

Secondary Teachers' Perspectives on Response to Intervention: A National Study

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to Stanley I. Savitz, who has been with me every step of the way, but from heaven. From the start of being recruited to pursue a doctorate at the University of Tennessee, he encouraged and wanted me to take advantage of this opportunity. My father was a loving and supportive father, that was excited about having a Dr. Savitz in the family. Through his passing, I realized that I was ready to follow his dream and my passion of educating teachers about literacy and struggling readers. My father had encouraged me to pursue my doctorate and always wanted the best for me, academically and personally, and it took time for me to realize that this is what I wanted, too. He was an amazing man that is greatly missed every day. Throughout each step of my doctorate, I knew he was looking down from heaven with pride and tears of happiness in his eyes. He always motivated me to keep moving and keep going forward, which is exactly what I am now doing. This study, and my future dreams and goals, are dedicated to him. It is my way of saying, I love you, dad.

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ABSTRACT

Response to Intervention is a policy that has been implemented across the country to reduce the number of students incorrectly identified Specific Learning Disabled (SLD), and to enhance the educational outcomes for all students. While most states provide guidelines or frameworks for implementation, there generally is not much provided for individual states and districts regarding how to implement RTI in their schools. With implementation happening at the secondary level and most secondary educators not having a literacy background, there is a need to find out more regarding teachers' perceptions. This mixed-methods sequential design exploration study first used a national survey with three hundred and three participants and then follow-up interviews with nine participants chosen by regional division. The purpose of this study was to investigate teachers' perceptions regarding the RTI policy, as well as how they viewed their confidence and confidence in their school regarding teaching literacy strategies and interventions at the secondary level. Specifically, the data were used to compare the teachers' own confidence in implementing required literacy strategies and instruction to how the teachers perceive the overall school's success at implementing RTI. Additionally, teachers were asked about their perception on training provided. Through quantitative analysis and qualitative coding, three main ideas were identified through the data: need for quality professional development, need for strong administrative support, and need for additional resources, for successful implementation of RTI in their schools.

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“Exemplary teaching should not be so hard to accomplish. Schools and school districts must take more responsibility for providing instructional and curricular support so that exemplary teaching becomes more common and requires less effort. Good teaching should not have to work against the organizational grain” (Allington, 2010, p. 38)

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Introduction

For many decades, federal policies have focused on and supported the need for educational equity for all students as there are achievement gaps amongst students, especially based on race and socioeconomic status (NAEP, 2015) and an overrepresentation of minority and poor students in special education classes (IDEA, 2004). Other main objectives of these policies are early identification for students considered at-risk of having learning difficulties and the need for using scientifically-based instruction and intervention throughout general education settings.

Two major educational policies, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001) and the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA, 2004) reshaped the way schools assessed and identified students as learning disabled (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). Both of these mandates stressed the need for high standards and the use of high quality, scientifically-based instruction and interventions to address the needs of these struggling students (NCLB, 2001; IDEA, 2004). In addition, these mandates hold schools accountable for the progress of all students to attain grade-level standard proficiency (Klotz & Canter, 2006). Both of these policies provided a framework for Response to Intervention (RTI).

NCLB (2001) provided specific requirements for school districts regarding the alignment of curriculum content with the state mandated assessments, as well as the use of scientifically-based instruction and interventions, the use of valid screening measures, and progress monitoring to identify students that might need more intensive instruction (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). In

addition, Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) was introduced and requirements were established to help narrow the achievement gap among subgroups (Spellings, 2005) and was assessed through the use of state mandated assessments.

IDEA (2004) mandated that prior to students being identified as having a learning disability, or being placed in special education, schools must show the process that was used to monitor the achievement gap between rich and poor students, as well as students from racial/ethnic groups other than Caucasian. Additionally, information must be provided showing an attempt to intervene on the students' behalf with interventions based on their specific needs. IDEA provided support for the use of a response to intervention framework to lessen the amount of incorrectly identified SLD students that were placed in special education and to assist struggling readers at all grade levels (Berkeley, Bender, Peaster, & Saunders, 2009).

In 2002, President Bush's Commission on Excellence in Special Education met and identified eight areas in which low achievement may be the basis for identification of a specific learning disability. They provided three recommendations moving forward:

- 1) education programming should focus on the needs of every child rather than compliance
- 2) schools should be proactive instead of reactive by identifying students with disabilities early in their schooling
- 3) the identification process needs to be more effective by utilizing research based instruction and interventions" (Yell & Drasgow, 2007).

The commission introduced a model of prevention, known as RTI, a comprehensive system that could be used as an option instead of using the discrepancy model (National Association of State Directors of Special Education and Council of Administrators of Special

Education, 2006). The main objective of the RTI framework is to decrease the number of incorrectly identified Specific Learning Disabled (SLD) students in their schools (Johnston, 2011), with the NICHD white paper stating the special education referrals should decline by 70+% with RTI in place. This model of prevention provides instruction and intervention when students need it opposed to the “wait to fail” mentality that required educators to wait until students’ achievement fell substantially below their ability as measured by IQ tests and allow the discrepancy to become large enough to qualify the child as learning disabled, before providing the needed intervention services (Fletcher, Lyon, Fuchs, & Barnes, 2006). The goal is to accelerate the student’s rate of growth so that they will be able to meet grade-level expectations (Scanlon & Sweeney, 2010). Up to 15% of school’s funding for students with disabilities may be used toward general education interventions designed to prevent language and literacy difficulties.

RTI puts an emphasis on the importance of collaboration between general education and special education teachers, instead of each teacher working in silos (Harlacher & Siler, 2011). RTI is designed to incorporate assessment, instruction, and intervention through the use of multiple tiers of support for students, depending on the level of reading difficulty students may be experiencing, prior to being referred for special education (Berkely et al., 2009; Brown-Chidsey & Steege, 2005). The framework uses data-based documentation to show student progression in intervention and to rule out the possibility that perceived deficits were caused by ineffective, improper, or inappropriate prior instruction (USDOE; Vellutino, Scanlon, Small, Fanuele, & Sweeney, 2007). Interventions need to be research-based, which means that the intervention was proven successful in a research setting. This means that if the intervention is implemented exactly the same way, the intervention will again be successful. However, this idea

does not address or take into consideration the diversity of students, teachers, resources, or attitudes across the country, as well as the fact that according to the What Works Clearinghouse website, few reading intervention programs provide evidence of success.

With this option being available, all 50 states of the United States are implementing RTI to some degree (Berkeley, et al., 2009), not only to reduce disparities with SLD identification by more accurately identifying, documenting, and instructing at-risk students, but also to enhance the educational outcomes for all students (Barnes & Harlacher, 2008; Barry, 1997; Duffy, 2007; Fisher & Frey, 2013; High School Tiered Interventions Initiative, 2010). According to the RTI Action Network (www.rtinetwork.org) and various state documents, although there are various tiered models used across the United States, the 3-tiered model is most common (Hale, Kaufman, Naglieri, & Kavale, 2006).

This places Tier 1 as the core classroom where all students receive research-based, high quality, differentiated general education instruction with the goal being that at least 75-80% of the students are on grade level (Bender, 2012; Fuchs & Deshler, 2007). Differentiated instructions means that the teacher knows each student well (Bender, 2012) and instruction is individual-focused to the students' strengths and weaknesses (Lenski, 2014) because teachers are “responsive to students' varying reading levels, varying interests, and varying learning profiles” (Tomlinson & Kalbfleisch, 1998, p. 54). Tier 2 is provided to students that are struggling at grade level (around 10-15% of students) and Tier 3 (1-5%) for high-intensity intervention for students that have fallen far behind their peers academically and are not making significant progress in Tier 2 (Kovaleski, 2007).

Much of the current research on RTI implementation (e.g. Chapman, Orloff, Weaver, Vesey, Anderson, Marquez, & Sanchez, 2013; Clemens, Shapiro, Wu, Taylor, Caskie, 2014;

Fisher & Frey, 2013; Fuchs & Deshler, 2007; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2007; Greenfield, Rinaldi, Proctor, & Cardarelli, 2010; Spear-Swerling, & Cheesman, 2012; Vellutino, Scanlon, Small, & Fanuele, 2006; White, Polly, & Audette, 2012) and teacher perspectives and contextual influences of RTI (Rinaldi, Averill, & Stuart, 2011; White, et al., 2012) have been with elementary teachers, where RTI has been more fully implemented. However, there has been a need for implementation at the secondary level keeping with the idea that RTI is not only to assist with decreasing inappropriate SLD identification but to assist all struggling readers as literacy progress tends to slow once students enter the secondary grades (Vaughn, Fletcher, Francis, Denton, Wanzek, Wexler, Cirino, Barth, & Romain, 2008) and students who have fallen behind in reading during the elementary years have difficulty catching up.

Current data shows that the majority of secondary students are struggling with reading as many are not scoring proficient or above on various assessments. For instance, the 2015 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) results indicated that only 37% of twelfth grade students and 34% of eighth grade students scored proficient or higher, while the lowest scoring group (below basic reading level) went from 25% in 2013 to 2% in 2015 (Camera, 2016). Another common assessment secondary students take is the ACT, where only 49% of the students met College Readiness out of the 59% that took it in 2015. Capella and Weinstein (2001) found that 85% of students entering high school with low proficiency scores in literacy also ended high school at the same level. This shows that literacy needs are not being met for secondary students, which influences the dropout rate in high schools when students cannot keep up with the curriculum due to their literacy skills (Hasselbring & Goin, 2004; Kamil, 2003; Snow & Biancarosa, 2003), creates issues for students that live in states where state assessments are the gatekeepers to diplomas (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006), and students will have a more

difficult time being successful in the global world. All of which NCLB and IDEA address as problems that need to be dealt with through RTI.

Implementation of the RTI initiative at the secondary level is more recent with states only starting full implementation in the past few years. There is limited research on effective reading development at the secondary level, but research has shown that with certain organizational structures put into place, there can be a reduction in referrals for special education as well as improved achievement overall with students (Barry, 1997; Berkeley, et al., 2009; Duffy, 2007; Fisher & Frey, 2013; High School Tiered Interventions Initiative, 2010).

Rationale and Statement of the Problem

The literature related to RTI and the IDEA legislation does not provide specific information for implementation (Brozo, 2011; Dulaney, 2012; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2006). For instance, there isn't specificity provided regarding who is to implement RTI at the schools, how RTI is to be implemented, what training is needed, what types of literacy interventions should be provided or are most appropriate for the identified students, or exactly how long students are to remain in each tiered level (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Compton, 2012; Johnston, 2010). State Departments of Education (SDOE) provide basic guidelines and/or frameworks on their websites to assist with implementation of the RTI framework; however, most states indicate that each district needs to make their own decisions based on their own students' needs, demographics, resources available, etc. (Berkeley, et al., 2009).

Fuchs and Deshler (2007) posit that RTI educators need to understand the RTI process within their school and that implementing RTI successfully will require sustained professional development, explicit expectations for implementation, and substantial time to put the new framework into place. Therefore, the IDEA mandate and the RTI framework place new

challenges for secondary educators, with Tier 1 being in the general education classroom with content-area teachers with English language arts teachers being the ones mainly tasked with teaching literacy at the secondary level (Barry, 1997, Blackford, 2002). Most content-area teachers, as well as special education teachers (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Vaughn, 2014), are not prepared to meet the literacy needs of middle and high school students through the use of specific reading strategies and practices known to improve student achievement (Leko & Mundy, 2012; Swanson, 2008).

Policies like RTI influence what is taught but do not explain how to take the policy and apply it to daily practice (Booher-Jennings, 2006; Lipsky, 2010; McGill-Franzen, 2000). Typically, teachers teach from what they already know and understand (Coburn, 2001; Coburn, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 1996; Spillane & Jennings, 1997), which is a problem at the secondary level if content-area teachers do not feel or are not well-prepared to help struggling readers (Buehl, 1998; Ciullo, Lembke, Carlisle, Thomas, Goodwin, & Judd, 2016; Darwin & Fleischman, 2005) improve literacy skills through the use of their own content specific texts. For “instruction, to be effective, [it] must be delivered by well-prepared professionals” (Quatroche, Bean, & Hamilton, 2001, p. 292), otherwise, when teachers feel that they are not supported, prepared, or included in the discussions regarding new changes, they feel powerlessness (Lieberman & Miller, 1978; Lipsky, 2010).

Secondary teachers are already constrained by school-level demands and available resources (Lieberman, 1982) yet are now being asked to assume full responsibility to not only teach their own content and discipline while also being asked to differentiate their instruction to the needs of the students, incorporate literacy instruction in each of their classes, provide documentation for student responsiveness to interventions, and often asked to administer and

teach the various tiered interventions. Often, these teachers are asked this without training or background in literacy (Barry, 1997; Burnett, 1966) and are not well-prepared to help struggling readers (Buehl, 1998; Ciullo, et al., 2016; Darwin & Fleischman, 2005) with their own content specific texts.

Response to Intervention is a policy that has been implemented without the consent of and discussion by/with secondary teachers and with little research (Regan, Berkeley, Hughes, & Brady, 2015; Reynolds & Shaywitz, 2009). It appears that like with many other policies, the government wants control without responsibility, while the school districts get responsibility without control.

Therefore, the current study is guided by the notion that educational policy is not always explicit and the idea that “legislators may legislate and administrators may administer, but it is the educators in the schools who makes sense out of legislation and administration, who translate laws, regulations, mandates, and directives” (Fraatz, 1987, p. 2). Teachers play a key role in implementing RTI as they are the ones changing instruction to meet the students’ needs, so there is a need to ascertain whether or not these secondary teachers feel prepared to implement the literacy component of RTI in their schools and whether or not they perceive their school successfully implementing RTI. Based on the data gathered from this study, policymakers, States’ Department of Education literacy staff, and district and school administrators, will understand how teachers perceive their knowledge and confidence of implementing RTI with implications for additional support and guidance needed for successful implementation.

