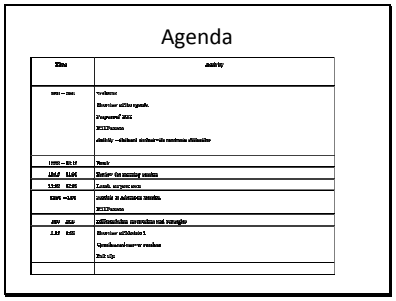
My name is Wanda Rector, and I am your trainer for this Professional Development Workshop.

Slide 2



Instructions for Activity: Ask participants to read the quote to themselves. Give 30 seconds wait time and then have participants turn to the person next to them to discuss if they agree or disagree with the statement and why. Have willing participants share their thinking.

Slide 3



Welcome the participants and briefly tell the participants of the day's agenda.

Slide 4

Module 1
Response to Intervention

- "The quality of a school as a learning community can be measured by how effectively it addresses the needs of struggling students."
  --Wright (2005)

Do you agree or disagree? Why?

Source: Wright, J. (2005, Summer). Five interventions that work. NAESP Leadership Compass, 2(4) pp.1,6.

4

Say: Let's read the quote, and discuss whether you agree or disagree with this statement? Why?

Slide 5

History of RTI

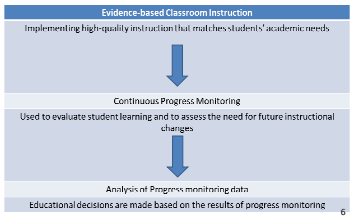
- 1970 – Stanley Deno proposed using students' response to academic interventions as the way to identify early learning difficulties (Buffum, Mattos, & Weber, 2009).
- 1990 – Individual states began using RTI
- 2004 – Nationwide implementation of RTI is the way to identify students with a specific learning disability (Haager, Kinger, & Vaughn, 2007).
- 2010 – RTI is used by school districts across the United States (Thomas & Zirkel, 2010)

5

Engaged the participants by asking if there is anyone from other states, and districts familiar with RTI and its process. Wait for responses, and allow for discussion.
Say: RTI focuses on all students and addresses the needs of students who are at risk or academically struggle.

Slide 6

RTI Framework



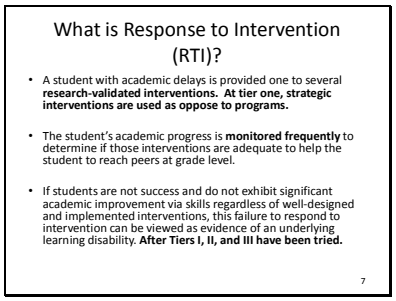
6

Say: Implementing high-quality academic instruction and interventions can have a higher chance of success when grounded in sound evidence-based classroom instruction.

Say: Training teachers to gather data to assess students' skills can be assessed via continuous progress-monitoring data.

Say: After the school staff uses progress-monitoring data, evaluation, and assessment, then decision rules to determine the interventions' effectiveness and necessary modifications.

Slide 7

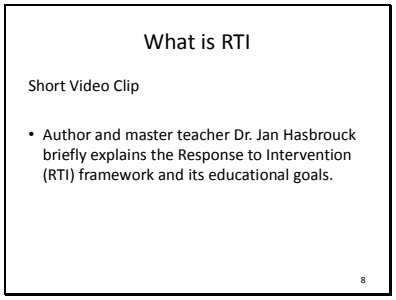


Say: Read the bullet points, and focus on the items in bold print.
Discussions points:

- Research-validated – all interventions used must be validated by research
- Strategic interventions – interventions based on research-based best practices like differentiated instruction
- Monitored frequently – If the student is not making sufficient growth, the intervention may need to be changed.
- After Tiers I, II, and III interventions have been implemented over a period of time without success, students may be be referred for special education testing.

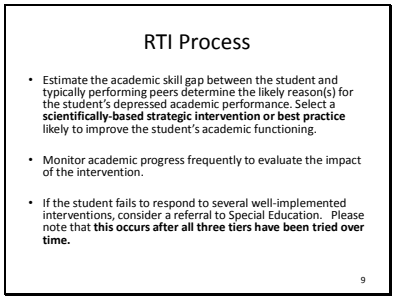
Say: Please note that Response to intervention is not in any way, a means to identify students for special education.

Slide 8



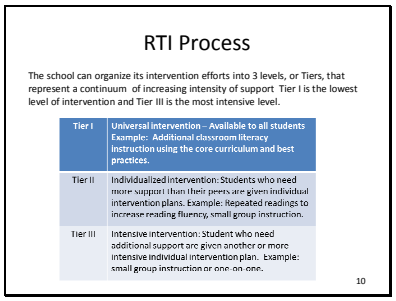
Say: Let's take a list to a short video on What is RTI? By Dr. Jan
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m9oLt2ISMMo

Slide 9



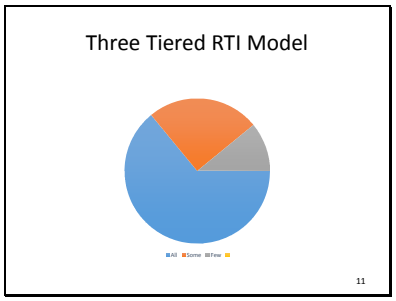
Say: Read the steps taken in the RTI process. Focus on print in bold.
Discussion Points:
Scientifically-based or best practice – all interventions used must be validated by research that shows use of the intervention will promote increased reading achievement in reading comprehension and vocabulary areas of reading. Interventions should be based on research-based practice such as literacy instruction and differentiated instruction.
After Tier I, II, and III – Only after tiers I, II, and III interventions have been implemented for the proper amount of time without significant improvement in academic performance, should a student be referred for special education testing.

Slide 10



Explain the distinction between Tiers I, II, and III, placing emphasis on Tier I. The work completed in this professional development project concentrates on Tier I.

Slide 11

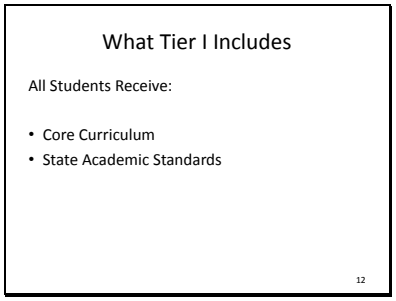


Say: The pie chart represents the disbursement of services in three-tiered model.

