

2018

Teacher and Administrator Perceptions on the Fidelity of Implementing the Response to Intervention Framework

Denisha Brown
Walden University

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College of Education

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Denisha Brown

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Walden University
2018

Abstract

Teacher and Administrator Perceptions on the Fidelity of Implementing
the Response to Intervention Framework

by

Denisha Brown

MA, Cambridge College, 2011

BS, Clark Atlanta University, 2008

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Education

Walden University

February 2018

Abstract

There is a problem with fidelity of implementation (FOI) of the Response to Intervention (RTI) framework in an elementary school in the southeastern United States. Both teachers and administrators have observed inconsistent implementation of RTI and teachers' reported lack of motivation to implement RTI as designed. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to gather teacher and administrator perceptions of the FOI of RTI model using interviews, surveys, and review of archived documents. The implementation of science framework formed the conceptual foundation of this qualitative project study. The research question focused on the FOI of the RTI model as it related to effective interventions, implementation methods, enabling contexts, and intended outcomes. The purposeful sample included 9 participants using the selection criteria for educators who were employed as Kindergarten to 3rd grade elementary teachers or as administrative/support staff and actively participated in the process and procedures of the implementation of the RTI model at the target site. Data were coded and analyzed using inductive analyses. Findings included common themes related to the need for professional development (PD) on interventions, progress monitoring, expectations, differentiation, and the value of RTI. Based on the findings, a project was constructed to include collaborative learning within ongoing PD sessions and development of professional learning communities (PLCs) to refine implementation of RTI. The findings from this study may lead to positive social change by allowing educators to implement RTI with a greater fidelity to accommodate the needs of diverse learners.

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Dedication

This doctoral project study is dedicated to my parents, for their love and support, especially my mother for giving up her doctoral dream to raise my siblings and me. To my siblings, my nieces, nephews, friends, extended loved ones, students, and professional colleagues I charge you complete the highest education possible or follow your dreams, because you can achieve whatever you put your mind to. Your love and support has uplifted me and constantly encouraged me during this challenging journey to obtain a vision, a goal, and a dream that I could not have imagined in my wildest dream. When I reflect back over my life, I was a child who was a former introvert, but filled with an inquisitive mind, but with your support you have inspired me to let my light shine. I have achieved many milestones in my life and without a doubt each of you have made lasting impressions on my heart that have allowed me to make necessary noise for myself and others as change agent and leader within today's society. I thoughtfully dedicate this work to my loved ones who have shown everlasting and eternal love, from watching over me as my guardian angels, to whispering in my ear during late nights of writing, saying "Baby, you got this! Keep pushing you can finish this, it is just a test of your faith." My guardian angels, Fannie, Grady, Jesse, Big Mama Rebecca, Ralph, LaVerne, Treoen, and many other loved ones, I heard your cry for me to stay a course on this road. Each of you have truly instilled in me values that have clearly revealed that, "I can do all things through him who strengthens me."(Philippians 4:13) Without each of you I am nothing, with you I am everything. That is why I humbly present this life work as a symbol of my blood, sweat, and tears of agape love in your honor with forever appreciation and gratitude to you!

Acknowledgements

The highest praise is given to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for taking steps for me when my feet could not move and being the guiding pilot of this journey for me. I am blessed beyond measure knowing that I am your child as you continuously show me daily that you will never leave me or forsake me. Thank you, Father, for providing me another day to do your will and achieve what you have planned for my life. I thank my loving and supportive parents, Evarn and George, and my wings beneath my wings, my “Real Sisters” and “ATL Falcon Lover”, Deidre, DeVonya, DeAndra, and DeMario for your overwhelming love, faith in me, and encouraging words. Thank you to Jayce, McKenize, Charis, Vitalia, Olivia, Chandler, De’Lisa, Kia, Courtney, Kandis, Ben, Shay, Paula, my cousins, aunts, uncles, and extended loved ones for your laughter and cheers to persevere through this degree when I thought it was more than I could bear. My professional colleagues and accountability partners; thank you for inspiring me and being a confidant. Your prayers and support have definitely ensured this journey was successful. My doctoral committee has been patient, understanding, encouraging. Thank you to Dr. Michael Vinella, Dr. Cathryn White, and Dr. Karen Hunt for your mentorship and inspiring me to extend beyond normalcy and challenged me to be an astute researcher. A doctoral degree is a journey that takes more than one. I consider each of you as my mentors, my coaches, my support system, and my invaluable leaders who have ensured I fly above the chickens and mount up like an eagle. As I reflect on my gratitude in obtaining this goal, I am reminded of Isaiah 40:31, Psalm 23, Proverbs 3:6, and Mark 10:27. We did it! With deepest sincerity, I thank each of you for your endless commitment, selflessness, and support along this journey. I love you all!

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Section 1: The Problem

Introduction

The Response to Intervention (RTI) framework was mandated due to the reauthorization of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA, 2004) and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2002), which addressed general and special education needs of students (Castro-Villarreal, Rodriguez, & Moore, 2014; Fuchs, Fuchs, & Compton, 2012). One of the goals of IDEA (2004) and NCLB (2002) laws were to improve the process of labeling students who may have a disability. These laws aimed to create an efficient process for screening, intervening, and monitoring to determine a child's response to scientific, researched-based interventions and reduce the disproportionate rate of students who received special education (Castro-Villarreal et al., 2014; Mikutis, 2013; Swanson, Solis, Ciullo, & McKenna, 2012).

More recently, the Every Student Succeed Act (ESSA, 2015) replaced the NCLB (2002) as the nation's education law and commitment to equal opportunity for all students (National Education Association, 2015). The ESSA (2015) included provisions that all students will be provided with support to help identify, and began closing, achievement gaps by ensuring local educators, parents, and communities focus on students most in need, and in turn will allow students more time to learn and teachers more time to teach (National Education Association, 2015). As a result, the ESSA (2015) and the RTI model were adopted by school districts, and required school district leaders, staff, and personnel to focus on best practices for instruction to ensure every student

succeeds through a data-driven and prevention-based framework for enhancing learning outcomes (Harrington, Griffith, Gray, & Greenspan, 2016; Sanger, Brunken, Friedli, Ritzman, & Snow, 2012).

Although schools nationwide have implemented the RTI model, which addresses using research-based instructional strategies and evidence-based interventions to meet struggling learners' needs, schools' implementation processes have varied across the nation (Fisher & Frey, 2012; Little, 2012; Moore, 2014). There are only 28 states that have officially mandated RTI to be used as a method to decide if students have a specific learning disability (Björn, Aro, Koponen, Fuchs, & Fuchs, 2015). Georgia is a state that mandated RTI for all schools; however, Georgia did not provide consistent guidance to implement RTI models process and procedures (GADOE, 2012).

Georgia has developed the RTI framework as a four-tiered prevention model, which includes Tier 1 as standard-based instruction, Tier 2 as needs-based learning, Tier 3 as Student Support Team (SST)-driven learning, and Tier 4 addresses individually designed learning for a student referred for consideration of placement in an suitable educational setting such as special education, gifted, speech, or English to speakers of other languages shown in Figure 1 (GADOE, 2012). The purpose of Georgia having a four-tiered RTI model is that Georgia schools used the four-tiered model as the process and procedure for identifying students with special academic or behavior concerns who may qualify for an Individual Educational Program, unlike other states that may have a separate

model for special academic or behavior programs for students who may qualify for an Individual Educational Program (GADOE, 2012).

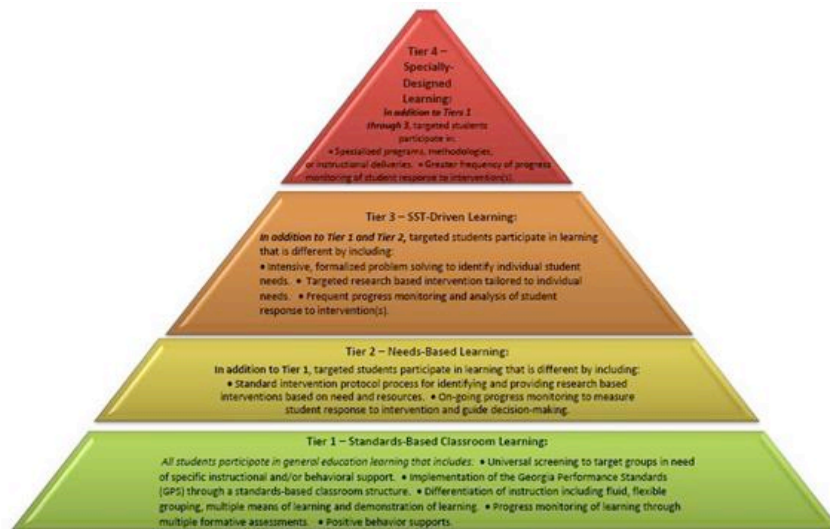


Figure 1. Georgia four tiered RTI model.

Adapted from: Georgia Department of Education (2011). *Response to Intervention: Georgia Student Achievement Pyramid of Interventions*, September 19, 2011, retrieved from <http://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment>.

The Georgia Department of Education (GADOE) allowed school districts to develop their own practices and implementation of the RTI model, but all Georgia school districts were required to incorporate a Student Support Team (SST) within each local school (GADOE, 2012). With Georgia allowing school districts to choose how they implemented and trained teachers regarding RTI, teachers received little guidance on how RTI should be implemented effectively, based upon the limited professional development offered according to the professional development plan of the selected school district (GADOE, 2012;

Jaffe, 2013). As a result, teachers may lack sufficient knowledge to implement RTI with fidelity, which may lead to ineffective RTI implementation in their classroom. Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative case study was to assess teacher and administrator perceptions of the fidelity of implementing the Georgia RTI model. I investigated this problem within one campus, using teacher and administrator interviews, surveys, and review of archived documents.

In Section 1 of this project study, I discuss the problem, rationale of the problem, and significance of the problem, from both local and national perspectives. In addition, I define special terms, present research questions, review current literature, and explore the conceptual framework associated with the problem. Furthermore, the implications for possible projects based on the likely findings from the data collection and analysis are discussed. Finally, I present a summary of the key points in Section 1.

The Local Problem

In this study, I addressed the teachers' and administrators' perceived issues and concerns with the fidelity of implementing the RTI framework. The teachers and administrators expressed implementation issues with the new RTI model continuously and displayed a lack of motivation to implement RTI at the selected school of study (personal communication, March 25, 2015). In an effort to eliminate implementation issues, the concepts of fidelity of implementing the Georgia RTI model processes were explored. This will determine if the delivery of RTI is the way it was designed to be according to the state guidelines (Harlacher, Sanford, & Nelson-Walker, 2014; Zvoch, 2012). The fidelity of

implementation determines and monitors components of an intervention plan that were implemented as initially intended according to the research-based guidelines and best practices (Keller-Margulis, 2012; McKenna, Flower, & Ciullo, 2014).

When implementing a new school program, such as RTI, the importance of fidelity of implementation can determine if teacher and administrator practices are consistent with the state RTI process to make a positive influence on student outcomes or if changes are needed to the state RTI process of implementation (McKenna, Flower, & Ciullo, 2014).

At Elementary School C, teachers reported from 2014 through 2015 a lack of understanding the process of RTI implementation (personal communication, March 30, 2015). The RTI chair of Elementary School C redelivered the professional development training provided by the district to the 32 elementary teachers at the selected school of study. However, a majority of the 32 teachers expressed that the RTI identification and documentation process was time consuming and tedious to complete which impacted their desire to comply (personal communication, March 25, 2015). Additionally, another teacher expressed that she was not knowledgeable of the RTI model and frustrated with understanding how to implement the RTI model with fidelity according the state of Georgia RTI model (personal communication, October 3, 2015). When teachers have a lack of knowledge or low motivation towards implementing RTI, the RTI processes and procedures are not implemented as intended, based upon teachers' confusion about RTI processes and procedures (Castro-Villarreal et al., 2014; Werts, Carpenter, & Fewell, 2014).

The students who received interventions and instruction as intended according to the Georgia RTI model may have a positive influence on the state standardized assessment scores by decreasing the amount of students labeled as beginning learners. According to the state standardized test scores between 2014 and 2015, 57% of third grade students were beginning learners in English Language Arts and 46% of third grade students are beginning learners in Mathematics (Georgia Department of Education, 2015). Test results of the third grade students indicated that a majority of third graders were struggling to meet the state requirements according to the Georgia Common Core Standards (Georgia Department of Education, 2015). Because of this concern, I specifically assessed teachers and administrators' perceptions on the fidelity of implementing the Georgia RTI model at Elementary School C.

Teachers who taught Kindergarten through third grade were targeted as participants for this study, because K-3rd grade students are more commonly identified to have academic and behavior challenges (Lipsey, Farran, & Hofer, 2015). Additionally, the teachers who teach K-3rd grade may decrease the 57% of beginning learners in English Language Arts and 46 % of beginning learners in Mathematics on state standardized assessments, and increase the amount of proficient learners in both English Language Arts and Mathematics on state standardized assessments, if equipped with best practices through the RTI model to support teaching and learning for all learners. Therefore, I investigated this problem using a qualitative case study to understand Kindergarten through third

grade teacher and administrator perceptions of the Georgia RTI model related to fidelity of implementing the RTI model as presented in the training.

Rationale

One of the primary roles of teachers is to provide differentiated instruction for all learners to be successful, which may be addressed through the four tiers of RTI (Castro-Villareal et al., 2014; O'Connor & Freeman, 2012). The selected school of study implemented the Georgia RTI model, which consisted of four tiers, but teachers were showing a lack of motivation to implement with fidelity. Schools located in other states commonly implement a three-tiered RTI model to address students' needs as shown in Figure 2 (NCRTI, 2012). According to the National Center on Response to Intervention (NCRTI 2012), "RTI is a multi-level prevention system intended to provide evidence-based support to students with academic challenges, and to identify appropriate instruction and related supports to produce successful student outcomes" (pp. 1-2).

As a result, there has been a considerable amount of interest in RTI being implemented into existing schools' practices, which means teachers, administrators, and school leaders must implement this initiative within the school's curriculum practices and procedures (Burns, Egan, Kunkel, McComas, Peterson, Rahn, & Wilson, 2013; Fisher & Frey, 2012). Furthermore, Castro-Villarreal et al., (2014) indicated that effective RTI models require supportive leadership from administrators, ongoing RTI professional development (PD) and support, and resources to enhance the fidelity of implementing the RTI process. Teacher and administrator perceptions in relation to the fidelity of implementing

the RTI model should be examined based upon the delivery of RTI instructional strategies and interventions (McKenna et al., 2014). This examination can affect the effectiveness of implementing a RTI model (McKenna et al., 2014).

Researchers have suggested that inappropriate implementation of any RTI model could impact the fidelity of implementing the RTI model, therefore investigating the fidelity of implementing the Georgia RTI model by assessing teacher and administrator perception should be explored (Castro-Villareal et al., 2014; McKenna et al., 2014; O'Connor & Freeman, 2012).

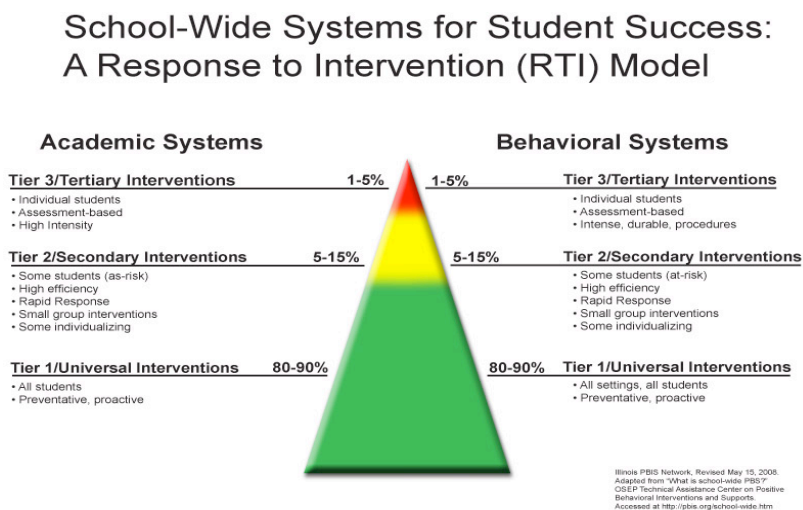


Figure 2. Three tiered RTI model.

Adapted from: "What is school-wide PBIS?" CSEP Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports, by Illinois PBIS Network, May 15, 2008, retrieved from <http://pbis.org/school-wide.htm>

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

According to the RTI chair of the local urban school of study, teachers have shown a lack of motivation and understanding of how to effectively

implement RTI (personal communication, March 31, 2015). More specifically, a school based leader expressed that teachers have shared they are uncomfortable with using the RTI model because the process is time consuming, tedious, and there is a lack of resources provided to support teachers (personal communication, March 25, 2015). Additionally, the school based RTI chair conducted teacher conferences prior to implementation to provide one-on-one training and support to teachers regarding the proper implementation of Georgia RTI model and processes (personal communication, March 31, 2015). Despite RTI PD the implementation of the RTI process is perceived to be a problem by both teachers and school-based leaders. By investigating teacher and administrator perceptions regarding the fidelity of implementing the Georgia RTI model, teachers' and administrators' abilities to implement RTI may be enhanced and may produce an RTI model implemented as designed.

RTI professional development was provided initially by the school system administrators twice a school year; at the start of the new RTI model implementation process for reading specialists, math specialists, curriculum specialists, data specialists, counselors, administrators, RTI school chairs, and RTI coordinators (Jaffe, 2013; personal communication, March 31, 2015). Collaboratively, the RTI chair, data specialist, and curriculum specialist were responsible for facilitating the RTI PD for the process and procedures for implementing the Georgia RTI model at their respective school sites (Jaffe, 2013; personal communication, March 31, 2015). However, the school RTI chair of the selected school of study led and facilitated the RTI PD, which was very intense

due to the tedious steps, and new learning concepts teachers were required to know within the four tiers of the RTI model (personal communication, March 31, 2015).

According to the curriculum specialist, it was suggested that to increase student success on state standardized assessments, RTI implementation from each tier is required (personal communication, April 14, 2015). Additionally, state standardized test scores between 2014 and 2015 reflected 57% of third grade students were beginning learners in English Language Arts and 46% of third grade students were beginning learners in Mathematics (Georgia Department of Education, 2015). Test results of the third grade students indicated that a majority of third graders were struggling to meet the state requirements according to the state Common Core Standards (Georgia Department of Education, 2015). The results of the high percentage rate of students identified as beginner learners indicates that these students were Tier 2 or Tier 3 students according to the Georgia RTI model. This may suggest that implementation of Georgia RTI model is important to changing the results of students meeting the Common Core Standards on upcoming assessments to decrease the amount of Beginner learners (Georgia Department of Education, 2015). Based upon key school personnel responsible for delivering the RTI professional development and state assessment results, it is evident there was a problem with teachers and the implementation of RTI (personal communication, March 31, 2015).

There was one job-embedded professional development session at the beginning of the 2014-2015 school year for the Georgia RTI model. This session

lasted for an hour for teachers responsible for implementing the Georgia RTI model within the local school; however, after the one-hour RTI PD took place, many local campus administrators and teachers expressed that the implementation of RTI may be ineffective due to the lack of ongoing job-embedded professional development (personal communication, March 31, 2015). According to a post evaluation of the RTI PD, concerns were reported that RTI PD contained excessive literature, limited resource suggestions, and did not meet the teachers' specific needs including the fact the RTI PD only occurred once (personal communication, March 30, 2015).

When PD for RTI implementation was provided in an unclear or ineffective manner, teachers lack the responsibility and/or motivation to use the system with fidelity (Isbell & Szaboo, 2014). Effective PD can lead to effective implementation of RTI; whereas ineffective PD leads to poor implementation (Kuo, 2014). Therefore, in effort to develop and implement an effective RTI model, school administrators must identify challenges, supports, implementation considerations, and teachers' perceptions (Marsh, 2012; Sanger et al., 2012). The purpose of this study was to assess teacher and administrator perceptions of the fidelity of implementing the Georgia RTI model at one campus using teacher and administrator interviews, surveys, and review of archived documents.

Evidence of the Problem from the Professional Literature

The most common challenges and barriers to implementing an effective RTI model are inconsistency, poorly suggested interventions, and the lack of evaluating the RTI model for fidelity of implementation (Cowan & Maxwell,

2015; Sanger et al., 2012). Additionally, there are similar influences that impact the effectiveness of RTI, which could be the intensity of interventions, leadership support initiatives, and teachers' beliefs and knowledge of RTI (Marsh, 2012). To successfully implement the RTI model with fidelity, school administrators need to analyze current implementation of the RTI model by surveying teachers who are implementing interventions, and by providing continuous administrative support in the form of PD and effective resources for instruction (Cowan & Maxwell, 2015).

With this analysis, I created a training program to help administrators address the four factors that affect fidelity of implementation (FOI), which are: complexity, material and resources required, perceived and actual effectiveness, and interventions (NCLRD, 2006; Harlacher et al., 2014). These four factors address the issues of time needed for instruction and intervention, accessible resources, teachers' perceptions of the efficiency of implementing practices, and teachers' motivation level to deliver interventions with fidelity (McKenna et al., 2014). To guarantee the FOI of the RTI model and its effectiveness, administrators must consider assessing processes and procedures regarding RTI implementation. This can be done by conducting observations, self-assessments, and analyzing student achievement outcomes by monitoring the frequency, method, and procedures used with the RTI model (Keller-Margulis, 2012; McKenna et al., 2014;). Without school administrators or school leaders addressing the challenges and concerns of effective RTI implementation, teachers

do not have adequate skills and knowledge to implement an RTI model with fidelity (Marsh, 2012).

With teachers playing a pivotal role in RTI implementation, their perceptions, understanding, and attitudes regarding RTI are beneficial to addressing teacher buy in, fidelity concerns, emphasis for professional development, and barriers to the implementation process (Castro-Villarreal et al., 2014). School administrators could measure the FOI RTI by observing teachers to determine the frequency and the appropriateness of the delivery of instruction and interventions. They can provide immediate feedback and support to teachers to guarantee that the implementation of instruction and interventions are done with accuracy. This will help to guarantee fidelity of RTI implementation (Gerstner & Finney, 2013). When teachers are provided with resources and supports, they tend to make corrections where needed to assure success (Harn, Parisi, & Stoolmiller, 2013). Furthermore, teachers' training, motivation, knowledge, efficacy, resources, supports, and willingness to participate in the process may have an important significance related to the FOI RTI with success (Castro-Villareal et al., 2014; O'Connor & Freeman, 2012). Without effective training for teachers, an understanding of the RTI model processes and procedures may not be achieved which may lead to teachers implementing the RTI model inadequately (O'Connor & Freeman, 2012).

Effective PD is necessary to accomplish the goal of implementing the RTI model with fidelity (Castro-Villarreal et al., 2014; O'Connor & Freeman, 2012; Werts, et al., 2014). Ineffective PD will hinder this goal (Gulamhussein, 2013;

O'Connor & Freeman, 2012; Werts, et al., 2014). Ineffective PD takes place when there is a lack of finances, knowledge of content, and continuous support for teachers after PD has been provided (Gulamhussein, 2013). When there is a lack of support teachers are not equipped with appropriate skills to sustain and to implement new practices with fidelity (Finch, 2012). Continual support is needed when implementing new skills, such as RTI interventions and practices (Butler & Schnellert, 2012). When teachers do not have support from leadership teams or collaborative learning teams, inconsistent implementation practices may take place leading to unclear procedures, decisions, and poor documentation of students' data from interventions implemented (Butler & Schnellert, 2012). Therefore, developing leadership and collaborative teams to support teachers with implementation of RTI may lead to consistent implementation practices and procedures of RTI as intended (Nellis, 2012).

Researchers have documented that 80% of students' academic needs are met when there is effective RTI implementation (Allain, 2013). Without effective RTI implementation, approximately 65% of students are promoted without achieving the necessary knowledge and skills to be prosperous in the next grade or to graduate from high school (Callender, 2014). Furthermore, the U. S. Department of Education reported that students from 2011-2012 who received appropriate support through RTI implementation yielded appropriate referrals to special education (2015). In an effort to seek growth in student achievement before promoting students to the next grade level, implementing a consistent RTI model with understanding and fidelity is beneficial for students and teachers

(Gulamhussein, 2013; Nellis, 2012). The purpose of this study was to assess teacher and administrator perceptions of the fidelity of implementing the Georgia RTI model at one campus using teacher and administrator interviews, surveys, and review of archived documents.

Definitions

Many terms used in this study are often used in educational settings and educational literature. The terms listed below define the educational terms used throughout this study.

At-Risk Students: Students who academically or behaviorally perform below grade level of their counterparts (Vaughn & Fletcher, 2012).

Differentiated Instruction: Providing a group of students or individual students with a customized curriculum or tailored instruction to meet each student's learning needs (Darrow, 2015; Tomlinson, 2014).

Disproportionate Representation: The overrepresentation and underrepresentation of minorities in a special education program (Mikutis, 2013).

Fidelity: The degree interventions or treatments are implemented as designed and planned (Ehlers-Zavala, Obiakor, Bakken, & Rotatori, 2010).

Fidelity of Implementation (FOI): The process of monitoring interventions as suggested and executed based upon research best practices, strategies, and evidences. (Keller-Margulis, 2012, p. 343; McKenna, Flower, & Ciullo, 2014, p. 16).

Formula for Success: A framework of understanding for implementing an RTI model with fidelity for school and district leaders. The framework of

implementation of science indicates it is important to consider this formula to guarantee implementation takes places as intended by measuring implementation practices, intervention practices, and fidelity of implementation when school leaders implement RTI programs (Dunst, Trivette, & Raab, 2013; Gagnon & Bumpus, 2016).

Georgia RTI model: The levels of instructional intensity within a multi-tiered prevention system used to identify and support students with learning behavioral needs which includes four tiers: *Tier 1:* Research-based or standard-based instruction provided to all students. *Tier 2:* Consists of needs-based learning by providing small group academic instruction or behavior support, utilizing scientific research-based instruction considered effective for the students. *Tier 3:* Provides more intensive driven individualized instruction within the Student Support Team (SST); practices or behavioral support for students who were assessed at Tier 2 and data indicates inadequate progress. *Tier 4:* Individually designed learning for students who are eligible for special academic services are placed in Tier 4 and receive individualized instruction to meet their needs based upon the referral made from Tier 2 (GADOE, 2012; RTI Action Network, 2012).

Individual Educational Program (IEP): A written statement for students who are placed in special education that describes the students current performance level, yearly goals, particular services needed, dates for the beginning and period of services, and in what way the IEP will be evaluated (Shifrer, 2013).

Intervention: A research based skill or strategy implemented and monitored to improve academic or behavioral skills (Wanzek & Cavanaugh, 2012).

Progress Monitoring: Measurement of change or student's skill level of learning over a period of time to address instructional needs, which determines what evidence-based interventions are effective (Brown, 2012; Fuchs & Vaughn, 2012).

Research Based: Programs and studies that incorporate suggested strategies or recommendations that have been researched generally and proven to make change (Keller-Margulis, 2012).

Response to Intervention (RTI): "A systematic data-based method for identifying, defining, and determining students' academic or behavioral difficulties by monitoring student progresses and making decisions about the necessary instructional modifications or intervention intensity, which is based on a three-tiered model" (Little, 2012, pp. 69-70; Pool, Carter, & Johnson, 2012, pp. 232-233).

Self-efficacy: "An individual's belief in his or her capacity to execute behaviors essential to produce a given level of achievement or a particular task. For the purpose of this study, self-efficacy is used for understanding teachers' confidence in their ability to exert control over their own motivation, behavior, and social environment." (Bandura, 1997, pp. 11-13; Denler, Wolters, & Benzon, 2014, pp. 1-3).

Special Education: A program designed to provide students with disabilities with a free appropriate education, which meets their individualized needs and offer students appropriate services (Hoover, 2012).

Significance

School district leaders and school administrators should be aware of the concerns teachers may have with implementing RTI and how teachers' concerns may impact school initiatives (Israel, Pearson, Tapia, Wherfel, & Reese, 2015; Little, 2012). While school leaders and administrators are placing emphasis on teachers fully understanding RTI (Bailey, 2014; White, Polly, & Audette, 2012), teachers are struggling with the implementation of RTI and leaders should understand that the success of any RTI implementation depends on the teachers' abilities to implement RTI with fidelity (Wilcox, Murakami-Ramalho, & Urick, 2013). FOI requires teachers and administrators to collaborate to ensure RTI is implemented as intended and frequently monitored for effectiveness (Abry, Rimm-Kaufman, Larsen, & Brewer, 2013; Castro-Villarreal et al., 2014). Currently, at the selected school of study, approximately 85% of teachers of grades Kindergarten through third grade are lacking the knowledge to implement RTI with fidelity (personal communication, March 30, 2015). Additionally, according to a teacher within the selected school, approximately one initial RTI professional development was provided for teachers and an additional professional development was provided for make-up training for teachers who missed the initial professional development (personal communication, March 31, 2015). A teacher shared that, due to limited professional development and lack of

understanding, she was not motivated to implement the processes and procedures of the RTI model (personal communication, September 28, 2015).

The results of this study allowed me to address existing gaps in practice by assessing teacher and administrator perceptions on the fidelity of implementing the Georgia RTI model. Gaining a deeper understanding of teacher and administrator perceptions may allow administrators in the local school district to reform the RTI model to support teachers in their understanding and teaching approaches related to RTI implementation. This project study may help with the school RTI implementation processes and procedures. Teachers and administrators may gain a deeper understanding of RTI by participating in RTI PD to obtain strategies to meet their students' needs and identify where gaps in practice exist in relation to RTI implementation. The potential positive social change at the local level would allow educators to implement RTI with a greater fidelity to accommodate the needs of diverse learners.

Therefore, the purpose of this project study was to assess teacher and administrator perceptions of the fidelity of implementing the Georgia RTI model at one campus using teacher and administrator interviews, surveys, and review of archived documents. A qualitative case study to investigate teacher and administrator perceptions as related to the FOI the Georgia RTI model produced recommendations to address current barriers of teachers' perceptions for RTI implementation and RTI PD, improve the effectiveness of the RTI model, and suggest relevant support, or RTI PD remedies, to enhance the fidelity of implementing RTI. By investigating teacher and administrator perceptions on the

fidelity of implementing Georgia RTI model, a school administrator may review my findings that are outlined in a white paper; the white paper includes policy recommendations and suggestions that may prompt collaborative discussions and lead to a more effective RTI implementation process.