Purpose and Significance of the Study

Currently, there are very few studies that assess secondary literacy educators’ perspectives, or own viewpoints, regarding the implementation of RTI at their school, and no

studies that look at teachers' perspectives across the entire country. Many current studies neglect to consider the role of the general education teacher (Fuchs, 2003) even though these teachers are the ones implementing Tier 1 and at times, implementing Tier 2 and Tier 3. Minnesota Department of Education used a statewide survey to gather data from a wide variety of school faculty positions regarding implementation perspectives and needs, as well as two recent studies that included secondary educators' perspectives. The first, by Sanger, Friedli, Brunken, Snow, and Ritzman (2012) assessed perspectives' regarding RTI implementation using focus groups and an open-ended survey to all 18 participants (classroom teachers, school psychologists, speech language pathologists, and one paraprofessional) in one school district. The second study, by Regan, et al., (2015) focused on using a questionnaire and then follow-up interviews with teachers and administrators at the elementary and secondary levels in one school district. They wanted to determine the teachers' perceptions regarding RTI implementation, preparedness, and knowledge of basic concepts. Similarly, the purpose of the current study will be to focus on secondary literacy perspectives' (i.e., the teachers' personal view or opinion) across the entire nation by examining these teachers' perspectives on the RTI policy, confidence in their own abilities to implement RTI successfully, and confidence that the school is implementing RTI appropriately. In addition, responses from educators working in the different regions of the United States will be compared to see if there are similarities in the procedures schools are using while implementing literacy interventions for struggling readers. Finally, the teachers' perspectives regarding the implementation of RTI across regions will be compared to identify possible differences of how teachers view what is happening in their schools.

Taking the information reported directly and anonymously from teachers will offer an opportunity for additional understanding as to what is happening with RTI at the secondary

levels, as well as possibly provide support for the need of additional appropriate, high quality professional development on RTI and literacy interventions and instruction for all content-area teachers, especially on differentiated instruction and literacy instructions in the content areas. Moreover, knowing how teachers perceive their own abilities and their perceptions of their school's abilities to implement RTI, policy makers will be able to see at a national level if there is a need to make possible modifications for secondary implementation. This study informs current policy debates on RTI and allows educators to build on lessons from implementation research. In addition, the information can be used to look at state- and district-level trends of teachers' perceptions, across the country.

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide the study:

1. What are secondary teachers' perspectives of the Response to Intervention policy and are there differences across geographic regions?
2. What are secondary teachers' perspectives, or levels of confidence, in their own abilities to implement RTI effectively as well as confidence in their school's effective implementation of RTI and are there differences across the regional divisions?
3. Is there a relationship between secondary teachers' perspectives on the implementation and effectiveness of RTI at their school and their perspectives regarding the RTI policy?
4. Are there similarities across the nation regarding how the literacy component of RTI is being implemented at the secondary level?

In the remainder of this chapter I will define pertinent relevant terms, offer my reflexivity statement, and address assumptions for this study.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions are provided to ensure uniformity and understanding of these terms that I utilize throughout this proposal and within the context of the study I propose. All definitions not accompanied by a citation were developed by myself.

Adequate Yearly Progress – the procedure used to determine if students are improving towards proficiency level on a statewide assessment

Adolescent Literacy – the “ability to read, write, understand and interpret, and discuss multiple texts across multiple contexts” (IRA, 2012).

Below Proficient – receiving a score level below the proficient level on a scaled score standardized assessment

Core Curriculum (Tier 1) – general education classroom or content-area. All students are included in a regular course of instruction.

Curriculum-Based Measurement (CBM) – Originally, CBM was the creation of assessments from actual curricular materials used by the students being assessed. However, often, this is assessment that is either teacher created or “off the shelf” materials that are aligned to the curriculum.

Differentiated Instruction – “refers to educators tailoring the curriculum, teaching environments, and practices to create appropriately different learning experiences for students in order to meet each student’s needs. To differentiate instruction is to recognize the students’ varying interests, readiness levels, and levels of responsiveness to the standard core curriculum and to plan responsively to address these individual differences.

There are four elements of the curriculum that can be differentiated: content, process, products, and learning environment” (RTI Glossary of Terms, 2009).

English Language Arts Teacher – a teacher who is instructing either a traditional or Honors English course for all students.

Evidence-Based Practice – educational practices and instructional strategies that are supported by scientific research.

Fidelity of Implementation – “refers to the accurate and consistent provision or delivery of instruction in the manner in which it was designed or prescribed according to the initial research findings and/or developers’ specifications. Five common aspects of fidelity include: adherence, exposure, program differentiation, student responsiveness, and quality of delivery” (RTI Glossary of Terms, 2009). Harn, Parisi, and Stoolmiller (2013) stated that “the primary intent of measuring fidelity in schools is to ensure quality implementation to improve student outcomes across time, not to achieve high fidelity scores for the purpose of supporting the internal validity of a study” (p. 185).

Formative Assessment – informal assessment designed to quickly inform teachers of students’ progress, strengths, and weaknesses with the current content, skills, and strategies being taught. Examples include observation, conferences, exit slips, and portfolio’s.

Grade Level – the actual grade level that the student is in. This does not imply that the student is reading at the grade level he/she is in and could be above or below proficiency at this level.

Intervention – increased focus in intensity or duration of instruction focusing on specific skills students are not responding to in core instruction. Intensity can be increased through length of time, frequency, and duration.

Intervention Teacher – anyone that is currently teaching and implementing a literacy intervention outside of the core general education classroom.

Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports (MTSS) – used to describe a framework that links RTI (academic interventions) with behavior interventions into one framework. The use of data-based problem-solving methods consistent with RTI are used with MTSS.

Pedagogy – the method, theory, and practice of teaching

Professional Development – collaborative learning process amongst individuals, teams, and administrators throughout the school that is ongoing, job-embedded, learner centered, and meant to promote the professional growth of the participant.

Proficient – students receiving a score at the cut level of the assessment to determine that the student has ‘passed’

Reading Level – the actual level that the student is reading at. This does not directly correlate with the grade level the student is in.

Reading Specialists – teachers who have undergone appropriate coursework, usually in the form of an MS or PhD degree program, have taken a state certification exam, and have received a certification in reading.

Reading Teacher – any teacher who is instructing a course entitled Reading. This may or may not be an intervention course. These teachers may or may not be certified as reading specialists.

Scaffolding – an instructional technique in which the teacher breaks tasks into steps to allow students time to learn and practice new skills. Teacher gradually shifts the responsibility from him/herself to the student. An example would be when the teacher presents a task and models for the student, then the student practices with teacher and peers through a guided practice, and finally, students work independently.

Self-efficacy – a teacher’s judgement about his or her capability to complete a task and the power to produce a desired outcome

Specific Learning Disability – “the child does not achieve adequately for the child’s age or to meet state-approved grade-level standards in one or more of the following areas, when provided with learning experiences and instruction appropriate for the child’s age or State-approved grade-level standards: oral expression, listening comprehension, written expression, basic reading skill, reading fluency skills, reading comprehension, mathematics calculation, and/or mathematics problem solving” (IDEA, 2004).

“Classifications of any child as learning disabled is a socially and politically negotiated process based, at least in part, on family and school resources for intensive instruction for struggling readers, and public reckoning brought to bear upon individual teachers, and individual schools for low reading test scores” (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2000).

Struggling Reader – for the purpose of this study, a struggling reader is a student who has not scored proficiently on the state assessment and/or is not on grade level on literacy assessments. These students have difficulty reading and understanding complex text that are commonly found in secondary classrooms.

Systemic Reform – “holds that all children can achieve high academic standards, a new tenet of educational policy...that schools must provide students with access to ambitious

curriculum in the form of appropriate materials and effective teachers” (McGill-Franzen, 2000, p. 895)

Reflexivity Statement

Writing is a “reflection of our own interpretation based on the cultural, social, gender, class, and personal politics” (Creswell, 2013, p. 215) that every researcher brings into the study and findings. Reflexivity provides transparency by “intentionally attending to the perspectives, attitudes, and beliefs that shape how” (Paulus, Lester, Dempster, 2014, p. 13) a research study was designed and how data were interpreted. It is critical for a researcher to take these background experiences and beliefs into consideration prior to conducting the research and throughout the entire process to ensure the integrity of the study. Therefore, I have and will continue to take into consideration my views and knowledge regarding struggling readers, literacy, interventions, response to intervention, learning and teaching, professional development, and policy implementation. As an adult and a young scholar, I am constantly learning and growing, so I acknowledge that my views on all of the topics and issues of this study will continuously change and adapt based on new knowledge and experiences.

My first experience with struggling readers was as a struggling reader myself in high school. I remember coming to school not prepared to discuss our homework readings because I either had not read it, did not understand the content, or could not read the material required. I would sit in class and not be able to follow the discussion and typically ended up in the principal’s office due to my lack of engagement or off task behaviors. Not one high school teacher took the time to interpret why I was having difficulty and so I continued to barely pass in class. Without my parents forcing me to attend school, I might have become one of the many

that dropped out of school. After my own experience as a struggling reader without a lifeline to assist me, I decided to become the teacher that was not there for me.

As an educator of students and teachers, I witnessed students get labelled with disabilities without ever addressing their needs as a learner. I learned that many secondary educators and administrators that I came into contact with took a deficit lens towards secondary students who struggled to read taking the idea that it was either too late for them to learn or they had a disability that prevented them from learning. I worked next to educators who felt it was not their place to teach literacy strategies in their discipline area and did not understand the premise behind differentiated instruction, using interesting and relevant texts, or using collaboration in the classroom. Students were aggressively placed in reading classrooms that were being taught by various professionals, many of whom were not trained or certified to teach reading. Too often, I was told by many of my peers to give up on my students because it was the students' fault that they could not read.

However, even though the majority of my students were consistently labelled with various disabilities, they were able to learn to read and progress at their own pace. At presentations I conducted and attended, I observed teachers acquiring new knowledge on how to use literacy strategies in their classrooms and become better informed when working with struggling readers. In general, when teachers were provided a voice, they spoke up honestly and straightforwardly that they were not trained or knowledgeable enough to feel comfortable teaching outside of their chosen discipline. But, some wanted to learn.

When Response to Intervention was first implemented at the high school where I worked, we were provided with an RTI specialist (with no literacy background) who was to prepare and train the entire staff in regards to reading, writing, math and behavior interventions. After a total

of three full faculty meetings that focused on the background of RTI, schoolwide data report, and discussion on implementing specific strategies schoolwide (Cornell notes and Questioning), she was gone. Teachers were told to use literacy strategies in all content area classrooms and to differentiate their instruction. Reading teachers were hired to teach all students that were not proficient on the state assessment. All of this was taken on during the first year of implementation with very little professional development or support from administration. Through conversations with educators across the state, I became aware that my situation was not an anomaly but becoming the norm.

Today, after all my experiences as an educator of students and teachers, I believe that all secondary students are capable of becoming successful readers. I also believe that many secondary teachers do not feel that it is their place to teach literacy or literacy strategies in their classrooms without proper training and professional development. I feel that with ongoing and authentic professional development that is influenced by adult learning theories and specific to the needs of the teacher, teachers are capable of incorporating literacy strategies in their own discipline area. Teachers need to be provided a voice throughout the implementation process to allow for appropriate modifications and changes to be made for students to raise their achievement levels in reading, at all grade levels.

As a researcher, my ontological beliefs are most consistent with critical constructivism (Kincheloe, 2005). I feel that there isn't just one concrete reality, but that realities are "multiple, intangible mental constructions, socially and experientially based, local and specific in nature...and dependent for their form and content on the individual persons or groups holding the constructions" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 110). Meaning that "multiple realities exist that are inherently unique because they are constructed by individuals who experience the world from

their own vantage points” (Hatch, 2002, p. 15). My belief is that we each come from different backgrounds, experiences, cultures, religions, and traditions, and we must take that into account when understanding our own reality. Critical constructivists understand that the “social, cognitive, and educational theories we hold must be consciously addressed” (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 7) and that as researchers, we must consistently reflect on ourselves.

As a pragmatist, I believe that “conducting inquiry to useful ends takes precedence over finding ways to defend one’s epistemology” (Dillon, O’Brien, & Heilman, 2013, p. 1118) and that “different methods are appropriate for different situations” (Patton, 2014, p. 92). To me, the chosen method(s) needs to focus on real world problems with the hopes of identifying solutions in authentic environments. These types of studies, like mine, are meant to influence or help a specific situation or problem by publishing or presenting to other teachers and policy makers once finished (Patton, 2014).

With that in mind, I felt a need to gather data from across the nation to accurately answer my research questions regarding teachers’ perceptions around the country about RTI. Therefore, initially a survey was used to gather teacher-reported data and then regional division interviews were conducted to gather more in depth description from some of the participants. These interviews allowed reality to be constructed together between the researcher and some of the participants. Dialogue is vital to most accurately interpret the information presented by participants and to gain a deeper understanding of what participants want to share regarding implementation of RTI at their schools. With that in mind, my methodological frame is most aligned with Interpretivism, as I feel that I am providing my interpretation of what I learn from the data of the survey and the interviews. According to Maureen Angen, “There can be no understanding without interpretation” (Angen, 2000, p. 385).

Assumptions

This research was conducted under several assumptions. First, I assumed that I could obtain unbiased insight into teachers' perspectives from across the country through a survey. I also assumed that gathering participants through various national/state organizations would be possible. In addition, I assumed that by conducting one interview per regional division (based on the US Census), that I would gather enough information to support and elaborate survey results. Through these various findings, I assumed that I would add to the field of research regarding secondary literacy and teachers' perspectives on RTI. Last, I assumed that participants would answer questions on the survey and through the interview honestly and to the best of their ability.

Theoretical Framework

According to Dillon, O'Brien, and Heilman (2013) when thinking about research, "the defining characteristic is not on the paradigms, theories, or methodologies through which research is conducted, but rather on why research is conducted, who asks research questions, and what research creates as praxis" (p. 1108). This study first examined the teachers' perceptions regarding the RTI policy and then looked at how the secondary teacher's themselves viewed their confidence in teaching literacy strategies and interventions at the secondary level. The data were used to compare the teachers' own confidence in implementing required literacy strategies and instruction to how the teachers' perceive the overall school's success at implementing RTI. Additionally, teachers were asked about their perception on training provided. Understanding teachers' opinions regarding their confidence in teaching literacy strategies and interventions directly relates to their self-efficacy as a teacher, as "few would argue that the beliefs teachers hold influence their perceptions and judgments, which, in turn, affect their behavior in the classroom" (Pajares, 1992, p. 307). Therefore, with the purpose of this study in mind,

understanding teachers' perspectives on their own confidence of teaching, Bandura's (1995) notion of Self-Efficacy drove this inquiry.

Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory.