Discussion points:
All students receive Tier I reading interventions because it is best practice instruction of the core curriculum. Tier I interventions occur in the regular education classroom by the general education teacher. The section that represents the fewest are student who need intensive needs.

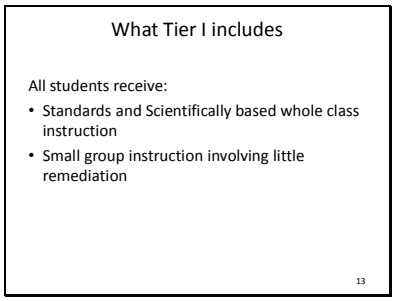
Say: Does your classroom resemble this model?

Slide 12



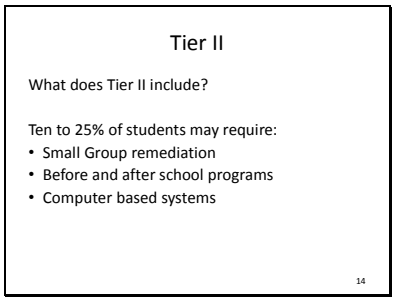
Explain that Tier Includes the core curriculum, and is equated to the state grade level standards. Again, all students receive instructions in the core curriculum.

Slide 13



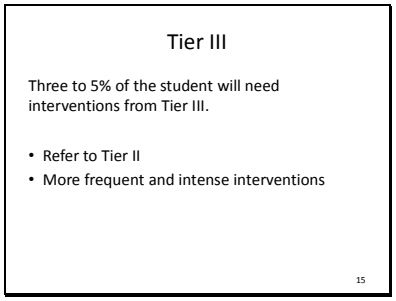
Allow 5 minutes to explain that Tier I includes the core curriculum, which is comparable to state grade level standards. The core curriculum instruction is provided to all students.

Slide 14



Provide participants with on overview of Tier II. Explain how Tier II interventions can be provided, as well as who should receive Tier II interventions. Also remind participants that the focus remains on Tier I.

Slide 15



Provide participants with an overview of Tier II. If Tier II is not working for the student, proceed to Tier III. Then explain the intense interventions of Tier III and how it may be used on readers receiving these interventions.

Slide 16

RTI Model

What is required under an RTI Model in schools?

- A structured format for problem-solving.
- Knowledge of a range of research-based interventions that address typical reasons for academic failure.
- The ability to use diverse methods of progress monitoring assessment in academic areas.

Adapted from Jimwrightonline.com

Say: In order to put the an RTI Model into practice, schools should carry out the following 5 steps:
1. Select an evidence-based intervention strategies;
2. Train teachers to gather frequent progress monitoring data;

- Develop building-level intervention programs to address common academic concern (that is, research based tools to enhance

Reading skills.

- Establish a building intervention team (typically made up of teachers, and support staff).
- Align current intervention and assessment efforts with 3-tier model

Slide 17

RTI Activity

Jackson is a 14 year old 9th grade student. He is struggling in reading and has had difficulty in this area since elementary. He is performing below benchmark and below his peers according to classroom performance curriculum-based assessment, and standardized measures. His Reading teacher observed that his word decoding is labored. When he reads aloud, he often guesses (incorrectly) at words based only on the first letter. Student is cooperative and wording working. Jackson was placed in a small group for a 90-minute reading block with others demonstrating difficulty. Jackson continues to study despite of this strategy.

17

Directions for activity: Have the participants break up into groups of 4. Participants will review this fictional student's information and use the RTI process for the decision-making determination for this student. Each group will provide a response

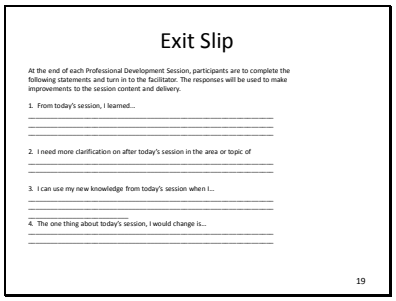
Slide 18

Let's Review Module 1

18

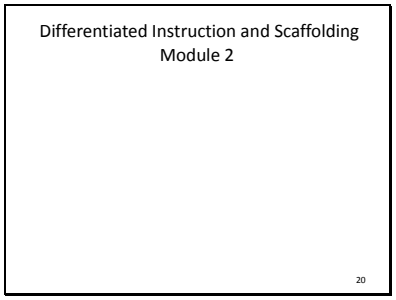
Run the slideshow of module 1. Quiz participants over what was covered in the module.

Slide 19



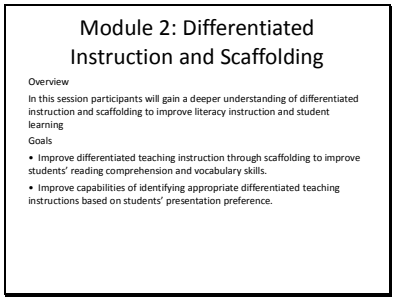
Wrap it up. Ask participants to complete the exit slips and return to the facilitator before they leave the workshop for module 1.

Slide 20



Say: Welcome to day 2, module 2, Differentiated Instruction

Slide 21

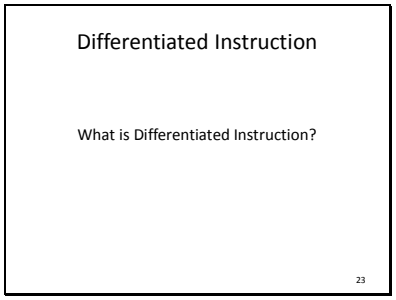


An overview of Module 2: Differentiated Instruction and Scaffolding, and along with goals of this session.

Slide 22

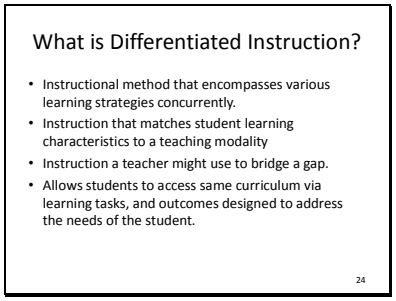
Direct participant's attention to today's agenda.

Slide 23



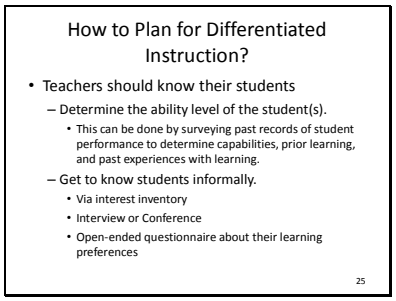
Ask for volunteers to provide their definition of differentiated instruction.