Guiding/Research Question

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to assess teacher and administrator perceptions of the fidelity of implementing the Georgia RTI model at one campus using teacher and administrator interviews, surveys, and review of archived documents. Teachers have expressed that they would like to have further understanding of RTI to become more knowledgeable of how to incorporate RTI within daily instructional practices (personal communication, April 29, 2015). Hoover and Love (2011) noted that understanding teachers' knowledge and perceptions of programs they are required to implement helped them make informed instructional practices school-wide. By conducting interviews, surveys, and review of archived documents to determine the teacher and administrator perceptions of RTI as related to the fidelity of implementing the Georgia RTI model, a deeper understanding helps shed light on where the local gap in practice exist related to RTI implementation.

The following research question was aligned with the research problem and purpose. This was an open-ended, general question that helped narrow the purpose of this study and further to reflect the participants' views of the central phenomenon and gain deeper understanding of it (Creswell, 2012). The overarching question explored in this project study is:

Research Question

How do teachers and administrators perceive the fidelity of implementing the four-tiered RTI model as related to effective interventions, implementation methods, enabling contexts, and intended outcomes at the study site?

Review of the Literature

The Georgia RTI model could be ineffective due to poor implementation; however the implementation process could be improved if RTI is implemented with fidelity as intended (McKenna et al., 2014). When schools implement RTI with fidelity, best practices are implemented to improve student achievement (Keller-Margulis, 2012). According to the National Center on Response to Intervention (NCRTI 2012), “RTI is a multi-level prevention system intended to offer evidence-based support to students with learning problems, and to identify appropriate instruction and related supports to produce successful student outcomes” (pp. 5-6). With RTI being the leading school reform practice in Georgia, it is essential that schools implement RTI into existing schools’ practices with fidelity, which means teachers and administrators must learn and support the RTI model (Burns & Gibbons, 2013; Fisher & Frey, 2012; O’Connor et al., 2012). Therefore, it is evident that teachers and administrators must ensure the fidelity of implementing the Georgia RTI model takes place to guarantee appropriate implementation aligns with the goals of RTI and the instructional goals of the school (King, Lemons, & Hill, 2012).

The FOI is important because it measures whether teachers’ practices are influencing student outcomes or if changes are needed (McKenna et al., 2014).

The RTI implementation process is based on using proper methods of instruction for research-based practices to help students improve. The school administrators and support staff members may only certify students improve by monitoring the FOI of RTI (Swanson, Solis, Haring, Ciullo, & McCulley, 2012; McKenna, 2014). Furthermore, using the RTI framework without determining the degree to which students are provided instruction makes it difficult to determine its effectiveness (Keller-Margulis, 2012). Therefore, teacher and administrator perceptions in relation to the fidelity of implementing the Georgia RTI model were examined based upon how the delivery of RTI can impact the effectiveness (Gerstner et al., 2013; McKenna et al., 2014).

To ensure literature saturation for this research regarding teacher and administrator perceptions on the fidelity of implementing the Georgia RTI model, several steps were conducted to find related, relevant, and current research. First, a search using the following Booleans: *Response to Intervention, teachers' perceptions, disproportion rate of students, fidelity of implementation, progress monitoring, professional development, implementation of science framework, and RTI implementation within elementary settings*. Then, I discussed my topic with colleagues to generate their suggestions pertaining to the problem of this project study.

I began the web search by using Walden University library online databases with the initial Booleans and suggestions from colleagues with a search using significant terms in peer-reviewed journal articles, on-line journals, dissertations, books, reports and academic texts. The Walden Library databases

used for the search included the following: Education Research Complete, ERIC, Google Scholar, ProQuest Central, and SAGE Journals Online. There were 233 peer-reviewed journal articles reviewed and used, published within the past 5 years. By searching scholarly databases, I was able to limit my focus on relevant terms on current and past research and theories. Finally, I organized my findings by common themes that addressed teacher and administrator perceptions on the fidelity of implementing the Georgia RTI model within the literature review of this study until saturation was reached.

Conceptual Framework

In an effort to examine how teachers and administrators perceive the fidelity of implementing the Georgia RTI model, I selected the implementation science framework for the conceptual framework, which will provide the context and serve to guide the development of this study. “The implementation of science framework focuses on the differentiation of implementation and intervention, these important practices describes how incorporating both practices with fidelity are interrelated and how each influence the outcomes of implementing a program” such as, RTI (Dunst et al., 2013, pp. 85-86). Fidelity is based upon “the process of monitoring whether all components of an intervention or plan are implemented as initially intended to guarantee the effectiveness of the program”, such as RTI (Keller-Margulis, 2012, pp. 343-345; McKenna et al., 2014, pp. 16-18). Based upon the implementation of science framework, teachers and administrators may need to adopt this concept to guarantee fidelity of Georgia RTI model is implemented for students to experience academic success.

The implementation of science framework provides insight into the elements of effective implementation processes that lead to the adoption of new policies, programs, evidence-based methods, or intervention practices in the manner that is intended (Duda & Wilson, 2015; Dunst et al., 2013). Eccles and Mittman (2006) defined the implementation of science framework as “the scientific study of methods to support the systematic acceptance of research findings and other evidence-based practices into regular practice” (p. 1). The implementation of science framework indicates it is important to consider implementation practices, intervention practices, and FOI when school leaders implement RTI programs (Dunst et al., 2013; Gagnon & Bumpus, 2016). To ensure the Georgia RTI model is implemented with fidelity and successfully on student outcomes, school administrators, support staff, and teachers should support the following: (a.) effective interventions, (b.) effective implementation methods, (c.) enabling contexts, and (d.) intended outcomes, known as the formula for success (Duda et al., 2015). Figure 3 identifies the Formula for Success.

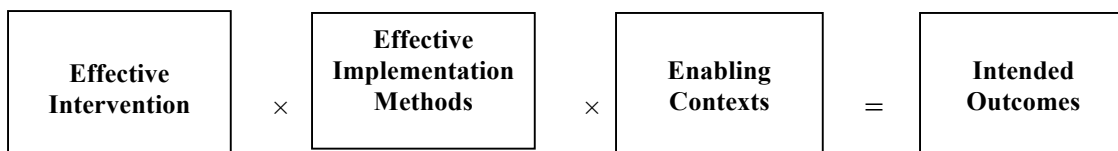


Figure 3. Formula of success.

Adapted from: Duda, M. & Wilson, B. (2015). *Using Implementation Science to Close the Policy to Practice Gap*. A Literate Nation White Paper, Science Panel. Vol. Spring (2015). San Francisco, CA.

The process of using the implementation of science framework suggests that teachers, school administrators, and support staff can sustain an RTI model with fidelity if the implementation science structure is successfully managed so teachers, administrators and students can experience the expected benefits (Duda et al., 2015). Essentially, the goal of inquiry in the implementation of science framework is to research and understand how newly adopted initiatives are put into practice and maintained as the intended purpose (Cook & Odom, 2013). Therefore, to improve academic outcomes for students by adopting the RTI framework, teachers and administrators need to consider the implementation of science framework as part of the process (Duda et al., 2015; Dunst et al., 2013, & Gagnon et al., 2016). Within the context of the implementation of science framework, I investigated teacher and administrator perceptions on the fidelity of implementing the Georgia RTI model at the study site using teacher and administrator interviews, surveys, and review of archived documents. By investigating teacher and administrator perceptions on the fidelity of implementing Georgia RTI model, participants, school district leaders, and school administrators may review my findings outlined in a white paper. The white paper includes policy recommendations and suggestions designed to prompt collaborative discussions and lead to a more effective RTI implementation process.

Literature on the Broader Problem Associated with the Local Problem

Response to Intervention framework. The Response to Intervention (RTI) framework was developed to determine “early identification of students

with disabilities and to provide preventative interventions to reduce inaccurate referrals of students to special education due to lack of best instructional practices of teaching and learning” (Ciullo, McKenna, Solis, & Swanson, 2012, p.115). As a proactive and preventative approach, “RTI encouraged teachers and other educational leaders to develop instructional plans for teaching to improve the academic or behavioral performance of their students” (Little, 2012, pp. 69-71). “This multi-tiered framework was a system-wide problem-solving and data-driven process in which students were examined on specific skills and provided instructional support to each individual students’ needs in an effort to improve their abilities academically or behaviorally” (Castro-Villarreal et al., 2014, p. 104). There were several tiers school systems developed to address concerns of at-risk students; however, it is a more common practice for schools to utilize the three-tiered levels of the RTI model than the four-tiered levels of the Georgia RTI model (Fuchs et al, 2012; Fuchs & Vaughn, 2012). Tier 1 is designed as scientific, evidence-based core instructional and behavioral approaches for all students within the proposed general curriculum (Fuchs et al., 2012; Little, 2012). At Tier 2, specific instruction and interventions provided along with required instruction is used to increase the student achievement and progress monitoring progress (Little, 2012; Pool, Carter, & Johnson, 2012). Tier 3 was designed to provide intensive instructional interventions in a collaborative manner of core instruction with the goal to increase students’ academic progress (Fuchs & Vaughn, 2012; Little, 2012). Tier 4 is targeted and specialized design instruction for students who have met eligibility criteria for placement in special programs, such as

special education, English speaking, and gifted education (GADOE, 2012; RTI Action Network, 2012).

The RTI tiered model is vital to the educational processes due to the reauthorization of IDEA (2004) and goals established in the NCLB (2002), which permitted the use of RTI to determine whether students make adequate improvement and what interventions should be specified for them (Hall & Mahoney, 2013; Kuo, 2014). Previously, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 served as the federal accountability law that focused attention on low-performing students, aiming to close the achievement gap (Darling-Hammond & Hill, 2015). However, the legislation of NCLB (2002) was the revision of ESSA (2015) that challenged state leaders and school district leaders to increase efforts to improve student achievement for all learners, which is the key initiative for the RTI framework (Darling-Hammond et al., 2015). “The usage of incorporating the RTI model in educational settings has emphasized general and special education teachers’ responsibility to meet the needs of all learners by ensuring students make academic progress” (Hall & Mahoney, 2013, p. 273). Additionally, RTI led to early identification of students with academic or behavioral disabilities and remediation for students who are at risk of failing a particular subject or grade level (Hoover, 2012; Mikutis, 2013). Furthermore, researchers suggested “teachers who implement RTI with fidelity could prevent students for making choices that could lead to school dropouts, unemployment, imprisonment, poor health, and other limiting experiences of inadequate academic performance” (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Compton, 2012, pp. 263-267). Response to

Intervention is important and the process should be repeatedly used for improving student achievement and learning goals, which is the overall purpose of implementing RTI (Little, 2012).

Impact of RTI implementation. RTI models are currently being implemented in about 94% of schools nationwide (O'Connor et al., 2012; Robinson, Bursuck, & Sinclair, 2013). The purpose for the RTI process is to provide all students with differentiated or intensified instruction and intervention to prevent student academic failure, before being referred for additional services such as special education (Fisher & Frey, 2012; Murakami-Ramalho & Wilcox, 2012). Further researchers have suggested that by implementing RTI the needs of struggling learners, prevention of labeling, and avoiding a history of school failure could be addressed (Sanger et al., 2012). Although, the purpose of implementing RTI is clearly defined, schools need to make basic decisions for RTI implementation (Wanzek & Cavanaugh, 2012). O'Connor and Freeman (2012) suggested that RTI implementation requires school administrators to change their view and practices of educational reform.

The views and practices of educational reform could be changed only if school administrators are willing to understand the need for change, accept the purpose for change, and support the change for all stakeholders (Castro-Villarreal et al., 2014). Therefore, school administrators need to implement RTI with purpose and understanding of their roles, and support from school personnel who believe using the prevention model of RTI could impact positive change in all students (Sylvester, Lewis, & Severance, 2012). Teachers' understanding of RTI

should be fostered from the school district administrators and school-based leaders, such as the principal and RTI specialist by offering ongoing professional development and engaging in collaborative discussion with teachers regarding implementation and components of RTI, which could have a significant influence on the successful implementation of the RTI model (Hoover & Love, 2011; O'Connor & Freeman, 2012). Furthermore, Swanson et al. (2012) suggested that teachers and educational leaders believed a key advantage and purpose of implementing RTI is assisting students as soon as they display academic or behavioral problems. Subsequently, Fisher and Frey (2011) and Swanson et al. (2012) believed successful implementation of RTI requires support efforts from all staff and leaders within the school by participating in open dialogue through problem-solving and data review meetings that support RTI efforts for students. Researchers have suggested that there are various RTI implementation components that are essential to ensuring the fidelity of implementing the RTI model (Fisher et al., 2011; O'Connor et al., 2012; Swanson et al., 2012).

Implementation components. School administrators and leaders are implementing RTI to meet the needs of struggling learners and models are being implemented with different implementation components across the country in schools and school systems (McLerney, Zumeta, Gandhi, & Gersten, 2014). Although RTI is found to be a multi-tiered approach many educators address RTI in different manners for general and special education students and teachers (Sanger et al., 2012). Researchers have suggested that the teachers and school administrators should collaborate with one another to discuss what essential

components are required in the implementation of the RTI model (Slyvester, Lewis, & Severance, 2012). As a result of school leaders and teachers collaborating, Hoover and Love (2011) found the key components of implementing RTI included a clear understanding of the RTI framework, school and district-wide professional development that is ongoing, Tier 1 and Tier 2 understanding of instruction between general education teachers and other teachers providing Tier 2 support (Broemmel, Jordan, & Whitsett, 2015).

In comparison, White, Polly and Audette (2012) and Bailey (2014) discovered there are essential components of RTI, which include organization of student supports and services from the onset of the process, data-based instructional plans, alignment of research-based interventions, and consistent progress monitoring and data collection. Additionally, it is important to approach RTI as a multi-tiered system composed of screening, progress monitoring, instruction, and identification of appropriate intervention for students (Sanger et al., 2012). School administrators who can identify key components for an RTI model may develop an implementation process that is consistent and effective for teachers to understand to improve student outcomes (McDaniel, Albritten, Roach, 2013). When an RTI model does not have key components identified in the process, student outcomes may be affected in a negative manner (Sharp, Sanders, Noltemeyer, Hoffman, & Boone, 2015). Identifying key components necessary for RTI implementation can provide an outline for school administrators and leaders when designing an RTI model (McDaniel et al., 2013).

White et al. (2012) and Bailey (2014) suggested there are key RTI initiatives for implementing any RTI model effectively. First, the creation of district level and school level resources should support general education and special education (White et al., 2012; Bailey, 2014; McInerney et al., 2014). Next, there needs to be commitment and support from the principal and school-wide leadership team (White, 2012; Bailey, 2014; McInerney et al., 2014). Then, an RTI committee should be established to provide professional learning and discuss the importance of the RTI process (White, 2012; Bailey, 2014; McInerney et al., 2014). Additionally, an RTI implementation plan to increase knowledge, process, and resources to provide manageability of the program should be established (White et al., 2012; Bailey, 2014). In comparison, an action plan to involve family members and parents is necessary to help them understand and participate in the RTI process (White et al., 2012; Broemmel et al., 2015). Based upon these recommendations, one may suggest that all stakeholders within the school setting should be involved in the process to ensure the fidelity of implementing RTI initiatives.

The findings of the researchers suggested that educators should collaborative work to achieve best evidence-based practices to develop key components of an effective RTI model (McDaniel et al., 2013; White et al., 2012). By having key RTI initiatives, definitions, and understandings of RTI, teachers and leaders receive insight into their roles in providing interventions for all students (Slyvester et al., 2012). Although collaborative efforts are important to achieve best results for implementing RTI, challenges may still arise with

implementation if school administrators develop an RTI model without the essential components.

Implementation challenges. There are numerous reports of school teachers who have explained challenges with the implementation of RTI, which impacts school administrators' capability with implementing a successful RTI model for their school (Bailey, 2014; Muakami-Ramalho et al., 2012). Bailey (2014) found that "many rural schools struggle with implementing RTI because the lack of efficient funds for personnel or resources, time within their schedule for professional development, administrative support of the process, instructional teachers and staff buy-in, and actively engaged students, parents, and community leaders in the process" (pp. 34-35). These critical challenges were found to be occurring in many rural schools across the country regardless of schools that may receive federal and state funding (Bailey, 2014; O'Connor & Freeman, 2012; Robinson, Bursuck, & Sinclair, 2013). Similarly, Robinson et al. (2013) explored RTI implementation in two rural southeastern elementary schools that identified challenged components for implementation of RTI, which could be due to cost, time, professional development, limited resources, and support. The results identified that the cost to purchase items to start RTI intervention programs and professional developments and cost for substitutes were not feasible to the schools' budget due to the lack of funds (Bailey, 2014; Robinson et al., 2013).

Additionally, teacher turnover rates affect how the momentum of teachers responding to RTI procedures, especially if one teacher or school leader guides the entire faculty of teachers during RTI model procedures (Burns et al., 2013).

Surprisingly, school leaders and teachers reported reluctance to share data of students in Tier 2 or Tier 3 of the RTI model that indicates an academic issue or behavior issues of a student that may need further testing, due to parents who are well-known community members of the school (Bailey, 2014). Other challenges were related to the recruitment and retention of highly effective teachers in rural schools to implement scientifically based strategies with at-risk students (Ehren & Hatch, 2013; Keller-Margulis, 2012). Robinson et al. (2013) determined that for “rural elementary schools to implement RTI with fidelity, teachers will need to buy-in to the process and procedures and administrators will need to provide effective ongoing professional development” (pp. 1-2). Furthermore, “rural schools will need to acquire financial support for employing and retaining highly qualified teachers that will incorporate scientific-based instructional practices for teaching and learning, as well as, monitor students’ progress for making informed decisions to support student achievement” (Robinson et al., 2013, pp. 7-8).

A primary challenge with implementation of RTI could be principal leadership. When principals implement the RTI process by collaborating with teachers and other instructional leaders, they form their own understanding of the direction their school should be moving toward in efforts to increase student achievement (Printy & Williams, 2015). Murakami-Ramalho and Wilcox (2012) examined elementary school principals implementing the RTI process by conducting a collaborative RTI professional development with teachers. As a result, teachers expressed they felt the principal truly listened to their concerns about RTI and how to help struggling students. Consequently, the principals

explained that for RTI implementation to be successful listening to the teachers and valuing their concerns and opinions could lead to the development of the school-wide approach toward RTI.

Primarily, through principals' leadership and collaboration with teachers, a school-wide plan for RTI should be developed with cost and time taken in consideration (Murakami-Ramalho et al., 2012). Therefore, the approach to RTI could result to all students being served based upon their needs, teachers improving small group instruction and collaboration initiatives amongst their colleagues, and the principal sharing students' improvements based upon data (Murakami-Ramalho et al., 2012; Printy et al., 2015). In regards to implementation challenges, researchers suggested school principals should review whether their school's mission and goals are associated with the goal of RTI to achieve positive and measurable school goals that support the implementation of RTI (King, Lemons, & Hill, 2012). "Principals could refrain from experiencing implementation challenges of RTI by informing teachers of expectations, encouraging new researched methods, using data to measure the effectiveness of instructional practices, and using a well-developed protocol to improve RTI implementation and student achievement" (King et al., 2012, pp. 12-13). Therefore, schools that face RTI implementation challenges could consider practices to support effective RTI implementation.

School leaders who strive to lead effective RTI implementation initiatives with teachers may rely on their professional and personal characteristics when dealing with implementing new initiatives. Fullan (2014) suggested school

leaders who have a moral purpose realize necessary strategies to energize teachers to make a difference in the lives of diverse learners. Fullan (2014) further recommended that school administrators who understand the process of change are essential when implementing new initiatives. The process of change may be difficult initially and may require collaboration daily to include relationship building and knowledge building. The researcher indicated that many school leaders and teachers who participate in relationship and knowledge building may collaborate with one another (Fullan, 2014). This is in an effort to share and develop best practices that reduce barriers and strengthen procedures by engaging in professional learning (Fullan, 2014). Furthermore, he suggested that school leaders who establish coherence with teachers understand the process of change when implementing new initiatives that lead to the development of new best practices and patterns for teachers and students (Fullan, 2014). Therefore, to implement effective RTI implementation, schools need effective leaders who are committed to creating a positive, energized, and enthusiastic environment for teachers to implement RTI with fidelity to improve student achievement. With great emphasis being placed on effective leadership, researchers have continued to suggest that teachers who attend and engage in RTI professional development increase their self-efficacy of RTI and improve their instructional practices (Fullan, 2014; Gumus & Kemal, 2013; King et al., 2012).

Teacher perceptions of RTI. Teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs about the Response to Intervention framework impact how teachers implement the RTI process within their daily instruction (Castro-Villarreal et al.,

2014). Research conducted by Frank and Vaden (2013) examined the influence of teachers' skills and beliefs regarding RTI on their level of motivation. Consequently, the findings of the study discovered there is significant correlation between teachers' RTI skills and RTI beliefs and teacher perceptions based upon the years of experience (Frank et al., 2013). The researchers concluded teachers with fewer years of experience were more receptive of implementing RTI due to familiarity and comfort level with training of RTI, whereas teachers with more years of experience were unfamiliar and not comfortable with RTI skills and beliefs (Frank et al., 2013). These findings suggested that in order to guarantee teachers' motivation is high with implementing RTI teachers must be provided with clear and knowledgeable facts about RTI, teachers must be aware of RTI components and challenges that may occur, and professional development must be offered to ensure teachers collaborate and establish a successful plan for implementing an effective RTI process with fidelity (Hall & Mahoney, 2013; LaChausse, Clark, & Chapple, 2014; Lee, Cawthon, & Dawson, 2013).

RTI fidelity of implementation. Fidelity is important in the instructional, assessment and delivery of any RTI framework (Gagnon et al., 2016). "When implementing RTI it is vital to monitor the fidelity of RTI processes and procedures, to distinguish between students who may be at-risk of failing or at-risk of being identified as a student with disabilities" (Keller-Margulis, 2012, pp. 342-343). Fidelity of implementation is when interventions are delivered to students during instruction in which the interventions were designed (Gagnon et al., 2016; Keller-Margulis, 2012; McKenna et al., 2014). The fidelity of

implementation should be evaluated by the procedure of screening and progress monitoring and a decision-making procedure should follow (Fox, Veguilla, & Binder, 2014). When monitoring the fidelity of RTI it is important the school-level administrators and teachers are involved in the process (Eagle, Dowd-Eagle, Snyder, & Holtzman, 2015). Teacher and school administrator perceptions of RTI affect the level of fidelity of RTI and the success of implementing RTI (Castro-Villarreal et al., 2014; Cowan et al., 2015; Eagle et al., 2015;). Without monitoring the fidelity of implementing an RTI model and processes as intended, the RTI model implementation process could be ineffective. This may affect school initiatives not being met and students' needs not being met, and student achievement initiatives could have poor results (McKenna et al., 2014). The benefits of implementing an RTI model with fidelity could influence students' academic and behavioral performance if implementing with effective and appropriate instructional strategies and best practices (Marston, Lau, Muyskens, & Wilson, 2016; McKenna et al., 2014).

Fidelity of implementation of RTI process as it was intended occurs when interventions and best practices are implemented directly and consistently with students, which makes RTI an effective practice (O'Connor et al., 2012). The key components to measuring the fidelity of implementing an RTI model includes documenting and monitoring the type of interventions conducted, the days and weeks in which interventions were conducted, the durations of interventions, and the intensity of individuals and deviations from a set intervention plan for a specific student (Denton, Tolar, Fletcher, Barth, Vaughn, & Francis, 2013).

Documentation of implementation of an RTI framework could be collected and tracked using benchmark data and weekly assessments using electronic or paper-based tracking forms (Björn et al., 2016). Additionally, the measuring of fidelity could take place through observations of students' behaviors, self-assessments of checklists for teachers, and analysis of permanent products such as student self-monitoring sheets, student point sheets, charts, and tokens (McKenna et al., 2014). When implementing RTI, it is critical for teachers and administrators to document the process, so that if the implementation process of RTI is unsuccessful, school administrators and teachers can collaborate to take appropriate measures to improve the RTI framework as it is intended to work (Marston et al., 2016).

The proactive practices of school administrators for ensuring the fidelity of implementation takes places for RTI includes; credibility of interventions to improved outcomes, clear operations and techniques, defined responsibilities for all stakeholders, data system for measurable results implemented, formative feedback, and accountability measures for non-compliance (Bernhardt & Hebert, 2014). When school administrators develop clear and defined process and procedures with support and feedback teachers are more willing and adapting to the process and procedures to implement RTI with fidelity (Buffum & Mattos, 2014; O'Connor et al., 2012). Teachers' instructional practices with RTI can impact the implementation of RTI (Björn et al., 2016; O'Connor et al., 2012). According to Castro-Villarreal et al. (2014), it is imperative teachers' instructional practices and perceptions of RTI are in support of the process of RTI

to ensure fidelity of implementation. When teachers had positive perceptions of RTI, teachers could improve the outcomes of intervention as intended (Buffum et al., 2014). Without the support of teachers, the fidelity of implementing an RTI model as it was intended could be poorly implemented due to teacher perceptions (Malloy, Acock, DuBois, Vuchinich, Silverthorn, Ji, & Flay, 2015). It is necessary to train and support teachers regarding all processes and procedures to instill confidence and assure that implementing the Georgia RTI model occurs with fidelity.

Progress monitoring. The progress-monitoring tool is an essential part of ensuring the fidelity of implementing an RTI model occurs with tracking and documenting student academic or behavioral progress (Johnson & Mellard, 2014). When teachers document students' progress, they are provided with the opportunity to make data-driven decisions to plan their instructional approach to address students' academic or behavioral concerns (Ciullo, Lembke, Carlisle, Thomas, Goodwin, & Judd, 2016). According to the ESSA (2015) and the IDEA (2004), teachers must provide the necessary support by screening, intervening, and monitoring to determine students' needs and begin closing the achievement gap (Castro-Villarrel et al., 2014; National Education Association, 2015). The purpose of progress monitoring students within the context of RTI is to increase student achievement by focusing on best practices for instruction to ensure every student achieves (Ciullo et al., 2016; Sharp, Sanders, Noltemeyer, Hoffman, & Boone, 2015). The laws of ESSA (2015) and IDEA (2004) both assist with instructional practices and identify the significance of supporting all students by

specifically addressing their instructional needs (Castro-Villarrel et al., 2014; National Education Association, 2015), which may be done with the various tiers of the RTI framework and monitored to reveal students' outcomes.

Documenting the progress monitoring of interventions can drive the instructional approaches of teachers and impact the student achievement in either a successful or unsuccessful manner (Berry-Kuchle, Zumeta-Edmonds, Danielson, Peterson, & Riley-Tillman, 2015). When teachers change their instructional approaches to meet their students' needs, they have specifically differentiated instruction that allows students to increase their academics with their specific deficits (Huffman, Hipp, Pankake, & Moller, 2014; Johnson et al., 2014). The process of progress monitoring may only be effective if the data retrieved is used to help students achieve academic success.

The RTI model has several different tiers of instruction, which requires teachers to progress monitor students' academics and behavior concerns (Berry-Kuchle et al., 2015). When school administrators adopt an RTI model progress monitoring is a key component in the process, as it determines if the RTI model is working as intended (Malloy et al., 2015). Progress monitoring helps with student learning because their instruction is monitored (Joseph, Kastein, Konrad, Chan, Peter, & Ressa, 2014). Additionally, the process of progress monitoring is essential to evaluating a program (Huffman et al., 2014; Joseph et al., 2014). As a result of progress monitoring, the fidelity of implementing RTI can be determined if the intervention is effective based upon the results. RTI is a model, which includes research-based interventions as well as progress monitoring that may be

difficult for teachers who may not have participated in RTI professional development (Huffman et al., 2014). Professional development is necessary for implementing the RTI model with fidelity.

Professional development. Professional development is a fundamental part of teachers developing skills needed to assist them in improving their instruction (Han, 2014). Teachers who engage in professional development may reflect upon their current instructional practices and strive to advance their future instructional practices. According to Brown and Inglis (2013), a number of reasons can impede or enable early childhood teachers' implementation practice within their classroom, but in order to guarantee implementation skills improve, teachers must be provided professional development that is ongoing. Brown and Inglis (2013) suggested, "ongoing professional development could potentially increase teachers' level of self-efficacy to implement new initiatives within their instructional practices" (pp. 12-13). Brown and Inglis (2013) also believed teachers needed to move through three distinctive phases of capacity building to provide continuity and meaningful professional development. These phases consist of prioritizing a vision for learning, developing professional development and a support session with an expert, and focusing on creating an environment for a support session with experts in the field to consolidate understandings and allow for support with other teachers (Brown et al., 2013).

When teachers have continuous ongoing professional development, they feel confident with implementing new practices. Teacher competence and teacher retention increase when the campus level and administrative support provide

meaningful professional development on a school level (Burkman, 2012; Schumacher, Grigsby, & Vesey, 2015). In a study conducted by Chong and Kong (2012) they discussed that effective professional development enhances teachers' self-efficacy because professional development facilitators take the time to organize and identify teachers' needs to assure success with implementing a new initiative. Furthermore, teachers who participate in professional development where they have support and build confidence with implementing new skills have better opportunities to motivate students in their everyday practices (Cordingley, 2015; Powers, Kaniuka, Phillips, & Cain, 2016).

Professional development (PD) is defined as an engaging workshop for teachers to participate in professional dialogue for improvements in their instructional practices and understanding of the content presented to improve student learning (Masuda, Ebersole, & Barrett, 2013). Professional development is important for teachers because PD makes teachers aware of the important advances occurring in education that will impact the learning environment (Gumus & Kemal, 2013). High-quality and effective professional development is significant to ensuring change takes place in education (Quint, 2011; Sagir, 2014). Jones, Stall, and Yarbrough (2013) have suggested that effective and meaningful professional development must include these key concepts: time and organization, relevance, and follow-up. Vislocky (2013) also reported that successful professional development provided opportunities for collaborative learning, improved curriculum and teaching, increased active learning, deeper knowledge of content, increased strategies of how to teach content, and sustained learning

over a period of time. With these elements addressed in professional development, teachers will find success and enjoy the results of their efforts by facilitating improved teaching and learning in every classroom for every student and implemented RTI with fidelity (McCoy, 2014). By investigating teacher and administrator perceptions on the fidelity of implementing Georgia RTI model, school administrators and teachers can review my findings that will be outlined in professional development training sessions: the PD training sessions will include policy recommendations and suggestions that may prompt collaborative discussions and lead to a more effective and refined RTI implementation process.