Bandura (1995) posited that self-efficacy, or teachers' "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations" (p. 2) is needed to teach effectively and efficiently. These beliefs about personal competence affect behavior in multiple ways, including how teachers make choices and decide upon what courses of action to pursue. In other words, teachers will engage in tasks in which they feel competent and confident and tend to avoid tasks in which they do not (i.e., if they are not trained in new teaching methods, they will not feel comfortable, and will avoid the task). Many secondary educators have not received training in literacy strategies or interventions and do not feel confident in their abilities to teach them without proper professional development (Burnett, 1966; Ness, 2009). If they do not see themselves as literacy teachers (Hall, Burns, & Edwards, 2011; Lang, et al., 2009), even if it is only the inclusion of literacy strategies, then the implementation of the strategies will not be successful.

Bandura stated that

"Such beliefs influence the courses of action people choose to pursue, how much effort they put forth in given endeavors, how long they will persevere in the face of obstacles and failures, their resilience to adversity, whether their thought patterns are self-hindering or self-aiding, how much stress and depression they experience in coping with taxing environmental demands, and the level of accomplishments they realize" (Bandura, 1997, p. 3)

He emphasized that teachers who encompass a strong sense of their own instructional efficacy are able to create motivating and engaging environments for their students, thus creating an environment for success. Bandura (1997) stated that “evidence indicates that teachers’ beliefs in their instructional efficacy partly determine how they structure academic activities in their classrooms and shape students’ evaluations of their intellectual capabilities” (p. 240). These students are then more likely to be able to become masters through the experiences in the classroom of a teacher who has high self-efficacy, which in turn, will improve their own views of themselves as learners.

Nunn, Jantz, and Butikofer (2009) found with their study that “increases in teacher efficacy were associated with perceptions of improved outcomes of intervention, satisfaction with results, collaborative team process, and data-based decisions” (p. 217), which are all components of RTI. Teachers with stronger self-efficacy tend to select more challenging tasks, persist and endure through them, and perform them successfully. Therefore, it is more likely for a teacher with stronger self-efficacy, whether due to training and/or administrator support, to be more successful when implementing the various tiers of RTI in their classroom. In turn, if the teachers feel more confident and in control of the situation in their own classroom, the students will be more successful.

Therefore, Bandura’s Self-Efficacy theory is relevant to my study on teachers’ perspectives on RTI implementation in their own classroom and the school level in that it highlights the importance of how teachers feel about themselves and what they are teaching in relation to their opinion on the success of the implementation at their school. Bandura’s self-efficacy theory, which can be developed through proper high quality professional development differentiated to the needs of each teacher, explains the importance of teachers viewing their

capability in delivering new instruction and literacy interventions. Without the belief that they will be successful, teachers will not be successful, which ultimately means that students will not progress (O'Connor & Korr, 1996). Ultimately, if the teachers do not feel confident in their abilities, or the schools' abilities, there is a need to identify further why, as it may affect the implementation of RTI, and ultimately the progress of the students.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 presented the introduction, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, significance of the study, definition of terms, reflexivity statement, theoretical framework, and assumptions of the study. Chapter 2 consists of a more thorough background on RTI, followed by information on secondary RTI and content-area teachers, with the chapter ending with a review of related literature and research on RTI in the secondary setting. The methodology and procedures used to gather data for this study are presented in Chapter 3. The results of analyses and findings that emerged from the study are presented in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 contains a summary of the study and findings, conclusions drawn from the findings, a discussion, limitations, and recommendations for future study and research.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

“Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world.”

Paulo Freire, 1989, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

Overview

In Chapter 1, I described my experience with teaching and working with struggling readers and teachers, as well as a brief introduction on Response to Intervention and how secondary teachers are influenced with the implementation of RTI. This information led me to the following research questions:

1. What are secondary teachers’ perspectives of the Response to Intervention policy and are there differences across geographic regions?
2. What are secondary teachers’ perspectives, or levels of confidence, in their own abilities to implement RTI effectively as well as confidence in their school’s effective implementation of RTI and are there differences across the regional divisions?
3. Is there a relationship between secondary teachers’ perspectives on the implementation and effectiveness of RTI at their school and their perspectives regarding the RTI policy?
4. Are there similarities across the nation regarding how the literacy component of RTI is being implemented at the secondary level?

Chapter 2 will first provide a more in-depth explanation of RTI in Section I, with Section II elaborating on how secondary teachers are influenced by the implementation of RTI and Section III providing a literature review of studies and research currently available on RTI implementation at the secondary level.

Section I: Components and Overview of RTI

The idea of RTI is not a new concept (Kame'enui, 2007). The desire to teach to the individual child has been around for many years. The ILA Commission position statement (2010) on RTI defined it as “a comprehensive, systemic approach to teaching and learning designed to address language and literacy problems for all students through increasingly differentiated and intensified language and literacy assessment and instruction” (IRA). Some researchers and literacy experts prefer the term ‘Response to Instruction’ over “Response to Intervention” due to not wanting to use a deficit mentality (Brozo, 2011).

The National Association of State Directors of Special Education and Council of Administrators of Special Education (2006) provided the following framework (See Figure 2.1) in their white paper designed to provide policy guidance to states and local education agencies on conceptual issues related to RTI implementation (See Figure 2.1).

Duffy (2007) discussed the two types of protocol that can be used to implement interventions. The first is standard treatment protocol, which has a line of inquiry that follows a series of steps to assess, identify the problems, intervene, and then assess again. Typically, the standard protocol approach places students in a standard intervention, or one-size-fits-all type of program (Vellutino, et al., 2007). This protocol tends to isolate specific skills and uses a ‘drill and kill’ approach (Johnston, 2011). The second is a problem-solving approach. This is when a team meets and works together to identify problems, intervene, then assess and discuss again

(Marston, Reschly, Lau, Muyskens, & Canter, 2007) for each individual student. The problem-solving approach's depth of analysis prior to the intervention selection is deeper. There is a focus on subskills to help identify specific, targeted interventions.

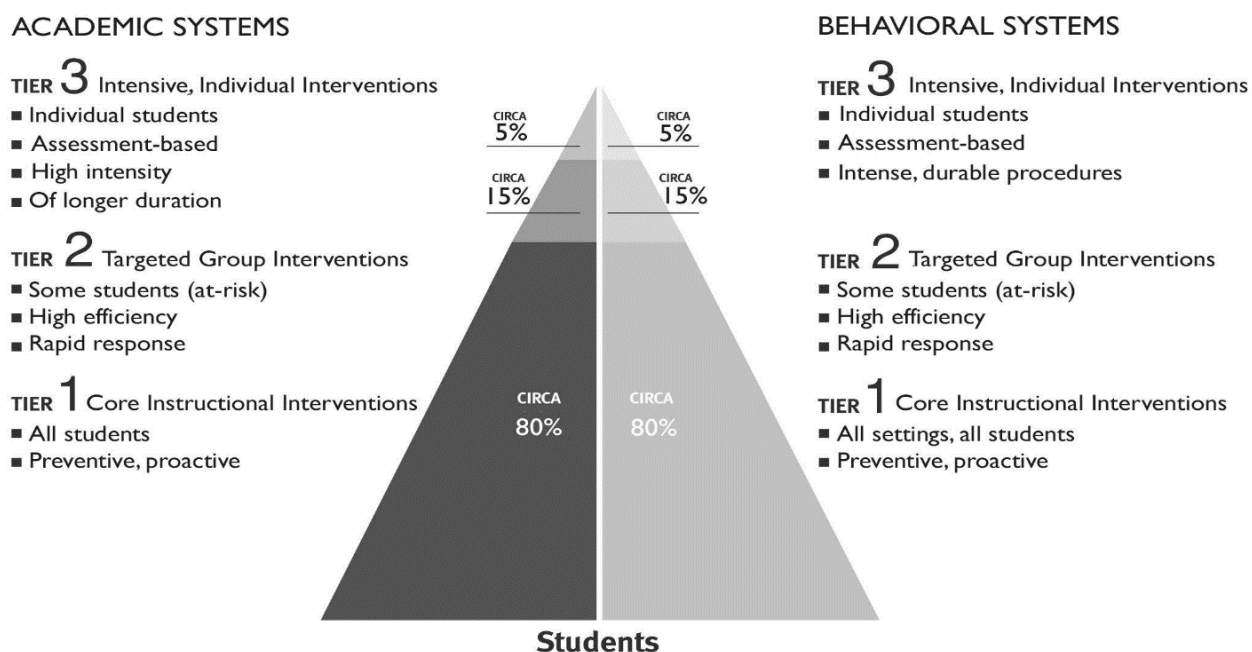


Figure 2.1 Response to Intervention Framework by the National Association of State Directors of Special Education and Council of Administrators of Special Education, 2006

As previously mentioned, the most common tiered model used for RTI is the 3-tiered model that places Tier 1 in the general education classroom where all students receive research-based, high quality, differentiated general education instruction with the goal being that at least 75-80% of the students are on grade level (Bender, 2012). At the secondary level, Tier 1 also incorporates disciplinary literacy strategies used with students that struggle with reading. Tier 2 is provided to students that are struggling at grade level (around 10-15% of students) and Tier 3 (1-5%) for high-intensity intervention for students that have fallen far behind their peers and are

not making significant progress in Tier 2 (Kovaleski, 2007). According to McGill-Franzen and Smith (2013), “RTI is not grounded in constrained or basic skills, but rather in the range of activities and instruction that are appropriate for learners to achieve grade-level standards” (p. 108).

Assessment.

Assessment is the “systematic collection and analysis of data before, during, and after a learning episode, in which information is used by teachers to evaluate instruction, provide feedback for learners about their overall progress” (Hall, et al., 2011, p. 66). Instruction by teachers, whether in the core classroom or in an intervention setting, needs to be determined through the use of multiple indicators of achievement (Dennis, 2013; McGill-Franzen & Lubke, 2011; Roberts, Torgesen, Boardman, & Scammacca, 2008) that are useful and relevant (Fisher & Ivey, 2006). These assessments need to be trustworthy, accurate, and relevant to tailor instructional programs and instruction to the needs of individual students (Kame’enui, Fuchs, Francis, Good, O’Connor, Simmons, Tindal, & Torgesen, 2006).

Universal Screening.

The framework of RTI uses an initial universal screening process to identify students who need additional support and instruction through the use of interventions and any student identified ‘at risk’ is placed in various tiered levels based on the amount of additional help needed. This is when the entire school population, or a subset of the population determined by administration, is assessed for possible need of additional support and instruction. Universal screeners need to be able to provide in depth information regarding students’ specific strengths and weaknesses, which means that more than one should be used for determination of needs (IDEA, 2004).

Many schools are using EasyCBM, DIBELS, and AimsWeb, which do not provide enough information, nor specific to content area needs or comprehension skills, for secondary students (Johnston, 2010; Lenski, 2012). A state assessment is not able to validly identify exactly what students are struggling with and many such assessments are given the year prior, and therefore, these assessments should not be used as a sole determination regarding placement, progress, or used as a guide for instruction or intervention purposes (Brozo, 2011; Johnston, 2011; Kovalski, VanDerHeyden, & Shapiro, 2013; Rupp & Lesaux, 2006). Therefore, when students are determined to need additional support based on the universal screener, diagnostic assessments should be conducted to identify students' specific needs (Johnson, Jenkins, & Petscher, 2010; Lipson, Chomsky-Higgins, & Kanfer, 2011; McGill-Franzen, Payne, & Dennis, 2010).

Dulaney (2012) conducted a study with middle school faculty regarding their journey implementing RTI. This school focused on the importance of collaboration and shared decision making, amongst all stakeholders. In addition, they worked with school, district, and community resources to find additional funding for resources, tools, and PD opportunities. Instead of using a basic universal screener, they chose to use Qualitative Reading Inventory III for all students to gain a full profile of each students' needs, especially in reference to comprehension. Although the secondary teachers felt this was very time consuming in the beginning and took away from their own content teaching, at the end of the year, teachers "recognized that assessing and intervening in behalf of all students was one [of] their greatest successes" (p. 67). They stressed the importance of not only understanding each student, but also the need for all school staff to share in their own understandings before, during, and after implementation of RTI.

Use of assessments and interventions should be a reciprocal process (Dorn & Henderson, 2010). Without specific knowledge regarding the types of weaknesses students are demonstrating, it would be “difficult to define appropriate intervention designs for adolescent struggling readers, develop proficiency standards to estimate students’ progress, and effectively plan for instruction” (Dennis, 2013, p. 6).

Progress Monitoring.

Once interventions have been started, the RTI framework requires progress monitoring, the second function of assessment. These assessments are used to determine if the students are responding to the additional instruction provided in the intervention and to assist teachers in using the information to modify existing instruction based on the students’ needs. It is assumed that failure to respond appropriately under the conditions presented becomes the operational definition of a reading disability. However, in looking at research, there does not seem to be a consensus regarding a “single method for identifying non-responders in an RTI model” (Schatschneider, Wagner, & Crawford, 2008, p. 6). Schatschneider et al., conducted a meta-analysis of studies regarding secondary interventions and evidence provided of success, and determined that various studies used different methods: alternative methods, median-split of slope estimate, normalization criterion, final benchmark criterion, dual-discrepancy criterion, and slope discrepancy criterion. Many of these methods were found to not show student growth accurately.

Some schools are using the Rate of Improvement (ROI) method to determine progress during an intervention. Kovalski, VanDerHeyden, and Shapiro (2013) described how using ROI can be used to calculate the growth that would be required between screening intervals for students to meet expected learning benchmarks. Fletcher, Francis, Morris, and Lyon (2005)

recommended the use of tests from the same achievement battery because the same cohorts would have been used to develop the norms. Fletcher, et al. (2006) recommended the use of Classroom Based Measures for progress monitoring but stated that this type of assessment can substantially vary depending on grade, subject, and curriculum. They felt that “because CBM assesses performance on the year’s curriculum at each testing, rich descriptions of strengths and weaknesses in the curriculum can be generated” (p. 72), thus creating diagnostic profiles for teachers to use. They also discussed the need for using other assessments, like observations, with CBM progress monitoring. Johnston (2011) emphasized that certain CBM’s focused predominately on fluency and that “by focusing solely on speed and accuracy and taking no account of the context of performance, particularly the relative text difficulty, CBM can misdirect teachers’ instructional efforts” (p. 28).

Other measures could consist of different diagnostic assessments, teacher expertise, classroom observations, running records, informal reading inventories, or other classroom based measures (Howard, 2009; Tompkins, 2010) that are responsive to what is seen on a daily basis (Brown, 2010; Johnston, 2011). Informal assessment could even be as simple as listening to the student read aloud or provide a retell of what was read (Peterson, Caverly, Nicholson, O’Neal, & Cusenbary, 2001) during a student-teacher conference (Serravallo & Goldberg, 2007). A cloze reading test can be used to find out information regarding comprehension. It is not perfect, but it does allow some idea of which students are struggling (Lenski, 2014). The important aspect is using more than one assessment and making sure to look at assessment results in more than one way because different measures can provide different insights (Kame-enui, et al., 2006; Lipson, et al., 2011).