Slide 24



Discuss with differentiation is, and find out what students know about it
Say: Differentiation is the modification of instruction to meet the individual needs of the student
Say: It is an approach to instruction that incorporates a collection of strategies

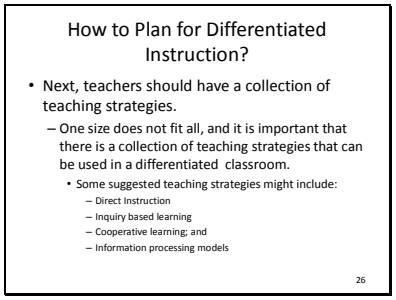
Slide 25



Say: Differentiating instruction requires a thoughtful process by the teacher, as the classroom may be comprised of students at various grade levels ranging from below grade level, on grade level, and above grade level.

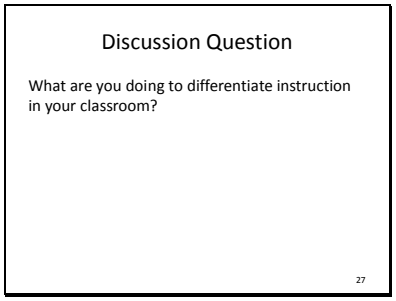
Say: As Teachers get to know their students, then Content (what is taught), Process (how it is taught), and Product (how learning is assessed), may be achieved.

Slide 26



Break students into groups, and assign the above suggested teaching strategies to each group. Students my use butcher paper to demonstrate and present to the entire class. Allow 15 minutes for this activity.

Slide 27



Ask participants to turn to a partner and discuss for 2 minutes, then ask for volunteers to share

Slide 28

How to Implement Differentiated Instruction

When implementing Differentiated Instruction:

- Teachers will deliver standard curriculum through diverse ways to reach all learners.
- Students' academic needs are pre-assessed to determine a starting point and make necessary modifications to help students move toward academic success.

28

This statement along with the info on the next few slides comes from http://www.readingrockets.org/article/263 by Carol Tomlinson. The link to the article is on the resource page if you would rather go directly to the link and read it from there.

Slide 29

Differentiated Instruction

- Differentiated Instruction is implemented via Content, Process, Student Products, Learning Environment.
  - Content – The modification of material, order of presentation, and quantity of student learning.
  - Process – Involves the methods by which learners are able to access designated material.
  - Student Products – Students are permitted to change the way they can demonstrate what they have learned.
  - Learning Environment – How the classroom works.

29

Say: The strategy to a differentiated classroom is that every student is routinely offered choices and that students are matched with tasks correspond to their individual learner profiles.
Then, explain the following:

- Content: Alternatives for taking in information
- Process: Alternatives for making sense of the ideas
- Student Products: Many alternatives for expressing what they know
- Learning environment: Should model how a differentiated classroom functions and feels.

Slide 30

Differentiated Content

- Differentiating Content examples:
  - Use reading material at various reading levels.
  - Placing text materials on tape
  - Partner reading
  - Reteach concept(s) to a small group of struggling students.

30

Open up discussion and see what ideas/suggestions participants can generate

Slide 31

Differentiating Process

- Examples of Differentiating the Process or activities including the following:
  - Use tiered activities that all learners work at the same level of major understanding and skills, but at different levels of support, and challenge.
  - Offer classroom environment that motivate students to seek topics of interest to them.
  - Develop assignments that address the needs of the students
  - Offer supports to students who needs it
  - Provide extra time to those who requires more time

31

Open up discussion and see what ideas/suggestions participants can generate

Slide 32

Differentiating Products

- Differentiating products include the following:
  - Use rubrics that match students' diverse skills levels;
  - Allow students to work independently or in a small group on their products; and/or
  - Encourage students to create their own product assignments providing the assignment encompasses the required guidelines.

32

Open up discussion and see what ideas/suggestions participants can generate

Slide 33

Differentiated Learning Environment

- Examples of differentiating learning environment include the following:
  - Provide places within the classroom that are less distracting and promotes collaboration;
  - Provide materials that are diverse in cultures;
  - Provide clear and concise guidelines for independent work that corresponds to the students' individual needs.

33

Open up discussion and see what ideas/suggestions participants can generate

Slide 34

Differentiated Instruction and Assessment

- Assessment drives instruction
  - Assessment data helps teachers to plan the next step for learners as well the entire class in general.
- Assessment can run consistently from the start to end of a new concept and or unit
- Teachers evaluate student readiness, interest and learning profile.

34

Say: Assessment and instruction are inseparable. Providing students with assessment information can help students promote their academic growth.

Slide 35

Differentiated Classroom Structures for Literacy Instruction

- Differentiation is more than having different students do different things.
  - Differentiated instruction is based upon:
    - The needs of the student
    - Flexibility in being able to adapt to the changing needs of students
  - Think about the following examples:
    - Different experiences for students rather than differentiated experiences

35

Say: The next four slides are for literacy instruction that be differentiated.
As you read through the examples, invite the participants to how they can add to the examples, but do this in pairs. Refer students to Diane Leipzig's article at: http://www.readingrockets.org/article/264

Slide 36

Differentiated Literacy Instruction

Differentiated Whole Class Structure

- When Jan writes a warm up for her 9th grade class, she builds something for each of her vocabulary terms. One day she wrote a term from a new unit and assigned groups to figure out the prefix, root word, and suffix to come up with a meaning of a term without looking at a dictionary.

36

Discuss what is meant by whole class structures and when and why we provide instruction using this structure before having students come up with more examples of different instruction and differentiated instruction using whole class instruction.

Slide 37

Differentiated Classroom Structures for Literacy Instructions

Differentiated Small Groups

- At the start of the school year, Mary took three running records on each of her 9th graders. Based upon their instructional levels, she created four reading groups. Every three weeks, she took an additional running record on each students and changed her records to reflect students' new instructional levels. Over the year, she had from three to six groups depending on these results.

37

Discuss with the participants what is meant by small group structures and when and why we provide instruction using this structure prior to having students come up with more examples of different instruction and differentiated instruction using the small group structure.