Implications

The implications of the research will assist school district leaders, school administrators, and teachers to engage in a collaborative discussion to make decisions pertaining to implementing a more effective RTI model. Information and evidence conveyed through the study may provide new instructional best practices needed for teachers and administrators to understand and to implement the Georgia RTI model with fidelity (Murakami-Ramalho et al., 2012). Additionally, the research results and evidences suggested effective professional development content needed for teachers and administrators to establish a better understanding of the Georgia RTI model processes. Researchers have indicated that through professional development teachers can become aware of what RTI entails as well as address concerns with ongoing professional development while implementing an RTI model (Robinson et al., 2013; Sanger et al., 2012). This

case study focused on collecting data from teachers and administrator interviews, surveys, and review of archived documents to assess teacher and administrator perspective on the fidelity of implementing the Georgia RTI model. Professional development training was developed and included for participants, school instructional staff members, school district leaders, and school administrators at the conclusion of this doctoral project study.

Summary

The reauthorization of IDEA (2004), NCLB (2002), and the provisions of the ESSA (2015) mandated and prompted “school districts throughout the country to implement the RTI model as a data-driven and prevention-based framework for improving student achievement results” (Harrington et al., 2016, pp. 278-279; Kuo, 2014, p. 611; Swanson et al., 2012, pp. 115-117). While one of the primary goals of the RTI model is to guarantee academic success for all students (Kuo, 2014), in comparison the ESSA (2015) was established so that academic success and opportunities for all students should be provided in an effort for students to succeed academically (National Education Association, 2015). Although school districts have implemented RTI, the effectiveness of school district teachers’ and administrator’s implementation process varies, leading to poor implementation practices and inconsistent RTI models being implemented (Keller-Margulis, 2012; Sylvester et al., 2012). Section 1 of this doctoral project study focused on the problem of a local school fidelity of implementing the Georgia RTI model, which was adopted for all schools to use within the district, but schools were allowed to develop their own implementation process and

procedures of the RTI model. District leaders and school-based leaders within the district revealed that teachers were expressing difficulty with the new model for RTI (Jaffe, 2013; personal communication, March 30, 2015). The literature review addressed the implementation of science framework, RTI components, and challenges, fidelity of implementation, progress monitoring, and professional development as they relate to the implementation of the Georgia RTI model. As a result, the findings of this study may be used to recommend practices and strategies to implement the Georgia RTI model with fidelity for teachers and administrators to understand and use with deeper knowledge in urban elementary schools in the form of professional development trainings.

In Section 2 of this project study, I described the methodology of this doctoral project study. The methodology includes a description of the research design and approach, the setting and sample, instruments and materials, data collection and analysis, assumptions, limitations, scope, delimitation, measures taken for the ethical treatment of participants, and the logical and systematic outcomes.

Section 2: The Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this doctoral project study was to assess teacher and administrator perceptions of the fidelity of implementing the Georgia RTI model at one campus using teacher and administrator interviews, surveys, and review of archived documents. By investigating teacher and administrator perceptions regarding the fidelity of implementing the Georgia RTI model, teachers and administrators' abilities to implement RTI with a greater fidelity will enhance. This doctoral study helped with the school's fidelity of implementing the Georgia RTI model processes and procedures. The results of this doctoral project study was designed to assist district leaders, school administrators, and teachers to engage in a collaborative discussion to make decisions pertaining to implementing a more effective RTI model. To assess teacher and administrator perceptions on the fidelity of implementing the Georgia RTI model, this doctoral project study focused on the following research question:

How do teachers and administrators perceive the fidelity of implementing the four- tiered RTI model as related to effective interventions, implementation methods, enabling contexts, and intended outcomes at the study site?

In Section 2 of this doctoral project study, I discuss the methodology used to determine the findings regarding the research question discussed in Section 1. I conducted a case study approach that focused on interviews, surveys, and a review of archived documents using a heterogeneous group of K-3rd grade

teachers and administrators in an urban elementary school in southeastern Fulton Georgia. To determine how teachers and administrators perceive the fidelity of implementing the Georgia RTI model, I used teacher and administrator interviews, Assessment of the Fidelity of Response to Intervention Components (*AFRTIC*) surveys, and a review of archived documents, which included the school district RTI implementation plan. The school RTI PD plan was not reviewed because the school did not have an RTI professional development created and developed. The Assessment of the Fidelity of Response to Intervention Components is a survey tool, which was adapted from the Response-to-Intervention School Readiness Survey (*RTISRS*) 2006, designed by Wright (2010) to collect data from participants. These data sources provided a deeper understanding and shed light on the local gaps in practice that may exist and impact on the fidelity of RTI implementation for teachers and administrators. In addition, in Section 2, I present the sample procedures, data collection, and data analysis methods. By employing a qualitative case study approach, data were obtained that will provide a rich and detailed description of the perceptions of the K-3rd grade elementary teacher and administrator perceptions and viewpoints in relation to the fidelity of implementing the Georgia RTI model in the local school district. I analyzed the data to determine if there are gaps in practice such as a lack of understanding, a lack of resources, and training based upon teacher and administrator perceptions. The data from this project study suggest best practices to be utilized that will assist with implementing the RTI process with fidelity.

Research Design and Approach

A qualitative case study research design was selected to assess teacher and administrator perceptions on the fidelity of implementing the Georgia RTI model at Elementary School C using teacher and administrator interviews, surveys, and review of archived documents. According to Creswell (2012), qualitative research is used when the variables are unknown and the researcher must gain information from participants about the phenomenon of the study. Qualitative researchers focus on understanding how people perceive their experiences and the significance they may apply to their experiences that may have had in a realistic setting (Creswell, 2012; Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2015). Additionally, Yin (2015) explained that qualitative research provides the opportunity for developing new inquiries and concepts. With this qualitative bounded case study data that investigated teacher and administrator perceptions on the fidelity of implementing the Georgia RTI I produced recommendations to address current concerns, to suggest further supports, and to enhance the fidelity of implementing RTI.

Description of the Qualitative Tradition

In this doctoral project study, the research was qualitative in nature and followed a case study research design. Lodico et al., (2010) and Yin (2015) defined qualitative research as taking place in a natural setting, representing the views and perspectives of people, where participants are selected through nonrandom methods, using multiple sources of evidences, and emerging data that may help to explain the problem or explain human social behaviors as result of

findings. Data were collected to gain a deeper understanding of the perceptions of teachers and administrators based on their experiences with the fidelity of implementing RTI. A summary of these data collected from interviews, open-ended surveys, and archival documents were written as a narrative that was analyzed to identify common themes. Additionally, a case study research design allowed for the opportunity to study real life phenomenon. This gave me the ability to explore and understand the problem in an authentic context to make recommendations or challenge current practices. Merriam (2009) defined case studies as in-depth descriptions and analyses of a bounded system. Further, “case studies focus on revealing meaning to an investigated problem or process from an individual, group, or situation to develop a great sense of understanding or vision of the problem” (Lodico et al., 2010, p. 269). Case studies are bounded by a limited amount of participants ranging from one or two to 30 or 40, simply meaning limits can be created by the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2012; Merriam, 2009). This type of study allowed me to gather information guided by my research question.

Justification for Qualitative Case Study Tradition

The case study qualitative research design was selected based on the nature of this project study that explored a social problem. Yin (2015) described case study as “a realistic investigation of a modern and common phenomenon within a real-life experience, using multiple sources of evidence for support of findings” (pp. 3-6). This tradition aligns with the problem because of the limited research on teacher and administrator perceptions on the FOI of RTI in an urban

elementary setting. An understanding of how teacher and administrator experiences and perceptions toward RTI implementation is important to make better suggestions for an effective RTI model with fidelity for similar school settings. By conducting this qualitative case study, the data collected from interviews and surveys were used to present the experiences of teachers and administrators, and their beliefs and concerns regarding RTI implementation. These experiences helped develop best practice recommendations and suggestions in a form of PD training sessions to the participants, school district leaders, and school administrators to better support teachers and support staff members. The review of archived documents data included the school district RTI implementation plan that provided a better understanding of the practices and implementation procedures of the RTI model. Furthermore, the results of this study can lead to the school district leaders having discussions and making changes that may ultimately impact student achievement for all learners.

Rationale for Not Selecting Other Qualitative Research Tradition

There are three qualitative research designs that were not selected for this project study. They include ethnographic research, grounded theory, and phenomenological theory.

An ethnographic research design was not selected because ethnographic studies investigate interactions of individuals or small groups in a setting that belongs to a cultural group, while requiring “the researcher to be a part of the group being studied in effort to gain the perspective of the participants” (Lodico et al., 2010, p. 15). By using a case study, gathering information could be done

through multiple sources and perspectives without becoming a part of the participants' environment or culture (Lodico et al., 2010).

Grounded theory design explores to develop a theory based upon data from the setting, which is not the goal of this project study. Researchers who select to use grounded theory as their research design seek to provide a better explanation or theory due to lack of support of existing theories related to the problem or participants being studied (Creswell, 2012). In a case study, the researcher identifies a problem and collects data to reveal themes and possible solutions.

A phenomenological research design was not selected because phenomenological studies seek to capture the essence of multiple people experiences, perspectives, and understandings of a phenomenon by the researcher immersing themselves in the lives of the participants being studied (Yin, 2015). This requires a prolonged engagement in this field to obtain information (Yin, 2015). The use of a case study was selected because of the limited number of participants. The case study method provided a better understanding of phenomenon studied in a deeper manner.

Participants

Population and Sampling Procedures

The setting for this study was in a public school district located in the southeastern part of the United States. The district contains 57 elementary schools, 19 middle schools, 17 high schools, and 8 charter organizations (FCBOE, n.d.) In addition, within the local school district, there are 96,200 students

enrolled throughout the district at the elementary grade levels (K-5), middle grades levels (6-8), and high school levels (9-12) (FCBOE, n.d). During the 2015-2016 school year, there were more than 6,500 teachers and other certified educators employed within the local school district (FCBOE, n.d.). One elementary school was chosen out of the local school district because the school was required to implement the Georgia RTI model, which was initially adopted for all 101 schools within the local school district to implement based upon a district-wide initiative (FCBOE, n.d). The selected school, Elementary School C, was also chosen because I do not work at the school and had no relationship with the prospective participants. The local school selected for the study implemented the new RTI model, but the campus principals, supervisory personnel, administrators, and the 32 elementary teachers expressed implementation issues with the new RTI model more than similar elementary campuses within the school district (personal communication, March 25, 2015). Additionally, teachers expressed that the RTI identification and documentation process was time-consuming and tedious to complete (personal communication, March 25, 2015). A teacher reported from 2014 through 2015 additional concerns with the RTI process, such as lengthy required documentation, inconsistency of RTI models, lack of understanding, lack of resources when implementing interventions required by the RTI model, as well as a lack of training regarding the process of RTI implementation (personal communication, March 29, 2015).

The targeted population of interest for this study was the 32 elementary K-3rd grade teachers and six administrators employed in the selected school. This

resulted in a total of 38 participants invited to participate in the study. The 38 teachers and administrators were selected for this study using purposeful sampling. The primary criteria for selecting participants were as follows: (a) employed as Kindergarten to 3rd grade elementary teachers at the selected school, (b) employed as administrators/support staff at the selected school, and (c) actively participated in the process and procedures of the implementation of the RTI model. The sample was reduced based upon the number of participants who voluntarily agreed to participate in the doctoral project study, which were five Kindergarten-3rd grade teachers and four administrators. Additionally, inviting 38 participants allowed me to have more participants than needed in case a participant later decided not to participate, thus reducing the sample size. In an effort to guarantee saturation of the central phenomenon of the study, only a few cases are necessary in qualitative case studies along with other data (Creswell 2012; Lodico et al., 2010; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2015), which supported my sample size of participants if any participant decided not to participate or withdrew from the study.

Criteria for Selecting Participants

The population for this project study included 9 participants who agreed to voluntarily participate out of 38 targeted potential participants who were invited. The study consisted of one Kindergarten teacher, two 2nd grade teachers, two 3rd grade teachers, a Special Education Lead teacher, Curriculum Instruction Specialist, SST/RTI chair, and a Principal, (see Table 1) who are actively involved in the RTI process and responsible for implementing RTI with fidelity.

When selecting participants for the study, the process of purposeful sampling was used. Creswell (2012) defined purposeful sampling as, “the selection of individuals or sites that can best help the research understand the central phenomenon” (p. 206). The primary criteria for selecting the pool of potential participants included: (a) employed as a Kindergarten to 3rd grade elementary teachers at the selected school, (b) employed as administrator/support staff at the selected school and, (c) each actively participated in the process and procedures of the implementation of the RTI model. This assured an effort to provide a deeper understanding, and insight into the case study (Creswell, 2012; Merriam, 2009). Once the teachers and administrators agreed to participate they were coded alphanumerical Teacher 1: T1, Teacher 2: T2, Administrator 1: A1, Administrator 2: A2 and so on to assure that data collected and identity of the teachers and administrators remained confidential.

Table 1

Summary of Participants’ Demographic Information

Category*		Gender		Current assignment *	
Administrator	44%	Male	22%	PK-5 th	44%
K-3 rd Teacher	55%	Female	78%	K-3 rd	55%
Support Staff	33%			Pk-5 th	33%

Note. N = 9

* Participants could meet requirements for multiple categories.

Justification for Number of Participants

Those invited to participate in the study had to be Kindergarten through

3rd grade teachers and administrators at the selected school and each invitee had to be an active participant in the process and procedures of the implementing of the RTI model. The purposeful selection of Kindergarten through 3rd grade teachers was based upon research which, found that students in K-3rd grade students were identified with academic and behavior challenges (Lipsev et al., 2015). As evident by state standardized test scores between 2014 and 2015, 57% of third grade students were beginning learners in English Language Arts and 46% of third grade students were beginning learners in Mathematics (Georgia Department of Education, 2015). These test results of the third grade students indicated that a majority of third graders were struggling to meet the state requirements according to the Georgia Common Core Standards (Georgia Department of Education, 2015). The results of the high percentage rate of students identified as beginner learners indicate that these students were Tier 2 or Tier 3 students according to the Georgia RTI model and they were below grade level expectations (Georgia Department of Education, 2015). By assessing the fidelity of implementing the Georgia RTI model with K-3rd grade teachers and administrators, students benefit from a change within instructional practices that could close the achievement gap for all learners. Additionally, the teachers and administrators who participated with the process and procedures with implementing the Georgia RTI model were able to share their experiences and viewpoints in an effort to present deeper inquiry about RTI processes and procedures. Qualitative researchers seek to reveal an in-depth rich description and understanding of a defined setting, group, or person (Creswell, 2012; Yin

2015). Merriam (2009) explained that qualitative researchers are concerned with revealing detailed and specific knowledge about the topic being investigated, while quantitative researchers are interested in generalizing their findings from their participants. When conducting qualitative research it is suggested to have few individuals as participants ranging from one or two to 30 or 40 in an effort to yield the most relevant and plentiful data given of the selected topic of study (Creswell, 2012; Yin, 2015). The purposeful sample method used for this study allowed for in-depth data to be collected from all or just a few participants that agreed to participate in the study. Those participants who agreed to participate in the study were five teachers and four administrators, who met the purposeful sample criteria and provided relevant information regarding the central phenomenon (Creswell, 2012; Yin, 2015).

Procedures for Gaining Access to Participants

Permission to conduct research throughout the local school district began with approval from the local school district's research department. I contacted the Director of Research and Evaluation and was informed that the local school principal would be the person responsible for approval to conduct the study (personal communication, June 6, 2015). The Director of Research and Evaluation informed me that permission to conduct study must be obtained from the principal of the identified school due to the limited amount of participants (personal communication, June 6, 2015). First, I contacted the principal for the selected school for the study by email to schedule a meeting to discuss the intended study and obtain a letter of cooperation to conduct the study with

teachers and administrators within the school. Next, I was informed by the principal to email the purpose of the research study outlined in an Invitation to Participate Letter. Then, the principal wrote a Letter of Cooperation and forwarded to me, giving me permission to conduct the study at the selected school. Last, the principal instructed me to contact the RTI chair at the school to provide me with the names of teachers and administrators who met the selection criteria, which was K-3rd grade teachers and administrators or support staff employed at the selected school of study and were active in the process and procedures of the implementation of the RTI model. I contacted the RTI chair who provided me with the names of possible participants. The RTI chair was invited to participate in the study as an administrator.

Upon completing the Walden University IRB application submission, I secured approval from Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) (approval #03-14-17-0397515). Next, I used the list of possible participants provided by the RTI chair to email and request the participants' permission to be part of the study. I notified the potential participants in a confidential email for the initial solicitation, with the Intent of Study Form, and the Informed Consent Form. The Informed Consent Form contained a link for an electronic signature to be obtained for potential participants who agreed to be a part of the study. The information in the Intent of Study Form and Informed Consent clarified the participant's potential role in the study, benefits provided to them, and stipulated participants were under no obligation to participate. The participants were asked to respond to the Informed Consent Form within 10 days. The participants

returned their electronic signature on the Informed Consent Form using their personal email. I reviewed participants' responses to make further contact with participants to establish a researcher-participant working relationship in effort to begin the data collection process.

Methods of Establishing a Researcher-Participant Working Relationship

I worked to develop a researcher-participant relationship to safeguard all individuals so that they felt at ease with sharing their perceptions and beliefs with me prior to, during, and in post interviews and survey data collection process. I achieved a researcher-participant relationship by obtaining approval to conduct research from the selected school of study, the principal, Walden University IRB, and by obtaining informed consent from potential participants. In addition, I achieved a researcher-participant relationship by ensuring that the participants understood their responsibilities if they agreed to participate in this doctoral project study. I explained the purpose of the study, the data collection procedures, the voluntary nature of the study, the risks, benefits of being in the study, and confidentiality of their participation. My contact information, as the researcher, was also included within the Intent of Study Form and the Informed Consent Form (Maxwell, 2013). I notified the potential participants in a confidential email for the initial solicitation, with the Intent of Study Form, and the Informed Consent Form. The Informed Consent Form contained a link for an electronic signature to obtain potential participant signatures for agreeing to participate. To ensure potential participants did not feel their participation was a school mandate,

the voluntary nature of the study was reiterated at the top of the email sent to the teachers and administrators.

Ten days after sending the initial solicitation email with the Intent of Study Form and Informed Consent Form to the 38 K-3rd grade teachers and administrators who were potential participants at Elementary School C within the local school district, I checked for the returned electronic signed Informed Consent Forms. I contacted the nine participants individually who returned the electronic signed Informed Consent Form via a confidential email to request basic contact information. This information included the participant's name, email address, and phone numbers. Contact was made via email to confirm and schedule a date, time, and location to conduct a face-to-face interview.

During the face-to-face interview, the participants received an unsigned copy of the Informed Consent Form to review throughout the data collection process, which included interviews, RTI surveys, and member checks by all participants. The administrator was asked to submit archival documents to me. I began the conversation with the participants by general introductory conversations not related to the topic of this doctoral project study to establish a friendly rapport. Following the brief and general introductory conversation, I acknowledged the participants for their involvement in the study and discussed the details of the Informed Consent. I reiterated the purpose of the study, the research procedures, and methods to protect confidentiality for clarity and understanding. This allowed the participants to be comfortable with the researcher-participant relationship during the process of data collection and

established an environment where participants were relaxed and open to asking questions. Merriam (2009) suggested that qualitative researchers were instrumental in the data collection process and for ensuring a positive researcher-participant relationship and for addressing any ethical issues that might arise. In an effort to have minimal conflicts of interest or ethical issues, I interacted with participants as the researcher only. I assured that participants would not be identified by name or by any information that would reveal their identity by coding the teachers and administrators alphanumerical (i.e. Teacher 1: T1, Teacher 2: T2, Administrator 1: A1, Administrator 2: A2) and so on. All information concerning the study was confidential. PD training sessions were recommended, outlined, and disseminated to participants, school district leaders, teachers, support staff members, and school administrators at the conclusion of this doctoral project study. All information collected was utilized only for the purpose of this study and was not released to others. The data are secured in a locked file cabinet in my home office and will be destroyed after 5 years. The researcher-participant relationship supported the ethical protection of participants during the process of the study and during the process of participants who chose to withdraw from the study at any time.

Ethical Protection of Participants

An IRB application was submitted containing information about the process of data collection and data analysis for approval secured from Walden University IRB ([#03-14-17-0397515](#)) for this study. Participants who were asked to participate in the study received information about the purpose of the study,

procedures, voluntary nature of the study, the risks, benefits of participating in the study, confidentiality of the study, and the researcher's contact information. The participants of the study, their place of employment, and identifying factors were kept confidential. Only I had knowledge of the true identities of each participant in this study. I asked participants to sign electronically the Informed Consent Form prior to their participation in the study. I communicated by email through a secured personal email in which I was the only person with the password. The benefits and potential risks were reviewed with participants prior to conducting an interview and survey. Additionally, the participants were informed that they were free to discontinue their participation at any time during the study. I guaranteed that all information was kept confidential by coding and securing data in a manner in which participants would experience no privacy violation, perceived coercion, social or economic loss, psychological stress, or health effects. The participant responses and information would remain confidential by coding alphanumeric such as Teacher 1: T1, Teacher 2: T2, Administrator 1: A1, or Administrator 2: A2, to represent each participant. The responses and information were kept confidential by securing and storing all paper copies of data and electronic copies of data in a locked file cabinet within my home. The electronic data were collected and coded from each participant in a password-protected email and stored within an encrypted file on my home computer. This assured that I am the only one able to identify and have access to participants' information. The ethical protection of all participants was assured based upon my knowledge and

understanding of ethical protection as evidence by my certification from The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research (Appendix E).

Data Collection

Justification for Data Collection Methods

According to Merriam (2009), qualitative case studies involve the researcher collecting data to conduct a total integration of all factors in an interactive and holistic manner for data analysis. As the researcher, collection of data occurred through semi-structured interviews, open-ended *AFRTIC* surveys, and review of archived documents related to the problem including the school district RTI implementation plan and the school RTI PD plan. The school district RTI plan is a document that listed the district RTI implementation process and procedures. The school RTI PD plan may have included information regarding the scheduled RTI professional development offered to teachers and administrators in the local school district, but the school RTI PD plan was not submitted. The school RTI PD plan was not collected and submitted because it was not created or developed for review for this study.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted after participants submitted their Informed Consent Form by electronically signing agreement to voluntarily participate in this study. Interviews were conducted one-on-one at a preferred location suggested by the participant. When all participants' interviews were completed, the participants were informed that a confidential email would be sent with a link for the open-ended *AFRTIC* survey to be completed. The Teacher and Administrator Interview Protocols can be found in Appendix B.

The final form of data collection was archived documents, which at the time of obtaining consent from the principal of the selected school of study and Walden University IRB, archived documents were requested. I requested a copy of the school district RTI implementation plan and the school's RTI PD plan from the school principal. I only received a school-wide RTI implementation plan. The school's archived documents did not contain a school wide RTI professional development plan. Therefore, I could not analyze the school RTI professional development plan. The Archived Document Review protocol that was used to analyze the documents can be found in Appendix D. These data collection sources enabled me to understand teacher and administrator perceptions on the fidelity of implementing the RTI framework. Data collection procedures took approximately 8 weeks: two weeks to conduct the face-to-face interviews with each participant who voluntarily agreed to participate in the study; two weeks to send and collect *AFRTIC* surveys; one week to review the archived documents; and three weeks to analyze and transcribe, member-check, code and input data collected from interviews, *AFRTIC* surveys, and archived documents into the password-protected Survey Monkey Program to find common themes (Yin, 2014). The projected timeline for data collection were flexible and adjusted based upon the participant's availability.

Interviews

A semi-structured, open-ended question approach was used for interviews and provided responses to the project study. Each interview lasted between 30-45 minutes to allow adequate time for questioning and responding to 10 open-ended

questions. The interviews were planned on days and times determined by the participants outside their normal duty schedule. The protocol for how the interviews were conducted was explained in the initial participant's Informed Consent Form. The interview questions were prepared, formal, and semi-structured questions, as well as probing questions used as follow-up based upon the responses provided by participants to insure a thorough understanding of the participant's perceptions (Hu, Found, Williams, & Mason, 2014). The interview questions created were aligned with my research question and conceptual framework and were based on research from the literature review that contained questions on teacher and administrator perceptions on the fidelity of implementing the RTI framework (Appendix B). The questions were developed based on the knowledge the researcher was seeking to understand about teacher and administrator perceptions regarding the fidelity of implementing the Georgia RTI model. This knowledge may provide a greater understanding of the level of RTI implemented, resources, and ongoing RTI PD needed to allow teachers and administrators the ability to implement RTI with greater fidelity. There were probes used to receive feedback on questions prior to conducting the interviews to determine if reformulating questions were needed to improve the quality of data collection (Kallio, Pietila, Johnson, & Kangasniemi, 2016). The feedback on interview questions validated that the interview protocol included the types of responses I was expecting to answer my guiding research question (Kallio et al., 2016). To make certain the interview questions were appropriate, I asked two district administrators, one curriculum specialist, and one methodologist to review

and to provide feedback regarding the interview questions. This review of interview questions clarified any points as needed to guarantee that questions were clear and reliable prior to conducting interviews.

Interviews were conducted one-on-one at a preferred location for the participant. I asked 10 open-ended interview questions and recorded the participant's response. In this setting the participants were more comfortable and willing to share and articulate their ideas (Creswell, 2012; Yin, 2015). I used a recording device to document the interviews. When using a qualitative research design, face-to-face interviews allowed me the capability to acquire information from others with the purpose of collecting information from the participant's perspective. Yin (2014) explained when interviewing each individual participant, the researcher gathers detailed information from observing the participant's behavior to questions and attitude toward the topic of study, which leads to documenting the participant's perspective and understanding the participant's responses. Therefore, purposefully written field notes were taken throughout the interviews to record the participant's verbal and nonverbal responses. The field notes assisted me in describing what was observed or heard during the interviews, as well as I wrote questions or comments I may have had (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Lodico et al., 2010). The interviews were audio recorded and labeled with the assigned numeric pseudonym. All interview data were transcribed into an encrypted Word file document, verbatim, so that an electronic case study database could be coded, analyzed, and stored or retrieved post research (Yin, 2014). Using an audio recording device and interview protocol helped minimize any

anticipated ethical issues that might bring harm to the participants, such as risks, confidentiality, deception, and informed consent (Creswell, 2012; Yin, 2014).

I conducted each participant's interview and submitted a draft of each participant's findings to them for member checking to determine accuracy of their own data reported within two weeks. Each participant was contacted in a confidential email to conduct member checking which was a review of the draft and their edits. Each participant had the opportunity to member check the draft of their interview data findings to approve or correct misconceptions for accuracy. Participants checked the electronic link within the confidential email to approve or correct misconceptions for accuracy; as a result, all participants approved their findings for accuracy of this study. The process of member checking was used so participants could assess the accuracy of the findings and minimize any ethical issues (Creswell, 2012). Additionally, each participant was reminded about the Informed Consent Form and the data collection process of the *AFRTIC* survey at the conclusion of interviews. The survey was sent in the form of a link in a confidential email and all participants completed the survey electronically to assess the fidelity of implementing the Georgia RTI model of the selected school of study.

Survey

One survey instrument was used in this study: the Assessment of the Fidelity of Response to Intervention Components (*AFRTIC*), which was adapted from the Response-to-Intervention School Readiness Survey (*RTISRS*) 2006, designed by Wright (2010). Permission from the author was obtained to use the

survey in its entirety with adaptations. The *AFRTIC* was designed as a tool to aid schools in monitoring the RTI implementation process (Appendix A). Wright (2010) indicated that the awareness of best instructional practices, multiple methods for assessing students' abilities, and monitoring students' progress are necessary tools for implementing RTI processes and procedures effectively. *AFRTIC* is a survey designed to help school administrators identify the elements of RTI in which teachers are competent as well as areas that need additional support (Wright, 2010).

The K-3rd grade teacher and administrator participants were notified at the end of the face-to-face interview via a confidential email that the survey would be in the form of a link. The survey protocol was emailed confidentially, which indicated how the *AFRTIC* had been tested for validity, how data would be used, and the expected time for completing the survey was two weeks. The *AFRTIC* was inputted electronically using the Survey Monkey Program. A link to the survey was shared in the protocol email. Each participant was asked to open the survey link to complete the survey, which should have lasted about 5 minutes. Once I received each participant survey, the data were transcribed into an electronic Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and analyzed using descriptive statistics. The Microsoft Excel spreadsheet was imported into the Survey Monkey Program to allow the process of organizing, sorting, analyzing, coding, and searching for common themes and patterns using the program filter system. Findings were reported using descriptive statistics.

The survey was divided into five sections: (a) RTI: Understand the RTI

Model, (b) Response to Intervention: Use Teams to Problem-Solve, (c) RTI: Select the Right Intervention, (d) RTI: Monitor Student Progress and, (e) RTI: Graph for Visual Analysis. The survey consisted of 26 questions with four answer choices. As Wright (2010) suggested, participants were directed to respond to each item indicating the level of their knowledge of RTI, using the following scale: 0 (lacking basic knowledge of RTI); 1 (starting to learn RTI); 2 (developing awareness of RTI); or 3 (fully knowledgeable of RTI). The research data analysis from the surveys were transcribed into a narrative form and then coded or labeled using the Survey Monkey Program to identify common themes and patterns.