One important aspect to consider when addressing types of assessment and using the data for instructional planning and interventions is the fact that educators need to know how to use data to make educational and appropriate decisions. If an intervention is not working or does not address the students' needs, changes should be made to fix the problem, instead of continuing use of the same intervention (Lipson & Wixson, 2012; Smith, Fien, Basaraba, & Travers, 2009). Then, assessments need to be conducted again to make sure the changes are working. The easiest way to see if an intervention is working is through reading comprehension measurements (Scammacca, Roberts, Vaughn, Edmonds, Wexler, Reutebuch, & Torgesen, 2007).

Tier 1.

Tier 1 typically is instruction during the regular core classroom setting. At the secondary level, this means that differentiated instruction and literacy strategies need to become part of the content-area teacher's classroom, also known as disciplinary literacy. Over the years, there have been two positions regarding disciplinary literacy: use general strategies (i.e., RAFT, Reciprocal Teaching) across all content-area classrooms exactly the same way or implement strategies that are adapted to fit the specific content to promote comprehension of literacy in that discipline (Houseal, Gillis, Helmsing, & Hutchison, 2016). Shanahan and Shanahan (2008) conducted a study on literacy in the content classrooms and found that each content area in a high school had specific literacy skills and strategy needs, based on their specific content area and most of these skills were not generalizable like in elementary classrooms.

Additional research has concurred that not all strategies and interventions work across all curricula and grade levels (Edmonds, Vaughn, Wexler, Reutebuch, Cable, Tackett, & Schnakenberg, 2009), as learning and reading in elementary school is different from secondary's use of discipline specific texts. Therefore, the latter view of disciplinary literacy that recognizes

that literacy is an essential part of any disciplinary practice and that different skills, knowledge, and reasoning processes hold sway as one moves from one discipline to the next (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008), is most commonly accepted.

Disciplinary literacy knowledge is needed for all content-area teachers at the secondary level to understand ways of incorporating literacy in their own subject classrooms (Moje, 2008; Pearson & Hiebert, 2013). There is a need for content area teachers to not feel that it is their job to teach reading, but to understand that there are specific close and critical reading strategies that are used depending on the specific content and purpose (Lenski, 2012). Even though the same strategy might be used in all content areas, it could be used differently depending on the discipline.

Without a strong tier 1 in the general education setting with content area secondary teachers, RTI will not be successful (Brozo, 2009; IRA, 2010). There is a need for “consistent, high-quality classroom instruction all day, every day...[with Tier 1 being the]... number one priority for keeping students from initially entering or re-entering Tiers II and III” (Noll, 2013, p. 57).

Tier 2 and Tier 3.

Once multiple diagnostic assessments are conducted and interpreted, students that are unresponsive to classroom based interventions are placed into either Tier 2 or Tier 3, based on their specific needs (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). Tier 3 being services provided for students that are considered most at risk. This should be a fluid process between interventions and instruction that are considered research based, inside and outside of the core classroom. These interventions should be aligned with the core instruction and focused on the specific needs of the students

(McGill-Franzen & Smith, 2013; Mellard, McKnight, & Jordan, 2010). Intervention at these tiers tend to be in the form of small group or individualized instruction.

Mellard, McKnight, and Jordan (2010) identified some ways that instruction can be modified for more intensity, based on student need. Increasing the intensity of an intervention could be done by adding minutes of instruction, the frequency and/or duration of the intervention, changing the instructional group size, providing immediate corrective feedback, mastery requirements of the content (pacing), the number of response opportunities (more practice time and not only use of whole-group instruction), number of transitions during intervention (lengthened time without interruption), the specificity and focus of curricular goals (chunking objectives in manageable parts), and instructor specialty and skills (more experienced teachers). They stated that through the use of both “intentional and impromptu verbal prompts during the learning process can help close the gap between current and goal skill level or understanding of concepts” (p. 221).

Other ways to adapt instruction would be by subject area content, learning and literacy programs, and learning products (IRA, 2012, p. 9). The content is what students are reading and learning, the process is how they are understanding and learning the content, and the product is how students demonstrate their knowledge or what they will produce. All of these are able to be adapted to allow choice for students and differentiation based on the students’ needs.

The International Literacy Association (ILA, formerly known as the International Reading Association) (2002) identified what is considered evidence-based instruction. They defined evidence-based instruction as a “particular program or collection of instructional practices [that have] a record of success” (pg. 4). They identified the following five aspects to count as evidence; objectivity, validity, reliability, systematic, and refereed. They also took

generalizability into consideration. When researching a possible program option, they recommended looking at studies that used an experimental design or quasi-experimental designs, as they give the strongest evidence of effects for a program or practice on the ‘average’ student. They stressed that there should be evidence from a variety of studies to make it more scientifically convincing, before determining if the program is evidence-based.

This is because the term research-based, also at times called evidence-based, is problematic. It is often used to quiet the masses and make people think that the intervention has been proven to be successful without proper documentation of the successes (Ayers & Ayers, 2014), due to political backing of certain products (Coalition for Evidence-based Policy, 2003; Yettick, 2015) and ignores valid strategies that have potential for success (Allington, 2009a). Many commercial reading programs have no reliable research, but are still being used (Slavin, Cheung, Groff, & Lake, 2008), with schools spending their money on implementing these programs instead of spending the money on better ways to improve reading instruction throughout the school (Allington, 2015) so that students are frequently engaged in literacy-promoting activities (Weinstein & Walberg, 1993).

The Coalition for Evidence-based Policy (2003) emphasized that for an intervention to be evidence-based, the study should identify the intervention, who administered it, who received it, what it cost, how the intervention differed from what the control group received, and the logic behind the intervention. In addition, there should be identification provided in the types of school settings the intervention was successful in, allowing for readers to know if the intervention would work in their own school setting. Harn, et al., (2013) emphasized the need for evidence-based practices to change over time based on school needs, student population,

available resources, and teacher beliefs. Therefore, schools need to be careful in their selection of interventions and programs.

The ILA (2002) found that no single product or method was effective in teaching all children to read. They stressed the important fact that what worked at one school did not guarantee it would work at others. In addition, some of the studies viewed showed successful results, but they felt that there were flaws in the designs and/or the types of reporting of the data.

According to the What Works Clearinghouse, a U.S. Department of Education website that reviews the latest findings from various studies regarding the effectiveness of commercially available programs, when putting in the parameters of secondary interventions with positive or potentially positive effectiveness rating, there were only 14 interventions identified. Upon further review of the information, and also looking at the extent of evidence with the rating of medium to large, there were only 3 (FastForward, Read180, and Student Team Reading Writing).

FastForward is a computer-based reading program that focuses on cognitive skills as well as language and reading skills for grades 3 through 10, met these parameters for their comprehension component to be used with individual students. Interestingly, out of 305 studies reported about this program, only 6 met the Clearinghouse's standards with reservations and no study met them outright. The curriculum program Read180 (achievement and reading comprehension programs), also had potentially positive effects with a medium to large body of evidence. Out of 101 studies reported, 2 and 6 studies respectively met the standards with reservations, and none of the studies met the standards outright. The program is designed as a full curriculum for the class that uses a rotational model of independent reading, small group instruction, computer-based assisted technology, and center work. Lastly, Student Team

Reading and Writing (Stevens, 2003), a practice program meant for small group instruction with an integrated approach to reading and language arts, met all of the qualifications and had 2 out of 2 studies that respectively met the standards with reservations. Therefore, based on the WWC criteria, there are very few options that meet the needs of secondary students and secondary intervention, with the mentality that there isn't one program that works for every student. This should not be a surprise, as published programs are beneficial when they are supplemental to traditional instruction, but cannot replace the core instruction (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2015; Lipson & Wixson, 2012).

Struggling adolescent readers are capable of the reading process and should not be viewed through a deficit lens (Dennis, 2013; Peterson, et al., 2001; Scammacca, Roberts, Cho, Williams, Roberts, Vaughn, & Carroll, 2016) by content-area teachers. “Sound intervention programs can significantly reduce the number of older children who are identified as LD and who typically require intensive, long-term special education programs” (Lyon, Fletcher, Shaywitz, Shaywitz, Torgesen, Wood, Schulte, & Olson, 2001, p. 259). The RTI framework at the secondary level needs to focus on fluency, building vocabulary and reading comprehension skills using texts that are at their instructional level (Allington, 2009b; Hock, Brasseur, Deshler, Catts, Marquis, Mark, & Stribling, 2009; Lesaux & Kieffer, 2010; Rupp and Lesaux, 2006) in the content-area classrooms and for these interventions to be taught by content-area teachers who have been trained to work with struggling readers.

Section II: Secondary RTI and Content-Area Teachers

RTI at the secondary level has three main purposes, according to Johnson, Smith, and Harris (2009). These purposes are to build capacity to meet state graduation requirements, to ensure that appropriate instruction and intervention has taken place, and to provide a system of

constant school improvement. For RTI to be successful at the secondary level, it rests on “the capacity of educational professionals to collect and interpret student achievement data and to identify and implement interventions that supports student progress” (Duffy, 2007, p. 7).

However, there are various challenges specific to secondary schools in regards to implementing RTI. Factors include class schedules, teacher beliefs and attitudes towards reading in the secondary classrooms, teacher knowledge of differentiated instruction and literacy strategies, resources, and youth culture (Blackford, 2002; Brozo, 2011).

All students deserve high-quality first instruction (Lipson, et al., 2011), which is the main focus of RTI implementation at the secondary level. This is due to the idea that if students are receiving high-quality, differentiated instruction designed to their individual needs, fewer students will need to be placed in an intervention tier (Brozo, 2009; Noll, 2013). This means that some form of reading instruction should be throughout the entire school day (Hock, et al., 2009), which places additional responsibility on general education content-area teachers.

Research shows that teachers need to conduct differentiated instruction and choose appropriate interventions that address the specific needs of the child because there is not one way to define all struggling readers (Buly & Valencia, 2002; Dennis, 2009; Dennis, 2013; Lenski, 2014; Scanlon & Vellutino, 1997). Secondary content-area teachers are now responsible for this task as well as including literacy strategies in their classrooms. Because adolescent reading difficulties could be associated with not being able to read classroom texts (Lee & Spratley, 2010), lack of interest in the texts (Beers, 2003), or lack of support secondary teachers need to know how to teach to each individual child while also teaching their own content material, possibly through additional professional development or training.

Guthrie (2004) addressed the fact that “engaged reading can overcome traditional barriers to reading achievement” (p. 5). Therefore, some ways secondary teachers can differentiate instruction in their own classroom are by providing student choice in readings, text sets that allow students to stay on the theme or topic, but at their independent reading level and interest (Allington, 2002), and ample amounts of time to read (Fisher, 2004). In addition, teachers need to know how to scaffold new instruction (Guthrie and Wigfield, 2000; Langer, 2011) and conduct small group instruction in their classrooms (IRA, 2010).

With texts at the secondary level being too difficult for many students to read independently, content area teachers “need to first have a clear understanding of how texts are used as tools for learning and specifically demonstrate how to use literacy for their own purposes” (Lenski, 2012, p. 279). As Allington (2015) stated, “effective lesson design always begins with selecting texts that are of an appropriate level of difficulty given the skills and development of the learner” (p. 13). Teachers must understand that students have different literacy strengths and weaknesses, as well as know how to appropriately diagnose and instruct each and every individual student based on these needs (Buly & Valencia, 2002; Dennis, 2009). Also, these content-area teachers need to be able to determine “specifically what works with whom, in what contexts, and under what circumstances” (Gabriel, Day, & Allington, 2011, p. 224). All teachers need to “view their job as teaching children, not teaching curriculum” (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2000, p. 143).

The problem is that simply raising the bar with new policies that require intervention and differentiated instruction to take place throughout all content areas does not automatically mean that schools are prepared for this or that teachers are capable, or willing, to do so. Bereiter and Bird (1985) emphasized that by the time secondary students are identified as having issues with

literacy in the content areas, the types of instruction that are needed are either gone or replaced with basic reading strategy instruction. This common problem is the fact that many secondary teachers do not see themselves as reading or literacy instructors (Hall, et al., 2011; Lang, et al., 2009; Lester, 2000; Zipperer, Worley, Sisson, & Said, 2002) in any way and believe that if a student can read the words then they are comprehending everything, which is not true (Edmonds, et al., 2009).

A common thought amongst secondary teachers is that if students received exemplary instruction in elementary school with basic reading skills, these skills would carry over and be enough throughout the rest of their education. However, “while many readers make gains through grade 8, many then fall behind from grades 8 to 12” (Peterson, et al., 2000, p. 11). This could be due to many secondary education programs only requiring one or two, if any, reading courses. Therefore, content area teachers are not prepared to help struggling readers (Buehl, 1998; Darwin & Fleischman, 2005) with their own content specific texts.

Secondary teachers need to understand that secondary students tend to struggle most with comprehension and vocabulary and that teaching specific reading and comprehension strategies yields achievement for struggling secondary readers (Kamil, Borman, Dole, Kral, Salinger, & Torgesen, 2008). These teachers must know how to use literacy activities in their classrooms that are appropriate for their discipline to prevent additional “reading difficulties and maximizing all students’ opportunities to learn” (Galloway & Lesaux, 2014, p. 518). However, due to pressure of students needing to pass state assessments with these scores being tied to graduation in many states, as well as teacher evaluations, there tends to be a lack of concern with secondary content-area teachers towards making sure students can read the texts provided (Mastropieri, Scruggs, & Graetz, 2003) and checking that they are improving in reading.

Ness (2009) conducted a study with middle and high school social studies teachers and science teachers to find out their thoughts on teaching reading strategies and why they did or did not provide this type of instruction. Of the 2,400 minutes of observations with the 10 teachers, only a total of 82 minutes were of reading comprehension instruction, with the majority of this being question answering from end of chapter questions, which tends to be assessment not instruction. The majority of the observations were of teachers holding whole-class only instruction. The findings were that teachers felt unqualified, not responsible for providing explicit instruction on reading comprehension, lacked professional knowledge and training, and they felt that it would detract from what they already had to cover in a limited time frame. With instruction being implemented throughout the secondary grades and in all content-areas, there is a need for reading instruction courses to become a requirement for all secondary education programs (Hock, et al., 2009).