Slide 38

Differentiated Classroom Structures for Literacy Instruction

Differentiated Workshops

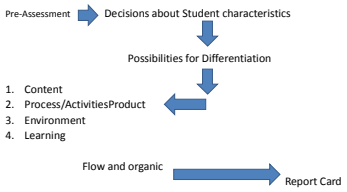
- Diana teaches her 9th grade class a writing lesson about dialogue. She walks around the room as students write, and jots down the names of students who are experimenting with dialogue in their writing, noting their use of quotation marks. During independent writing time, she pulls the group of students who were not punctuating their dialogue and teaches a lesson on quotation marks. Then she pulls the group of students who were using quotation marks correctly and introduces the concept of indenting for new speakers.

38

Discuss what workshop structure means and when and why we provide instruction using this structure prior to having students come up with more examples of different instruction and differentiated instruction using the workshop structure.

Slide 39

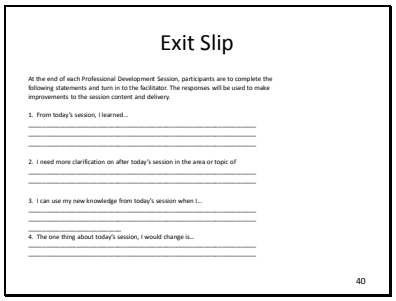
Differentiating Instruction and What it is All About



39

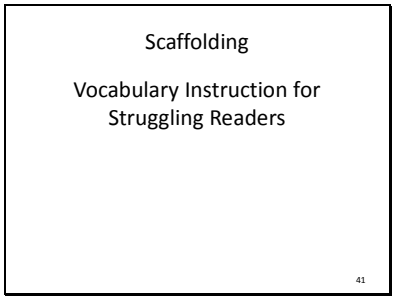
Say: When do you assess your students? Wait for feedback.
Say: As I mentioned on prior slides, assessment and instruction are inseparable. Further, the teacher and students may benefit from assessment. Pre-assessment is key as well as it informs the teacher as to what is needed to help the student succeed.

Slide 40



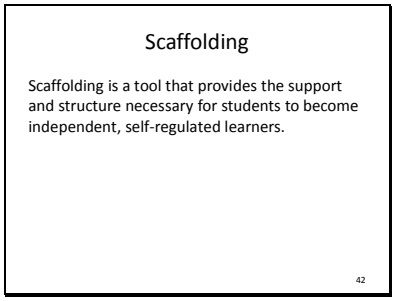
Say: This is your ticket out of today's sessions. Please complete this form before you leave.

Slide 41



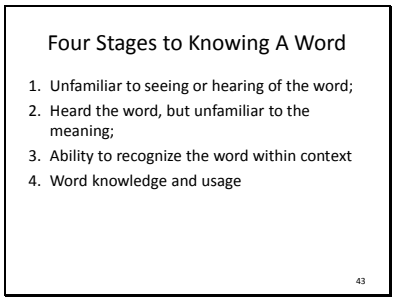
Say: Let's move forward to learning about Scaffolding and Vocabulary Instruction for Struggling Readers.

Slide 42



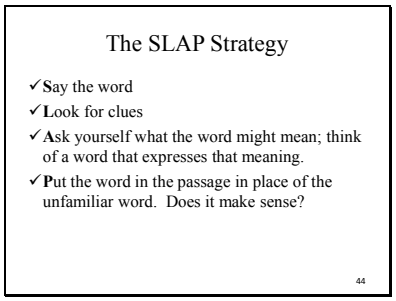
Say: Scaffolding is a way to guide and help students learn simultaneously through modeling that uses prompting and think-out-louds, use of the internet, guiding students with a discussion using leading questions, and through group work by pairing advanced learners with developing learners.

Slide 43



Read and discuss. Remind participants to focus their instruction on words in stages 2 and 3 to assist students to progress into stage 4 word knowledge and its usage.

Slide 44

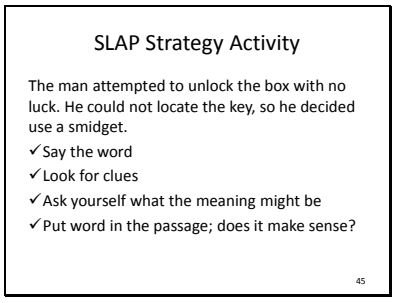


Say: This slide provides educators with one strategy that students can use to determine meanings of words in a text. Say: This slide provides educators with one strategy that students can use to determine meanings of words in a text. It is important to model this strategy several times for students to see prior to permitting the students to perform this activity independently.

Listen, as I read the following short passage to help learners discover the meaning of words within a text.

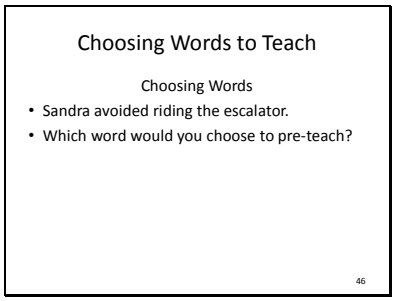
Read: The professor was a favorite among the students at the university. His **sagacity** was helpful to them as they pursued their degrees. The professor was known to use his insight, common sense, and experience to help students pursue their education. Students are provided with the following words: silliness; thoughtlessness; wisdom; and negligence. Now, they will replace **sagacity** with each word to determine the word by reading text with the word replaced to determine the word meaning of **sagacity.**

Slide 45



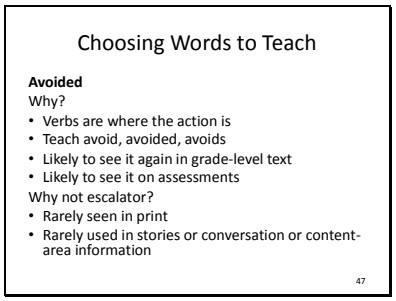
Have participants use this SLAP strategy with the provided sentence. Discuss with participants the importance of modeling this strategy multiple times for students to see before having students do the task independently

Slide 46



Ask participants what word in the sentence is explicitly taught by most teachers? Say: How many of you selected "escalator"? The academic word that needs explicit instruction is "avoided".

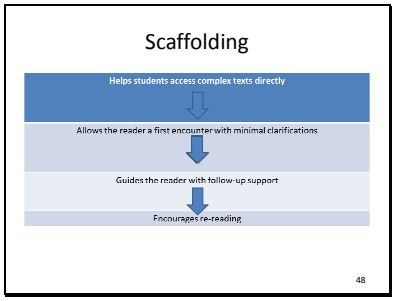
Slide 47



Say: High-utility academic vocabulary are found in many content texts, and cross-curricular terms in Tier 2. Some examples of high utility words are *expand, explain, justify, maintain, predict*, and *summarize*. However, words such as *justify* and *predict* may frequently appear in English, Science, and Social Studies texts. Understanding these terms may greatly increases comprehension of academic texts. This may be beneficial to students who take the state assessment in core subject areas.