When using an instrument, it is important that the tool is reliable and valid, meaning the scores from the instrument are stable, consistent, and valid (Creswell, 2012). According to Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007), Cronbach's alpha, is a common reliability statistic used to distinguish internal dependability or average correlation of statements in the *AFRTIC* survey instrument. Gall et al., (2007) explained the reliability of coefficient ranges from 0 to 1 might be used to describe the reliability of components revealed from the survey. In context, the higher the core, the more reliable the scale will be. These researchers explained that 0.70 is considered an acceptable reliability (Gall et al., 2007). Wright (2010) used the Cronbach's alpha approach to examine each statement of the *AFRTIC* survey. Wright (2010) indicated that in the *AFRTIC*, the Cronbach's alpha procedure lead to the reliability of the *AFRTIC* survey to 0.81 based upon the relationship of a statement with the total variability score compared to an individual statement

variability score. This Cronbach's alpha value suggested the alpha should be at least 0.70 in order to consider the survey as reliable (Wright, 2010). Additionally, the author of the *AFRTIC* has indicated several teachers, school administrators, district-level personnel, and a content review committee of university professors have extensively field-tested and critiqued the *AFRTIC* over many years to establish content validity (Wright, 2010). The survey data collected from each participant were analyzed to confirm reliability and validity. Upon collecting survey data I analyzed the data by transcribing it into a narrative form and then coding or labeling findings using the Survey Monkey Program. The final method of data collection was to review archived documents submitted by each administrator participant.

Review of Related Documents

After I obtained consent from Walden University IRB to conduct this study, I requested archived documents from the principal of the selected school of study. I requested a copy of the school district RTI implementation plan and the school RTI PD plans as it relates to the central phenomenon from the school principal. I was only provided with the school district RTI implementation plan. The archived document did not contain a school wide RTI professional development plan because it was not created. The Archived Document Review protocol used to analyze the documents is in Appendix C. I received archived documents that provided additional insights into types of activities and processes that teachers and administrators planned during the implementation process of the Georgia RTI model during the 2014-2015 school year (Merriam, 2009). In

addition, archived documents provided richer sources of information that could increase the validity of interview and survey data (Creswell, 2012; Yin, 2014). The requested archived documents from the administrators included: (a) the school district 2014-2015 RTI implementation plan and, (b) the 2014-2015 RTI school PD plan, as it related to the central phenomenon of the study.

The school district RTI implementation plan identified the process and procedures teachers and administrators are supposed to follow throughout the school district RTI implementation process. The archived document did not contain a school wide RTI professional development plan because it was not created and available for review of this study. The information obtained from the archived document revealed noticeable trends and emerging themes found in the interview and survey data collection process. Yin (2014) suggested that multiple sources of data, such as documents, help the researcher interpret the central phenomenon by the means of triangulation. The archived document did not reveal the teacher and administrator perceptions, but provided other reliable information according to the Archived Document Review Protocol Appendix C, which resulted in additional insights regarding the problems and concerns with the current fidelity of implementing the Georgia RTI model processes and procedures.

Systems for Keeping Track of Data

The privacy and confidentiality of participant data were protected always using alphanumerical Teacher 1: T1, Teacher 2: T2, Administrator 1: A1, Administrator 2: A2, and so on. I was the only person conducting and handling

the interview recording and transcripts. To ensure the confidentiality of participants, all paper copies of interviews and electronic copies of interviews were stored on a USB device, and secured in the researcher's home office locked file cabinet. The provisions to safeguard the protection of data included a locked file cabinet and confidential passwords. The original document of all forms, typed field notes of surveys, interviews, and personal notes was uploaded in encrypted file documents and kept on a password-protected computer that could only be accessed by me. Upon the completion of each interview, I immediately transcribed the audio of the interviews into a Word document of findings. The transcribed data collected from interviews was uploaded to a USB device in the form of an encrypted file document and secured in my locked home office file cabinet. All emails and correspondences sent to the study site administrator and participants were saved and secured electronically as well.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher in this study was to purposefully select and choose participants, conduct interviews and surveys, collect and review archived documents, and analyze the data provided by each participant. Researchers who use purposeful sampling intend to gain information from participants who have the best knowledge concerning the research topic (Elo, Kääriäinen, Kanste, Pölkki, Utriainen, & Kyngäs, 2014). Taking on the role of a researcher, it was impossible for me to completely immerse myself into the data and not become affected (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). According to Creswell (2012), when conducting qualitative research, the researcher becomes a part of the study, while

recognizing biases, values, and interests. Although I was not a member of the faculty or staff at the selected school of the study, there could have been some personal biases brought to the study that were related to the topic, due to my past experiences teaching grades K-3rd and implementing the RTI framework.

Currently, I do not teach grades K-3rd in the local school district. I am a school counselor in another school district for grades K-5th. Although I work with students and teachers in an elementary setting, I further minimized the influences of my experiences and biases as I conducted each interview by acknowledging them within a personal research journal.

Corbin and Strauss (2015) stated that maintaining a personal research journal would permit one to recognize any biases throughout the data collection and analysis process. A personal researcher journal “documents a history of the thoughts, activities, and viewpoints that are awakened during the research” (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 102). Although there are numerous approaches often involved when teaching adults (andragogy) paralleled to children (pedagogy), I purposefully acknowledged any views, actions, feelings, and potential biases I had during the data collection of K-3rd grade teacher and administrator perceptions on the fidelity of implementing RTI within a personal research journal.

The second bias that I exhibited was physical attributes, such as facial and verbal expressions, tone or body language. The physical attributes bias I had was minimized by implementing practices such as: maintaining eye contact with each participant during the interview process, refraining from facial expressions by not

showing approval or disapproval, and listening to the response and then utilizing the probes from the interview protocol to gather additional information. In addition, I used a normal relaxed tone and presented each question and probe without bias and without stressing any significant words or concepts. Employing these practices consistently with my responses, and maintaining pleasant and neutral facial expressions when interviewing or interacting with participants minimized biases from my physical attributes.

Lastly, I brought biases to the proposed doctoral project study during the interview process. In an effort to create a relaxed and comfortable setting, I strove to establish a bond with each participant being interviewed prior to each participant's interview session by discussing topics not related to the research topic. This bonding practice diminished actions that could possibly influence the participants by not sharing any personal views concerning the research topic. Additionally, I reduced the biases during the data collection processes by ensuring the interview protocol and probes were used to guide the questions that might relate to the project study topic throughout the research process of data collection. The process of minimizing any biases was critical during the data collection, analysis process, and other stages of my doctoral project study; a peer reviewer and an external reviewer were used during this process to minimize any biases.

Data Analysis

Creswell's (2012) qualitative analysis through qualitative interviews, surveys, and review of archived documents was used for this study to uncover teacher and administrator perceptions on the fidelity of implementing the Georgia

RTI model. Data analysis was a continuous process that started as soon as the collection of data began and was guided by my research question. Gläser and Laudel (2013) suggested that importance of defining your research goals and then designing the analysis and methodology helps researchers achieve their intended goals of the study. The goal of this research was to assess and understand teacher and administrator perceptions of the fidelity of implementing the Georgia RTI model within the select school of study. Using the process of collecting data through various methods to achieve the study goal, having a system in place to focus on the understanding and the development of patterns and themes found in the data is important (Gläser & Laudel, 2013). Creswell (2012) stated that data analysis in a qualitative case study is an inductive process of summarizing, interpreting, and validating the information collected throughout the data collection process.

Analyzing, summarizing, interpreting, and validating process help to safeguard that the findings are represented and reported accurately (Creswell, 2012). Data findings represented and reported were sorted, coded, and searched for similarities, differences, and patterns aligned with the implementation of science framework to achieve the purpose of this doctoral project study. Additionally, the data findings needed to be in a visual display and needed to be interpreted by making a comparison between the findings and related literature. This was accomplished by describing the fidelity of implementing the four-tiered RTI model as related to effective interventions, implementation methods, enabling contexts, and intended outcomes to ensure the RTI processes and

procedures was successful. Then I was able to use the inductive process of coding, summarizing, and interpreting the in-depth information into categories and themes to discover meaning, to investigate process, and to gain understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2012; Lodico et al., 2010).

Data Analysis Methods

Data analysis involves organizing, transcribing, coding, reporting, and validating findings of what participants of a study have said and what the researcher has seen and read (Creswell, 2012; Merriam, 2016). Merriam (2016) suggested that data analysis should be done as soon as data is collected due to process can be overwhelming for a new researcher. A qualitative data analysis answers the research question presented usually derived from interviews, field notes, and documents (Merriam, 2016). When data sources are collected in different sources the accuracy of the data findings are enhanced by member checking and triangulation, which encourages the researcher to present the data findings that is both accurate and credible (Creswell, 2012). Three types of data collection tools, interview protocols, *AFRTIC* surveys, and archived documents were used to obtain sets of rich data for this study. Data was collected from teachers and administrators who participated in the process and procedures of the implementation of the RTI model. Data sources included transcripts from teacher and administrators' interview, field notes from the *AFRTIC* survey, and information from the archived documents.

The collection of data was a difficult task to complete and having clear steps for analyzing data assisted with the process. The steps for analyzing and

interpreting data were a routine process, which was reviewed frequently during the process of data collection.

Creswell (2012) has suggested the following steps in analyzing and interpreting qualitative data.

- I. Prepare and organize the data by transcribing into a Word document
- II. Explore and code the data into categories using the Survey Monkey Program for interviews and surveys
- III. Construct coded data to build descriptions and themes to portray the complexity of the phenomenon using the Survey Monkey Program
- IV. Represent and report the findings with visual displays or narrative discussions
- V. Interpret the findings by reflecting personally on the impact of the findings and on the literature that might inform the findings
- VI. Use member checking to validate the accuracy of the findings (pp. 237-257)

By following these steps of data analysis for the data sources used the findings related to the central phenomenon of this study was presented with accuracy and credibility to develop a project for this study.

The first step in data analysis consisted of reviewing and organizing the data to be transferred into a Microsoft Word document. The transcripts from the interview, field notes from the *AFRTIC* survey, and information from the archived

documents review protocol was consistently reviewed and explored multiple times to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the data (Yin, 2014). Interviews and *AFRTIC* surveys data were reviewed and transcribed into a Microsoft Word document precisely after each interview and survey using the Survey Monkey program analyzing filtering system to prepare for coding. The process of coding allows for understanding of data findings to be presented by identifying patterns of similar terminology, phrases, and words within the data (Creswell, 2012).

Data findings gathered from teachers and administrators were coded by creating a Microsoft Word document that consisted of a table. The table had 10 columns, with one interview question in each table and the key phases within the guiding research question labeled at the top of each column, which was: effective interventions, implementation methods, enabling contexts and intended outcomes. The archived data was reviewed using a Document Review Protocol (Appendix C) to provide supporting evidence for the findings uncovered in the interviews and surveys. I printed the table Microsoft Word document that contained the data findings to review in order to determine themes and common threads through these data.

Major and minor themes were identified in the coded data (Lodico et al., 2010) that were valid and relevant to the research question that guided this study (Creswell, 2012). Themes were identified based upon color-coding data findings for common or repetitive descriptions. I prepared the data findings in a narrative form. Finally, I emailed each participant a typed draft of my findings for member

checking; all participants verified that there were no misconceptions.

Additionally, I triangulated the data by comparing interview and survey data to archival data to determine any connections, similarities, or relationships. Member checking and triangulation validated the accuracy of my findings (Creswell, 2012). Furthermore, the interpretations and themes that emerged during data analysis led to the creation of an ongoing professional development project that was an extension of the data collected.

Accuracy and Credibility of Findings

When conducting a qualitative study, the researcher can review accuracy of the findings by triangulation, member checking, using rich descriptions, clarifying bias, presenting discrepant information, peer debriefing, and using an external auditor (Creswell, 2012). For this study, member checking, triangulation, and using rich descriptions were used to review accuracy of the findings. Member checking allowed me to take my draft of findings to the participants for review to determine if their viewpoints shared were accurate. After the participants reviewed the draft of findings, none of the participants needed to make changes or corrections to their responses. Upon obtaining participants' approval of the draft findings, the draft findings were used to disclose themes and assist in producing recommendations for this project study. The benefit of conducting member checking allowed me to determine the validity of the data findings to identify any bias or misunderstandings I documented (Kornbluh, 2015).

I triangulated data from interviews, surveys, and archived documents to guarantee that these sources of data validated the identified themes.

“Triangulation is the process of examining evidence from different sources or data collection methods and using it to corroborate themes” (Creswell, 2012, p. 259). By using triangulation, a clear picture of the topic being studied was presented. Triangulation allows perspectives and patterns to be compared and validated as well as allows the interpretation of data collected to be verified and validated. Additionally, rich descriptions to support the research results were used, to provide an opportunity to give detailed descriptions of the setting (Creswell, 2012).

Discrepant Cases

The process of discrepant cases must be conducted and identified during the data collection and data analysis stage for the credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability of the study (Maxwell, 2013). When discrepant cases are found, the researcher should discuss the evidence for the identified themes as well as any general perspectives that contradict the themes with the participants. This process of dealing with discrepant cases from participants’ perspectives allows the chance for the researcher to present a realistic, accurate, and valid testing of the findings, which also yields a deeper understanding of the findings in the project study (Maxwell, 2013). During the data analysis process and reporting of data findings, there were no discrepant cases found. There were realistic and valid representations of findings. There were no differences in participants’ perceptions of what was needed to address the

central phenomenal, which strengthen the accuracy of my findings. All data were included in the data analysis process to present in-depth information gathered.

Data Analysis Results

Qualitative case studies provide responses of understanding of the central phenomenon through emerging themes (Creswell, 2012). The purpose of this qualitative study was to assess teacher and administrator perceptions of the fidelity of implementing the Georgia RTI model at one campus using teacher and administrator interviews, surveys, and review of archived documents. There were three methods of data collection used to assist me in collecting teacher and administrator perceptions of the fidelity of implementing Georgia four-tiered RTI model as it is related to effective interventions, implementation methods, enabling contexts, and intended outcomes. Merriam (2016) stated that data could be derived from multiple sources to ensure a holistic description and to convey understanding of the central phenomenon. Upon the completion of collecting data from multiple sources, an analysis of the data was conducted. An aggregation of my results allowed me to organize responses to key factors within the guiding research question within this study. The rich descriptive information from each participant was presented under the key factors of the research question, which were effective interventions, implementation methods, enabling contexts, and intended outcomes. Overall, the data findings were arranged according to the guiding research question to provide clarity to the central phenomenon.

Findings

The findings from this doctoral project study emerged from interviews, surveys, and reviews of archived documents as means to inform the guiding research question: How do teachers and administrators perceive the fidelity of implementing the four-tiered RTI model as related to effective interventions, implementation methods, enabling contexts, and intended outcomes at the study site? The interviews, surveys, and archived data were used to triangulate the data and provide a deeper understanding of each individual participant's perspective with the fidelity of implementing the four-tiered RTI model. The data obtained from this qualitative case study from participants were coded alphanumerically as follows: Teacher 1: T1, Teacher 2: T2, Administrator 1: A1, Administrator 2: A2 and so on to confirm confidentiality. This section was arranged by the research question and key factors within the questions, concluding with the emerging themes. For this qualitative case study design, I facilitated and completed nine one-on-one interviews, issued and received nine surveys, and reviewed archived documents with participants of this study. Based on the data composed from the multiple semi-structured interviews, surveys, and a review of archived documents, I was able to clarify and evaluate the perceptions of each participant, which is essential to the purpose of this study. The qualitative case study took place in an urban school district in Georgia. According to the school district's 2015 report, the population is approximately 96,200 students in grades ranging from Kindergarten to 12th grade. The campus for this study, Elementary School C, has

a population of approximately 880 students. The case study focused on teachers within Kindergarten - 3rd grade, and administrators' experiences and viewpoints of the fidelity of implementing the RTI model as a result of Kindergarten-3rd grade students who are more likely to have academic and behavior challenges identified (Lipsey et al., 2015). Additionally, the selected study school's standardized test scores by the state between 2014 and 2015 indicated 57% of third grade students were beginning learners in English Language Arts and 46% of third grade students are beginning learners in Mathematics (Georgia Department of Education, 2015). These test results of the third grade students implied that a majority of third graders were struggling to meet the state requirements according to the Georgia Common Core Standards (Georgia Department of Education, 2015). Because of this concern, the students who received interventions and best practices of instruction as aligned with the Georgia RTI model may yield a positive impact on the state standardized test scores, by decreasing the number of students labeled as beginning learners and increasing the number of students labeled as proficient learners.

In addition, the data collected from participants provided the following themes (Table 2) that align with the guiding research question of this study:

Theme 1: Lack of Training on Interventions

Theme 2: Effective Progress Monitoring

Theme 3: Ongoing Professional Development Training

Theme 4: Clear Expectations

Theme 5: Differentiation of Instruction

Theme 6: School-wide Value of RTI

The cyclical relationship of the six themes is illustrated in Figure 1. The six identified themes were interrelated through their effect on each other as ways to implement the Georgia RTI model with fidelity.

Table 2

Themes and Descriptions

Theme	Description
Lack of training on interventions	Teachers receive training on program not intervention process.
Effective progress monitoring	Teachers and administrators use data for input but not decisions related to interventions.
Ongoing professional development	PD is needed continuously to help teachers understand and implement RTI model with fidelity.
Clear expectations	Teachers struggle with expectations due to changes in the RTI process yearly.
Differentiation of instruction	Teachers and administrators need to ensure instruction is provided to meet diverse learner needs.
School-wide Value of RTI	Teachers and administrators need to accept the RTI program.

The teachers and administrators believed that training on interventions is needed, which could lead to effective progress monitoring if teachers are trained on how to provide interventions support. The ongoing PD is needed for continuous support with the RTI process at each tiered level, which teachers and administrators believed would provide clear expectations and support, with differentiating instruction. Overall, teachers and administrators believe the fidelity of implementing RTI needs to include school-wide value of RTI in reference to time, scheduling, and buy-in to certify the process is implemented with fidelity with the necessary tools that are identified as themes.

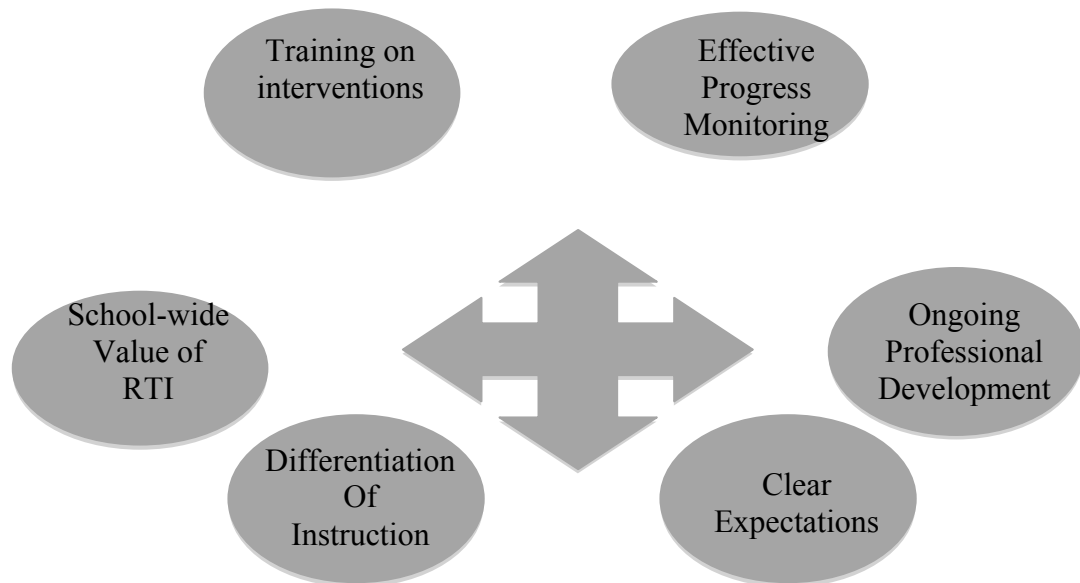


Figure 4. Cyclical relationship between themes.

Guiding Research Question

The guiding research question was: How do teachers and administrators perceive the fidelity of implementing the four-tiered RTI model as related to effective interventions, implementation methods, enabling contexts, and intended outcomes at the study site? This question guided the developing themes.

Effective Interventions

Theme 1: Lack of training on interventions

The theme of lack of training on interventions identified teacher confusion in comprehending how effective interventions should be implemented according to instructional processes, frequency, accuracy, and quality of instruction.

According to the school district RTI implementation plan, effective interventions are described at Tier 2 of the Georgia RTI model, as a small group of 4-8 students

that includes fifteen minutes for instruction 3-5 days a week, during a 6-12 week period, and progress monitored bi-weekly. Whereas the school district RTI implementation plan explained that effective interventions for Tier 3 of the GA RTI model consist of 1-4 students including thirty minutes of instruction five days a week, during a twenty-week or more period and progress monitored weekly. Based on the tiers of instructional support for interventions at Tier 2 and Tier 3 of the Georgia RTI model, the purpose of effective intervention is to provide students with academic challenges with targeted, needs-based, and driven learning to meet grade-level expectations.

The Georgia RTI framework allows all students to receive supports needed to address academic barriers, speech, language, articulation concerns, and behavior concerns (Jaffe, 2013). T1, T2, T3, A1, and A3 indicated that training on interventions is needed to ensure students receive the supports needed to address their academic or behavior barriers. T1, T2, T3, A1, and A3 mentioned that the timeliness of the interventions needed to be adjusted in their daily instructional schedule to guarantee students receive the interventions as intended. There were 66% of participants who suggested intervention strategies need to be taught step-by-step and in teacher-friendly scripts containing sufficient detail, so educators can clearly comprehend how to put the interventions into practice. Teacher 3 and Teacher 4 shared that interventions are not being implemented during the daily instructional schedule because a majority of teachers struggle with implementing interventions into their daily practice. Teachers' challenges with implementing interventions included determining the appropriate quality and

mass of evidence-based practices within instructional practices (Barrio & Combes, 2015). When teachers receive detailed information that can be easily understood regarding intervention implementations, students will begin to receive interventions with fidelity.

Teacher 5 communicated timing and scheduling was a structure needed for effective interventions. Teacher 5 stated:

Training on interventions is needed for clear and concise instruction, especially timing and scheduling clarification. I struggle with finding the time within my daily schedule when I have multiple students that require targeted Tier 2 or Tier 3 interventions. I believe I can be more successful with one-on-one training or observing another teacher with scheduling time to implement interventions for multiple students.

Administrator 1 stated, “When I observe teachers to ensure interventions are being implemented, I have noticed they struggle with implementing the daily instructional practices along with students’ targeted interventions within their instructional practices.” Administrator 4 also shared that during collaborative meetings such as SST, teachers express frustration with timing and scheduling to implement interventions along with other teaching and learning practices for students.

Teacher 2 identified training on interventions are needed after matching student deficits to the scientifically based interventions from the school district intervention bank systems because directions may not be clear and understandable at all times. Teacher 2 shared, “I think clear and concise instruction are needed

for interventions. I think when we are not provided with training or support for interventions, we fail at implementing interventions. I think this frustrates teachers with actually implementing interventions with fidelity.” This frustration of the lack of training on interventions may also be supported by 77 % of participants who indicated the school administrators fail to support teachers after the selection of interventions are made, to ensure that interventions are implementing correctly. A lack of training with properly using interventions occurs when teachers lack the specific knowledge in the steps of the intervention process to implement with students (Werts et al., 2014).

Furthermore, according to the *AFRTIC* survey, 88% of participants felt that their campus was at the beginning phase of tailoring intervention concepts as needed to be operational in modern-day classrooms while being cautious to preserve the quality of effectively implementing interventions. Teacher 4, Teacher 5, Administrator 2, and Administrator 3 expressed that training on when to change interventions to meet students’ deficits requires modeling interventions and modeling differentiated instruction strategies. There were 77% of the participants who agreed that the campus is at the beginning phase of following up with teachers to determine if interventions are implemented with fidelity. Administrator 1 believed if teachers received more support on the fidelity of implementing interventions, they would be comfortable with implementing all tiered levels of the RTI model into their daily practices.

Teachers and administrators believed that training on interventions should be required in order to implement the four-tiered RTI model as it relates to the

implementation of effective interventions. Shapiro (2014) believed administrators needed to involve all school staff in professional development to guarantee teachers are equipped with the knowledge to implement interventions by modeling practices by experts as well as collaborating on a supportive school-wide plan to ensure time for RTI implementation. The support of having training on interventions could guarantee implementation with fidelity based upon timing, and clear, understandable directions to confirm interventions are implemented as intended.

Implementation Methods

Theme 2: Effective Progress Monitoring

Progress monitoring is a critical element of RTI that assist teachers in identifying needs and designing interventions (Saddler & Asaro-Saddler, 2013). The participants indicated that in an effort to implement the four-tiered RTI model with fidelity, effective progress monitoring is a key implementation element needed. All the participants shared the importance of progress monitoring at Tier 2 and Tier 3, needed to evaluate how students are responding to interventions. Teacher 3, T4, T5, and Administrator 3 and A4 explained that progress monitoring is usually done with the universal screening only, which assesses students' abilities of all grade level material, but fails to assess students' abilities according to the intervention implemented for students. Teacher 1 stated, "There is inconsistency of data when progress monitoring does not take place with fidelity. There are multiple ways in which progress monitoring is suggested for teachers to do, therefore continuity is needed to guarantee all teachers are

monitoring students' progress accurately." Teachers recommend that additional training on progress monitoring is needed for assessing the effectiveness of interventions that are implemented. Teacher 2 stated, "Progress monitoring data is reviewed during collaborative SST meetings for effectiveness to determine the intensity of interventions, change of interventions needed, tiered level in which students may need to be move to, and to determine if evaluation for additional supports are needed." All teachers are responsible for progress monitoring students' abilities to measure their academic or behavior success, which could be tracked using a variety of assessment tools (Marston, et al., 2016).

Progress monitoring requires teachers to assess students on intervention strategies and skills as well as collect and document their assessment scores (Jimerson, Stein, Haddock, & Shahroozi, 2016). Forty-four percent of participants believed the teachers at the study site are advanced with assessing and collecting students' data on standard based curriculum, but teachers failed at effective progress monitoring students' abilities according to interventions at Tier 2 and Tier 3 of the RTI model. Administrator 2 shared that teachers struggle with effective progress monitoring when measuring or tracking the effectiveness of the intervention identified for students. In addition, 66% of participants are at the beginning phase when using local or research norms, or criterion-based benchmarks to analyze the importance of a students' delays in fundamental academic skills. Administrator 1 agreed that using local or research norms for monitoring students' success is essential, but using informal assessments related to the intervention can indicate the fidelity of implementing the scientific based

interventions provided through the district database. Eighty-eight percent of participants shared that progress monitoring may need to be aligned with current strategies and support within the classroom to bring continuity to best practices. Researchers suggested that progress-monitoring should be embedded within instructional practices daily to assure continuity of best practices such as collecting student data, reviewing the data, and conducting brief observations of students' progress (Simonsen, MacSuga-Gage, Briere, Freeman, Myers, Scott, and Sugai, 2014). Additionally, Administrator 4 indicated that when teachers feel equipped with continuity of best practices, teachers' self-efficacy in the value and effectiveness of the four-tiered RTI model may increase teachers' ability to implement RTI with fidelity. All participants agreed continuous meetings, additional trainings, or professional developments are needed to assure teachers implement and progress monitor RTI interventions with fidelity.

Enabling Context

Theme 3: Ongoing Professional Development

The participants indicated they wanted ongoing professional development in various aspects of the RTI program. There was general professional development provided for staff regarding the RTI model, understanding its general features, and approaches, but there was no specific school RTI PD plan for ongoing professional development regarding RTI implementation processes and procedures. When teachers participate in ongoing professional development activities that focus on RTI processes and procedures, they tend to buy-in to the implementation process (Bayar, 2014). Teacher 2 indicated, "I think school

administrators and support staff leaders believe if they provide training to teachers on the RTI processes and procedures one time that we should be able to apply the knowledge gained with prior knowledge to implement RTI with fidelity. They must remember we are just like students and need ongoing repetition and support to ensure we understand the concepts of RTI implementation.” Sixty-six percent of participants felt they are in the beginning/intermediate phase with their self-efficacy to implement RTI with fidelity. Teacher 5 noted, “Teachers’ self-efficacy towards RTI could be increased when ongoing training and supports are provided that make teachers feel comfortable with implementing RTI processes and procedures.” When ongoing professional learning supports teachers, they establish growth in their self-efficacy that has a positive effect on their instructional practices (De Neve, Devos, & Tuytens, 2015). Furthermore, participants were asked about resources or supports they feel are needed to implement the RTI model with fidelity. All participants agreed ongoing professional development is needed in the aspects of clear expectations, scheduling, timing, progress monitoring, and differentiated instruction.

Ongoing PD trainings could be complied with a plethora of information, strategies, and tools, which might appear to be overwhelming for a person to understand and implement into their practices (Klettner, Clarke, & Boersma, 2014). Teacher 4 indicated, “The problem with some professional development trainings are receiving multiple tools or strategies for RTI implementation, which makes the process of implementing RTI stressful for teachers.” Providing clear expectations with specific tools and process may provide less stress and more

willingness from teachers to implement RTI. All teacher participants agreed that scheduling and timing to implement intervention, progress monitoring, keeping up to date data, preparing for SST meetings, and preparing for daily standard instruction with differentiated instruction is overwhelming and difficult to manage; these concerns could be possible professional development topics to equip teachers with skills and strategies to be successful with RTI implementation. Administrator 2 noted the importance of creating a sense of continuous supports, especially professional development trainings, “If we as administrators and leaders equipped teachers with supports and expectations for implementing any practices, we have done our due diligence of ensuring teachers are equipped with best practices to address our students’ needs.” Administrator 2 and Administrator 4 further explained, “Teachers do struggle with scheduling and timing due to the lack of training to see how to include interventions and progress monitoring in what teachers are already doing within their instructional time.” Participants indicated that progress monitoring can be difficult with multiple targeted interventions needed for students and suggested additional personnel or training to streamline the process of progress monitoring can support the implementation of the RTI model with fidelity. Teacher 1 and Teacher 2 shared, “If our school leaders provide ongoing trainings or additional personnel for progress monitoring, we could eliminate consistent problems with implementing and ensuring the data is tracked appropriately and timely.” Teacher 5 emphasized, “I would love to see Tier 1 modified for differentiated instruction training.” Teacher 5 shared, “If I am equipped and trained to teach diverse learners, I may

be able to reach each students learning abilities to reduce the amount of referrals to Tier 2 and Tier 3.” Teacher 1, Teacher 2, Teacher 4, Teacher 5, Administrator 2, and Administrator 4 agreed that ongoing professional development training on differentiated instruction could reduce the number of referrals to Tier 2, Tier 3, or Tier 4 as well. Differentiated instruction could have an impact on the types of interventions, number of referrals to special education, and state assessments scores.