To become exemplary secondary teachers, there is a need to not only understand their own subject content but to also understand how adolescents learn to read so that they can assess student issues and determine how to effectively instruct each student. As previously discussed, classroom teachers are more likely to meet the needs of all students if they are familiar with content literacy best practices as content literacy strategies can be used to differentiate instruction (Fisher & Frey, 2001; Scammacca, et al., 2016) which is needed for all core classrooms, or Tier 1, of RTI.

Parris and Block (2007) provided a list of what they felt was needed to be considered a highly effective secondary teacher. This was based on interviews with 70 district and school administrators asking them to first identify highly-effective educators and then to simply describe two traits to best describe each. This study found that 25% of the traits identified fell in

the realm of literacy pedagogy (i.e., knowledge of how secondary reading is taught, using inquiry-based learning, asking critical thinking open-ended questions, relevant and meaningful instruction) and 20% with methods of addressing diverse needs (i.e., individualized instruction included with frequent descriptive formative assessment and flexible grouping based on needs while consistently revising curricula to these needs). Personal characteristics accounted for 18% (i.e., cares about themselves and their students) and knowledge-base for 12% (depth and breadth of their own personal content-area knowledge). The remaining categories were quality and quantity of literacy activities used, amount of professional development, relationship with the students, and classroom management.

Lai, Wilson, McNaughton, and Hsiao (2014) conducted a study to determine if generic and content area literacy components in a secondary school could improve both achievement on standardized reading assessments and the attainment of graduation. Their first phase focused on providing professional development with English language arts and math teachers at each school. The professional development was focused on learning how to analyze assessments and data to create diagnostic profiles for each student that would need intervention. Phase 2 continued creation of student profiles plus the inclusion of general literacy strategies. Phase 3 included the professional development from phase 2 and added content-area literacy training. The results showed an increase in reading comprehension for students and an increase in attainment rates of graduation. There were similar effects across ethnic groups, socioeconomic status, and school sizes. The plateau of gains from professional development only of generic literacy strategies showed the need for specific content-area literacy instruction professional development for additional gains. They stressed the need for all three phases for implementation to be successful.

Tatum (2004) demonstrated how reading achievement can be raised through supporting 8 fourth through eighth grade teachers. Through the use of ongoing professional development on core literacy strategies, providing additional curriculum materials and resources (i.e., young adult literature that emphasized students' culture as a frame of reference), assisting teachers development of a comprehensive assessment profile for each student, delivering bi-weekly grade-level and monthly schoolwide staff development, supplying professional readings, as well as descriptive feedback and use of teacher reported reflections, he was able to switch their instruction from test prep and workbook dependency to a "schoolwide literacy framework that included daily read-alouds, guided reading instruction, independent reading, word study, and writing" (p. 29). Tatum showed the need for someone with great understanding of adolescent literacy, like a reading specialist, at all schools, so that teachers could learn how to effectively teach adolescent learners.

Reading specialists are important in helping secondary content-area and special education teachers learn how to work with struggling readers, identify strategies, skills, and techniques that are appropriate for their specific discipline, and show them how to use varying approaches in the classroom (i.e., small groups). Through working with the other teachers and faculty at a school, a reading specialist brings his/her own knowledge on reading and literacy instruction while content area and special education teachers are able to identify the specific literacy skills needed for students to be successful in their content areas. McCombs and Marsh (2009) surveyed principals, coaches, and reading and social studies teachers from 113 middle school in Florida. They found that having reading specialists in their schools showed a strong positive influence with reading and social studies teachers feeling more confident in their ability to teach reading to their students, as well as student's assessment scores increasing with some of the cohorts.

RTI at the secondary level requires significant reorganization of school structure (Sansosti, Noltemeyere, & Goss, 2008) but “can address the needs of struggling learners, prevent labeling, and avoid a history of school failure” (Sanger, et al., 2012, p. 99). There is a need for understanding that “full implementation of ambitious instructional policy has fuzzy boundaries and typically takes many years to accomplish...[as schools need to]...build capacity to support new forms of instruction” (Coburn, Hill, Spillane, 2016, p. 248). The implementation of RTI cannot happen overnight without proper steps and teacher training (Noll, 2013).

Section III: RTI in Secondary Schools

As previously discussed, implementation of RTI at the secondary level is newer, with some states like Tennessee only starting implementation in the last year or two. When it comes to RTI and Tier 1, disciplinary literacy is at the forefront in the general education classrooms. This means that secondary content-area teachers will need to use differentiated instruction techniques and incorporate literacy strategies in their discipline with their content-area texts (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Vaughn, 2014). Torgesen, Houston, Rissman, Decker, Roberts, Vaughn, Wexler, Francis, Rivera, and Lesauz, (2007) identified six critical factors needed for proficient reading performance: fluency of text reading, vocabulary and meaning of words, active and flexible use of reading strategies to enhance comprehension, being able to access background knowledge, use of higher level reasoning and thinking skills, and motivating and engagement for understanding and learning from the text. Similarly, Roberts, et al. (2008) emphasized the need for instruction to encompass word study, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and motivation. They found that typically, older students had basic phonics and phonemic awareness skills. Therefore, interventions at the secondary level should not focus on phonics or phonemic awareness, but on the other elements of reading with a focus on comprehension.

Lang, Torgesen, Vogel, Chanter, Lefsky, and Petscher (2009) looked at the effectiveness of four secondary reading interventions (Reach, RISE, Read180, and SOAR) and strategy instruction in the social studies and science curriculum at a high school. They found that students in the most at-risk group had the most gains on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test with SOAR (using the drill and kill method with FCAT Explorer) and RISE (consisted of differentiated instruction, explicit instruction of strategies, teacher-created text sets, and a lot of self-selected reading and writing). However, the moderate at-risk group had the biggest gains with RISE and Read180 (rotational model of small group, computer-based assistance, and independent reading of self-selected choice from their chosen title library that focuses on vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency). They stressed that there wasn't a program that worked for all and that all teachers needed to use reading strategies in their classrooms. Like others already mentioned, they stressed the need to "establish the effectiveness of research-based instructional conditions by studying their impact on the measures that are being used to evaluate the progress of schools nationally to remediate reading problems in struggling readers" (p. 171).

Scammacca, et al. (2007) conducted a meta-analysis on current interventions. They found that it is never too late to intervene with struggling students and that older students also benefit from interventions that are appropriate to their needs. They felt that there was a need for school-wide comprehension strategies and vast amounts of self-selected reading throughout the day. The majority of the studies they looked at did not provide standard scores to determine how the students improved based on grade-level standards, in regards to struggling students versus the average reader of a similar age. They concluded that interventions did in fact raise scores (higher effect sizes for middle school versus high school students), but there wasn't an indication with any of the studies regarding if the intervention also raised the students to grade level.

This aligns with findings from Torgesen, Alexander, Wagner, Rashotte, Voeller, & Conway's study (2001) that provided older struggling readers with individualized and one-on-one intensive literacy instruction, primarily on word reading with some focus on comprehension, that resulted in gains in word reading and comprehension, but not in fluency. Growth was looked at based on their progress during the intervention and up to two years after the intervention, compared to growth prior to involvement in an intervention (regular instruction in the learning disabilities resource rooms prior). A pre- and posttest design was used, using multiple assessments (components/subtests of the following: Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processes, Woodcock Reading Mastery Test-Revised, TOWRE, Gray Oral Reading Test-III, Woodcock-Johnson Psychoeducational Battery-Revised, Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals-Third Edition, Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Revised, teacher checklists regarding behavior, parent questionnaire, and a student physical) to gather and compare student growth. The students in this study were considered to have severe reading disabilities but showed significant gains in standard scores after intensive, individualized instruction. Following the intervention period, 40% were found to not need special education services anymore. However, even though reading rate showed large improvement, many students still had severe impairments at the end of the 2-year intervention.

Graves, Brandon, Duesbery, McIntosh, and Pyle (2011) conducted a study with sixth graders with and without disabilities. All ELA teachers were provided training on differentiated instruction and all students were placed in a 2 hour ELA block. Tiered interventions were in the form of intensive small group instruction that focused on decoding (20 minutes), fluency (20 minutes), comprehension and vocabulary (combined 20 minutes). Intervention sessions were conducted three times per week, at one hour per week, for ten weeks. Students in the

intervention group an average of 10 words per minute in 10 weeks. Both, the treatment and control group, improved similarly with fluency and word recognition, based on oral reading fluency scores and the use of Maze assessments (pre- and posttest). The authors identified a need to include a stronger comprehension focus for students to progress.

Brozo and Hargis (2003) conducted a study at a high school to re-create the literature culture of the school. Their main objective was to “determine the reading abilities of all students and the effectiveness of initiatives to improve them” (p. 15). To start, all students took the STAR assessment and then determination was made for students to take either the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test (2000) or the Nelson-Denny Reading Test (1993). The data were also to be used as a pre- and posttest design format for the study. Discussions took place with faculty to determine needs for professional development with the idea that the content-area teacher’s curriculum would be infused with literacy elements. Three initiatives were ultimately selected and implemented: sustained silent reading, reading young adult novels in the content-area classrooms, and providing alternative texts for struggling and superior readers. Teachers were provided professional development and ample opportunity to meet with the researchers for informal discussions. Findings showed that students’ reading achievement improved significantly, as did their engagement and involvement in class.

Brozo (2011) discussed three case studies that were conducted at secondary schools throughout the country (Virginia, Nebraska, and California) in his book entitled *RTI and the Adolescent Reader*. They were all in the first few years of implementing RTI. The first case, in Virginia, adopted the program Content Literacy Continuum, which is a five-tiered level intervention program that places emphasis on data-based instruction and ongoing professional development for all teachers through the use of Strategic Instruction Model (teacher instructional

routines and student learning strategies). They implemented the program in “four overlapping phases: exploring, planning, implementing, and sustaining” (p. 109). Needs assessments were taken into account in the beginning, and professional development, typically conducted by SIM coaches, was ongoing and changed based on the needs of the teachers. For their universal screener, and as a progress monitor tool, they used the Scholastic Reading Inventory. However, students were identified for intervention based on these scores as well as standardized and benchmark assessment data and formative assessments. On top of this being a schoolwide effort with SIM strategies, READ180 and Wilson were purchased programs for intervention. Findings for this school showed significant gains in reading on the standardized reading assessment used (Specific assessment was not mentioned) as well as a reduction in the number of students being referred for special education services.

Case study #2 took place with 10 middle schools in Nebraska. The focus for this district was to improve literacy for students by providing below-level readers with research-based interventions. Their universal screener was the Iowa Test of Basic skills, and then the addition of classroom reading and writing assessments, and report card scores. Emphasis was placed on professional development for all middle school teachers, psychologists, and speech language pathologists through a 3-day summer program that focused on fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, syntax, and writing. Throughout implementation, professional development continued based on the needs of the faculty in the district. Tier 2 interventions included READ180 and System 44 and progress monitoring was conducted through the use of DIBELS and AIMSWEB subskill assessments. Tier 3 was considered special education in this district. Findings after the first two years showed that there was improvement on the Test of Reading

Comprehension and Test of Written Language, as well as a small drop in student referrals to special education.

Case Study #3 was a school district in California. This school district teamed with the University of California, Berkeley on a U.S. Department of Education IES grant to implement the Striving Readers project. Students are identified for intervention based on cutoff scores from any of the following three tests: Degrees of Reading Power, the California English Language Development Test, or the California Standards Test-English Language Arts. Content-area teachers were provided around 200 hours of professional development throughout implementation. Tier 1 and Tier 2 training focused on the Strategies for Literacy Independence across the Curriculum model. A common assessment tool was designed by the team overseeing the project and was used for progress monitoring every 8 to 12 weeks. Findings were inconclusive at the time of this write-up but mentions that there were significant effects on one of the outcome assessments, the comprehension focused Degrees of Reading Power.

In summary of the three case studies, the two that were most successful provided a lot of ongoing professional development; starting with planning and continued throughout the implementation. Administrative support was provided and steps were created as an action plan. These two schools showed gains in reading development and a decrease in special education referrals. Even though both of the successful schools used packaged commercial programs, it can be argued that the teacher's knowledge and ability to modify instruction as needed can be the more appropriate reason for success. The third school did make their project a schoolwide initiative but little was mentioned regarding success or failure.

Fisher and Frey (2013) stated that in their case study with RTI at the high school level, it took commitment from the whole school to organize and implement an instructional framework

that guided lesson planning and delivery, from getting students where they needed to be to providing instruction during office hours and after school. The teachers chose to switch from a traditional grading policy to using a competency system that allowed students to be assessed and graded based on state standards to provide teachers with more diagnostic information on each individual student. Students that received below a 70% had to retake the competency for completion. Eighty percent of the professional development provided was for Tier 1 teachers. Tier 2 was an additional in-class situation that emphasized small-group supplemental, guided instruction and productive group work taught by content-area teachers with the assistance of special education teachers. Tier 3 took place outside of the classroom, often during lunch or after school. Interventions were created by teachers instead of purchasing products. Findings showed improvement on state test scores, grade point averages, attendance, and fewer referrals to special education. The authors stressed that RTI was likely easier to implement and be successful due to allowing teachers to engage in professional learning communities and other ways to collaborate. There is a need for RTI to become part of “the school’s vision and mission, not an administrative mandate” (Dulaney, 2012, p. 63).

Sanger, et al. (2012) conducted a mixed method study that looked at reactions and opinions of educators before and after the implementation of RTI in a sample of secondary schools. Methods included five focus groups with interviews, twenty observations, and a survey. The study lasted nine months. There were 18 educators from 10 schools that provided RTI in a classroom in a low or middle income level school. Six were classroom teachers, 4 school psychologists, 7 speech language pathologists, and 1 paraprofessional. Each classroom consisted of 10-13 students and intervention was applied anywhere between 2-17 hours per week. Eight of

ten of the classrooms used a co-teaching approach. Only one day of professional development was provided.

Overall participants did feel that RTI could improve student achievement, if implemented correctly. Themes identified from all of the data were challenges and concerns, support for the model, implementation considerations, and experts in special education and communication disorders are important.

Under challenges and concerns, participants felt that regular education classroom teachers did not understand RTI and that it was difficult to implement at the secondary level, due to scheduling, and that there was a great need for additional training. Participants also stressed that there is a need to identify students for RTI prior to high school but they saw the helpfulness of progress monitoring throughout the course of the year. Participants tended to be positive regarding supporting RTI implementation at their school with the hope that special education resources could be used across the general education curriculum. Participants felt that RTI could help assist struggling students.