Ask the group of participants to identify more words/terms that should be taught.

Slide 48



Say: In this slide, you can see how Scaffolding is used as a type of assistance provided by a teacher or peer(s) to support learning. Does this happen in your classroom?

Slide 49

Improving Vocabulary Learning and Teaching

This section will cover the effectives of improving the effectiveness of vocabulary instruction and learning at the secondary level.

Slide 50

Building Vocabulary Skills

Learners can improve vocabulary skills by:

- Attaining different components of vocabulary knowledge
- Learning and using an array of vocabulary building skills

Adapted from English Language Education Section Curriculum Development Institute Education Bureau (2013)

Say: As content area classes become more challenge and terms become more complex, student can learn to strengthen their vocabulary skills by acquire more vocabulary knowledge and skills.

Slide 51

Vocabulary Learning and Reading

Students who are successful readers have:

Vocabulary Knowledge

Background Knowledge

Metalinguistic Skills (the ability to reflect and manipulate language)

Adapted from English Language Education Section Curriculum Development Institute Education Bureau (2013)

Say: If students are being successful because they have acquired these skills, than how can you incorporate a cycle that will build the struggling readers' vocabulary and improve reading?

Slide 52

The Cycle of Reading and Vocabulary

The following represents the cycle of reading and vocabulary:

- At the vocabulary cycle – Introduce word knowledge, and teach individual
- At the Reading Comprehension cycle – Build the students background knowledge, and metalinguistic skills
- Reading – Provide more reading time; motivate higher level reading, and match students with text

Adapted from English Language Education Section Curriculum Development Institute Education Bureau (2013)

Say: It is imperative for students to have support at every cycle of vocabulary and reading.

Slide 53

Focus on Target Vocabulary

When focusing on targeted vocabulary:

- Target the key vocabulary that matches their language needs
- Study the target vocabulary in greater depth

Adapted from English Language Education Section Curriculum Development Institute Education Bureau (2013)

Say: Teachers can improve students' vocabulary and reading by focusing on targeted vocabulary to improve vocabulary, background knowledge, and metalinguistic skills through learning activities

Slide 54

Pedagogies for Learning Target Vocabulary

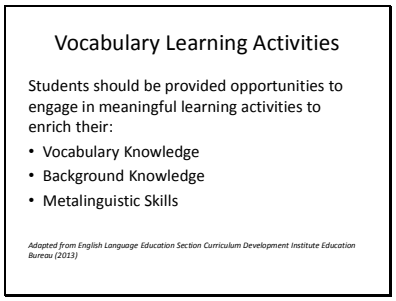
Pedagogies for learning target vocabulary should include the following:

- Provide multiple exposure to target words in text, vocabulary-focused activities and opportunities to practice using vocabulary
- Promote elaboration of the form-meaning through instructional intervention
- Guide student development of building vocabulary skills

Adapted from English Language Education Section Curriculum Development Institute Education Bureau (2013)

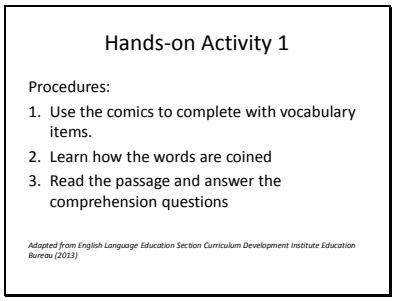
In providing instruction for teaching students to learning target behavior, they must acquire skills and knowledge to approach specific and unfamiliar vocabulary, and have opportunities to practice these skills.

Slide 55



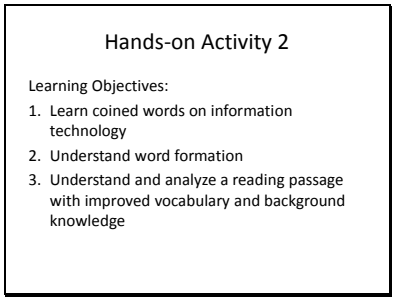
Say: Vocabulary knowledge maybe enhanced by providing students with definitional and contextual information about a word.
Background knowledge may be taught in conjunction with concepts and content to provide enrichment to students' prior knowledge. Metalinguistic skills may acquire when vocabulary building and reading skills are taught in order to improve students' reading comprehension.

Slide 56



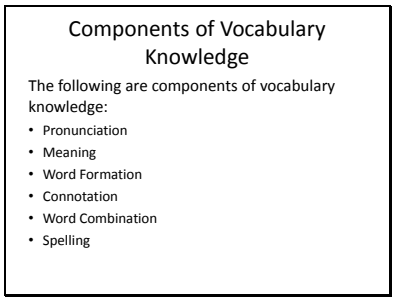
Say: This a good opportunity to some practice vocabulary skill building, and motivating students to read.

Slide 57



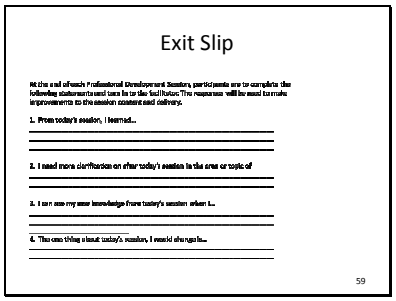
Say: By incorporating Activity 1 and 2, learning activities, students will be able to focus on the target vocabulary, learn more about the topic by completing the comics with target vocabulary. Students will also develop vocabulary building skills when they learn how new words in the area of information technology are coined, Finally, students can apply vocabulary and background knowledge as well as metalinguistic skills when they are able to read the passage and answer the comprehension questions.

Slide 58



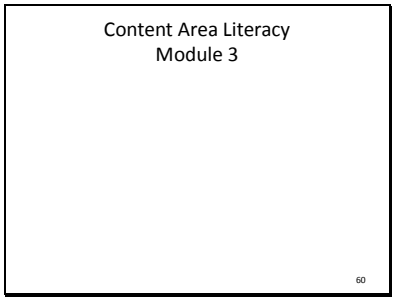
Say: Let's take a look sat some examples:

Slide 59



Say: This is your ticket to exit this session. Please complete before exiting.

Slide 60



Welcome to Module 3, Content Area Literacy.