Overall, all participants agreed that ongoing PD is needed to support teachers and support staff to confirm they implement RTI fidelity which may need to be collaborative training, observations, modeling, or one-on-one support to ensure clarity, understanding, and expectations are met for all.

Intended Outcomes

Theme 4: Clear Expectations

Sixty-six percent of the participants interviewed were aware of the four-tiered RTI model in place, but felt inadequate in their ability and knowledge of how to implement the process with fidelity. Teacher 3 stated, “Challenges with implementing RTI is not limited to the knowledge of the process, but the procedures and expectations of the school and district may be unclear with the daily practices of the school leaders and teachers.” The school district provided training at the selected school with a presentation that stated the development of the RTI model, the expected duties and expectations of teachers and administrators within each tiered level, and helpful websites. Although, there were clear expectations of what teachers and administrators should do at each

tiered level of the RTI model, being aware of best practices is vital to RTI implementation; the “How to” implement selected research-based interventions needs clarity according to 88% of the participants. Teachers and administrators specified that it is important to have the progress monitoring data as well as support with intervention implementation to ensure students are receiving the support needed for their educational experiences. Administrator 2 shared, “Clear expectations of how to actually implement interventions with fidelity is key to the RTI implementation process in order to show accurate and sufficient impact of interventions to close achievement gaps of students.” When expectations of how to implement RTI are clear and concise, supporting students’ academic and behavior needs are met through effective practices learned by teachers who engage in ongoing PD (Callender, 2014).

Teacher 4 and teacher 5 shared, when attending trainings or meetings emphasis is placed on using multiple tools to progress monitoring and implement interventions strategies to gather data, rather than supporting student achievement to show academic growth. Teachers were not clear on how to effectively progress monitor and focus on interventions to observe accurate results of students learning abilities. Teacher 1, 2, 3, 4, and administrator 3 identified the support of ensuring interventions are implemented as intended can come from support of collaborative teams with specifying clear and concise daily duties and responsibilities regarding interventions. Teacher 5 stated that collaborative RTI teams might assist identifying helpful strategies for interventions for students with similar deficits. Teachers and school leaders who do not foster healthy collaboration on planning

for implementing RTI with fidelity fail to state expectations that contribute to ineffective RTI processes and procedures (Little, Little, Peterson, Ferguson, Blair, & Selzler, 2014). Fifty-five percent of participants felt the school's intervention team is between the beginning phase and intermediate phase with documenting the quality of implementing interventions and following up with SST meetings to determine interventions. Administrator 4 stated, "Every teacher needs to be a part of an RTI Team prior to meeting with the SST team to ensure collaboration takes places during the progress monitoring phases and implementing interventions." By providing collaborative teams for teachers, all teachers can be a part of the process of ensuring students' needs are met through RTI, with adopting best practices and strategies for interventions that can be shared and modeled for fidelity (Little, et al., 2014).

The participants were asked if there are any problems associated with implementing the Georgia RTI model with fidelity. Teacher 1, 2, and 5 and administrator 1, 2, and 3 agreed that skilled educators who are trained continuously on best practices for RTI implementation are needed. Teacher 2 shared, "When I was a part of a school community where the expectations of best practices were described in trainings, I felt more competent to implement best practices through the RTI model." Administrator 1 noted that, "I expect clear and concise expectations from my superior, in turn I must provide clear and concise expectations to my colleagues." Administrator 3 and Administrator 4 shared that when training is not ongoing on how to progress monitor, implement interventions, differentiate instruction, and document data, the expectations are

unclear and impact the effectiveness of students' progress throughout the tiered model. The process of implementing RTI with fidelity could benefit from continuous support throughout the process to help teachers as well as students. Teacher 2 shared that the responsibility of ensuring students achieve their full potential is placed on all stakeholders, and ongoing professional development and support can guarantee all stakeholders are clear of their roles in implementing the RTI process with fidelity.

Theme 5: Differentiation of Instruction

The concept of differentiation of instruction was common with 88% of participants during interviews, as a component of the RTI model that participants felt needed to be modified. Differentiated instruction occurs often in RTI implementation with teachers providing instructional support to students at various tiered levels of the RTI model (Castro-Villarreal et al., 2014; Shapiro, 2014). Teacher 1 explained, "I have multiple students who may need intervention support at Tier 2 or Tier 3 and it is difficult to know all students interventions plans needed." Teacher 1 further stated, "I am uncertain of where to start with differentiating instruction at Tier 2 or Tier 3 for students in a small group." Although, RTI is used to provide differentiated instruction for all learners, teachers still struggle with the concept. Teacher 2 noted, "Teachers are equipped with the knowledge of how to differentiate instruction students and deliver appropriate instruction to meet students' needs when teachers are supported through professional development trainings." Teachers who engage in professional development trainings focusing on differentiated instruction become

knowledgeable and well-prepared to effectively teach and lead all students to do their best work (Morgan, 2014).

Eighty-eight percent of participants understood that differentiated instruction could take place at all tiered levels of the four-tiered RTI model. Administrators 1, 3, and 4 indicated that when providing support to ensure differentiated instruction occurs with daily instruction and intervention, the number of students may be reduced, and to reflect the percentages recommended by the district for students who should be assigned in Tier 2 or Tier 3. According to the archived document provided by the district, throughout the RTI model process a school should have about 80-100% of students at Tier 1, 10-15% of students at Tier 2, 3-10% of students at Tier 3, and 1-5% of students at Tier 4. In effort to ensure students are receiving the instruction needed, Teacher 3 and Teacher 4 shared that support is needed to know how to modify core curriculum and implement interventions to guarantee they meet diverse learner needs. Furthermore, differentiated instructional support can impact teachers' self-efficacy of the fidelity of implementing the Georgia RTI four-tiered model. Researchers suggested that differentiated instruction is challenging for novice and expert teachers; professional development teaches them how to strengthen self-efficacy with addressing the challenges with differentiating instruction for all learners (De Neve et al., 2015).

Theme 6: School-wide Value of RTI

School administrators, teachers, support leaders, and other instructional support staff are important for creating a system in which a school can thrive and

implement best practices for student achievement (Bernhardt & Hebert, 2017). The RTI model provides opportunities to challenge all stakeholders to meet students' needs. Through collaboration and buy-in from all instructional stakeholders within the school, RTI can be implemented with enthusiasm and fidelity (Robinson, Bursuck, & Sinclair, 2013). By building school teams to problem solve, offer organization, supply possible solutions, and guide staff with the process of RTI the teacher and all stakeholders are more willing to do their part within the four-tiered model (Jensen, 2016). School teams are important to the climate of the school, culture, and processes to ensure all stakeholders feel valued, have mutual trust, respect for others, and support through the instructional practices for teaching and learning (Fullan, 2014).

Teachers 3, 4, 5 and Administrator 1 declared, "The need for collaboration amongst grade level teams may be necessary to find best strategies to use with interventions." Teacher 4 stated, "The need to include all stakeholders in the RTI implementation can ensure everyone is knowledgeable of the process, but as well as play a significant of role of implementing the four-tiered model with fidelity." When involving all stakeholders within the RTI process, teachers may be more willing to buy-in the process of and comfortable with their peers to ask for assistance if needed (Chandler, 2015; Robinson et al., 2013). Building collaborative teams provides opportunities to review if process and procedures of RTI are being implemented as intended; the goal is to establish meetings with teams that take place regularly (Burns et al., 2013).

Teachers 1, 2, 4, 5 and Administrators 2 and 4 believed that if leaders within the school can agree upon timing, scheduling, continuity, progress monitoring, and supporting instructional teachers each academic year, RTI implementation can have great advantages. The lack of having time within the instructional scheduling, clear expectation of resources, progress monitoring support, and ongoing trainings and supports for instruction impacts the effectiveness and values of the process to teachers and administrators. Teacher 4 and Administrator 1 shared that every administrator or support staff member may be unaware of new practices, which could lead to misleading information or confusion being shared with teachers regarding RTI for support. In an effort to eliminate misleading information occurring, all stakeholders are part of the collaborative school teams that assures RTI is valued within the same regard as teachers, which will make everyone accountable of the process (McDiarmid & Caprino, 2017).

The participants were asked what additional needs they feel would assist with ensuring the fidelity of implementing the four-tiered RTI model. All of the participants felt that additional purposeful and meaningful ongoing professional development is needed to address the RTI processes and procedures such as timing, scheduling, progress monitoring, and differentiation of instruction. Teachers 1, 3, 4, and 5 stated that training must be conducted through the school year and not just a one-time training on the processes and procedures or how to input data, but more specifically of how to implement interventions within the instructional setting. Teacher 4 shared, “My previous school supported the RTI

process by planning ongoing professional development through PLCs to support myself and others' questions, concerns, strengths, and weaknesses. I would love to have further supports in a collaborative manner building within our school year just to feel comfortable that I will always have a supportive environment.”

Administrators 2 and 4 stated that ongoing professional development might assist with teachers feeling more equipped and knowledgeable with the process of implementing interventions. Based upon the fact that the school administrators were unable to provide a school-based RTI professional development plan document for review, it was evident ongoing professional development is needed. The school RTI PD plan may have indicated specific training that supports RTI and the participants' experiences with RTI implementation. Providing ongoing PD would allow for novice teachers and expert teachers to receive support needed to implement RTI with fidelity as well as ensure the school values RTI as a vital way to provide instruction for all learners.

Dealing with Discrepant Cases

According to Yin (2014) studies are supported, and validated, by identification of inconsistencies. During, the collection and draft findings of the data, I did not identify any discrepant cases that may have been inconsistencies of the data collected. I ensured that the data were valid, relevant, and a true representation of the findings during the data analyses process. The process of member checking confirmed and verified the draft findings obtained from interviews and surveys were valid. Data were saved and stored in a secured file

cabinet within my home office. Data will be destroyed and discarded after 5 years.

Evidence Accuracy and Credibility

The information gathered during the data analysis process included several procedures and steps to maintain accuracy and validity. Additionally, the data analysis process was guided by the research measures approved by the Walden University's IRB throughout this qualitative case study. The interviews conducted were transcribed and checked by all participants for accuracy and credibility. Member checking was used to confirm the information shared and collected by participants from interviews and surveys were accurate, as well as to minimize bias during the transcription and findings process. Additionally, triangulation further validated the accuracy of the findings and due to the use of multiple data sources and participants for this study, the synthesis and triangulation was supported so that findings were both accurate and credible.

Summary

Teachers and administrators are faced with many challenges when implementing new processes and procedures within the instructional program (Burns et al., 2013). Often, many changes with implementing the RTI model within the instructional program may come from district leaders to assure student success (Printy et al., 2015). When implementing RTI, researchers have indicated the implementation of science framework should be considered for successful student outcome by ensuring effective interventions, effective implementation, enabling contexts, and intended outcomes are implementing with fidelity to

guarantee RTI is implemented as intended (Duda et al., 2015). The findings provided valuable information as it relates to the implementation of science framework on teacher and administrator perception of the fidelity of implementing the four-tiered RTI model as related to effective interventions, implementation methods, enabling contexts, and intended outcomes. The findings revealed that teachers and administrators are in need of training on interventions, effective progress monitoring, ongoing professional development training, clear expectations, differentiation of instruction, and school-wide value of RTI to implement the four-tiered RTI model with fidelity.

The participants shared that what is needed for implementing RTI with fidelity are (a) training on interventions to assist with implementing interventions as intended, (b) effective progress monitoring to ensure continuity of tools and resources, (c) ongoing professional development to support teachers with various problems they may have with implementation, (d) clear expectations to specify what is needed without multiple steps, (e) differentiation of instruction to support diverse learners within all tiers of the RTI model, and (f) school-wide value of RTI by all stakeholders to collaboratively improve the RTI process. When teachers and administrators are aware of the concepts and skills needed to support teachers with implementing RTI, they are more committed to build and strengthen teacher practices for a successful implementation of RTI (Barrio et al., 2015). The data gathered from this study showed that teachers and administrators are in need of ongoing effective professional development training and support with key components of RTI to implement the Georgia RTI model.

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to assess teacher and administrator perceptions of the fidelity of implementing the Georgia RTI model at one campus using teacher and administrator interviews, surveys, and review of archived documents. I conducted semi-structured interviews, an RTI survey, and reviewed an archived document to gain a better understanding of the perception of the phenomenon of implementing the Georgia four-tiered RTI model with fidelity. I organized the findings under the key components of the research question and conceptual framework, the implementation of science framework that guided this study to provide clarity in how the data findings answered the research question. The results from the data analysis revealed six themes (Table 2). Findings from the study acknowledged that several common factors could impact the fidelity of implementing the RTI model with teachers and administrators. Those common factors are the need for ongoing professional development that focuses on interventions, progress monitoring, clear expectations, and differentiation of instruction, as well as the school-wide value of RTI in relation to timing, scheduling, and continuity essential to building teachers and administrators' self-efficacy to implement the RTI model with fidelity to support students' learning.

The district and school selected for this study may implement the changes that the teachers and administrators perceived as concerns and issues with implementing RTI by addressing the findings through collaboration and professional development. Training on interventions, ways to effective progress monitoring clear expectations regarding documentation and implementation, and

differentiation of instruction could be conducted through the form of collaborative teams such as Professional Learning Communities where professional development could be ongoing. Teachers and administrators would also like to have a better understanding of the RTI model and how to incorporate the process of interventions within their instructional schedule. Addressing the concerns of teachers with RTI requires administrators to provide support through modeling expectations in professional development trainings and valuing the process of implementing RTI (Eagle et al., 2015).

Donnell and Gettinger (2015) explained that ongoing PD that focused on evidence-based practices and procedures is essential to providing teachers with knowledge, skills, and clear expectations towards RTI implementation. When professional development is ongoing and meaningful, educators maintain a high self-efficacy of implementing new practices by receiving support to improve teaching and learning of concepts regarding RTI (Malik, Nasim, & Tabassum, 2015). Additional professional development that focuses on collaborative and reflective approaches with teachers' skills of effective progress monitoring, implementing interventions with fidelity, and documentation builds teachers' value and capacity to enhance the abilities of diverse learners (Fuchs & Vaughn, 2012; Zepeda, 2014). The key concepts found in both literature review and the findings throughout this case study are that ongoing professional development, effective progress monitoring, implementation components such as timing, scheduling, continuity, and collaboration amongst all stakeholders in RTI teams are essential for teachers and administrators who are responsible for implementing

RTI with fidelity for making informed decisions and supporting achievement for all students academically and behaviorally through the RTI model. The PD trainings that address the teachers' and administrators' concerns as implementation challenges or key implementation components of RTI are valuable to ensure collaborative efforts take place, thereby resulting in the effective implementation of the RTI model with fidelity for Elementary School C.

Conclusion

The purpose of this doctoral project study was to assess teacher and administrator perceptions of the fidelity of implementing the Georgia RTI model at one campus using teacher and administrator interviews, surveys, and review of archived documents. At Elementary School C, the selected site for this study, teachers and administrators were experiencing challenges with the implementation of the RTI model. In Section 2, I explained in detail the qualitative case study research design used in this doctoral project study. I used interviews, surveys, and review of an archived document from K-3rd grade teachers and administrators at the selected school of study. The participants were described. The proposed data collection and data analysis were presented guided by the qualitative, case study approach. According to the findings of this study, training on interventions, effective progress monitoring, ongoing professional development, clear expectations, differentiation of instruction, and school-wide value of RTI are implementation components and challenges teachers and administrators perceived that affect implementing RTI with fidelity. The research findings resulted in professional development training sessions that will include

evidence from both the literature and research focusing on interventions, effective progress monitoring, differentiation of instruction, and clear expectations, which will be presented to teachers and administrators at the conclusion of this doctoral project study.

In Section 3 of this study, I discussed in detail the project that developed from the study findings. Additionally, I provided a literature review, a project evaluation plan, and a discussion of project implications in Section 3. Lastly, in section 4 I detailed my reflections and conclusions of this doctoral project study.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to assess the fidelity of implementing the Georgia RTI model. Once I analyzed the data, I then developed ongoing professional development training sessions titled, *Effectiveness of RTI Starts with You*, included in Appendix A, based on major and minor themes culled from the data analysis phase of Section 2, as well as the review of literature completed in Section 1 and Section 3. Section 3 of this project study includes a project description, goals, evaluation plans, as well as a rationale and a review of literature. In this section, I also address the implementation methods, study barriers, and social change implications connected with this project.

The findings of the study indicated a need for ongoing PD focusing on interventions, effective progress monitoring, differentiation of instruction, and clear expectations. By engaging in ongoing PD the selected school administrators and district administrators will be provided with guidance and training on key components participants felt should be addressed to implement RTI with fidelity. Additionally, participants suggested key factors such as creating a school-wide value of RTI, providing a collaborative setting for continuous training, and building upon teachers' self-efficacy to have the confidence and motivation to implement the RTI model. The teacher and administrator participants suggested that key findings would assist with Elementary School C improving their processes and procedures of implementing RTI with fidelity.

School districts leaders and school administrators favor PD based upon current research in guiding teachers to implement new process and procedures to meet the needs of their students (Voogt, Laferriere, Breuleux, Itow, Hickey, & McKenney, 2015). Based upon my review of the findings, teachers and administrators of my selected school of study need ongoing PD to increase their self-efficacy, competence, and confidence with implementing RTI with fidelity. By engaging in the PD sessions, teachers and administrators within the school will have an opportunity to consider the effect of the six emerging themes and concepts that could enhance their process of implementing the four-tiered RTI model with fidelity. Based on the findings revealing ongoing PD is needed, there will be continuous support as the school district leaders provide new processes and procedures regarding RTI, which require teachers and administrators to learn, understand, and apply new concepts to their implementation process of RTI. Teachers and administrators participants will be able to implement the PD strategies within their daily practices to guarantee the FOI the RTI model takes places as intended.

The project address the need for ongoing PD has on the FOI the RTI model and how teachers and administrators can successfully implement the RTI model by trainings and valuing the RTI process. The project address data collected from teachers and administrators through interviews, surveys, and a review of an archived document, which formed themes that guided the literature review to offer the school district, teachers, and administrators at Elementary School C some strategies to enhance their implementation of the current RTI

model. My project provide teachers and administrators with realistic, relevant, and effective strategies and processes that can be implemented to improve the implementation of RTI, which could possibly affect student achievement academically or behaviorally (Crone, Carlson, Haack, Kennedy, Baker, & Fien, 2016; Moore, 2014). This section concludes with an analysis of the data that focus on the project, project implications, and the impact it has on social change.

Description and Goals

The project, created as a result of the findings of this study, is an ongoing PD training sessions for K- 3rd grade teachers and administrators that will focus on differentiation of instruction, training on interventions, and effective progress monitoring. The purpose of the PD is to provide clear expectations to increase teachers' self-efficacy to implement RTI with fidelity through collaboration and ongoing PD sessions. This allows opportunities for teachers and administrators to engage with research-based best practices in an effort to align their skills and abilities with implementing RTI. Ongoing PD training will be provided during the allocated time for PD sessions on the school's calendar; this will consist of 3-8 cumulative hours of training, implementation of newly trained skills, observations of colleagues, and follow up within professional learning communities. I will conduct the trainings using a PowerPoint presentation for the delivery of information in the ongoing PD project and one-on-one modeling on how to implement research-based interventions and to provide differentiation of instruction. I will focus the training sessions on specific learning needs drawn from my research and include research from peer reviewed scholarly articles

aligned with the findings of this doctoral project case study. By adding these insights within the ongoing PD training, the teachers and administrators will have a foundational background of the purpose of the trainings based upon the perceptions of the participants within their campus. Goals for the ongoing PD are noted below.

- Goal 1: The teachers and administrators will construct an understanding of the RTI framework and the benefits of implementing RTI.
- Goal 2: The teachers and administrators will identify effective practices and strategies to enhance teaching and learning and RTI implementation for all students.
- Goal 3: The teachers and administrators will collaborate to develop an action plan for a school-wide initiative for implementing RTI with fidelity to address various learning needs.
- Goal 4: The teachers and administrators will collaborate on improved ways to implement differentiated instruction, select research-based interventions, and effectively progress monitor based on students' data.
- Goal 5: The teachers and administrators will collaborate to discuss within a professional learning community their observation of colleagues and self-reflect upon their practices implemented after training sessions.

Rationale

Findings from the qualitative case study presented in Section 2 served as the determining aspect for the selection of the 3-8 cumulative hours work days of PD training sessions. The study revealed a need for ongoing PD trainings to

assist teachers and administrators with implementing the RTI model with fidelity. Study findings highlighted gaps in practice in relation to training and supports based upon participants sharing a lack of clear expectations and supports regarding RTI. Findings indicated that, in order to implement RTI fidelity, training and supports must be implemented continuously for teachers, administrators, and all instructional leaders to guarantee best practices for teaching and learning are implemented as intended. The need for ongoing PD was noted in both individual interviews and through collective data included in survey responses. In addition, the need for ongoing PD was noted in the review of archived data, the school district RTI implementation plan document (2014), which did not identify RTI PD trainings for staff members. This document only provided additional resources for support for RTI through the selected school district website with employee access only to clarify any misconceptions and expectations of the RTI process that staff members may have about implementing RTI. Secondly, the decision to provide ongoing PD training was based upon student achievement on state standardized tests. The students who received interventions and instruction as intended according to the Georgia RTI model may have a positive influence on the state standardized test scores by decreasing the number of students labeled as beginning learners. According to the state standardized test scores between 2014 and 2015, 57% of third grade students are beginning learners in English Language Arts and 46% of third grade students are beginning learners in Mathematics (Georgia Department of Education, 2015). These test results of the third grade students indicate that a majority of third

graders are struggling to meet the state requirements according to the Georgia Common Core Standards (Georgia Department of Education, 2015). Teachers 1, 2, 3, and Administrator 6 shared that Elementary C could receive support in differentiated instruction which may reduce the numbers of students labeled as beginning learners by equipping students with the skills to be proficient learners.

Finally, based on the results of the interviews and surveys conducted, participants have not received training on differentiated instruction, research-based interventions, progress monitoring, and how and when to implement interventions to implement RTI within their current instructional practices to support teachers and students. There were 77% of the participants who indicated they need support to ensure they are implementing interventions as intended within their classroom prior to, during, and after implementation of interventions. The school also failed to submit an archived document of a RTI PD plan, which may have indicated trainings and supports provided.

The PD training is designed to assist in discussing and clarifying any misconceptions of RTI implementation to ensure appropriate implementation occurs with fidelity. The training will provide clarity about implementation components such as interventions, differentiation instruction, progress monitoring, helpful progress-monitoring tools, and the importance of data collecting to support the academic or behavioral needs of students.

The success of RTI depends on teachers and administrators engaging in PD that is collaborative and continuously leads to thoughtful instructional practices (Castillo, March, Tan, Stockslager, & Brundage, 2016). Whitworth and

Chiu (2015) found that when teachers and administrators participate in PD that is ongoing to improve the instructional practices of teaching and learning, student achievement increases. Donnell and Gettinger (2015) shared that PD training on RTI must be informative and engaging with decision-making and implementation components about RTI, for teachers to have a higher self-efficacy towards implementing RTI. With teachers being the primary personnel responsible for implementing RTI, it is understood that if teachers are fully equipped with interventions strategies, assessment techniques, and progress monitoring support, a change in pedagogy can occur that can significantly change the numbers of students as proficient learners or students receiving special education services (Castro-Villarreal et al., 2014). Although, the goal to implement RTI with fidelity involves teachers being continuously trained to implement interventions, the process requires collaborative support from all school personnel to work, to plan, and to invest in the process together to develop and implement appropriate instructional plans for all learners (Werts et al., 2014).

Professional development training dedicated to ensuring the processes and procedures of implementing research-based interventions, as intended is essential to ensuring the effective RTI implementation occurs (McKenna et al., 2014). Throughout, the literature review and the case study collaboration amongst teachers and administrators has been essential in ensuring that all school personnel value RTI implementation processes and procedures to impact effective change with students academically or behaviorally. Therefore, the challenge to provide ongoing PD that changes teachers' instructional practices to improve

student learning will consist of teachers' buy-in and self-efficacy to implement RTI (Piper & Zuilkowski, 2015). The goal of conducting PD trainings is ultimately to provide support to build teachers' comprehension to implement processes and procedures of the RTI model within their instructional practices to improve instruction, as well as to improve students' knowledge to be successful within their respective grade level.

Review of the Literature

Findings from this study indicated that participants felt a need for ongoing PD due to a gap in practice of implementing the RTI model with fidelity. Also, findings highlighted gaps in Elementary School C teachers' and administrators' current processes and procedures of implementing RTI and the impact their current practices have on the implementation of RTI. Based on these findings, there were suggestions to create ongoing PD to assist teachers and administrators with a better understanding of processes and procedures for implementing RTI with fidelity for diverse learners. The ongoing PD training sessions for this project study were developed to address the findings supported by research to increase the likelihood of teachers and administrators implementing RTI with a greater fidelity.

This section began with the discussion of the conceptual framework that guided the project development and continued with a thorough evaluation of recent peer-reviewed publication that includes perspectives related to professional development, training on interventions, effective progress monitoring, clear expectations, differentiated instruction, and school-wide value of RTI.

Subsequent sections that focus on specific parts of the fidelity of implementing the RTI framework, such as teachers' self-efficacy and professional learning communities, are included. I concluded this section with a summary of how saturation of concepts presented in literature was reached.

In reviewing the literature, I accessed peer reviewed articles and publications from Walden University Library's electronic databases, and academic texts. The EBSCO host databases searched during this literature review was the Education Research Complete, ERIC, ProQuest Central, Sage, Google Scholar, and Academic Search Premier to find articles related to this project. My key search terms included the following: *professional development, RTI professional development, RTI interventions, training on RTI interventions, effective progress monitoring, progress monitoring with RTI, expectations of RTI, differentiated instruction, value of RTI, teacher self-efficacy, professional learning communities, collaborative inquiry, andragogy, and the fidelity of implementing RTI*. Using a Boolean search, I narrowed my search to only find literature related to the project that was published during the past five years, available in full-text format, and published as a peer-reviewed article. To ensure the literature supported the project of professional development training of this study, literature was reviewed and added to this study until saturation was reached.

Conceptual Framework

The RTI framework is used as an approach to address students' academic and behavior concerns through various instructional tiers by providing quality

instruction and interventions (Daly, Neugebauer, Chafouleas, & Skinner, 2015). The implementation of science framework is an approach that can determine if the RTI framework is implemented as intended, by evaluating the implementation process and effective interventions that led to improved outcomes (Cook et al., 2013). Blase and Fixen (2013) evaluated a program comparable to RTI, by the implementation of science framework by this following criteria: a clear descriptions of the program, a clear description of essential functions, an operational definition of essential function, and a practical assessment of educators using the program, which are key concepts for successful implementation of RTI. Nilsen (2015) stated that the “implementation of science framework provides a sense of understanding the process of applying research practices into action to gain understanding of what influences the action outcomes by evaluating the process implemented” (pp. 3-5). The concept of implementation of science framework can be successful when a model or program is clearly articulated, change is accepted, training and support is provided, and sufficient time is allowed for the implementation process to occur with fidelity (Odom, Duda, Kucharczyk, Cox, & Stabel, 2014).

RTI implementation requires clear expectations for implementation including how to implement the RTI model, and delineation of stakeholder roles and responsibilities (Meyers, Durlak, & Wandersman, 2012). During the process of implementing RTI, all teachers and administrators must be willing to buy-in to the RTI process and have a high self-efficacy within their self to contribute to the implementation of RTI (Douglas, 2016). When educators implemented RTI,

training and support was provided for a supportive organizational climate when uncertainties might arise during implementation and allow for continuous strategies and feedback to be shared (Meyers et al, 2012; Olswang & Prelock, 2015). Overall, RTI implementation requires for time to be allocated for acceptable levels of fidelity and implementation to be evaluated within 2 to 5 years of the initial implementation (Odom et al., 2014; Olswang et al., 2015). The concepts of clear expectations, buy-in, self-efficacy, supportive organization, and timing to implement RTI were factors that influenced the success of the implementation of science framework as well as determined if the RTI implementation process succeeded or failed (Meyers et al., 2012; Nilsen, 2015).

The process of determining if RTI is implemented with fidelity provides opportunities to work with teachers and administrators on their experiences with RTI. This study assessed teacher and administrator perceptions on the fidelity of implementing the RTI framework as related to effective interventions, implementation methods, enabling contexts, and intended outcomes. In reviewing the purpose and the intentions of the RTI framework, the implementation of science framework addressed effective interventions, effective implementation methods, continuous support and trainings, and positive outcomes. Ultimately, the goal of RTI implementation requires teachers to be prepared with knowledge and training to give students structured instruction with effective interventions to improve students' academic and behavioral concerns (Meyers et al., 2012, Nilsen, 2015; & Odom, 2014). When effective implementation takes place, teachers received supports through ongoing PD to implement and communicate best

practices with effective progress monitoring (Meyers et al., 2012; Nilsen, 2015; Odom, 2014). Additionally, teachers could receive supports through observation and collaboration, by observing their colleagues during learning walks to view the implementation of the process and procedures of RTI, and by collaborative inquiring and discussing in PLCs best practices for RTI implementation (Hallam, Smith, Hite, Hite, Wilcox; 2015 & Holmstrom, Wong, & Krum, 2015). When teachers participate in learning walks and collaborative discussions in PLCs, they can determine what best practices works wells for their students, receive feedback on their instructional practices, and obtain new skills to implement within their instructional practices to implement RTI with fidelity (Owen, 2015). The intended outcome of implementing RTI is to increase students' level of academic and behavior achievement through effective interventions and implementation. When evaluating the implementation of RTI, ongoing professional development trainings are critical to closing the gap between the needs of teachers and administrators and effective practices (Fisher, Shortell, & Savitz, 2016; Olswang et al, 2015). Ongoing PD enhances teachers' self-efficacy and builds teachers' sense of purpose and confidence in the fidelity of implementing RTI (Donnell et al., 2015; Phillips, Nichols, Rupley, Paige, & Rasinski, 2016).