Implementation considerations addressed the need that RTI had to be merged with what was already taking place in content-area classrooms. There was a focus on participants stating that best instruction is the priority and then adding the other components. Participants did recognize that at the secondary level, many regular education teachers seem to feel threatened by these changes due to a potential power struggle that needs to be addressed. In regards to experts being important, participants emphasized that RTI needed to be flexible enough to make instructional modifications in a timely manner and that there was concern regarding how many types of interventions would be needed and if they were related or connected, which is needed to

be effective. Participants felt that experts were needed to help explain and train on the various changes in instruction and interventions.

Recommendations from participants included the need to plan and prepare ahead of time, need for collaboration and working together with all faculty, identification of student tier placement to have begun sooner, and the need for a lot more training on all components of RTI. The researchers call for additional research to look at a “sampling beyond one school district, which may allow for a more representative sample” (p. 106).

Bineham, et al., (2014) conducted a national survey study with school educators and faculty to span K-12 settings. Their purpose was to report general and special education perceptions regarding the implementation of RTI at their schools. Their guiding questions focused on the participant’s understanding of RTI, how it was implemented, and experiences that contributed to their knowledge of the RTI policy.

The main findings from this study report wide variances across participants, misunderstandings and confusion, and lack of training reported by the participants. The data revealed an extreme need for all levels of educational personnel to receive training in all parts related to RTI. The main gap discussed was a “disconnect between theory and actual practice” (p. 246).

The article with the results of this study did not provide great detail regarding data analysis and therefore the validity and reliability might be questionable.

The Minnesota Department of Education hired Wilder Research to conduct annual statewide surveys to determine the level of RTI implementation in schools. In March/April of 2013, they had a 46% response rate and 163 high school participants. They looked at four areas of implementation: leadership and organizational structures, curriculum and instruction,

assessment, and collaboration among staff. Participants were asked to rate activities as being in place, exploring, partial implementation, or not in place at all. Additional open-ended items were added for schools to identify possible barriers to RTI implementation.

In regards to leadership and organizational structures, well over the majority of participants felt that they were supported with professional development, resources, and time by the school and administration to embrace RTI. However, only 33% felt that the staff at their school truly understand what RTI meant. The participants felt that the curriculum and instruction provided high quality literacy curricula that were aligned to the standards. The participants overwhelmingly agreed that it engaged students, was culturally appropriate, and differentiated appropriately. However, only 61% positively felt that evidence-based interventions were provided for students not on grade level, 64% felt that interventions matched to student needs, and only 45% felt there was an overall effectiveness of interventions when reviewed 3 times a year. This shows that there was more knowledge and confidence for core classrooms than with intervention courses.

In regards to assessment, the overall majority felt that core classrooms were using valid and reliable assessments and that they were informing instruction appropriately and in a timely manner from the data of these assessments. Much less confidence though regarding how assessment data was being used in Tier 2 or Tier 3 with all numbers being around 50% of the participants being neutral or positive. There was a positive perception on collaboration in Tier 1 even though over the majority (59%) held low confidence regarding the roles of team members and collaboration among subgroups. Fifty-seven percent of the participants felt that there was a consistent process to guide the team meetings and decisions regarding interventions.

Along with the high school survey that was sent to various participants in Minnesota, the Department of Education also sent out a survey to middle schools. They had 77 participants at the middle school level. Overall, participants at the middle school level were much more positive than high school participants regarding the elements of RTI being already implemented in their schools. In regards to leadership and organization, the only question that participant's felt negatively about was regarding understanding of RTI (57%), similar to the high school participants. In regards to Tier 1 curriculum and instruction, the question was parent involvement generated the lowest ratings. Tier 2 had an average of 69% for all 10 questions showing either full or partial agreement that implementation was happening. There was a slightly lower agreement that procedures were in place for Tier 2 or Tier 3, than Tier 1. High scores were chosen by the majority of participants for all questions associated with assessment at all levels, with Tier 1 having the highest ratings of being in place and effective. The middle school participants also felt strongly regarding collaboration among staff members at all tier levels.

Regan, Berkeley, Hughes, and Brady (2015) conducted a mixed method study with elementary and secondary educators regarding their perceptions on their school's implementation of RTI and their knowledge of RTI. Teachers and administrators were surveyed regarding a) perceived feasibility and effectiveness of RTI, b) perceived knowledge of basic RTI concepts, and c) perceived preparedness to implement specific components of RTI within their district.

There were 4 schools in total, with 63 participants. They used a research created survey that used current literature as a guide, expert reviews, and pilot testing. The questionnaire consisted of 30 forced response items and 2 open-ended questions. The questionnaire first asked about general education practices and then the same questions were rephrased regarding RTI.

Next, there were 18 Likert questions regarding the feasibility and effectiveness of educational practices, including screening to identify students with difficulties (in all content areas), progress monitoring (individualized and through guided instruction), and implementing evidence-based reading practices. The next section consisted of 8 Likert items regarding their perceived knowledge of RTI and perceived preparedness to implement RTI procedures (purpose of RTI, adequate training, etc.). Three multiple choice items were used to address participant's perceived knowledge and preparedness of the implementation of tiered instruction. A final item was included to ask whether tiered instruction was implemented with fidelity. The two open-ended questions asked participants to identify advantages and disadvantages since the adoption of RTI in school and any changes they observed.

Overall, the elementary participants felt classroom feasibility and school-wide effectiveness was happening with screening in all areas (except in content area classrooms), progress monitoring was occurring of individual students and being used to guide instruction, and implementation of evidence-based reading instruction was occurring. However, in secondary schools, there was much less confidence in these areas. Overall, participants were only slightly positive towards classroom feasibility and school-wide effectiveness in implementing the following: screening for reading and content areas (although lower for effectiveness school-wide with content areas at 54% positive response) with slightly over the majority of participants chose either Agree or Strongly Agree.

The majority of participants chose positive options for progress monitoring, but viewed that school-wide progress monitoring was not effective. There were very low and negative responses chosen in regards to the participant's responses for perceiving knowledge and preparedness for RTI implementation. Overall, the elementary and middle school participants

seemed to feel knowledgeable about the purpose of each tier within RTI and understood the role that RTI played in regards to identification of students with disabilities. However, high school participants had much lower ratings of the items.

In regards to structure and time in a school day for RTI implementation, only 6% of high school participants felt there was adequate structure and time in the day. The high school participants also had low responses in regards to training, assessment procedures, and implementing RTI. The participants were not clear who was responsible for what part of the RTI implementation and were not aware of guidelines being set forth by the schools. Elementary and middle school participants were slightly more aware but no majorities of participants were confident in implementing any of the three tiers.

In regards to the two open-ended questions regarding advantages and disadvantages for implementing RTI, the high school participants were again less optimistic for student progress due to lack of training, guidance, and support that left the staff feeling confused, stressed, and/or frustrated. They felt there was not enough time to appropriately complete the work (including time for professional development, planning, and collaboration). The elementary and middle school participants stressed the increased use of effective educational practices and increased collaboration helping make the implementation of RTI more successful.

To find out more in depth information regarding professional development and to explore the differences between elementary and high school educators, the authors conducted semi-structured interviews of 23 questions with a purposeful sampling of 11 participants. (1 district coordinator, 4 elementary, 4 middle school, and 2 high school). Participants included a district RTI coordinator, 3 general education teachers, 3 special education teachers, and 4 literacy/reading specialists. Findings included the participants addressing too much testing

taking place, basic understanding of RTI principles and components, the feeling that RTI components were feasible and effectively being implemented in their own schools, and lack of understanding how to use data to modify instruction and the roles of teachers. Ultimately, the participants wanted more information on how to implement RTI, with the high school level participant(s) wanting more understanding and expressing a need for greater guidance on implementation.

Three additional studies were found regarding various school personnel's perceptions of RTI. These studies target different audiences from the current study, however, their findings are aligned with current study preconceived notions and findings. Therefore, the information is important to highlight.

Werts, Lambert, and Carptenter, (2009) investigated special education directors in North Carolina to determine their perceptions regarding the role of school personnel, time needed for instructional sessions, and considerations take regarding the implementation of RTI. They concluded that there was little consensus across the participants.

Sansosti, Noltemeyere, and Goss, (2010) reported findings from a nationwide survey of secondary school principals regarding RTI implementation in their schools. Findings showed that although the principals were knowledgeable of RTI, there was a discrepancy between their indication of the importance of RTI and its implementation.

Cavendish, Harry, Menda, Espinosa, and Mahotiere, (2016) conducted a grounded theory study looking at elementary educators identified challenges and successes experienced with RTI implementation in their schools. Their identified purpose was to first examine school personnel's perceptions of students' responsiveness with RTI and to focus on issues related to the practices within the RTI chosen models. This study used interviews and observations with

30 participants. The findings revealed professional development gaps across the participants, as well as issues with assumptions made by school personnel regarding diverse learners and how external pressures from accountability systems impacted the implementation of RTI.

Summary

Chapter two explored a number of topics related to RTI starting with a more elaborate explanation being provided on RTI components. Following that section, a literature review was provided on secondary content-area teachers; predominantly the need for these teachers to be willing and ready to work with literacy strategies in their classrooms. The review addressed the issue that many secondary content-area teachers do not have the needed tool box to work with struggling readers but showed through study findings that RTI can be successful with proper knowledge and training of these educators (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006; Swanson, 2008). With the lack of research at the secondary level (Brozo, 2011), the last section provided a review of the few current studies that focused on secondary literacy RTI. With secondary school RTI implementation, it is important to plan prior to implementation, all stakeholders need to be part of the process and on board, there is a need for all to collaborate and a need to have experts in literacy and disabilities included.

Although RTI at the secondary level requires significant reorganization of school structure (Sansosti, Noltemeyere, & Goss, 2008) it “can address the needs of struggling learners, prevent labeling, and avoid a history of school failure” (Sanger, et al., 2012, p. 99). There is a need first for all teachers to believe that all children can learn to read and second an understanding that “full implementation of ambitious instructional policy has fuzzy boundaries and typically takes many years to accomplish...[as schools need to]...build capacity to support

new forms of instruction” (Coburn, Hill, Spillane, 2016, p. 248). The implementation of RTI cannot happen overnight without proper steps and training (Noll, 2013).

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Overview

In this chapter, I will discuss the research design, methodology, as well as data collection and analytical strategies that I used to answer the research questions outlined in Chapter 1 and expanded upon in Chapter 2. The purpose of this study was to understand secondary teachers' perspectives regarding the implementation of RTI at their school, specifically how it is being implemented and their confidence in their own abilities as well as the schools' abilities in successful implementation. Specifically, my objective was to answer the following research questions presented for this study:

1. What are secondary teachers' perspectives of the Response to Intervention policy and are there differences across the regional divisions?
2. What are secondary teachers' perspectives, or levels of confidence, in their own abilities to implement RTI effectively as well as confidence in their school's effective implementation of RTI and are there differences across the regional divisions?
3. Is there a relationship between secondary teachers' perspectives on the implementation and effectiveness of RTI at their school and their perspectives regarding the RTI policy?
4. Are there similarities across the nation regarding how the literacy component of RTI is being implemented at the secondary level?

The rest of this chapter describes how each question was addressed.

Review of Selected Literature

A total of nine searches were conducted, starting in December, 2014 and continuing through February, 2017. Search terms used were “secondary” “literacy”, “secondary literacy”, “RTI”, “response to intervention”, “reading”, “high school”, “middle school”, “literacy policies”, “internet surveys”, “surveys”, “content area literacy”, and “disciplinary literacy”. Literature was gathered via multiple educational searches using search engines such as EBSCO and Academic Select Complete. Some texts appeared in more than one search. All articles and books were initially skimmed and abstract read to decide for possible use in this research. Any article or book that met the criteria of secondary literacy RTI, was either purchased and read or retrieved from online and then read. Additional articles, studies, and books were chosen upon viewing reference sections in already chosen literature.

Methodological Approach: National Study

This sequential explanatory mixed methods study (Greene, 2007) first consisted of a national survey to gather data from participants across the United States to provide a “big picture” of the information, and then nine participants were randomly chosen by regional division (See Table 3.1 for breakdown of region to division to state) to participate in semi-structured interviews to gather more descriptive and rich data regarding the teachers’ perspectives and survey replies (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Therefore, data was collected in two phases, which allowed contextualization of participant responses. The information that follows will first describe each chosen method and provide support for use of this method, and then detail how the method was used for this study.

Table 3.1 Region, Division, State Identification

Region	Division	States	
Northeast	New England	Connecticut	New Hampshire
		Maine	Rhode Island
		Massachusetts	Vermont
		New Jersey	Pennsylvania
Midwest	Middle Atlantic	New York	
	East North Central	Illinois	Ohio
		Indiana	Wisconsin
		Michigan	
	West North Central	Iowa	Nebraska
		Kansas	North Dakota
Minnesota		South Dakota	
South	South Atlantic	Missouri	
		Delaware	North Carolina
		District of Columbia	South Carolina
		Florida	Virginia
		Georgia	West Virginia
		Maryland	
	East South Central	Alabama	Mississippi
		Kentucky	Tennessee
West	West South Central	Arkansas	Oklahoma
		Louisiana	Texas
	Mountain	Arizona	Nevada
		Colorado	New Mexico
		Idaho	Utah
	Pacific	Montana	Wyoming
		Alaska	Oregon
		California	Washington
Hawaii			

* Information came from
https://www2.census.gov/geo/pdfs/maps-data/maps/reference/us_regdiv.pdf

Survey Methodology

Surveys are able to be used in a quantitative or qualitative fashion, depending on the types of questions that are used (i.e, open-ended or closed) and can be used administered in multiple ways (i.e., telephone, mail, Internet). It is a “systematic process of gathering information on a specific topic by asking questions of individuals and then generalizing the results to the groups represented by the respondents” (Thayer-Hart, Dykema, Elver, Schaeffer, & Stevenson, 2010, p. 4). People in the United States have become familiar with surveys to measure “public opinion for newspaper and magazine articles, the measurement of political perceptions and opinions to help political candidates in elections, and market research designed to understand consumer preferences and interests” (Fowler, 2014, p. 2).

Teachers are quite familiar with surveys regarding a myriad of purposes. They have been given survey instruments for needs assessment purposes, reflection, and evaluation instruments (Algozzine, Bealitie, Bray, Flowers, Gretes, Howley, & Mohanty, 2004; Black & William, 1998). Additionally, surveys have been used for determining teacher characteristics and student achievement (Jepson, 2005), teacher perceptions regarding inclusion practices (Davis & Wilson, 2000; Ostroff, 1992; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996), teacher attitudes, job satisfaction, motivation, behavior and instructional practice (Springer, Ballou, Hamilton, Le, Lockwood, McCaffrey, Pepper, & Stecher, 2011), teacher collaboration beliefs (Goddard, Goddard, & Tschannen-Moran, 2007), teacher trust in students and parents (Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, & Hoy, 2001), and education research and policy analysis (Desimone & Le Floch, 2004; Ingersoll, 2001).