Slide 61

Agenda

Time	Activity
0:00 – 0:30	Welcome Overview of Module 3: Content Area Literacy Instruction
9:30 – 10:45	
10:45 – 11:00	Restroom and snack break
11:00 – 11:30	
11:30 – 12:30	Lunch on your own
12:30 – 1:00	
1:00 – 2:00	
2:15 – 3:00	Let's Review Exit Slip

Direct the student's attention to the agenda

Slide 62

Direction Instruction

- How to provide direct instruction video

62

Show video on how to provide direct instruction
https://youtu.be/OJJkkUPC_yM
Engage participants in a discussion

Slide 63

Content Area Literacy

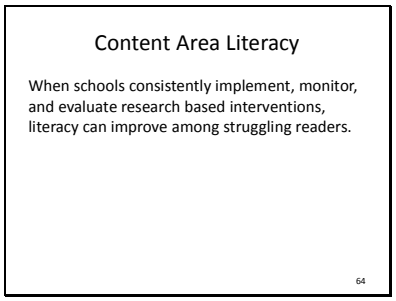
What Content Area Reading Involves

- Reading in content areas, such as English, Science, History, and Social Studies, implies that students can read and understand expository texts.

63

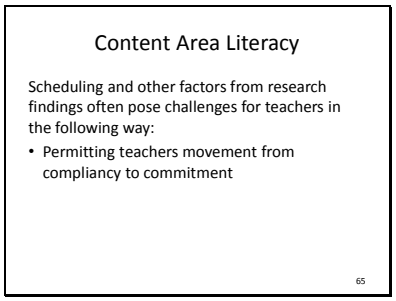
Say: Is there anyone here that believes that literacy instruction should only be done by the English teachers? Why? Discuss.

Slide 64



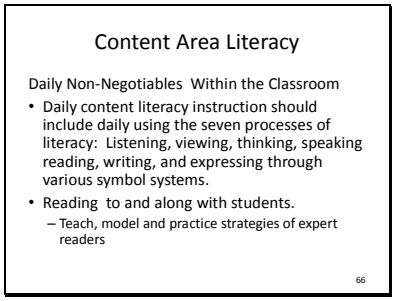
Say: What research based interventions has your school implement. Was it successful? If not, why? Turn to your neighbor and discuss. Allow 3 minutes.

Slide 65



Say: Many teachers expect students to have basic reading skills upon entering high school. With district mandates as it pertains to curriculum and student scheduling often leaves little time during class time for teachers to stop and teach students how to read. So, what are daily non-negotiables in order to foster content area literacy concerns?

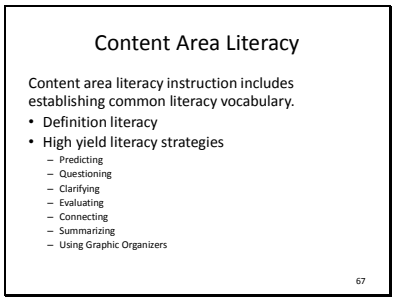
Slide 66



Give brief explanation of each non-negotiable. These are expectations that all faculty will agree to implement. These expectations provide the consistency needed to improve reading, writing and content learning to measure improvement.

Say: A classroom rich in literacy opportunities exposes students to the seven processes of literacy for many daily purposes across the content areas. Remember, reading to and with students provides students with access to standards-based curricula if they are reading below grade level

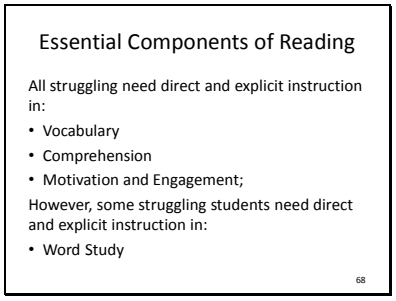
Slide 67



Say: According to the National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL) (2003), "Literacy is the ability to use printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential". If you will notice the root word listed in the literacy strategies are some of the same high frequency words necessary in choosing to teach Tier 2 terms such as *predict, question, clarify, evaluate, and summarize.*

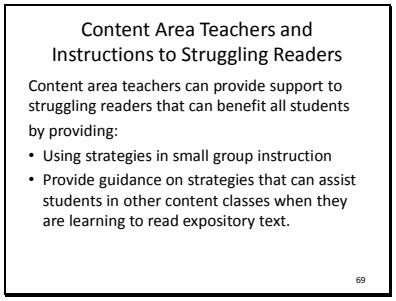
Say: Graphic organizers are often included in textbook supplemental guides; however, teachers may choose the type of graphic organizers, that works best with the text and information.

Slide 68



Explain and discuss the essential components of reading.
Say: How do you promote vocabulary building in your classroom in order to promote reading

Slide 69



Say: According to Chauvin and Theodore (2015), "Content-area literacy might use strategies such as monitoring comprehension, pre-reading, setting goals and a purpose for reading, activating prior knowledge, asking and generating questions, making predictions, re-reading, summarizing, and making inferences. In a science class, an example of a content-area literacy strategy would be a student using a KWL chart, which is a reading tool that asks "what I know," "what I want to know," and "what I learned" (p. 1). All students can benefit by using this type chart to identify what he or she already knows, pose questions for reading, and note what he or she has already learned during reading.

Slide 70

Content Area Literacy and Vocabulary

What is vocabulary instruction?

- The teaching of specific word meanings and strategies to obtain word meanings independently,
- Word consciousness, the extensive knowledge of and interest of words.

70

Say: Can anyone add to this definition of vocabulary instruction?

Slide 71

Content Area Literacy – Vocabulary Instruction

Why is effective content area literacy in vocabulary instruction important for struggling students?

- Older students encounter increasingly difficult and unfamiliar vocabulary in text, especially content area texts becomes more challenging.
- Students who do not know the meaning of the words they read, do not comprehend the text

71

Say: Vocabulary instruction is an essential element of English language arts classes, as well as other content-area subjects such as mathematics, science and social studies. Vocabulary instruction allow teachers to help students learn meanings of new and challenging words which can strengthen the students' independent skills of constructing the meaning of text.

Slide 72

Content Area Literacy – Explicit Instruction

Content area teachers provide direct instruction on specific words and strategies. Direct instruction of specific words is:

- Instruction on the meaning of specifically selection of words
- Teacher modeling, guided practice, and instructional feedback
- Prioritizing words into three categories: Important, Difficult and Useful words

Teachers should:

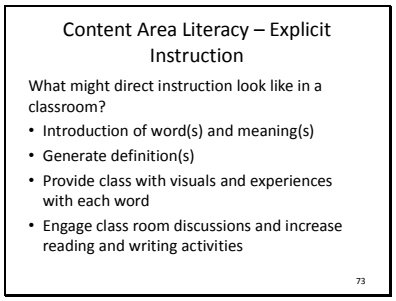
- Allocate a portion of time during class time to provide instruction on specific words and provide repeated exposure to new words in many contexts.