Teacher Self-Efficacy. Teachers have a significant effect on student achievement by establishing meaningful teacher-student relationships through collaborative learning, selecting differentiated learning activities for students, and collaborating with parents, colleagues, and administrators (Gaudreau, Royer, Frenette, Beaumont, & Flangan, 2013). Teachers' self-efficacy also plays a vital

role in student achievement due to teachers having the ability to plan and implement actions necessary to achieve desired outcomes that influence teachers' goals, efforts, and persistence with teaching tasks, which in turn influence instructional practices (Oakes et al., 2013). Self-efficacy measures an individual's confidence in his or her ability to successfully engage in a specific task (Mintzes, Marcum, Messerschmidt, & Mark, 2013). Researchers' findings have suggested that teachers' self-efficacy is influential to building the classroom dynamic (Gaudreau, Royer, Frenette, Beaumont, & Flangan, 2013). "Teachers, who overcome challenges by setting goals and striving to achieve goals, tend to demonstrate a high level of self-efficacy to address difficult tasks or requirements differently" (Mintzes et al., 2013, pp. 1202-1205). "Teachers with a low level of self-efficacy avoids difficult or stressful tasks, set low expectations, and fail to overcome challenges" (Mintzes et al., 2013, pp. 1203-1205), which could lead to a negative impact on teachers implementing RTI interventions, understanding the RTI process and procedures, and failing to give students the necessary support to improve students' academic and behavior skills.

Examining how adults learn may assist in suggesting ways to help change instructional practices of teachers implementing RTI. The concepts of andragogy, which is adult learning, suggested, "adult learners use prior experiences and knowledge to guide how they comprehend new concepts and respond to challenging events" (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2014, pp. 18-22). Therefore, the six concepts of andragogy, which helps understand why and how adults learn, indicates adults need to know the importance of learning, have a self-

concept of being responsible for their own decisions, apply their experiences of previous years to new concepts, have a readiness and orientation of learning, and be motivated to learn new concepts of teaching and learning (Knowles et al., 2014) in an effort to fully implement the RTI model effectively with fidelity. The concepts of andragogy are consistent with self-efficacy, which suggested that adult learners apply prior knowledge, observations, and their belief system to newly adopted learned skills to construct understanding (Levina & Mariko, 2015; Lumpe, Vaughn Henrikson, & Bishop, 2014). To be more effective, teachers will need opportunities to observe good modeling of the RTI process. They will also need to apply their learning immediately in their respected setting to believe in their abilities and skills to effectively teach best practices.

Teachers' self-efficacy beliefs are identified through the development of various sources to clarify misunderstandings. Bandura (1997) developed "mastery experience, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological activity as factors of self-efficacy" (Holzberger, Philipp, & Kunter, 2013, p. 775). Mastery experience is when individuals have previously succeeded on a relevant task, whereas, vicarious experiences involves judging one's own capability in relation to others (Holzberger et al., 2013). Verbal persuasion is encouraging or discouraging an individual's performance or ability to perform, which leads to an individual putting forth more effort to succeed at a given task (Canrinus, Helms-Lorenz, Beijaard, Buitink, & Hofman, 2012). Physiological activity involves when individuals experience less stressful teaching situations over which they feel they have more control (Gaudreau et al., 2013; Guo, Connor, Yang, Roehrig, &

Morrison, 2012), which might impact their comfort level and lead to high level of self-efficacy. According to Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, and Hoy (1998) a cognitive process leads to the formation of teacher self-efficacy, which leads to “discovering the relationship between a teacher’s evaluating their teaching task and their skills, by building a higher level of self-efficacy; the level of self-efficacy applied to a particular task or program shapes goals for effective teaching and learning” (Yoon, Evans, & Strobel, 2014, pp. 465-467). Therefore, a “teacher’s instructional practices are affected by his or her self-efficacy, and, in turn, the outcome of his or her performance with implementing RTI instructional practices” (Yoon et al., 2014, pp. 466-467). Teachers’ self-efficacy could be developed and changed to motivate a teacher’s commitment and produce successful student outcomes.

When teachers’ self-efficacy increased to a higher level of motivation and commitment to implement best practices, students could respond to the teachers’ motivation and commitment by developing their own motivation and commitment to what is being taught and learned. Teachers’ self-efficacy, motivation, and commitment toward different instructional subjects affect their instructional practices for teaching and learning, which influenced students’ self-efficacy, motivation, and achievement toward learning (Alkharusi, Aldhafri, Alnabhani, & Alkalbani, 2014). According to Mojavezi and Tamiz (2012), “the self-efficacy of teachers influences students’ motivation and achievement towards academic, personal, and social development” (pp. 484-487). Teachers who have a higher level of self-efficacy toward a particular instructional practice or subject tend to

have students who achieve higher test scores and grades (Mojavezi et al., 2012). This correlation was credited to students' motivation because the teachers' motivation level is high, whereas teachers with lower self-efficacy toward a particular instructional practice or subject tend to have students with lower test scores and grades because the teacher motivation is low as well as the students' motivation level is low (Mojavezi et al., 2012). When teachers have negative attitudes and beliefs toward their subjects, their instructional practices are ineffective and do not meet students' needs (Oakes et al., 2013). Therefore, it is imperative for students and teachers to be motivated to attain academic success and professional success (Steinmayr, Dinger, & Spinath, 2012). Researchers have found that when students are motivated by teachers, they build a relationship which provides ongoing and clear feedback about the students' learning progress, which enhanced the students' and teachers' self-efficacy beliefs regarding their ability to accomplish tasks (Alkharusi, Aldhafri, Alnabhani, & Alkalbani, 2014). In order to enhance teachers' self-efficacy and consequently improve students' motivation and achievement it is vital for school administrators and school-based leaders to provide clear opportunities to motivate teachers, which may consist in conducting ongoing PD that may lead to building professional learning communities (Mojavezi et al., 2012).

Ongoing Professional Development

Ongoing PD allows for teachers to improve or change their instructional practices and reflect about their practices regarding RTI implementation (van den Bergh, Ros, & Beijarrd, 2015). When teachers participated in PD they were

involved in investigating a phenomenon, interpreting results, and sense making practices to bring about change with student outcomes and achievements (Whitworth & Chiu, 2015). Additionally, “participating in ongoing PD allows for teachers to acquire knowledge of RTI strategies that can improve their teaching and learning practices, acceptance to renew their skills, and build upon their self-efficacy, by applying newly adopted practices to instructional practices for individual students’ needs” (Cordingley, 2015, p. 236). PD designed specifically to help teachers and administrators make changes in their practices of implementing RTI with fidelity requires collaboration (Tam, 2015; Whitworth et al., 2015). Cordingley (2015) stated that “quality PD that leads to higher student achievement should focus on collaboration amongst teachers and administrators by respecting the expertise of each other, learning by inquiring, modeling, observing, and applying reasoning to specific outcomes” (pp. 240-246). Teachers and administrators who participated in PD continuously sought more effective ways to implement RTI to teach all students, prevent failures, and meet the many needs of diverse students in their classroom (Harris, Graham, & Adkins, 2015).

Through ongoing PD, teachers and administrators build a culture of collaborative inquiry to openly discuss RTI processes and procedures in an interactive and trusted manner (Tam, 2015). During PD training sessions or PLCs teachers participate in collaborative inquiry were “they collaborate to identify problems, plan, teach, monitor, interpret expected outcomes, and reflect upon next steps that should be implemented into teaching and learning practices”

(Schnellert & Butler, 2015, p. 42). “Through collaboration teachers improve and assess their own practices leading to implementing RTI processes and procedures with fidelity” (Ciampa & Gallagher, 2016, p. 871-872). Researchers found that about 70% of teachers who participated in ongoing PD were more willing to accommodate their instructional practices to a high level of commitment to implement RTI for the development of teaching and learning (Harris et al., 2015; Hemphill, Templin, & Wright, 2015). When PD is provided for teachers and they are able to apply the concepts of andragogy, such as learning new concepts with a purpose and able to relate previous experiences with newly learned skills, teachers are motivated and enhance their self-efficacy to implement effective practices of RTI, (Knowles et al., 2014; van den Bergh et al., 2015). PD should always be ongoing to encourage teachers to implement and support RTI processes and procedures (Whitworth, et al., 2015). Ongoing PD allows for teachers and administrators to engage in dialogue, reflection, observation, and action research with one another, which, in turns, builds a professional learning community environment that supports all stakeholders (Tam, 2015). The implementation of professional learning communities allows for ongoing PD to occur and led to change within teachers’ and administrators’ beliefs and practices of implementing the RTI framework with a greater fidelity (Harris et al., 2015; Hemphill et al., 2015; Tam, 2015).

Professional Learning Communities. Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are collaborative teams where teachers work together to achieve common goals and by benefiting from learning from each other (Liu,

2013). The implementation of PLCs has allowed teachers to collaborate among their colleagues who are required to teach the same standards and content (Dyer, 2013; McCoy, 2014). Additionally, PLCs have provided a vehicle for professional development to be ongoing through consistent collaboration, time, and support focused on student learning (Dyer, 2013; Jones et al., 2013; McCoy, 2014). Researchers have revealed that teachers who participated in PLCs worked in collaborative teams to build shared knowledge regarding instruction, reviewed district and school guides, analyzed data in student achievement, and set expectations for learning and teaching (Jones, Stall, Yarbrough, 2013; McConnell, Parker, Eberhardt, Koehler, & Lundeberg, 2013). The concept of andragogy takes place in PLCs by allowing teachers to focus on issues that currently concern them, test their practices, maximize on resources, collaborate in a respectful manner, and rely on information that is appropriate and developmentally placed (Zepeda, Parylo & Bengtson, 2014). Additionally, when teachers participated in PLCs, the experience resulted in a higher sense of self-efficacy by experiencing collaboration with colleagues, implementation of ideas with students, opportunities to observe other colleagues, and experience outcomes of their work on student's behavior which resulted in positive effects on the students (Mintzes et al., 2013). Building teachers' self-efficacy in PLCs is based upon shared values, supportive environment, and encouraging professional dialogue, which make teachers feel comfortable with learning a new task (McConnell et al., 2013). When teachers participated in PLCs, teachers' self-efficacy was enhanced and a positive effect took place on students' outcomes

within the learning environment (Mintzes et al., 2013). Additionally, PLCs allowed for teachers to share the same mission, vision, values, and goals while focusing on student learning (Buffum & Mattos, 2014). “Professional learning communities supports collaboration amongst teachers, administrators, and support staff to apply necessary action steps to guarantee continuous improvement of student achievement, by gaining the skills to implement best practices” (Buffum et al., 2014, pp. 4-6; Eaker & DuFour, 2015, pp. 12-18). School-based leaders and teachers developed an inside-out reciprocity as opposed to a top-down system through the implementation of PLCs (Fullan, 2000).

Teachers and administrators understand that in order for adequate and effective change to take place they must continue to participate in ongoing professional development learning (Dyer, 2013; McCoy, 2014; Vislocky, 2013). As a result, researchers have examined literature, and suggested that key characteristics and attributes of effective PLCs share the same values and visions by emphasizing collaborative inquiry (Watson, 2014). Through collaborative inquiry, teachers identify a common problem, collect evidence, analyze evidence, reflect, share, and celebrate with one another regarding student achievement or teachers’ pedagogical knowledge and skills (Ciampa et al., 2016). With this information, Watson (2014) suggested that implementing PLCs within a school environment allows teachers to grow and to learn together with administrators through collaborative inquiry to improve school-wide initiatives for the school community (DeLuca, Shulha, Luhang, Shulha, Christou, & Klinger, 2015). Furthermore, Watson (2014) recommended teachers’ experience during

professional development in PLCs is important and can affect implementing the RTI framework; if teachers have an unpleasant experience they may fail to implement RTI processes and procedures that they have learned effectively. Therefore, it is imperative ongoing PD through PLCs are engaging experiences for teachers and administrators. This could result in teachers receiving training on interventions, progress monitoring skills, expectations, and differentiation of instruction strategies to ensure teachers and administrators implement the RTI framework with fidelity for positive student achievement outcomes.

Training on Interventions

Teachers and administrators who participate in ongoing PD through PLCs might better understand the purpose of implementing an effective RTI model when they receive training on interventions to use through the four-tiered RTI model. Training on interventions is required for teachers to acquire the skills and knowledge of research best practices of instructional skills to apply within their setting, which will begin to make a connection to RTI implementation in terms of effective interventions (O'Keeffe, Slocum, & Magnussin, 2013; Seedorf, 2014). An intervention required a specific skill to be taught to students for improving their academic or behavior concerns (Noll, 2013; Sullivan & Castro-Villarreal, 2013). Intervening means teachers should teach and assess to identify students' progress (Robins & Antrim, 2014). Most research based practices for interventions suggest that the approach should be explicit instruction and planned to address needs of students to prevent gaps in student achievement (Hooper, Costa, McBee, Anderson, Yerby, Childress, & Knuth, 2013). Failing to provide

PD in an effective manner regarding implementing interventions can result in interventions not implemented as intended (Noll, 2013). Interventions must be planned and supported through effective PD to change teachers' skills in ways that would result in effective RTI implementation (O'Keeffe et al., 2013; Seedorf, 2014). Researchers suggested that if schools want to observe the RTI implemented with fidelity, training on interventions must occur along with effective progress monitoring to support the goal of the RTI framework (Noll, 2013; Seedorf, 2014; Sullivan & Castro-Villarreal, 2013).

Effective Progress Monitoring

Effective progress monitoring requires teachers to monitor students' progress in response to interventions implemented to determine if students are increasing their academic or behavior levels. Teachers must be trained on how to effectively measure students' progress, which could assist with providing additional, more intense, or different interventions that can be effective (Rowe, Witmer, Cook, & DaCruz, 2014). Teachers and administrators utilized effective progress monitoring to track student responses to interventions and determined placement of students and predicted expected outcomes on benchmark assessments (Brandt, Chitiyo, & May, 2014). Researchers suggested teachers and administrators must acquire the knowledge and skills for effective progress monitoring because progress monitoring is a primary component of determining if the implementation of interventions are producing successful outcomes (Markle, Splett, Maras, & Weston, 2013). Margolis (2012) stated that progress monitoring

assessments must be timely, dependable, effective, easy to process, and quick to interpret, with teachers utilizing the data to make decisions (Rowe et al., 2014).

Assessments used for progress monitoring can be formative, benchmark, or summative assessments to provide teachers and administrators with an overall view of students' progress and response to interventions (Bernhardt et al., 2014). Formative assessments administered during instruction of interventions monitors students' progress in a particular area of concern and determines next steps of instructional practices (Piro & Hutchinson, 2014). Teacher-made tests, anecdotal notes, and work samples were considered formative assessments (Marchand & Furrer, 2014). Benchmark assessments usually determined students expected outcomes on state standardized assessments and determined whether a particular intervention was working or if it needs to be changed for better predictable outcomes for students (Piro et al., 2014). Summative assessments were measured to evaluate student's overall achievement of skills taught throughout the entire school year, which helped school leaders with grouping students for future instructional programs (Moody & Stricker, 2015; Piro et al., 2014). Teachers and administrators will need to acquire knowledge of the types of assessments that could be used for effective progress monitoring during PD trainings (Rodrigues & Oliveira, 2014); this could provide teachers with clarity and expectations of monitoring the effectiveness of RTI implementation and interventions.

Clear Expectations

RTI implementation entitles several steps to occur with teachers and administrators in a school setting. The processes and procedures of implementing

RTI must be provided in a clear manner and expectations must be discussed to ensure fidelity (Swindlehurst, Shepherd, Salembier, & Hurley, 2015). Clear expectations of how to implement RTI, when to conduct Tier 2 or Tier 3 supports, or who is responsible for progress monitoring was a part of PD trainings and the success of RTI implementation (Castillo & Curtis, 2014). During, PD trainings, teachers should receive direct and explicit instructions, concerns should be modeled as need, opportunities for practice should occur, and performance feedback should be provided prior to implementing RTI (Cramer & Bennett, 2015). When clear expectations of RTI are stated, teachers and administrators were more likely to incorporate expectations that follow to the success of providing differentiated instruction (Marrs & Little, 2014), and to address diverse students' needs through all four tiers of the RTI model.

Differentiation of Instruction

Differentiated instruction enabled teachers to focus their instructional practice based on students' needs using the RTI framework as an approach for implementing specific interventions practices for learners (Roberston & Pfeirffer, 2016). According to Allan and Goddard (2010), differentiated instruction and RTI processes and procedures are essential for implementing RTI (Cumming, 2014). Teachers who have difficulty with supporting diverse needs of students may require training in differentiated instruction (Dixon, Yssel, McConnel, & Hardin, 2014; Tomlinson, 2014). Allan and Goddard (2010) believed that differentiation should exist in each tier of the four-tiered model of RTI because each student's needs are different (Cumming, 2014; Patterson & Musselman,

2015). Many teachers struggle with the concept of differentiation, but training gave teachers' self-confidence to practice differentiation of instruction throughout all tiers of the RTI framework to meet each student's needs (Dixon et al., 2014). This project will promote opportunities for teachers and administrators to assess the fidelity of implementing RTI efficiently and reflect on personal practices to analyze how beliefs and training can impact the implementation of differentiation. Through the process of differentiated instruction teachers' responses to learners' needs are guided by the principle of change in teachers' instructional practices such as: flexible grouping, continual assessment, quality of curriculum, and building community through content and processes that affect students' readiness, interests, and learning profiles using a variety of instructional strategies (Robertson et al., 2016). PD trainings on differentiated instruction provided teachers with instructional practices for diverse learners in the capacity of meeting students' particular skill, process or comprehensive level (Nishimura, 2014).

Differentiation and RTI interrelates with one another with providing support to students' needs in a classroom setting through explicit instruction (Shogren, Wehmeyer, & Lane, 2016). Teachers who provided differentiated instruction effectively were less likely to have a high number of students in Tier 2 and Tier 3 due to meeting students' needs at Tier 1 (Freeman, Simonsen, McCoach, Sugai, Lombardi, & Horner, 2016). Additionally, differentiated instruction provided opportunities for teachers to implement multiple interventions with students by thoughtful planning for teaching and learning (Dixon et al., 2014; Freeman et al., 2016; Spruce & Bol, 2015). Through

effective differentiated instruction, teachers and administrators may value the RTI implementation process and procedures.

School Wide Value of RTI

The fidelity of implementing the RTI framework with teachers and administrators is based upon getting the entire school community on board with the implementation initiatives to value the process (Swindlehurst, Shepherd, Salembier, & Hurley, 2015). The school community should include school and district leaders, teachers, parents, counselors, occupational therapists, school psychologists, special education lead teachers, social workers, and other specialist support staff leaders to collaborate with one another to share their backgrounds, expertise, and training regarding RTI (Turse & Albrecht, 2015). The common logic of schools valuing the RTI implementation requires collaborative meetings to take place with the school community leaders to discuss a plan for implementation, and roles which each team member of the school is responsible for implementing (Nellis, Sickman, Newman, & Harman, 2014). Collaboration must be led by the school administrative leaders to facilitate RTI implementation by building a positive school climate that will lead to improved student outcomes (Gregory, 2017). A positive school climate takes places when the school community leaders take the responsibility of implementing RTI by participating and providing collaborate PD trainings or PLCs (Swindelhurst et al., 2015; Turse et al., 2015). During PD trainings or PLCs, leaders collaborate on implementing proven research-based interventions with fidelity, scheduling for conducting interventions with students, and timing for progress monitoring and data

documentation for students' progress (Noltemeyer, Boone, & Sansosti, 2014; Turse et al., 2015). Overall, in order for teachers and administrators to implement RTI with fidelity, they must become more intentional about collaborative trainings and supports regarding RTI, which will build the capacity and self-efficacy of teachers and administrators to value the process of implementing RTI with high quality practices and fidelity (Gregory, 2017; Noltemeyer et al., 2014; Swindlehurst et al., 2015).

Summary

The literature gathered in this review focused on areas identified in the themes that emerged from the project of this study. This review was necessary to address the gaps in practice that Elementary School C has been experiencing. Ongoing PD was found to be important in providing the teachers and administrators within the school with training that supports the implementation of the RTI model. The literature review showed components of RTI that may be important to implementing RTI with fidelity. The components of RTI such as training on interventions, differentiated instruction, effective progress monitoring, clear expectations, and school-wide value of RTI requires ongoing PD training to increase teachers' self-efficacy to implement RTI with fidelity. School district leaders and school administrators could provide ongoing PD trainings in PLCs to continuously support the initiatives of RTI implementation. Teachers and administrators could use what they learn in the PD training sessions to guide RTI implementation to meet the academic needs of all learners. Additionally, the

administrators could assist teachers by providing guidance and feedback on their processes and procedures of implementing the RTI model.

Project Description

This project will be implemented during regular scheduled time allocated for ongoing professional development training sessions for teachers and administrators responsible for implementing the RTI framework. The *Effectiveness of RTI Starts with You*, PD trainings consists of 3-8 cumulative hours' worth of training throughout the school year. The PD trainings will provide teachers and administrators strategies to implement the four-tiered RTI model with fidelity. Primarily, the goals of the PD trainings will create a more systematic process for implementing interventions through differentiation of instruction, provide clear expectations for effective progress monitoring and other procedures, and close the gap between teachers' and administrators' knowledge and application in implementing RTI with a greater fidelity by collaborative inquiry. With administrative support, the project will be presented in the lesson study framework, which was used to distinguish challenges with implementing inquiry-based practices in the educational setting of the Philippines (Gutierrez, 2015). Teachers and administrators will participate in professional development using a PowerPoint presentation with data from the study and strategies from the research that will give teachers relevant support in data analysis and differentiation strategies for students' instructional practices through the RTI framework. Ongoing PD will occur after each professional development training continuously; as teachers and administrators participate in training they will be

divided into learning teams to promote dialogue and goal-planning for implementation of new practices learned through collaborative inquiry (Bocala, 2015; Trust, Krutka, & Carpenter, 2016). After teachers are trained on a specific skill and set a goal, one teacher within the team will implement the practice with students, and members of the learning team will observe and take notes to provide feedback on the observed lesson in a PLC environment (Gutierrez, 2015; Trust et al., 2016). During the PLC when feedback is shared, the learning teams will revise the research lesson of instructional practices to implement the revised research lesson with students and the cycle of observing and sharing information continues after implementation (Bocala, 2015; Gutierrez, 2015). “School leaders commonly use a lesson study framework approach, which is a way to incorporate ongoing PD in the daily school practices, with the goal of focusing on the knowledge and pedagogy learned in an effective collaborative PD training sessions or PLCs where teachers receive support” (Bocala, 2015; Gutierrez, 2015, pp. 349-351). The usage of lesson study framework for the project could be successful based upon individual teachers processing the themes and concepts presented and implementing the strategies with students on a systematic basis.

Potential Resources and Existing Supports

The administrative team is an essential component of this project, because the administrative team of Elementary School C will have to allow the project to be implemented during the allotted time for PD trainings. Another essential component of support is the teachers, including the RTI specialist and Special Education Lead Teacher specialist, who participate in the PD trainings and are

key personnel responsible for implementing RTI. These participants will have to buy-in and implement the project to continuously collaborate and support each other. A space that is comfortable with tables and chairs for participants to sit in collaborative groups with their team is needed. The support materials and resources that might assist the participants during the PD trainings include, but are not limited to: a laptop computer, projector screen or smart board, writing tools, RTI handouts, access to the internet and the local school district website, with access to the district intervention bank for RTI research-based interventions. As the researcher and facilitator, I am available and capable of ensuring electronic devices are connecting and working properly to ensure the success of the PD trainings.

The first PD training session will be to discuss the benefits of implementing RTI, components of RTI that will be addressed, and expectations for implementing RTI with fidelity. An electronic copy of the presentation or handouts will be provided to participants. The goal will be to focus the training on differentiation of instruction and how it correlates with implementing RTI. Participants of the PD sessions will be divided into two learning teams. While divided into teams, participants will individually review their students' data from universal screening assessments and differentiate students according to their academic levels and interventions to plan for differentiated instruction. Once the students' areas of needs are determined, participants will collaborate on how to incorporate differentiated instruction and engage in guided training on differentiated instruction. The first PD training will conclude with constructing a

plan for implementing differentiated instruction based on students' data. The following plan for implementation will be as follow:

- Each learning team member will select a numbered sheet representing the chronological order of when teachers of the learning team will implement the practices taught during PD within a time frame of two weeks, such as differentiated instruction skills and strategies.
- All other team members will observe their peer implementing the practice to improve their own instructional practices and to offer feedback to their team members during follow-up PLC sessions.
- The teachers will be aware of the time they can observe a team member implementing a skill taught during the PD sessions by placing an Emoji eye sticker outside the classroom door.
- Members of each learning team will review and reflect upon observation in the PLC environment, which will provide the opportunity for feedback, reflection, planning for continuous improvement for differentiated instruction.

This process will occur after each ongoing PD session and allow for teachers and administrators to be actively involved in PLCs and learn from their actual practices (Gutierrez, 2015). The time allocated to implement differentiated instruction and understand the process for teachers could be limited to one month, before moving to the next focus skill in the PLC.

The second PD training session participants will focus on is training on research-based interventions to incorporate when differentiating instruction. The teachers will collaborate with learning teams to choose appropriate interventions and strategies to address students' learning goals by processing and practicing data analysis with students' data from universal screening assessment. Teachers and administrators will review research-based interventions and collaborate in discussion on the best research-based interventions for their students. The PD training session will provide opportunities for teachers and administrators to participate in modeling and guiding one another on strategies to implement research-based interventions at Tier 2 and Tier 3 through observations of a member of the learning teams. Participants will be allocated a month to observe, review, and reflect on their experiences in PLC with members of their learning teams. The next PD training will provide opportunities for teachers and administrators to collaborate on how to effectively monitor students' progress after conducting interventions.

The third PD training session will allow participants to develop an improved understanding of aligning current teaching practices with the new process for implementing RTI, and engage in guided training on progress monitoring. The teachers and administrators will collaborate within their respected learning teams on effective tools for progress monitoring to identify ways to improve the current progress monitoring processes. The PD training session will allow participants to observe a teacher by engaging in guided training on progress monitoring students' data based on formal assessments from

responding to intervention support and how to progress monitor benchmark assessments. The training will also conclude with members of the learning team providing a feedback and reflecting upon their experiences. The learning teams will continue to observe other members and gather other skills for applying within their instructional practices by sharing feedback. At the conclusion of the month allocated to implement progress monitoring best practices, all members of the learning team will construct a plan for implementing RTI school-wide, and develop their personal meaning of the fidelity of implementing RTI, with discussion of future supports or trainings needed. The participants will be provided with exit-slip feedback slips to reflect and share feedback about the training sessions and label their feedback as “Pinnacles” and “Pitfalls”, which “Pinnacles” will represent things that went well during PD trainings and PLCs, “Pitfalls” will represent things that need improvements or further supports based on individual members of the learning teams’ experiences.

The follow up to address “Pitfalls,” improvements or supports needed for implementing RTI will be addressed in PLCs or on an individual training with the RTI specialist. During the PLCs a review of expectations for implementing RTI, clarifications of misconceptions or challenges, and a review of helpful tools and strategies for differentiating instruction, implementing interventions, and progress monitoring may be addressed to ensure the fidelity of implementing the RTI model. The PLC sessions are scheduled for 90 minutes once a month and individual support will be available for teachers for 60 minutes twice a month by appointment with the RTI specialist. During the PLCs teachers, administrators,

and other school community leaders can provide support continuously based on their current experiences and challenges with implementing RTI to assist with improving process and procedures for all learners through the usage of learning teams using the lesson study framework.

Solutions to Potential Barriers

The potential resources and existing supports are also significant barriers to this project's success. If the school administrators choose not to implement the ongoing PD trainings due to previous commitments on PD trainings, the project will not be successfully implemented and available for participants. Additionally, previous existing supports for implementing RTI may have resulted in PD trainings that were not helpful or did not meet the concerns of teachers and administrators, which may lead to resistance to engaging in the 3-8 cumulative hours of ongoing PD trainings with learning teams. Teachers and other school leaders may feel overwhelmed with other instructional initiatives, new instructional programs or practices, as well as their current responsibilities related to RTI implementation that may be occurring during the school year and feel that this training will add additional responsibilities to existing duties and expectations.

Also, many experienced and new teachers and administrators may feel that they are equipped with best practices about implementing the RTI framework with fidelity due to past trainings or experiences. These experienced teachers and administrators may feel like additional training is not essential to improving their instructional practices and development as educators to improve RTI

implementation. Therefore, the key to this project being successful relies upon full implementation of the ongoing PD trainings to change the teachers and administrators self-efficacy toward RTI, and change or enhance the processes and procedures for implementing the RTI framework with fidelity in an effort to meet all teachers and students' needs.

Proposal for Implementation and Timetable

The ongoing PD training project is prepared and available for implementation during the 2018-2019 school year; implementation should begin in the Fall of 2018 pending approval at Elementary School C, where the data for this study were composed. The timeline is delineated in Table 3.

Table 3

Timeline for PD

Date	Goals
September 5, 2018	Provide the results of this study to administrators and participants who will engage in the ongoing professional development training sessions which will consist 3-8 cumulative hours of a work day. The training will address the need for creating a more systematic process for implementing RTI with fidelity by providing clear expectations and effective practices and procedures.
September 12, 2018	Receive consent for the ongoing professional development trainings from administrators for teachers, administrators, all instructional leaders within the school community responsible for implementing RTI.
September 19, 2018	Meet with Elementary School C administrators, RTI specialist, special education lead specialist, curriculum specialist, and instructional coaches to schedule dates, times, and locations of the ongoing PD trainings and follow-up PLCs. Provide handouts and supports in paper format or electronic presentation to administrators, RTI specialist, and other instructional support leaders. Each participant will receive documents as well during training sessions.
September 26, 2017	Begin to implement the ongoing PD trainings based on the Elementary School C PD trainings calendar from September 2018-December 2018

and continue PLCs regarding RTI from December 2018-May 2019 school year.

Conclude each professional development session with reflection and question and answer sessions by using “Pinnacles” and “Pitfalls” methods to address any misconceptions or unanswered concepts.