When creating a survey, reliability and validity of the survey needs to be assessed prior to sending it to possible participants, as there are many factors that can enhance or detract from the

validity and reliability of a survey (Alvarez & VanBeselaere, 2005). For instance, when developing questions, prior research and literature should be used as a reference, expert consultants should be utilized, and the items should be pretested with members that represent the targeted audience. In addition, the use of eyeballing, statistical tests of correlation (i.e, test-retest, parallel forms, Cronbach's alpha), interrater/intrarater, and face validity could help enhance the reliability and validity of the survey.

Looking at each individual item is important. Items need to measure the construct of interest, be culturally appropriate, be answerable, and content needs to be understood by all participants. In addition, questions should not be double barreled (too many concepts being asked in a single question), should not require a forced answer of participants, and the items should not be too lengthy. When considering the sample, the frame used, the size of the sample, and specific design of selection procedures need to be identified. As with any research, there are ethical considerations that must be thought through.

Participants need to know ahead of time why they are being recruited, how their information is valued and will be used, and the benefits (short term and long term) of participation clearly understood. This will hopefully alleviate some of the issues that could occur with social desirability and acquiescence (Warnecke, Johnson, Chavez, Sudman, O'Rourke, Lacey, & Horm, 1997), and allow the participants to reply comfortably, trust the researcher, feel culturally understood, and respond accurately.

One distinct disadvantage of survey research is that the survey needs to be designed for a specific purpose in order to gather information that is being asked, which means that typically, a new survey would need to be created for each different purpose. Non-response is another issue that researchers must deal with. This is determined by using how many participants take the

survey versus how many possible participants received the link for the survey. Another issue is the fact that the creator of the survey is making inferences regarding the characteristics of the participants, during creation, when looking at results from piloting the survey, and in using a sample to represent the entire population of the targeted audience (i.e, sampling error).

Bias comes into play when the sample does not fully represent the targeted population as a whole. This is when the sample frame does not represent the entire population, if the sample is not random, or when there is failure to collect answers from everyone. In relation to teacher surveys, Mullens and Kasprzyk (1999) stated that a well-designed focused survey could be “cost effective for administrators and place only limited burden on respondents, the accuracy of self-reported responses sometimes calls into question the reliability and validity of the resulting data” (p. 678).

Another disadvantage is the fact that the participant is not easily able to communicate with the creator of the survey for clarification of a question or response. When respondents answer the questions, the researcher must assume that the participant responded truthfully and to the best of his/her knowledge. This means that errors could occur due to misunderstanding the question, not having the needed information to answer, and distorting the answer due to social desirability factors. The fact that participants might be voluntary participants means that the representation might not be generalizable. Lastly, the depth of information gained with a survey might not be as influential as an interview or observation.

Although there are different types of surveys, each type of survey has its advantages and disadvantages (Fowler, 2014). Internet surveys are the newest with limited research to support their use, but provide many advantages in using them. Web-based surveys have been recommended by researchers to use in educational settings due to higher response rates, low cost,

and preferred chosen method (Cobanoglu, Warde, & Moreo, 2001; Greenlaw & Brown-Welty, 2009). According to Couper and Miller (2008), the first published paper regarding Web surveys appeared in 1996. Advantages of using an Internet survey is the ease of access to participants, the low cost to create it, send, and analyze the survey, the time that is saved in reaching a large population quickly, the fact that there isn't a need to use a facility to conduct the survey, and the length of time to receive the data is quite short (Ardalan, Ardalan, Coppage, & Crough, 2007; Carbonaro, Bainbridge, & Wolodko, 2002). Participants take the survey and the data securely and instantly gets recorded and is ready for analysis.

Teachers' Perspective RTI Survey.

When conducting research with teachers and wanting to tap into their beliefs and practices, there are numerous methods to use for a study. However, for the purpose of this study and having a desire to gather national data, an electronic survey was chosen for the first part of this study. With virtually universal access to email and with educators traditionally using email routinely, an Internet survey was chosen. Not only did this make the study more cost effective and easier to analyze all at once, but it helped with acquiring participants from across the United States. As previously mentioned, once survey data were obtained and analyzed, follow-up interviews occurred with a total of nine participants, one chosen from each of the 9 regional divisions (See Figure 3.1): New England Division, Middle Atlantic Division, East North Central Division, West North Central Division, South Atlantic Division, East South Central Division, West South Central Division, Mountain Division, and the Pacific Division (www.census.gov)

A positive aspect of using an Internet survey with educators is the comfort it might provide. In a world where evaluation seems to be at the forefront of classroom and teachers' lives, the teacher can take this survey from the comfort of his/her home, on his/her lunch break,

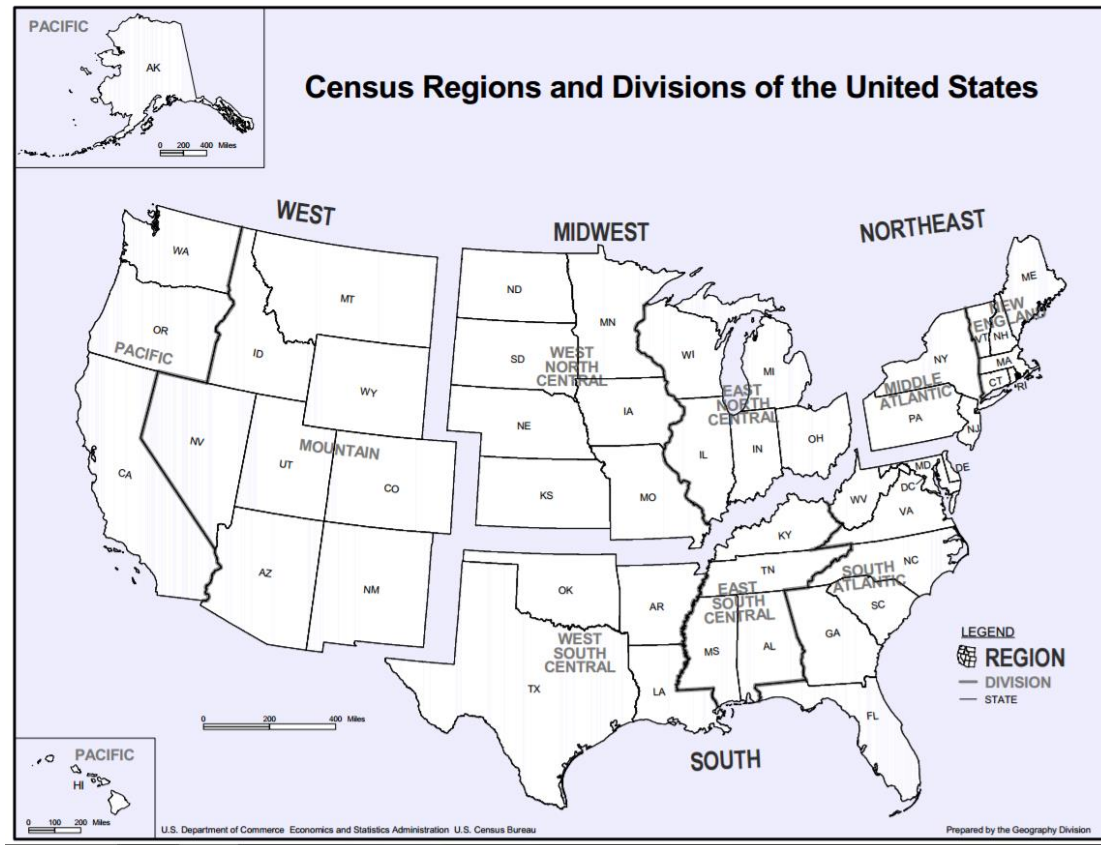


Figure 3.1 Map of the regional divisions

or whenever he/she wants. Administration on the school campus would have no idea if the educator is participating, which means that the teacher might provide more honest opinions more freely than having the researcher on campus with administration knowing exactly who is responding to the questions.

Even though an electronic survey relies on participants having access to the Internet, this method has been chosen primarily for ease of access to a large participant population in a timely manner. By providing an electronic survey link to participants, participants are able to access the survey from any computer, phone, or notebook that has internet access. A disadvantage that is often mentioned regarding Internet surveys is the fact that information may appear differently to various respondents, depending upon the browser and computer platform. However, when

creating the survey through Qualtrics, the program provides options to check how the survey will appear on various types of devices, to include computers, laptops, and cellular phones. This allows participants the ability to respond at their convenience, save and come back to it when they are available, and submit it quickly and effortlessly.

Hite (2011) provided an in depth informational guide on Qualtrics and the company's security measures. In this paper, Qualtrics is described as specifically appropriate for educational (i.e., K-12 setting) and research purposes. The program provides more than 100 question types, tools to modify items for specific purposes and needs, allows for follow up with respondents, is mobile and offline compatible, and is provided on a single platform. In addition, there are over 30 different graph types that allow for color and media to be included (Carbonaro, et al., 2002).

With real-time syncing, the data gets uploaded to "the cloud" and can be used immediately for analysis with programs like SPSS and exported to Word, PowerPoint, or PDF format. Hite, a Qualtrics Administrator, certifies that Qualtrics adheres to the Safe Harbor Privacy Principles of notice, choice, onward transfer, security, data integrity, access, and enforcement. The data are stored in data centers that are audited and SAS 70 certified, as well as having Transport Layer Security (TLS) encryption (HTTPS). Options like password protection are included when creating the survey with individual permissions available if granted by the main administrator. Qualtrics also has a disaster recovery plan if needed. The survey creator owns all of the data and user information and is able to track how many participants started the survey and how many finished the survey.

Participant Population

The target audience for this study was secondary (grades 6 – 12) educators who are working with the RTI literacy interventions at their school, or are familiar with the processes being used, during the 2016-2017 school year. The goal was to use previously stated national and state organization listservs provided from the International Literacy Association (ILA) and the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) for the survey, as they would have provided mass member email lists of educators throughout the United States that belonged to those two organizations, which would have provided participants from across the country. Additionally, this would provide a snowball effect with participants sharing the survey link with colleagues and peers.

However, upon receiving the initial recruitment email (after IRB approval from current institution) in October, 2016, both, ILA and NCTE research policies did not allow unknown researchers access to their member listservs. Both organizations recommended sending out a recruitment email to each individual state council (sent on 11/23, 12/4, and a final time on 12/15 after realizing some contacts were not receiving the recruitment email in their Inbox but it was going to their Spam box) to request that the contact person send the survey information out to their members. In addition, ILA chose to support this study by posting the survey link with information regarding the study once on their main ILA Facebook page and four times on their *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy* Facebook page. ILA also used Twitter to inform its members of the study. NCTE also had recommended to post the recruitment study information on their Member Forum page for their members' community; posted on the Adolescent Literacy Group page on 11/23 and 1/7 and the Teaching and Learning Forum page on 12/2 and 1/7.

Due to the original setbacks of not being able to communicate directly to the larger organizations, the addition of Council for Exceptional Children state councils was included in the recruitment process (email sent same time as ILA and NCTE state organizations) as well as sending out a basic recruitment email to all members connected through the Literacy Research Association member listserv (November 23, 2016). Although thirty-three out of the 150 organizations responded directly to the researcher regarding sending out the survey link to members (response rate of 22%), there is no definitive way of knowing how many organizations actually sent the link. Once participants opened the survey link, they were presented the informed consent form and told that by moving to the first page of the survey meant consent was provided.

Finlay (2002) discussed the need for researchers to be culturally aware, which means the researcher is reflexive of his/her own personal beliefs and values and looking how that might interfere with their research. In addition to being culturally aware, researchers need to have cultural knowledge, which means being informed of the culture for the group being researched. The idea of using the chosen organizations was to allow for credibility and buy-in from members, as well as demonstrate cultural sensitivity and cultural competence. Although an online survey does not allow connection with individual cultures, it does allow the researcher to share in the culture of literacy education.

Participant Descriptions.

The participants for this study consisted of 303 educators from across the country representing 41 states and all 9 regional divisions (See Figure 3.2). There were 30 males, 264 females, 7 participants that preferred not to answer, and 2 participants that left this question blank. The tables below show participants' gender, years of teaching experience, certifications

held, current Tier level and teaching position (See Table 3.2 and 3.3). For certifications held, as well as current Tier level and teaching position, participants were allowed to choose multiple options.

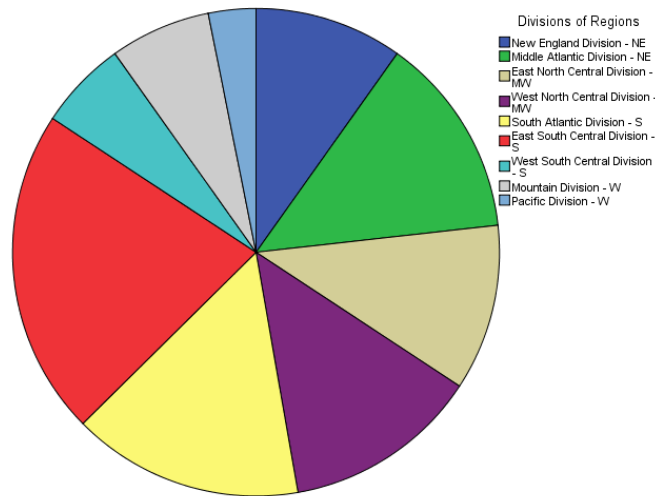


Figure 3.2 Participants of the study by regional division

Data Collection Procedures.

Following approval of the university IRB, a link to an anonymous electronic survey was emailed to three chosen professional organizations: ILA affiliated reading councils, state NCTE councils, and state CEC councils. The survey link became active on November 23rd, 2016 and remained open until February 3, 2017, due to requests from various councils to extend the closing date. Due to not having access directly to member lists, reminder emails were not sent out to any councils that responded to the researcher. However, two follow-up emails were sent to councils that had not responded. Once the survey cutoff window has ended, any participant that completed at least 75% of the survey was included in the analysis. All data was uploaded to SPSS the morning of the cutoff deadline.