72

Say: Direct instruction on specific words includes: reviewing new or unknown words in a text prior to reading, extending instruction on specific words over time and across different contexts to help students learn and generalize the word to different setting and providing the student with ongoing exposure to the targeted words.

Say: Prioritizing words can be categorized into three sections, importance, difficulty, and useful. This may be beneficial in helping students identify words they are unfamiliar with as it would not be possible to teach to students every single word.

Slide 73

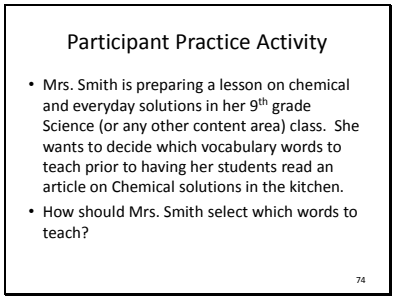


Say: Explicit content area instruction can provide a way for students to gain the most from effective instruction. Students need a rich body of word knowledge to succeed in basic skill areas, as well as specialized vocabulary to learn content material.

Says: Teachers should make decisions in planning vocabulary instruction when considering:

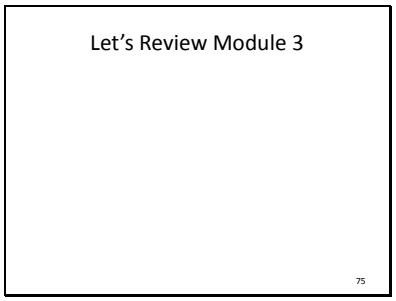
What words to teach and why
What level of instruction to provide
When to introduce words- before, during or after reading
Determine if the text offers a significant amount of words worthy of rich instruction
How to explain word meanings
What activities will engage students in grasping words
How to incorporate word learning opportunities in daily classroom routine

Slide 74



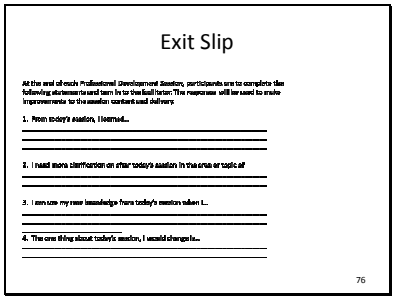
Break participants into groups of for this activity
When finished, ask the participants, what challenges did they experience in selecting words.

Slide 75



Say: Review with participants everything covered in module 2. Run power point slideshow and test memory of the participants over what was covered and learned.

Slide 76



Say: This is your ticket out, please complete the exit slip, and place them at the front desk before leaving the training room. Thank you.

Summative Evaluation

Professional Development Series Questionnaire RTI: Tier I Reading Interventions Professional Development Series Questionnaire

Training Location: _____Semester of Training: _____ Job Title: _____Years in present position? 1-3 _____ 3-5 _____ 5+ _____

Your feedback is sincerely appreciated. Thank you.

INSTRUCTIONS: Please circle the answer that best describes your experiences.

1. How would you describe the length of the session?

A. The session was too long.

B. The session was too short.

C. The session was the right length.

Comment:

2. How would you describe the amount of content covered?

A. The session had too much content.

B. The session did not have enough content.

C. The session has the right amount of content.

Comment:

3. How would you describe your opportunities to reflect on what you learned?

A. Time to reflect was a useful part of this session.

b. Time to reflect was a somewhat useful part of this session.

C. The time to reflect was not a useful part of this session.

Comment:

4. How effective was the modeling portion of the session?

A. The modeling was effective.

B. The modeling was somewhat effective.

C. The modeling was not effective.

Comment:

5. How useful was the time to collaborate?

A. The time to collaborate was very useful.

B. The time to collaborate was somewhat useful.

C. The time to collaborate was not useful.

Comment:

6. What additional comments or suggestions do you have about this workshop?

Appendix B: Permission to use RTI Study

Original E-mail

From : Deborah Wilson [XXX@saumag.edu]

Date : 09/02/2013 07:19 AM

To : Wanda Rector [XXX@waldenu.edu]

Subject : RE: Permission to use survey

Thank you for the request to use the RTI survey. You certainly have my permission to use it, tweak it, and use and tweak any other forms in my dissertation that may be useful.

Best,

Dr. Deborah Wilson
Interim Chair, Behavioral and Social Sciences
Associate Professor of Psychology
Southern Arkansas University
Magnolia, AR 71754

From: Wanda Rector [XXX@waldenu.edu]
Sent: Sunday, September 01, 2013 10:00 PM
To: Deborah Wilson; XXX@waldenu.edu
Subject: Permission to use survey

Hello Dr. Wilson,

I am a doctoral candidate at Walden University, and I just finished reading your wonderful dissertation, and I would like to ask permission to use your Response to Intervention Survey in my case study. Once I receive your response, I will be able
move forward to the URR.

I look forward to hearing from you soon!

Thanks!
Wanda Rector

Appendix C: RTI Survey for Grade 9 English Teachers

RTI Survey for Grade 9 English Teachers

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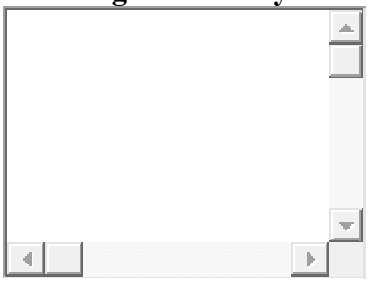
* Required

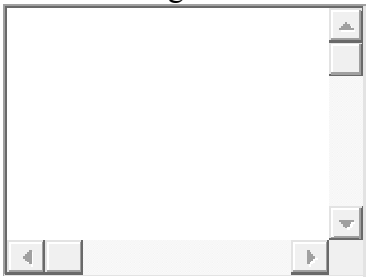
1. What factors do you think have contributed to the distraction from the implementation of RTI? *

2. What are the characteristics of the students who were not successful after receiving RTI for a year? *



3. Describe the training teachers receive regarding the implementation of RTI Tier I reading interventions. *

a. Do you believe the training is adequate? Why? Why not? b. What are your perceptions of the training?