Roles and Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of the facilitator, teachers, and administrators who attend the ongoing PD trainings are essential to this project study’s full implementation. The facilitator will be available to the participants and provide support by appropriately facilitating and engaging participants during the PD trainings. Teachers will need to be openly and actively engaged in the PD trainings and must commit to utilizing the process and procedures shared during the trainings to enhance their self-efficacy and practices for implementing RTI with fidelity. The school administrators will provide a location and support the trainings by attending sessions and collaborating with teachers and other school leaders. If teachers, administrators, and other school leaders collaborate through learning teams during PD trainings and continue through PLCs with the new supports and practices, the project will be considered a success for the teachers and administrators striving to implement RTI with fidelity.

Project Evaluation Plan

The evaluation of the project implementation is goal-based. The goal of the project is to disseminate findings that inform best practices based on research to implement the four-tiered RTI model with fidelity. The survey data will be collected at the end of the school year, following the implementation of the ongoing PD training sessions and PLCs.

A summative evaluation will be conducted using the *AFRTIC* survey to measure teacher and administrator perceptions of the newly adopted RTI processes and procedures based upon changes made from the ongoing PD training sessions. Changes may occur in teachers' instructional practices and administrators' processes for RTI implementation school-wide. Prior to the three ongoing PD sessions, the PD facilitator will provide the *AFRTIC* survey evaluation and collect the data. By using the *AFRTIC* survey prior to the ongoing PD sessions and afterwards a comparison of teachers' and administrators' perceptions of implementing RTI can be conducted. Additionally, school administrators and instructional support staff will have the opportunity to develop a better sense of the current RTI status of the campus in terms of the fidelity of implementing the RTI framework.

The overall evaluation goals for this project includes increasing the best practices used by teachers and administrators in terms of RTI implementation, increasing teachers' self-efficacy to implement RTI with fidelity, and increasing the student achievement in this population. Through the feedback obtained from the teacher and administrator evaluations, evidence could lead to ensuring the fidelity of implementing RTI takes place. When feedback is obtained from past professional development trainings, future trainings and supports are critically thought out and mindfully considered to guide more impactful PD trainings and instructional practices (Phillips et al., 2016; Turse et al., 2015). The school administrators and district leaders, as stakeholders, are responsible for ensuring and evaluating the fidelity of implementing RTI is occurring (Goe, Holdheide, &

Miller, 2014; Hudson & McKenzie, 2016). Therefore, feedback from this project will be ultimately be evaluated by school administrators who are responsible for teacher evaluations, who may document a paradigm shift in instructional practices that enhance the learning environment by conducting informal and formal observations that reveals RTI is being implemented with fidelity.

Project Implications Including Social Change

Local Community

The potential positive social change at the local level for this study may impact teachers, administrators, instructional leaders, students, parents, and other school community leaders. There is an impact for social change as this project may provide a deeper understanding of RTI, provide resources, and RTI professional development to allow teachers the ability to implement RTI with a greater fidelity to meet the distinct needs of their students and identify where gaps in practice exist in relation to RTI implementation. By supporting an environment of ongoing PD trainings and PLCs focusing on collaborative inquiry, data analysis, implementation of differentiated instruction, implementation of research-based interventions, and effective progress monitoring, the teachers, administrators, and students of Elementary School C will be affected. A teacher stated, “I think teachers need ongoing support and professional development that requires modeling and observing process and procedures for RTI implementation. This could help teachers like me with knowing what RTI looks like within their schedule when implemented with fidelity.” Based upon this teacher’s perspective and other participants, teachers and administrators need ongoing trainings and

supports within their schedule to implement, observe other teachers, reflect upon practices, analyze students' data to incorporate differentiated instruction, and research-based interventions to meet students' needs. In addition to the potential social change, this project study can potentially reduce the number of students referred to Tier 2, Tier 3, and Tier 4 for special education programs, and increase the number of students scoring proficient learners status on state standardized assessment by improving teachers' self-efficacy and competence in engaging improved RTI process and procedures within their instructional practices.

Far-Reaching

The effects of this study are far-reaching. I would like to share the project at the school, but also other schools in the district and even to other school districts that are utilizing the four-tiered RTI model. Their teachers and administrators can benefit from the themes and concepts of this study as it relates to the implementation of RTI. The publication dissemination of the study on the ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global database will provide data to other researchers seeking clarification regarding the fidelity of implementing RTI. Additional benefits will include ensuring teachers, administrators, and school community leaders are implementing RTI based on students' academic and behavior needs supported by data. The administrators, RTI specialist, and other instructional leaders at Elementary School C could possibly utilize the findings and recommendations to improve or change practices and ultimately improve student achievement through the fidelity of implementing RTI. As identified in the literature review, ongoing professional development on key factors such as

interventions, progress monitoring, clear expectations, differentiated instruction, school value of RTI along with teachers' self-efficacy and collaborative PLCs are essential to the success of the RTI framework. The project for ongoing PD trainings can provide clarity about the expectations and benefits of implementing RTI process and procedures with fidelity. In addition, based on the findings in this study, this project is a valuable resource to improving teacher and administrators' practices, strategies, beliefs, self-efficacy, and implementation of the four-tiered RTI model within the selected school and similar schools.

Conclusion

Teachers and administrators seek to provide best practices for all students throughout their educational experiences. Title 1 of the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA) noted that students will be provided with support to help identify and began closing achievement gaps. This can be achieved by school district leaders and administrators implementing the RTI framework with fidelity using best practices for instruction to close students' academic and behavioral gaps. Teachers are the key personnel responsible for providing best practices to students. When teachers are equipped with the knowledge and self-efficacy to implement RTI with fidelity, the commitment of ESSA (2015) could become reality for all students to receive appropriate prevention-based strategies to be successful.

While there are many reasons teachers and administrators may fail to implement the RTI framework with fidelity, findings in this project study indicated that teachers and administrators believe ongoing PD is necessary for

teachers, administrators, and support staff to be equipped with best practices to address diverse learners' needs. All participants shared that ongoing PD is needed in the aspects of clear expectations, scheduling, timing, progress monitoring, and differentiated instruction. Teachers are not unwilling to implement the RTI framework, but need training that supports the RTI components that are important to the implementation process. Sixty-six participants noted the need for training on strategies to implement RTI needs to be step-by-step, clear, concise, and teacher friendly for teachers to implement RTI with fidelity. This sense of providing training and supports are critical for increasing teachers' self-efficacy, competence, and confidence to implement RTI. The ongoing PD may need to be available in various forms such as coaching, continued conversation, supportive PLCs, and accountability amongst all stakeholders.

The development of the ongoing PD entitled, "*Effectiveness of RTI Starts with You*" could be used to assist teachers and administrators with a more systematic learning process for implementing RTI components, processes, and procedures to improve student achievement through collaborative modeling and training. The progression of PD allows for teachers, administrators, and support staff to close gaps between their knowledge and application in implementing RTI. PD provides opportunity to develop an understanding of the fidelity of implementing RTI. There are opportunities for teachers and administrators to collaborate, evaluate current practices, and enhance instruction with best practices. Participants would complete the PD with an action plan for a school-

wide initiative for implementing RTI with fidelity to address various learning needs.

This process has provided an opportunity for me to address my professional needs within my environment by collaborating with my colleagues to build cohesive relationships while finding a way to create opportunity for social change. The research process and project development have enhanced my abilities to develop strategic action plans that could impact a learning environment. I am now a counselor, project developer, leader, learner, and social change agent. This professional change is notable within my actions with students, staff, parents, and community leaders. This process has led to me reflecting that the possibilities as a leader are endless as long as I continue to be a learner and advocate for all students.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Introduction

This qualitative project case study's purpose was to assess teacher and administrator perceptions of the fidelity of implementing the RTI framework as related to effective interventions, implementation methods, enabling contexts, and intended outcomes at Elementary School C, located in southeastern Georgia. The findings of the data showed that there was a need for PD that will increase the effectiveness of interventions, clear expectations of RTI, progress monitoring, differentiated instruction, teachers' self-efficacy, and school-wide value of implementing RTI with fidelity. I designed ongoing PD training sessions consisting of learning teams using the lesson study framework, titled, *Effectiveness of RTI Starts with You*, after I assessed teachers and administrators' perceptions of fidelity of implementing the RTI framework.

In Section of 4 of this study, the purpose is to provide my review and reflections about the study findings. The review and reflections includes the project strengths, possible limitations, along with recommendations for future changes to practices, implications and applications, and the direction for future research. The findings shared the importance of utilizing the information gained as a tool to increase the processes and procedures of interventions, professional development, teachers' self-efficacy, progress monitoring, differentiated instruction, and the value of implementing the RTI model. In addition, I recommend the importance of incorporating PLCs for teachers, administrators, and other school community leaders to collaborate on best practices to increase

the fidelity of RTI implementation. Finally, I reflect on my responsibilities as a scholar practitioner and what knowledge I have gained about scholarship, project development, and leadership and change that has evolved me as an educational leader.

Project Strengths

A lack of fidelity of implementing the RTI framework can result in students' academic and behavioral needs not being met, leading to major achievement gaps for students (Meyer & Behar-Horenstein, 2015). Elementary School C exhibited challenges with the fidelity of implementing RTI, as noted by the school curriculum specialist who conferenced with teachers and administrators who expressed implementation concerns and challenges as well as a lack of motivation to implement RTI with fidelity (personal communication, March 25, 2015). Also, there were 57% of third grade students identified as beginning learners in English Language Arts and 46% of third grade students identified as beginning learners in Mathematics, which indicated the students were struggling meeting the state Common Core standards according to their respective grades (Georgia Department of Education, 2015). Because accountability for students' academic and behavior achievement has increased in the United States recently, school leaders and teachers were required to adopt the ESSA law of 2015 and the RTI model (Harrington et al., 2016; Sanger et al., 2012). A strength of the project to address this issue was to provide participants with a more systematic process for implementing interventions by differentiation of instruction for individual students to improve student achievement through

ongoing collaborative modeling, collaborative inquiry, and trainings of the RTI processes and procedures.

The data from interviews and surveys indicated the need to address teacher and administrator concerns with the processes and procedures of implementing the RTI model with fidelity. Teacher 1 indicated that multiple expectations are placed on teachers when implementing RTI that are confusing and overwhelming when they have a diverse class with students who receive instructional support at each tiered level of the RTI model. All participants shared that tools to use for progress monitoring are not consistent, and progress monitoring does not take place with fidelity for Tier 2 and Tier 3 students. Another strength of this project is the emphasis on addressing misleading concerns by providing clear expectations for effective progress monitoring and other processes and procedures as it related to RTI implementation. The project provides participants with training on processes and procedures with clear expectations and duties by modeling and guiding best practices and strategies for implementing RTI with fidelity.

The training includes ongoing PD through PLC sessions that may occur during scheduled PD days or faculty meetings, which will allow teachers and administrators to continue to collaborate, evaluate current practices, and enhance instructional practices with current best practices for teaching and learning. PLCs that allow teachers and school leaders opportunity to practice, reflect, collaborate, and engage in planning are essential for RTI being implemented with fidelity (Tam, 2015). The project was strengthened by teachers and administrators'

willingness to increase their knowledge and application by participating in a supporting collaborative environment to assist with closing the gap between teachers and administrators' knowledge and application in implementing RTI with fidelity at Elementary School C. The literature review uncovered instructional strategies to meet the deficits identified by the teacher and administrator participants. I designed ongoing PD training sessions based upon the findings and literature review to address Elementary School C deficits.

Project Limitations

The project I designed for Elementary School C required school administrators and teachers to commit to 3-8 cumulative hours of ongoing PD training sessions during the weekly regular scheduled ninety minutes PD time allocated at the local campus or faculty meetings. The project can also be conducted over a 3 full day period monthly over 3 months per grade level, requiring the entire school day and substitute teachers for PD training sessions. One of the project's limitations may be funding for substitute teachers during the option of the 3 full day PD training sessions that might impact the school's budget. Schools are provided with funding for specific PD trainings; funding for substitute teachers may not be allocated for the option of 3 full day PD training sessions monthly for 3 months for each grade level. Another consideration is the resistance instructional participants might have toward changing their instructional teaching and learning practices. Teachers and administrators expressed several challenges with the current RTI model processes and procedures and the need for additional training related more to the components of

implementing RTI. The PD trainings will require teachers and administrators to collaborate and develop a plan of action to enhance their current practices of implementing the RTI model with a greater fidelity. The limitations that could be possible are: (a) challenges with adding the training to the school calendar that may have already been developed with designated PD trainings, (b) challenges with allocating funds for substitutes during the day-long training, and (c) challenges with enhancing current practices of RTI with best practices shared during training sessions.

The PD trainings provided will improve teachers' and administrators' practices and their beliefs with implementing RTI. The primary purpose of the PD training sessions is to provide participants with a more systematic and clear process for implementing RTI with fidelity using differentiated instruction, effective progress monitoring, and applying best practices to meet students' needs within the four-tiered RTI model.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

The RTI framework is a prevention-based model implemented in various ways in many schools, requiring best practices to be used to address the academic and behavioral needs of students (Eagle et al., 2015; Warren & Robinson, 2015). My experiences with the RTI framework in various schools and school districts have appeared different due to the flexibility to implement RTI as it may or may not align with the school-wide initiatives. Teachers and other instructional support staff are primarily responsible for ensuring all tiered levels of the RTI model implemented within a school instructional program (Burns et al., 2013;

Castro-Villarreal et al., 2014). The responsibilities of teachers and instructional support staff have with RTI lead them to expressing challenging and concerns with the process and procedures of RTI (Isbell et al., 2014; Marrs et al., 2014). Additionally, administrators are faced with challenges and concerns of ensuring the fidelity of implementing RTI and providing supports to instructional staff regarding RTI implementation (Burns et al., 2013; Castro-Villarreal et al., 2014).

In this study, I focused on assessing teacher and administrator perceptions on the fidelity of implementing the RTI framework, due to concerns based on observed inconsistencies of RTI implementation and teachers' reported a lack of motivation to implement RTI. My investigation RTI implementation allows educators to implement RTI with a greater fidelity to better meet all students' needs.

However, an alternative approach to address the problem of implementing RTI with fidelity could be to compare two schools such as, variables, in the same district (Creswell, 2009). The research process could have included data collected from two campuses, one being an experimental campus and the other a control campus to determine if the use of certain factors will produce different outcomes (Creswell, 2009). There could have been school labeled, as the experimental campus, which the teachers and administrators adopted a RTI blocked scheduled, such as the first 30-60 minutes of day in which instructional staff focus on interventions school-wide within their classroom setting. Comparatively, the other school, a control campus, could have been a school that adopted the RTI model by allowing teachers to integrate processes and procedures of RTI in their

instructional practice during their own time or days, similar to the selected school of this study. The perception of teachers and administrators in the experimental school group related to the control school group would have allowed me to obtain their perspectives on modifications that needed to be made regarding school-wide implementation of RTI. The effect of piloting a school with a blocked schedule for RTI could prove to be positive or negative, depending on how student achievement may increase or decrease (Duke, 2015). Therefore, gathering student achievement data from both schools could provide additional information for helping to determine which school had a greater effect on student achievement due to the RTI implementation processes and procedures (Bernhardt et al., 2017; Wanzek et al., 2012).

Another alternative approach to address the problem is to engage stakeholders in a review of the reading and mathematics curriculum adopted at their respected schools. Stakeholders' determination on curriculum choices for instructional practices influences how teachers teach and how students learn (McGee, Wang, & Polly, 2013). Adopting a new curriculum may assist with meeting students at their levels if the curriculum in place is designed for higher level learners. Appropriate curriculum choices can influence the level of success students feel, considering that is difficult for them to feel a high level of success and achievement with a more challenging curriculum that does not address diverse learners' needs. I could have also recommended that every school campus district wide in middle and high school implement block scheduling to ensure students at each tiered level of the RTI model needs are met daily. These

alternative plans of the study could be successful only with the consideration and collaboration of all stakeholders' perspectives and summative data (Faehnle & Tyrväinen, 2013; Gulikers, Biemans, Wesselink, & van der Wel, 2013). When all stakeholders are engaged in the decision-making of implementing RTI, they tend to commit and participate in the process without resistance (Burns et al., 2013; Hansen, 2014). However, the approach in this study will assist school district leaders, school administrators, instructional support staff, and teachers with deciding the need for change in their selected schools to ensure fidelity of implementation for RTI thereby providing more support for all stakeholders, specifically students.

Scholarship

The process of scholarship requires one to learn at a high level of academic achievement or study (Bryson, 2016; Fear & Sandmann, 2016). Scholarship may involve researching a particular topic or challenging a theory, practice, or belief by researching and questions (Bryson, 2016; Fear et al., 2016). This project study involved scholarly learning through research of assessing the fidelity of implementing the RTI model. The project was designed based on the perceptions of teachers and administrators in Kindergarten through 3rd grade with implementing the four-tiered RTI model in an elementary setting. Data findings showed there was a need for ongoing PD trainings focusing on implementation components of the RTI model. I chose to develop ongoing PD training sessions based upon the findings to address teachers and administrators' concerns that can

be used on the Elementary School C campus and similar campuses to address the fidelity of implementing the RTI model.

Through scholarly research, my doctoral journey experience has evolved me as a professional educational leader. As a scholar practitioner, I have gained a better understanding of and expertise in conducting scholarly research and completing a project study that has the potential to impact social change within communities similar to Elementary School C. I am now able to apply skills learned through this scholarly process to my daily experiences within my professional setting on a school-based level or national level. This doctoral journey has increased my knowledge and understanding of what it means to be a social change agent by identifying a problem and providing a solution through research. Moreover, this experience has instilled within me the strength, courage, and motivation to be a productive scholar, change agent, and facilitator of topics concerning education.

The professional growth I have obtained through this process was obtained from the Walden University courses, the professional staff, and the supportive efforts of my chair, second chair, University Research Reviewer (URR) member, and the IRB committee that allowed me to achieve this lifetime goal of completing this doctoral project study. The support from my committee and colleagues has pushed me out of my comfort zone. I began this process to challenge myself, and in turn, this process has pushed me to be a scholar, a learner, an educational leader, a researcher, a writer, and a critical thinker. My adventure has required me to rely on my faith and support of family and friends,

which I am forever grateful and thankful for. I am looking beyond the horizon as becoming a one of a kind 21st century educational change agent leader and scholar due to the affect this process has had on my life.

Project Development and Evaluation

I developed this project based on the challenges and concerns that teachers and administrators were having with the fidelity of implementing the RTI model. My desire was to provide a clear systematic approach for implementing the RTI model with training and support to enhance the processes and procedures of RTI implementation. I believe that my project will provide teachers and administrators with improved practices for teaching and learning to meet students' academic and behavior needs, as well as improve students' results on state standardized assessments. As for the teacher and administrator participants of the ongoing PD training sessions, their skills and abilities to implement RTI with a greater fidelity after participating in the ongoing PD will be measured based upon observation by evaluator or peers observing instructional practices prior to training and afterwards. Participants may also self-evaluate their instructional practices prior to PD training sessions and afterwards by completing the *RTISRS* (2006) survey.

Throughout the development of this project, I used peer-reviewed articles to research and gain an understanding about the challenges and concerns that teachers and administrators are experiencing with implementing the RTI process with fidelity. This new understanding will help me as a future instructional leader to improve the academic performance of students by closing gaps between

teachers and administrators' knowledge and application in implementing RTI with useful RTI trainings. The qualitative data was collected from interviews, surveys, and an archived document, which was analyzed and coded into themes that answered the research question, and was used to guide the literature review and the subsequent RTI implementation with fidelity project. I was able to develop goals for the project aligned with my findings, the identified problem of this study, and peer-reviewed literature related to the project, which provided support, credibility, and clarity about why my project was developed. During the development of the project, I referred often to goals of the project and guiding research question for this doctoral project study. As the developer of this project, I ensured that evaluations of components of my project should be provided and discussed to determine if my project goals were achieved. My ultimate hope as the project developer is for participants to find the project engaging and meaningful in efforts to enhance their instructional teaching and learning practices.

Leadership and Change

Ehren and Hatch (2013) explained that one primary benefit of RTI was to improve student achievement. When RTI is implemented, teachers and school leaders must understand the process for implementing RTI, which requires teachers to receive support in order to achieve successful student achievement outcomes (O'Connor et al., 2012). When teachers and school leaders receive support through PD trainings to implement new initiatives such as RTI, they may be motivated to implement the process and procedures (Brezicha, Bergmark, &

Mitra, 2015). Educational leaders who adopt new processes and procedures of implementing RTI by collaborating with teachers in PD trainings and involving teachers within a team to be a part of the process of change, enhance teacher participation and ensure change occur with instructional practices (Haughe, Norenes, & Vedoy, 2014).

The project of ongoing PD trainings was developed to help the teachers and administrators at Elementary School C to implement their RTI model with fidelity and subsequently meet their students' academic and behavior needs with best practices for instruction at each tiered level of the RTI model. The school leadership and support of this project is vital to teachers and other instructional leaders' commitment, dedication, and engagement during the PD trainings and after the PD trainings. Teachers and instructional leaders may take the concepts learned in PD trainings and apply into their instructional practices. The leadership within Elementary School C affects how teachers, instructional leaders, and other participants perceive the PD trainings and PLCs related to RTI implementation components. Without the support of leadership, a systemic change may not occur; therefore it is essential leaders within the school adopt, value, and support the initiatives of this project to implement RTI with fidelity to observe changes within their teachers and students.

Reflective Analysis

My doctoral experience has been filled with victorious moments and challenging moments that required me to pushed beyond my comfort zone to reach my potential as a scholarly professional educational leader. The level of

collaboration with various dynamic professors and supportive colleagues has improved my level of critical thinking. The required doctoral project study was a culminating experience of my perseverance to critically think and to research a problem that could impact change within a learning environment. My goal throughout this learning experience was to obtain a doctoral degree; however, that goal quickly changed as I began to notice I was growing as a learner, a leader, and an educator. The goal I developed for myself during this experience was to increase my knowledge and understanding of teaching and learning as an improved educational change agent leader within an administrative setting to produce social change within learning environments locally and nationally. The process of producing social change requires one to become a social change agent (Komives & Wagner, 2016), which I see myself as now. I have obtained the skills to evaluate and to check for the credibility and validity of a problem to develop informed decisions, actions, and viewpoints to ultimately impact student achievement through instructional practices and supports teaching and learning as well as encouraging other professional educational leaders to strive for greatness to make a significant social change within the educational environment for all learners.

Analysis of Self as Scholar

Throughout this process, I have grown and developed as a student and scholar at Walden University. I have gained an understanding of what it is to conduct scholarly research and become a scholar. As a scholar, I have used the knowledge I obtained to improve my practices and elevate the practices of my

educational professional colleagues. My colleagues that I mentor have a new level of credibility as they value me as a scholarly practitioner and learner. I have inspired my colleagues to obtain their personal professional goals as well as challenged myself to obtain further personal professional goals.

The research process has taught me how to approach learning in a scholarly way. This experience has trained me how to research information gathered from many sources and then analyze and organize it into a meaningful context to my setting, constructing my own knowledge from the experience. I have gained a better appreciation and understanding of a researcher's responsibility to ensure the safety of participants to maintain confidentiality and to protect participants' rights throughout a research process. I developed a level of knowledge, understanding, and respect for the processes and procedures of implementing the RTI framework with fidelity and the importance of teachers' and administrators' perspectives in providing their experiences with RTI to impact teachers, administrators, school community leaders, and students' growth in teaching and learning. As a scholar, I have matured as a school counselor, a leader, a facilitator, and a future school instructional administrator, by the knowledge I have learned from this experiences that will enable me to bring about social change in my current professional endeavors and future professional endeavors within school districts, schools, fellow educators, and professional affiliations.

Analysis of Self as Practitioner

The journey during this research process allowed me to grow as a researcher and practitioner by applying concepts learned in my educational setting practices with educational professional colleagues and students. The doctoral project study required me to collaborate with my committee, which directed and guided me to improve my research abilities and led to the development of a project that met the high standards of Walden University. This doctoral journey required dedication and perseverance on my part, and I fully appreciate the support, direction, and guidance of my committee members throughout this journey. I am appreciative for the school district leaders and the school administrators who allowed me the opportunity to conduct the project within their setting and supported my research. The participants are the essential piece to the success of this project by giving of their time and sharing their perceptions of the problems they were experiencing with implementing the RTI model with integrity. I am eternally grateful for the participants. My final goal as an accomplished practitioner is to see the changes implemented at Elementary School C as a result of implementing the project to enhance the fidelity of implementing the RTI model.

Analysis of Self as Project Developer

As a project developer, I learned how to develop and implement a research project that has the potential to influence positive social change in an urban public elementary school. My project was developed based upon a conversation with

colleagues regarding concerns and challenges with implementing the RTI model at Elementary School C. I began to have more in-depth conversations with school leaders and teachers of the selected school of this study, which centered my concerns on the fidelity of implementing RTI. As I worked with my doctoral project study committee, I relied on my knowledge and skills to focus on assessing the school's deficits in relation to RTI implementation to meet the academic and behavior needs of all students. When I began my research I studied literature, connected data to a conceptual framework, created a prospectus and study, considered ethical concerns for research participants, obtained IRB approval, collected data, analyzed data, and presented the data findings with a culminating doctoral project study to address the findings of the research problem. This process required me to seek the assistance and guidance of my committee and to focus on Elementary School C needs that could benefit from the PD trainings. This project study could produce social change throughout the implementation of RTI within the selected campus and similar campuses with similar challenges.

Reflection on the Importance of the Work

The RTI framework is designed as a prevention model, designed to provide support and instruction to meet diverse learners' needs (Swindlehurst et al., 2015; Turse et al., 2015). The educational system uses the RTI framework to address the needs of all learners at levels of the tiered model (Turse et al., 2015). The success of implementing the RTI framework is fundamental to producing change in teaching and learning as well as student achievement (Noltemeyer et

al., 2014; Robins et al., 2013). The PD training sessions and the PLCs developed for this project focused on providing teachers and administrators with supports to implement the RTI framework to seek change within their instructional practices and their students. The PD trainings and PLCs allow the opportunity for teachers, administrators, and other school community leaders to collaborate, which increases teachers' self-efficacy to implement RTI components with a greater fidelity. Ultimately, the project designed for Elementary School C could impact and challenges educators to close gaps in practice with knowledge and application related to RTI implementation to provide all students with highly qualified instruction.

The fidelity of implementing the RTI framework requires effective interventions, effective implementation methods, and enabling contexts, to produce the intended outcomes of student achievement to increase for all learners (Duda et al., 2015). This led to participants within this study sharing concerns with interventions, implementation methods, and enabling contexts that impacted their ability to implement the RTI model with fidelity. All participants agreed that PD training sessions were needed to increase teachers and administrators' skills and abilities to implement RTI with fidelity while increasing students' achievement. Without the implementation of this project, educators and students will fail to succeed in closing the achievement. Therefore, it is vital for this project to be implemented to provide educators with best practices through guided hands-on exploration and collaboration with differentiated instruction, interventions, and progress monitoring, which will increase educators' self-

efficacy and instructional practices to support all students by addressing their needs through the RTI framework.

Potential Impact on Social Change

The qualitative case study data revealed the ongoing PD trainings and PLCs could give the teachers and administrators the skills necessary to meet Elementary School C needs of RTI implementation. Their implementation of the RTI framework had challenges and concerns with intervention implementation, progress monitoring, instruction, and many other RTI components. The data showed that RTI PD training was implemented at the beginning of the school year, and a school RTI PD Plan for continuous training was not developed, which resulted in concerns regarding components of RTI not being addressed. The PD trainings and ongoing PD trainings will provide teachers, administrators, and other instructional leaders with deeper understanding of RTI, resources, and RTI PD to allow teachers the ability to implement RTI with a greater fidelity to meet the individual needs of their students and identify where gaps in practice exist in relation to RTI implementation.

As a result of meeting the teachers and administrators' needs to implement RTI correctly by offering PD trainings throughout the school year, I believe that student performance on state standardized assessments can improve, with more students being identified as proficient learners. The trainings will provide teachers and information on how to collaboratively evaluate current RTI implementation, guide its implementation, and oversee its continued growth to produce academic growth for all learners. By helping the teachers to implement

the RTI model with fidelity, it is possible the need for more intense interventions and possible evaluation and placement in special education will decline, resulting in more students remaining in highly qualified educators' classroom providing differentiated instruction to meet their needs. This project ultimately has the potential to impact educational systems across geographical boundaries, multiple contents, and grade levels by refining the instructional practices through the RTI framework to increase educators' practices and student achievement.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

Based on the ongoing PD training sessions and PLCs, I believe that the teachers and administrators will improve the fidelity of implementing the RTI framework, which will increase student achievement. One of the applications of this project study is to implement the project at Elementary School C or similar settings with similar demographics. I will like to also present the findings at state and national educational conferences and publish in peer-reviewed educational journals to share teachers and administrators' perceptions. Future research may be to apply this project to the secondary level schools to offer guidance and support through PD trainings and PLCs to ensure teachers and administrators are meeting the specific and diverse needs of learners. This could assist with meeting students' academic and behavior needs at the secondary level that may have been unmet at the elementary level. An additional direction for future research could involve assessing teachers' and administrators' perceptions of implementing RTI at 4th and 5th grade focusing on Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports. The findings from a study and project of this nature could have a potentially far-reaching impact on

social changes for teachers, administrators, and school community leaders to responsive support, guidance, and leadership to other members of the educational system.

Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to assess teacher and administrator perceptions of the fidelity of implementing the Georgia RTI model at one campus using teacher and administrator interviews, surveys, and review of archived documents. The data from the teacher and administrator participants provided rich descriptions that lead to the development of a project addressing the concerns through professional development training sessions. The ongoing PD trainings address RTI implementation components focusing on data-driven decisions, best practices of interventions, differentiated instruction, effective progress monitoring, clear expectations, and valuing the process of implementing RTI. Throughout Section 4 of this study, I self-reflected on this doctoral project study journey to understand the importance of social change in RTI implementation and its impact on teachers and administrators at Elementary School C. The impact on social change will be measured by the changes in teachers and administrators' collaborative planning and practices to implement the RTI model with a greater fidelity resulting in a deeper understanding of RTI, effective resources, and improved student academic achievement in the daily classroom assignments, as well as benchmark and state standardized assessments.