4. What comprehension strategies help struggling readers become better readers? *

5. What critical thinking strategies would you use to develop students' critical thinking skills? *

6. Of the RTI strategies used in instruction, which ones were most successful in helping students gain reading proficiency? *

7. Which RTI Tier was most challenging to implement? Why? *

8. What are the strategies you used during RTI instruction? *

9. Why did some strategies work while others did not? *

10. How did you use differentiated learning in your instruction? *

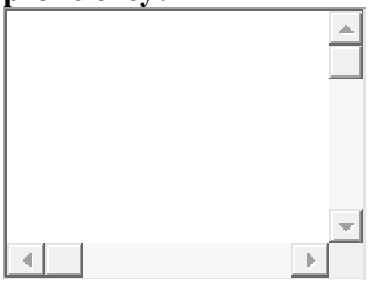
11. How does one on one instruction influence the students' success in learning to read? *

12. Describe how RTI assessments are used in your classroom? *

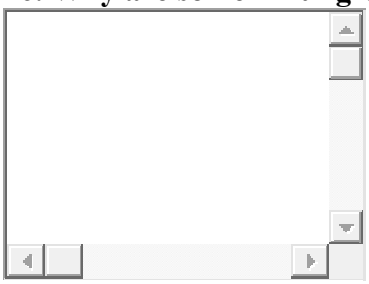
13. Which strategies used in the RTI program would you suggest content areas teachers use to help at-risk students who are struggling in reading? *

14. How would you suggest content area teachers incorporate the successful strategies into their instruction? *

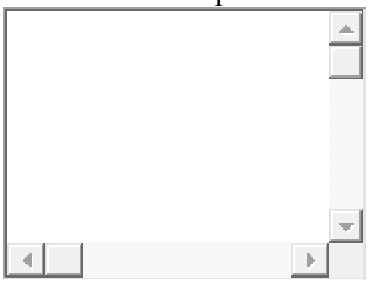
15. How do the emotional, social, and academic characteristics of students entering the ninth grade RTI program influence their success for achieving reading proficiency? *



16. Why are some ninth grade students in the RTI program successful? *



17. What solutions do you think will improve the RTI program in your classroom? *
a. What is the basis for choosing the solution(s)? b. What individuals should be responsible for developing and implementing the solution(s) and why? c.. What resources are needed to implement the solution?



Submit

Appendix D: Interview Protocol for Grade 9 English Teachers

Grade Taught _____

Date of Interview_____ Started: _____ Ended: _____

Attendance Area of School_____

Interviewed by_____

Interviewer: The information you provide in this interview will be used to help create a project that will support ninth grade English teachers in their implementation of RTI reading interventions in their classrooms. My interest is in learning from your beliefs, perceptions, experiences, and recommendations for potential solutions to the problem of ninth grade English teachers being asked to implement Response to Intervention reading interventions without training on the implementation of the interventions. The collected comments, experiences, and suggestions from the ninth grade English teachers interviewed will be summarized to identify components of the aforementioned project. All information provided will be kept confidential. Neither names nor identifying factors will be used in the final study.
The interview will take 25 minutes and follow-up interviews may be necessary to ensure the accuracy of the data.
First, I want to learn about what ninth grade English teachers perceive as the factors contributing to or distracting from the implementation of RTI in their school.

1. What factors do you think have contributed to the distraction from the implementation of RTI?

2. What are the characteristics of the students who were not successful after receiving RTI for a year?

Now, I want to learn about what ninth grade English teachers perceive as the strengths and weaknesses of the training they received on RTI in their school.

3. Describe the training teachers receive regarding the implementation of RT Tier I reading interventions.
   a. Do you believe the training is adequate? Why? Why not?
   b. What are your perceptions of the training?

Next, I want to learn about what ninth grade English teachers perceive as best practices regarding RTI.

4. What comprehension strategies help struggling readers become better readers?

5. What critical thinking strategies would you use to develop students' critical thinking skills?
6. Of the RTI strategies used in instruction, which ones were most successful in helping students gain reading proficiency?
7. Which RTI Tier was most challenging to implement? Why?
8. What are the strategies you used during RTI instruction?
9. Why did some strategies work while others did not?
10. How did you use differentiated learning in your instruction?
11. How does one on one instruction influence the students' success in learning to read?
12. Describe how RTI assessments are used in your classroom?
13. Which strategies used in the RTI program would you suggest content areas teachers use to help at-risk students who are struggling in reading?
14. How would you suggest content area teachers incorporate the successful strategies into their instruction?
15. How do the emotional, social, and academic characteristics of students entering the ninth grade RTI program influence their success for achieving reading proficiency?
16. Why are some ninth grade students in the RTI program successful?

Finally, I would like to learn about suggestions made for program improvement.

17. What solutions do you think will improve the RTI program in your classroom?
    a. What is the basis for choosing the solution(s)?
    b. What individuals should be responsible for developing and implementing the solution(s) and why?
    c. What resources are needed to implement the solution?

This concludes my questions. Thank you for your time. The answers you provided will be very helpful in helping me develop a product to support you and your colleagues in the implementation of RTI reading interventions. I will share the results of the project study with you and the other interviewees upon completion. Have a great day!

Appendix E: RTI Classroom Observation Response Form

Participant:_____ Subject/Grade:_____ Date/Time:_____

Observation Content	Observer Notes
TEACHING METHODS (uses relevant teaching methods, aids, materials, techniques, and technology; includes variety, balance, group involvement; uses examples that are clear, precise, and appropriate) Examples of items to observe: 1. Works with total groups, individuals, and small groups. 2. Monitors individuals and small groups. 3. Uses a variety of ongoing assessment tools such as checklists, surveys, and anecdotal records. 4. Applies assessment information to guide instruction. 5. Uses multiple teaching approaches 6. Varies instructional activities during class period 7. Provides time for students to actively process information. 8. Gives specific feedback to individuals and/or small groups	
PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT (number of students in attendance, room organization, distractions if any; list any observations of how physical aspects affected content delivery) Examples of items to observe: • Presents an inviting, relaxed environment for learning. • Provides comfortable desks and work areas. • Contains individual, designated personal spaces for extra books and other items. • Is designed for quick and easy groupings of tables and chairs. • Is arranged for teacher and student movement during work sessions. • Provides work areas for individual needs, including knowledge/ability levels. • Reflects current content or skills through student displays and artifacts.	

Overall impression of instructional delivery and use of RTI strategies:

Adapted from "Classroom Observation Form," Idaho State University (2013)