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Appendix A: The Project
Effective RTI Starts with You Project

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Purpose

The purpose of this professional development training (PD) is to provide teachers and administrators in school in the southeastern of Georgia with training that address the teachers' and administrators' concerns and challenges with implementing the Response to Intervention (RTI) model with fidelity. This PD training was developed based upon an in-depth study of teachers' and administrators' perceptions of the fidelity of implementing the RTI framework. The study addressed concerns and challenges that can impact the implementation of RTI, knowledge and application of teachers' and administrators' practices, and student achievement on state standardized assessments. Data analyzed from this study developed the identification of six themes that the teachers and administrators stated as needs for implementing the RTI model with fidelity. The six themes were: lack of training on interventions, effective progress monitoring, ongoing professional development, clear expectations, differentiation of instruction, and school-wide value of RTI (see Table 4).

Table 4

Themes and Description

Theme	Description
Lack of training on interventions	Teachers receive training on program not intervention process.
Effective progress monitoring	Teachers and administrators use data for input but not decisions related to interventions.
Ongoing professional development	PD is needed continuously to help teachers understand and implement RTI model with fidelity.
Clear expectations	Teachers struggle with expectations due to changes in the RTI process yearly.
Differentiation of instruction	Teachers and administrators need to ensure instruction is provided to meet diverse learner needs.

The cyclical relationship of the six themes is illustrated in Figure 1. The six identified themes were interrelated through their impact on each other as ways to implement the Georgia RTI model with fidelity. The teachers and administrators believed that training on interventions is needed, which could lead to effective progress monitoring if teachers are trained on how to provide interventions support. The ongoing professional development is needed for continuous support with the RTI process at each tiered level, which teachers and administrators believed would provide clear expectations and support with differentiating instruction. Overall, teachers and administrators believe the fidelity of implementing RTI needs to include school-wide value of RTI in reference to time, scheduling, and buy-in to ensure the process is implemented with fidelity with the necessary tools that are identified as themes.

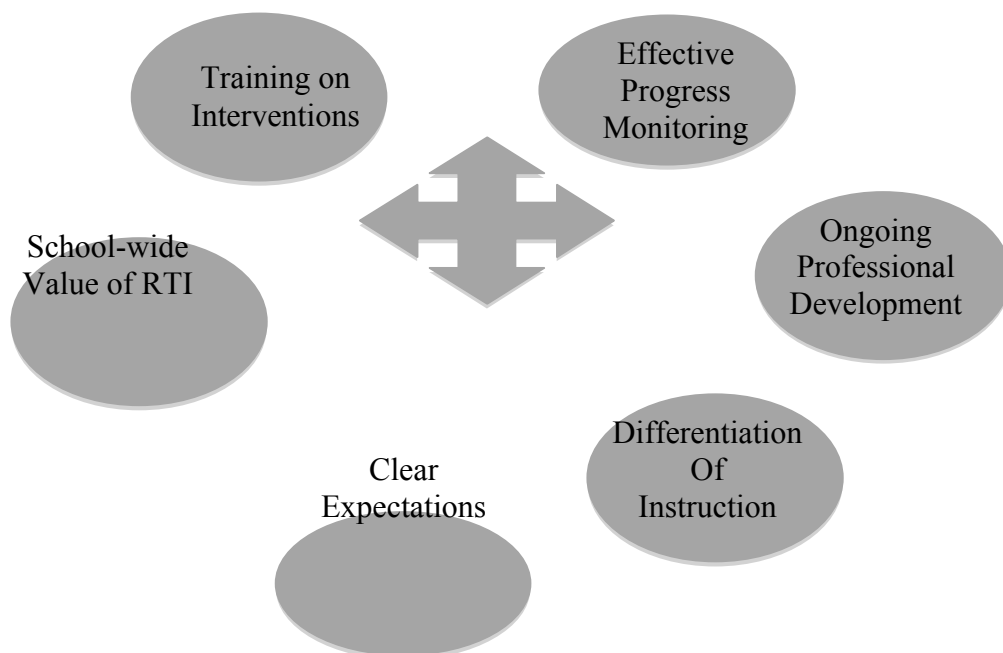


Figure 5. Cyclical relationship between themes

Materials

- Wireless internet access
- Laptop computers
- Power surges and/or extension for charging laptops
- A handout copy of Session 1 PowerPoint for all participants in attendance.
- A handout copy of Session 2 PowerPoint for all participants in attendance.
- A handout copy of Session 3 PowerPoint for all participants in attendance.
- Access to the district website for research-based interventions.
- A Progress Monitoring form tool for each participant in attendance.
- A daily agenda for each participant in attendance.
- A copy of RTI Process Checklist or each participant in attendance.
- A Tier 3 checklist for each participant in attendance.
- A copy of the daily evaluation (Exit Ticket) for each participant in attendance.
- A copy of differentiated instruction implementation plan for each participant in attendance.
- A copy of each student's data from universal screening assessments for reading and language arts.
- A copy of RTI implementation schedule for each participant in attendance.
- A copy of *AFRTIC* survey for each participant in attendance to access after a year or more of new RTI implementation practices.
- Access to a Promethean board or Smart board for the presentation.
- Large post-it pad, pens, pencils, markers, highlighters, post-it pads, note flags, dry erasers markers, dry eraser boards, etc.

Timeline

- Provide the results of this study to administrators and participants who will engage in the 3 Session ongoing professional development training that will address the need for creating a more systematic process for implementing RTI with fidelity by providing clear expectations and effective practices and procedures.
- Receive consent for the ongoing professional development training from administrators for teachers, administrators, and all instructional leaders within the school community responsible for implementing RTI.
- Meet with administrators, RTI specialist, special education lead specialist, curriculum specialist, and instructional coaches to schedule dates, times, and locations of the PD trainings and follow-up PLCs.
- Provide handouts and supports in paper format or electronic presentation to administrators, RTI specialist, and other instructional support leaders. Each participant will receive documents as well during training sessions.
- Implement the PD trainings based on the school or school district professional development trainings calendar from August 2018-October 2018 and continue PLCs regarding RTI from August 2018-May 2019 school year. Conclude each professional development session with reflection and question and answer sessions by using “Pinnacles” and “Pitfalls” methods to address any misconceptions or unanswered concepts.

Agenda

The PD training sessions will consist of 3 sessions and follow up within PLCs will occur. The *Effective RTI Starts with You*, training session will be presented as follows: Session 1-Thinking Differently About RTI, Session 2-Thinkers of RTI, Session 3-The Process Requires: Progress Monitoring.

Session 1: Facilitator's Agenda

Session 1: Thinking Differently About RTI



I. Session 1: Introduction (10 minutes)

- The purpose for this session of PD training is to provide authentic opportunities to engage with the benefits of RTI, differentiated instruction best practices and student data.
- The goals of the training are as follow:
 - To create a better understanding of RTI and the best practices for implementing with fidelity and
 - To create a more systematic process for analyzing students data to plan for instruction by supporting colleagues in data inquiry and
 - To close the gap between teachers' knowledge and application providing differentiated instruction with efficacy in implementation on a consistent basis.
- Distribute handouts of presentation and evaluation exit-slips.



II. Learning objectives (5 minutes).

- Review the history of RTI
- Understand the benefits of implementing RTI
- Review components of RTI and expectation
- Construct their meaning of differentiation
- Review student data to determine needs for instruction
- Identify ways to provide differentiated instruction
- Collaborate with colleagues to develop a plan for implementing differentiated instruction

III.

The first slide, 'History of RTI', discusses the 2004 No Child Left Behind Act and the 2015 Every Student Succeeds Act. The second slide, also titled 'History of RTI', mentions the RTI framework as a multi-tiered prevention model. The third slide, 'RTI Pyramid of Intervention', shows a pyramid with four levels: Tier 1 (All Students), Tier 2 (Targeted Interventions), Tier 3 (Intensive Interventions), and Tier 4 (Individualized Instruction). The fourth slide, 'Researched Benefits of RTI Implementation', lists benefits such as increased student achievement and reduced special education enrollment.

This slide features a quote from a teacher: 'Based upon teacher and administrator responses of the safety of implementing the RTI framework, they affirmed RTI supports the following...'. Below the quote are bullet points: 'Planning Professional Development', 'Professional Learning', 'Collaborative Learning', 'Differentiated Instruction', and 'Personalized Learning'.

This slide contains a quote from a researcher: 'Research and practice suggest that the implementation of RTI...'. It lists several key findings related to the effectiveness of RTI programs.

This slide lists the components of RTI, including: 'Differentiated Instruction', 'Research-Based Interventions', 'Formative Assessment', and 'Collaborative Professional Learning'.

Research (20 minutes)

- Read slides from current research
- Read slides about what teachers and administrators have said.
- Group sharing discussion: Share out from groups what resonates with you from these statements.

IV.

This slide asks 'What is Differentiated Instruction?' and provides a definition: 'The process of teaching, instructional responses to learners' needs that are guided by the practice of ongoing or iterative assessment...'. It includes a task instruction: 'Take 2-3 minutes to write down your meaning on RTI of differentiated instruction...'.

This slide lists key points about differentiated instruction: 'Differentiated instruction enables teachers to focus their instruction...', 'Differentiation and RTI...', and 'Additionally, differentiated instruction provides opportunities for teachers to implement...'.

Part Two Research (15) minutes

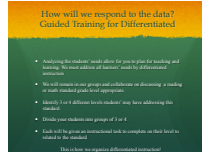
- Read about the process of differentiated instruction.
- Read quotes from current research.
- Collaborative share: Talk with a partner and write definition of differentiated instruction. How do you believe differentiated instruction occurs?

V.

The first and third slides, 'Pulling the DATA Apart', ask students to analyze their own STAR data. The middle slide, 'Questions', asks students to share any questions or concerns they have about analyzing data and includes an icon of a person thinking.

Data Apart: (30 minutes)

- Collaborative Action Activity: We will analyze the data of an individual STAR assessment data. We will look for weakness and strengthen of one individual student STAR reading and math data together. Questions will be answered about analyzing data.
- Group Action Activity: We will divide in groups of 4-6 to analyze your students' individual data.
- Compare your analysis with your team members.



VI. Guided Application and Collaboration Time (1 hour)

- Guided Training: Use the differentiated instruction implementation plan to document students' into group based upon your analysis and a standard.
- Plan lessons to meet all learners needs addressing the standard. ‘
- I will circulate and assist as needed.
- You may think through this analysis with your colleagues



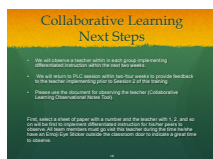
VI. Closer Look (15 minutes)

- Activity: We will watch and listen to a teacher that differentiated instruction. While we watch the video, take a running record of ways you can further differentiate instruction for your learners.



VII. Application and Implementation Plan (45 minutes)

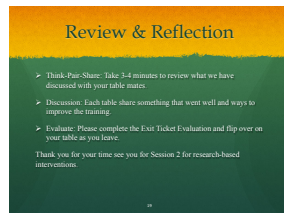
- Develop a plan of implementation for differentiated instruction.
- Use your students' data for implementation of differentiated instruction.
- Share strategies with group members to identify best practices for differentiated instruction.
- Utilize this time to use to identify the needs of Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports.



VIII. Collaborative Ongoing Learning (15 minutes)

- We will observe a teacher within in each group implementing differentiated instruction within the next two weeks.
- We will return to PLC session within two-four weeks to provide feedback to the teacher implementing prior to Session 2 of this training.
- Please use the document for observing the teacher (Collaborative Learning Observational Notes Tool).

- First, select a sheet of paper with a number and the teacher with 1, 2, and so on will be first to implement differentiated instruction for his/her peers to observe.
- All team members must go visit this teacher during the time he/she have an Emoji Eye Sticker outside the classroom door to indicate a great time to observe.



IX. Closure and Exit Slips (15 minutes)

- Think-Pair Share: Wrap Up the working session. Collaborate with group about what went well and what need improvements.
- Answer any further questions.
- Provide time for participants to complete exit slip.

Session 1: [Session1 project.ppt](#)



Differentiated Instruction Implementation Plan

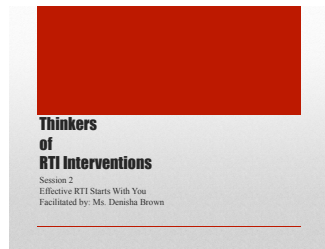
Subject/Course/Title:	Duration:
What Will Students to Learn? Students will:	
Prior Knowledge Prior to this action steps students have:	
Assessments/Success Criteria: Assessment Tool(s): Evaluation: Closing Task(s):	
How will instruction and assessments determine what students learn?	
<p>Elements of Differentiated Instruction</p> <p>Differentiation based upon:</p> <p>___ Willingness ___ Interests ___ Favorites:</p> <p>___ Types ___ Intelligence ___ Other (i.e. environment, gender, culture)</p> <p>Need to Learn: Students'</p> <p>How to Learn: Responses of Differentiated Instruction</p> <p> What to learn Ways of learning ___ Ways of learning ___ Environment</p>	
<p>Potential Learning Experiences:</p> <p>Whole Class or Groups: Learning Experience-Strategy and/or Structure Materials and Resources</p>	

Observation Tool

Collaborative Learning Observational Notes**What went well?****What changes you should consider?****What questions I have?****Overall Highlight**

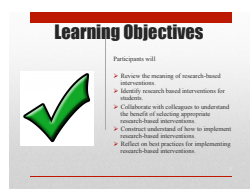
Session 2: Facilitator's Agenda

Session 2: Thinkers of RTI Interventions



I. Session 2: Introduction (10 minutes)

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



II. Learning objectives (5 minutes)

- Review the meaning of research-based interventions.
- Identify research-based interventions for students.
- Collaborate with colleagues to understand the benefit of selecting appropriate research-based interventions.
- Construct understanding of how to implement research-based interventions.
- Reflect on best practices for implementing research-based interventions


What are Researchers Saying?

- Investigated and scientifically based practices used to provide instructional and/or behavioral support with adequate levels of treatment fidelity (Fisher, Collier-Hack, Skaggs, Swart, & Johnson, 2015).
- Most research based practices for interventions suggest that the approach should be explicit instruction and planned to address needs of students to prevent gaps in student achievement (Hogarty, Cook, McIvor, Anderson, Yarb, Childers, & Kraft, 2013).
- Interventions must be planned and supported through effective PD to change teachers' skills in ways that would result in effective RTI implementation (Fisher et al., 2015; Swart, 2014).

How Do You Feel?

Teachers and administrators shared that:

- *the timeline of the interventions needed to be adjusted in their daily instructional schedule.
- *60% of participants that suggested intervention strategies need to be taught early-on and in teacher-friendly ways, containing enough detail.
- *teachers struggle with implementing interventions into their daily practice.



III. Research Findings (10 minutes)

- Read quotes from current research.
- Read quotes from how teachers and administrators feel about interventions.
 - Pair Share: Turn and talk with a partner. What resonates with from the research and statements?
 - Group discussion: share out from groups to help ground the work to be done today.

How to Select Interventions?

- Assess students using Classroom Screening
- Assess their Response to Intervention
- Assess student ability
- Assess if the research based intervention identified in district (What, Why, Duration, Intensity, Antecedent, Behaviors, 2017).



Selecting Interventions

- Do not have to agree on the best practice
- Use research to inform your selection
- Consider the student's needs
- Consider the teacher's needs
- Consider the student's ability
- Consider the student's behavior
- Consider the student's social skills
- Consider the student's academic skills
- Consider the student's behavior
- Consider the student's social skills
- Consider the student's academic skills

Collaborative Discussion

- Do not have to agree on the best practice
- Use research to inform your selection
- Consider the student's needs
- Consider the teacher's needs
- Consider the student's ability
- Consider the student's behavior
- Consider the student's social skills
- Consider the student's academic skills
- Consider the student's behavior
- Consider the student's social skills
- Consider the student's academic skills



IV. Collaborative Activity (30 minutes)

- Think, Pair, & Share: collaborate on best practices for implementing RTI with fidelity by selecting interventions
- Use students' data and organized by their tiered level
- Analyze review data and login to the district website to select interventions based upon the students' data
- Explain reasoning for selecting interventions

Guided Training

I Do: The facilitator will model how to incorporate an intervention using participants as students. The participants will provide feedback.

You Do: Please select an observer, student(s), and teacher at your selected table.

The teacher will model how to teach best practices for the research-based intervention.

It is the facilitator's responsibility to engage in the lesson being taught. The observer will provide feedback.

We Do: Discuss with your tablemates if the intervention was implemented as intended.

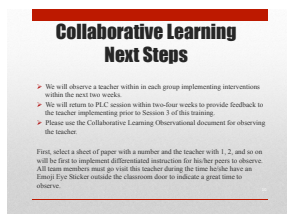
V. How can we implement interventions? (15 minutes)

- Model how to incorporate an interventions using participants as students.
- The participants will provide feedback.
- Select an observer, student(s), and teacher at your selected table
- The teacher may select an intervention from their students identify interventions selected.
- The teacher will model how to teach best practices for the research-based interventions.
- The students(participants) will engage in the lesson being taught.
- The observer will provide feedback.
- Discuss with your tablemates if the intervention was implemented as intended.



VI. Learning from others (25 minutes)

- We will watch and observe a teacher implementing Tier 2/3 interventions.
- Document ways the teacher differentiated instruction with process, procedures, and resources.
- Document ways you can implement interventions in your daily instructional practices and share with team mates



VII. Collaborative Ongoing Learning (15 minutes)

- We will observe a teacher within in each group implementing interventions during instructional practices within the next two weeks.
- We will return to PLC session within two-four weeks to provide feedback to the teacher implementing prior to Session 3 of this training.
- Please use the document for observing the teacher (Collaborative Learning Observational Notes Tool).
- First, select a sheet of paper with a number and the teacher with 1, 2, and so on will be first to implement differentiated instruction for his/her peers to observe.
- All team members must go visit this teacher during the time he/she have an Emoji Eye Sticker outside the classroom door to indicate a great time to observe.



VIII. Closure and Exit Slips (15 minutes)

- Think-Pair-Share: Wrap Up the working session. Collaborate with group about what went well and what need improvements.
- Answer any further questions.
- Provide time for participants to complete exit slip.

Session 2: [Session2Project.ppt](#)



Observation Tool
Collaborative Learning Observational Notes

What went well?

What changes you should consider?

What questions I have?

Overall Highlight

Session 3: Facilitator's Agenda



I. Session 3: Introduction (10 minutes)

- The purpose for this third session of PD training is to provide authentic opportunities to immerse in and engage with best practices for progress monitoring and student data in an effort to align beliefs with practice.
- The goal of this training is:
 - To close the gap between teachers' knowledge and application in progress monitoring with efficacy on a consistent basis of implementing RTI and
 - To construct a more effective plan for implementing RTI with fidelity for teachers and administrators.
- Pass out handouts of presentation, exit slips, and issue *AFRTIC* survey after implementation of revised RTI processes and procedures.



II. Learning objectives (5 minutes)

Through active engagement in today's session, participants will:

- Review the benefit of effective progress monitoring.
- Identify effective progress monitoring strategies with helpful tools.
- Collaborate with colleagues to understand how to ensure effective progress monitoring occurs.
- Construct process and procedures to develop a better understanding of current practice with new processes for implementing RTI.
- Reflect on best practices for progress monitoring, future supports or trainings.
- Construct personal meaning of the fidelity of implementing RTI.



III. Research and Reflection (15 minutes)

- We will review what researchers say about progress monitoring.
- Think, Pair, & Share: Participants will reflect on their beliefs about progress monitoring.



IV. Progress Monitoring Up Close (15 minutes)

- Participants will watch the video clip about progress monitoring.
- Document what you notice.
- What can we infer about the practices the teacher has implemented for progress monitoring?
- What are suggestions you have for progress monitoring your students?



V. Guided Training (30 minutes)

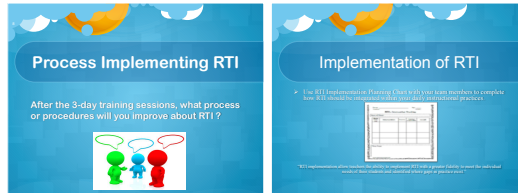
- Review tools that can be used for progress monitoring
- Evaluate tools and determine which tool will be best for progress monitoring.
- The facilitator will model how to effectively progress monitoring data and document using progress monitoring.
- Participants must use handout of progress monitoring and used assessments scores provided to document progress monitoring.
- Think & Share: Take 2-3 minutes to collaborate effective tools for progress monitoring to improve current practices.



VI. Application of Progress Monitoring (15 minutes)

- Observe a teacher within in each group conducting progress monitoring within the next two weeks
- Return to PLC session within two-four weeks to provide feedback to the teacher implementing strategies of this training
- Use the document for observing the teacher
- Select a sheet of paper with a number and the teacher with 1, 2, and so on will be first to implement differentiated instruction for his/her peers to observe.

- All team members must go visit this teacher during the time he/she have an Emoji Eye Sticker outside the classroom door to indicate a great time to observe.



VII. Implementation of RTI (30 minutes)

- Evaluate what process or procedures will you improve about RTI
- Use RTI Implementation Planning Chart with your team members
- How RTI should be integrated within your daily instructional practices?



VIII. Collaborative Ongoing Learning (25 minutes)

- Use a posted note and take 2-3 meanings and share your meaning of the fidelity of implementing RTI place on the parking lot.
- Think & Share future supports or trainings needed on the posted notes provided and place on the parking lot.
- Take 2-3 minutes to complete the Exit Ticket. The RTI chair will share survey with participants after implementation of new processes occur for RTI to evaluate effectiveness.



IX. Closure (15 minutes)

- Review initial beliefs about RTI implementation. How do you feel about implementing RTI with fidelity?
- Please complete evaluation exit slips.

RTI Implementation Action Plan

Tier I: Standardized Instruction	Status Best OK NI	Improvement Area	Timeline	Person Responsible
1. Core curriculum and critical components				
2. Effective instruction				
3. Professional development				
4. Differentiated Grouping				
5. Benchmark testing/progress monitoring				
6. Protected instructional time				
7. Monitoring implementation				
Tier II Intervention	Status Best OK NI	Improvement Area	Timeline	Person Responsible
1. Identification of students				
2. Interventionists and training				
3. Progress monitoring				
4. Intervention program and strategies				
5. Scheduling				
6. PLCs(PD)				
Tier 3 Intense Intervention (SST)	Status Best OK NI	Improvement Area	Timeline	Person Responsible
1. Identification of students				
2. Progress monitoring				
3. Intervention program and strategies				
4. Scheduling				
5. Interventionists and PD training- PLCs				



Observation Tool
Collaborative Learning Observational Notes

What went well?

What changes you should consider?

What questions I have?

Overall Highlight

Daily Session Evaluation Exit Ticket

Ticket

Session ____ of Training

Pinnacles- "What went well?"-

Pitfalls "What needs to be improved or further supports?"-

Overall Evaluation of –Session __ of Training

Pinnacles -

Pitfalls-

Door Sticker Sign for Observation



Assessment of the Fidelity of the Response to Intervention Components

Project Evaluation Survey

Introduction

To implement RTI effectively, teachers in the school must be familiar with a specialized set of tools and competencies, including

- a structured format for problem-solving
- knowledge of scientifically based interventions that address common reasons for school failure
- the ability to use various methods of assessment to monitor student progress in academic and
- behavioral areas.

The Assessment of the Fidelity of the Response to Intervention Components Survey (*AFRTIC*) is an informal measure designed to help teachers and administrators identify those elements of RTI that they are already skilled in and those elements that need additional attention.

Directions

This survey is divided into the following sections:

1. RTI: Understand the Model
2. RTI: Use Teams to Problem-Solve
3. RTI: Select the Right Intervention
4. RTI: Monitor Student Progress
5. RTI: Graph Data for Visual Analysis

Complete the items in each section. Choose the level of understanding that accurately reflects your current knowledge and skills relating to Response to Intervention.

0 Lack skills or basic knowledge of this model

1 Just starting to learn this model

2 Developing an awareness of this model

3 Fully knowledgeable in this model

Your participation in this survey will determine if changes made in RTI implementation has improved practices and ensured the fidelity of implementing RTI.

Please complete the following information and submit to the RTI Chair.

	0	1	2	3
1. RTI: Understand the Model	Lack skills or basic knowle	Just starting to learn this	Developin g an awareness of this	Fully knowledge able in this model
Teachers of successful RTI schools understand the RTI model and believe that this approach will benefit				
At my school:				
➤ the principal strongly supports Response-to-Intervention as a model for identifying				
➤ the staff has received an overview of the RTI model, understands its general features, and knows how RTI differs from the traditional 'test discrepancy' approach				
➤ the majority of the staff (80 percent or more) appears ready to give the RTI model a try, believing that it may benefit teachers				
➤ all programs or resources that are intended to improve students' academics or behaviors are inventoried and organized into three levels, or Tiers.(Tier I contains programs available to all students, such as class wide tutoring. Tier II addresses the needs of students who show emerging deficits and includes individualized intervention plans designed by the school's Intervention Team. Tier III is the most intensive level of assistance available in a school and includes special education services as well as such supports as Wrap -Around				
2. RTI: Use Teams to Problem-Solve	0 Lack skills or basic knowle	1 Just starting to learn this	2 Developi ng skill with this practice	3 Fully compete nt in this practice
Successful RTI schools support teachers in the RTI process by encouraging them to refer struggling students to an				
My school's Intervention Team...				
➤ is multi-disciplinary, and has members who carry a high				

➤ follows a formal problem-solving model during meetings.				
➤ creates an atmosphere in which the referring teacher feels welcomed and supported.				
➤ collects background information / baseline data on the student to be used at the initial				
➤ has inventoried school-wide resources that it can use in Team interventions.				
➤ selects academic & behavioral interventions that are “scientifically based”				
➤ sets clear, objective, measurable goals for student progress				
➤ selects methods of assessment (e.g., Curriculum - Based Measurement, DIBELS) to track student progress at least weekly during the intervention.				
➤ documents the quality of the referring teacher's efforts in ➤ implementing the intervention ('intervention integrity').				
➤ holds 'follow-up' meetings with the referring teacher to review student progress and judge whether the intervention was effective.				
3. RTI: Select the Right Intervention	0 Lack skills or basic knowledge of this practice	1 Just starting to learn this practice (Beginning Phase)	2 Developing skill with this practice (Intermediate Phase)	3 Fully competent in this practice (Advanced Phase)
Successful RTI schools select interventions that match the student's underlying deficits or concerns, are scientifically based, and are feasible given the resources available.				
My school...				
➤ has put together a library of effective, research-based intervention ideas for common student referral concerns—such as poor reading fluency and defiant behavior.				
➤ considers the likely 'root causes' of the student's academic or behavioral difficulties (e.g., skill deficit, lack of motivation) and chooses intervention strategies that logically address those root causes				

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ tailors intervention ideas as needed to be usable in real-world classrooms while being careful to preserve the 'treatment' qualities that make each intervention effective. 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ formats intervention strategies as step-by-step teacher-friendly 'scripts' containing enough detail so that educators can easily understand how to put them into practice. 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ follows up with teachers soon after a classroom intervention has been put into place to ensure that the instructor has been able to start the intervention and is implementing it correctly. 				
<p>4. RTI: Monitor Student Progress</p>	<p>0 Lack skills or basic knowledge of this practice</p>	<p>1 Just starting to learn this practice (Beginning Phase)</p>	<p>2 Developing skill with this practice (Intermediate Phase)</p>	<p>3 Fully competent in this practice (Advanced Phase)</p>
<p>Successful RTI schools have the capacity to collect baseline data, as well as to conduct frequent progress monitoring of students in academic and behavioral areas.</p>				
<p>My school can...</p>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ conduct structured classroom observations of students to determine rates of on-task behavior, academic engagement, work completion, and rates of positive or negative interactions with adults. 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ collect and assess student work products to assess the completeness and accuracy of the work --and to estimate the student time required to produce the work. 				

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ administer and score curriculum -based measurement (CBM) probes in basic skills areas: phonemic awareness, reading fluency, math computation, and writing. 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ use local or research norms (e.g., CBM), or criterion-based benchmarks (e.g., DIBELS) to judge the magnitude of a student's delays in basic academic skills. 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ create Daily Behavior Report Cards (DBRCs) or other customized rating forms to allow the instructor to evaluate key student academic and general behaviors on a daily basis. 				
5. RTI: Graph Data for Visual Analysis	0 Lack skills or basic knowledge of	1 Just starting to learn this practice	2 Developing skill with this practice (Intermediate)	3 Fully competent in this practice (Advanced)
Successful RTI schools routinely transform progress-monitoring data into visual displays such as time-series graphs to share with teachers, Intervention Team members, parents, and others. These displays demonstrate whether the student is benefiting from the intervention.				
<i>My school can...</i>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ convert progress-monitoring data into visual displays such as time-series graphs to aid in instructional and behavioral decision-making. 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ regularly share charted or graphed information with students, teachers, parents, and administrators as feedback about the effectiveness of the intervention. 				

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Appendix B: Interview Questions
Interview Protocol for

Kindergarten-3rd Grade Elementary Teachers and Administrators

Date of Interview _____ Started: _____

Ended: _____

Interviewed

by _____

Demographic Information

- What is your current position?
- How many years have you been in your position?
- What is your educational background (i.e. degrees, content areas, special certifications)?
- How many years of experience you have with the Georgia RTI model?

Interview Questions

1. What is your level of knowledge and/or experience with implementing the Georgia RTI model?
2. Explain the Georgia RTI model implementation process for students at each tier level of the four-tiered model.
3. How do teachers match student deficits to scientifically based interventions?
4. What resources are available to you that assist you in implementing RTI processes and procedures?

5. Is there a system for collecting and analyzing intervention data frequently to monitor student progress intervention data during the RTI process fidelity?
6. How is progress-monitoring data shared with school leaders to determine if interventions are implemented as intended?
7. What resources or supports do you feel you need to implement the RTI model with fidelity?
8. What components of the model do you feel need to be modified?
9. Are there any problems associated with implementing the Georgia RTI model with fidelity? If so, please explain.
10. Is there anything else that you would like to add regarding the fidelity of implementing the Georgia RTI model?

Appendix C: Document Review Protocol for RTI Documents

Document	Description
Name of Document:	
RTI Model Process Described	
Usage of Teams to Problem Solve	
Selecting Interventions	
Progress Monitoring for Fidelity	
Resources for RTI Implementation	