Table 3.2 Demographics by Regional Division

Regional Division	Gender			Years of Teaching Experience					Current Tier Level Taught		
	Male	Female	Prefer Not to Answer	1-3	4-6	7-10	More than 10	Prefer Not to Answer	Tier 1	Tier 2 or 3	Both, Tier 1 and either Tier
New England (N = 24)	0%	100%	0%	0%	4%	4%	92%	0%	17%	67%	17%
Middle Atlantic (N = 34)	3%	97%	0%	6%	6%	9%	79%	0%	18%	42%	39%
East North Central (N = 28)	11%	89%	0%	4%	7%	14%	75%	0%	21%	25%	56%
West North Central (N = 34)	9%	88%	3%	9%	0%	21%	70%	0%	22%	31%	47%
South Atlantic (N = 33)	10%	87%	3%	5%	8%	13%	74%	0%	28%	15%	56%
East South Central (N = 55)	11%	86%	4%	13%	7%	16%	62%	2%	16%	33%	51%
West South Central (N = 15)	20%	80%	0%	0%	20%	0%	80%	0%	20%	20%	60%
Mountain (N = 25)	12%	88%	0%	12%	29%	12%	47%	0%	35%	24%	41%
Pacific (N = 8)	0%	75%	25%	0%	13%	25%	50%	13%	13%	25%	63%

Table 3.3 Certifications and Current Teaching of Participants

Regional Division	Certifications (Multiple Options Allowed)						Current Teaching							
	Reading	SPED	ELA	El. Ed	Psych.	Other *	Reading	Instructional Coach	ELA	Intervention	Administration	Guidance Counselor	Content Area	Other **
New England	56%	36%	28%	60%	0%	24%	56%	12%	16%	28%	0%	0%	4%	24%
Middle Atlantic	41%	18%	44%	47%	3%	26%	41%	6%	27%	12%	9%	0%	12%	18%
East North Central	36%	11%	61%	43%	4%	32%	36%	36%	46%	29%	0%	0%	18%	29%
West North Central	39%	15%	48%	42%	0%	30%	39%	21%	52%	21%	3%	0%	6%	12%
South Atlantic	28%	31%	64%	38%	3%	31%	28%	18%	41%	10%	3%	3%	13%	10%
East South Central	13%	22%	47%	42%	0%	33%	13%	3%	36%	31%	2%	0%	24%	33%

Table 3.3 Continued

West South Central	40%	0%	67%	73%	7%	33%	40%	13%	33%	20%	7%	0%	20%	13%
Mountain	29%	29%	71%	18%	0%	12%	29%	12%	71%	12%	6%	0%	18%	12%
Pacific	25%	13%	75%	0%	0%	38%	25%	0%	50%	38%	0%	0%	25%	25%

* Note. Other may represent Administration, Educational Leadership, a specific content-area, or ELL

** Note. Other may represent Academic Specialist, Department Chair, ELL, Instructional Support/Aide, Consultant, Media or Literacy Specialist, Related Arts teacher, RTI instructor, Librarian, Title 1 Instructor, or Special Education.

Upon opening the survey URL link, participants were required to complete the consent form (see Appendix 1) and acknowledge that by moving to the first question of the survey demonstrated their acceptance of consent.

Instrumentation Design.

It is important to note that the Regan, et al. (2015) study previously mentioned did use a survey that assessed teachers' perspectives regarding RTI implementation at one school district. This survey and article were found after the initial pilot study and survey were created for this current study. Their survey asked very similar questions to the created items for this survey and the audience of 63 participants included teachers and administrators from 4 schools. Participants were asked questions regarding their perceived feasibility and effectiveness of RTI, perceived knowledge of basic RTI concepts, and perceived preparedness to implement specific components

of RTI within their district. Similar to this survey, the authors used Likert items, multiple choice, and one open-ended question.

The survey for this study was originally created as an assignment for a Survey Research course for potential use with the dissertation. The survey was created through the use of current literature on RTI, reviewed by multiple experts in the field of literacy, survey research, and/or RTI, tested through cognitive interviews (Collins, 2013), and then modified for content, length, and clarity based on feedback provided.

Through piloting the survey, feedback was provided by some of the 36 participants from 13 states regarding confusion and need for clarification on a few items. In addition, I was asked to provide a definition for RTI and differentiated instruction on the survey that was used for the final study. Also, based on lack of response on the three open-ended questions, the decision was made to reword the questions.

Items were created to gain clear and specific information regarding the tiers of instruction and intervention at their schools by using a check all that apply list and allowing the participant to add any additional options that were not available. For questions regarding their own opinions, a Likert scale was used (-2 strong disagree, -1 disagree, 0 neutral, +1 agree, +2 strongly agree) with a 'not sure' option to be recorded as SYSMIS to not interfere with analysis means. This was done to allow participants options in their choice and to not feel 'boxed in' to a response.

The final survey (See Appendix 2 for Final Survey) contained 57 items, of which nine were for demographic purposes and one was a spot for participants to volunteer for the interview portion of the study. Twenty-seven Likert items asked questions regarding RTI policy (e.g., "RTI can result in the improvement of academic achievement for many students who struggle to

learn.”), RTI in their school setting (e.g., “Our RTI model involves two or more tiers of increasingly intense interventions”), and the participant’s perspective regarding RTI implementation at their school (e.g., “I am confident that my students are receiving the necessary support in reading, through interventions.”). In addition, there were 20 multiple choice or check all that apply type questions asking specifics about their school tier levels (e.g., “How are decisions usually made, in your school, to determine when a student exits a reading intervention? Please check all that apply.”)

Data Analysis.

Data were taken from Qualtrics and immediately exported to SPSS. The Likert options were coded as follows: strongly disagree (-2), disagree (-1), neutral (0), agree (1), strongly agree (2). Participants were also allowed to answer with a ‘not sure’ option that was recoded as missing so that it did not get calculated in analyses.

Data were cleaned by: recoding and renaming all variables, creating labels for each variable, creating a codebook for the data (See Appendix 3), and coding missing or blank responses as system missing. Following the data cleaning, frequencies were re-run to ensure that all final variable frequencies matched initial frequencies and to observe any remaining issues (none were found).

Examining skewness and kurtosis of each variable, as well as running frequencies and descriptives on all variables and creating histograms, the assumption of normality was met (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). As the majority of the variables were assessed using a 5=point Likert scale, no responses were categorized as outliers within this dataset. For the check all that apply items, SPSS recorded all text options selected.

Prior to running analyses to answer the research questions, a Principal Component Analysis was conducted to reduce the number of scale variables into a smaller number of usable constructs. Levene's test for equality of variances, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity were conducted.

Research Question 1.

To answer the first research question, "What are secondary teachers' perspectives of the Response to Intervention policy and are there differences across the regional divisions," first frequencies were run for the five questions that made up Component 2: RTI Policy. Then, a composite mean score was calculated for the five questions. Finally, an ANOVA was used to determine if there were significant differences based on regional divisions.

Research Question 2.

To answer the second research question, "What are secondary teachers' perspective, or levels of confidence, in their own abilities to implement RTI effectively as well as confidence in their school's effective implementation of RTI and are there differences across the regional divisions," first frequencies were run for the eight questions that represented Component 1: RTI in our Schools and the four questions that represented Component 3: Participants' Own Confidence with RTI. Then, composite mean scores were calculated for each component. Finally, an ANOVA was conducted to determine if there were significant differences based on regional divisions.

Research Question 3.

To answer the third research question, "Is there a relationship between secondary teachers' perspective on the implementation and effectiveness of RTI at their school and their perspectives regarding the RTI policy," the composite scores from Component 1 and 3 were run

through a bivariate correlation (Pearson correlation) to determine the relationship between the two.

Research Question 4.

To answer the fourth research question, “Are there similarities across the nation regarding how the literacy component of RTI is being implemented at the secondary level,” tables were created for the 20 questions on the survey that are specific to RTI at the participant’s school site. Due to the number of participants, frequencies were recorded based on state and based on regional division.

Need for Qualitative Data.

While the desire to reach out to participants across the United States was very important, there was a need to gather additional, deeper, descriptive data to refine, extend, or explain the survey findings. Therefore, although a focus group was the original qualitative source of data, after pilot testing this with a group of educators, the decision was made to conduct individual interviews.

At the end of the survey, there was a question asking participants to provide their contact information if they would like to participate in the interview portion of the study. This allowed for more probing questions based on the participant’s survey responses to support, elaborate, and explain reasoning behind their perspectives (Flick, 2009). For instance, asking participants why they feel confident (or do not feel confident) regarding their own personal implementation of literacy strategies in their classrooms. Or why they agreed or disagreed with the idea that their school was successfully implementing RTI. This conversation and dialogue provided an opportunity to expound the patterns determined from the survey and fill the gap that was missing from forced choice items on the survey.

Interview Methodology

Many researchers feel that there is not a single, concrete reality, but that realities are “multiple, intangible mental constructions, socially and experientially based, local and specific in nature...and dependent for their form and content on the individual persons or groups holding the constructions” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 110). In other words, “multiple realities exist that are inherently unique because they are constructed by individuals who experience the world from their own vantage points” (Hatch, 2002, p. 15). The idea that human knowledge is created together because there is not a “single, legitimate way to make sense of the world” (Eisner, 1992, p. 14) means that some researchers have the need to work with the participants, traditionally with qualitative research methods. This means that “there can be no understanding without interpretation” (Angen, 2000, p. 385), which means that qualitative research might not be generalizable, as it is tied to a particular group or situation.

Tracy (2010) identified eight criteria for qualitative research that include worthy topic, rich rigor, sincerity, credibility, resonance, significant contribution, ethics, and meaningful coherence. By being transparent, self-reflexive, honest, and open about the purpose of the study, sincerity could be established and witnessed. Credibility could be accomplished through the use of triangulation and thick descriptions. The goal is to provide “enough detail that readers may come to their own conclusions about the scene” (Tracy, 2010, p. 843).

The creation of codes and themes are subject to interpretation with qualitative research. A code is a “word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (Saldana, 2013, p. 3). Flexibility is needed throughout any qualitative research, as interpretations can change based on new information. The researcher must attempt to be completely accurate in

recording what is heard and seen. The issue of not being able to see and record everything is negative aspect with qualitative research.

Interviews.

An interview is a way to “allow insight into participant perspectives” regarding their own personal experiences and understandings” (Hatch, 2002, p. 97). This process allows the researcher and the participant to engage together in a conversation focused on questions that typically address the participants “thoughts, opinions, perspectives, or descriptions of specific experiences” (deMarrais, 2004), allowing me to better understand the teachers’ perspective regarding RTI at their school and their replies to the survey questions.

Through the use of descriptive data, the researcher is able to interpret the knowledge gained from the participant. It is important to note that my data from the interview is my interpretation of what was stated during the interview. This could be biased based on my own personal experiences and background as an educator of struggling readers, as was stated in my reflexivity statement. For the purposes of this study, the interview was semi-structured, but formal. Hatch (2002) posited that even though the title of formal is used and the researcher comes in with certain topics or questions in mind, there is leeway for “digressions” (p. 95) to follow the participant’s direction of information and to keep with a constructivist mindset.

Participant Population.

Although the survey remained open until February 3, 2017, the data were exported to SPSS mid-January to allow stratified randomization for interviews based on regional division of participants that had thus far taken the survey. At the time of that export, there were a total of 52 participants that had voluntarily provided their contact information for the interview portion of the study. A total of thirteen participants were chosen, as two from the original list chose to

leave the interview portion of the study due to various family emergencies and two did not respond to initial or secondary contact regarding setting up a time for the interview. The nine participants (See Table 3.4 for interview participant interview schedule) provided a signed consent form prior to conducting the interview. Participants represented various school position types, years of experience, and perspectives, and all names are pseudonyms.

Table 3.4 Interview Participant Interview Schedule

Name*	Regional Division	Contact	Response	Interview Scheduled	Transcript Sent	Member Check Response
Paige	New England	1/06/17 1/11/17 1/16/17	1/06/17	1/24@2:00	2/3	
Sarah	Middle Atlantic	1/06/17	1/06/17	1/12@3:00	2/3	X
Zoey	East North Central	1/18	1/21	1-26@1:30	2/3	
Perry	West North Central	1/06/17 1/11/17	1/7/17	1-13@10	2/3	
Carter	South Atlantic	1/17	1/17	1/22@4:45	2/3	
Layla	East South Central	2/1/17	2/1/17	2/2@5:30		
Mandy	West South Central	1/06/17	1/16/17	1/17@4	2/3	X
Kelly	Mountain	1/06/17 1/11/17		1/18@7:30	2/3	X
Jennifer	Pacific	1/06/17 1/11/17 1/16/17	1/16/17	1/25@6:45	2/3	

Participant Descriptions.

Layla has worked the past 6 years at a middle school that employs around 60 teachers located in the East South Central regional division, but has been teaching for over two decades. Her school has around 850 students that are predominantly white with a mix of Hispanic and African American students. The poverty rate is around 40% and she described her school as fairly quiet. Her role at the time of the interview was an RTI interventionist, a literacy coach, and a teacher of two RTI reading intervention courses. She holds certifications in reading, special education, elementary education and has a PhD in literacy. In a school of about 850 students, around 105 are currently in an RTI Tier 2 or Tier 3 intervention. At the time of the interview, there were 2 reading teachers (including herself) with a total of 6 intervention classes (e.g., two for 8th grade, two for 7th grade, and two for 6th grade) per day in reading for 45 minutes each. The same structure is used for math intervention. Students with disabilities are included in intervention classes, but the school also has a Tier 4 for special education students that either can't make progress in Tier 2 or Tier 3, or due to their behavior issues. See Figure 3.3 for a visual representation of her interview data.

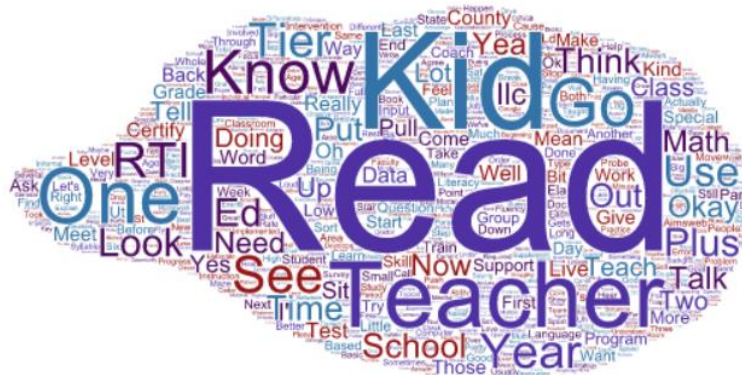


Figure 3.3 Layla

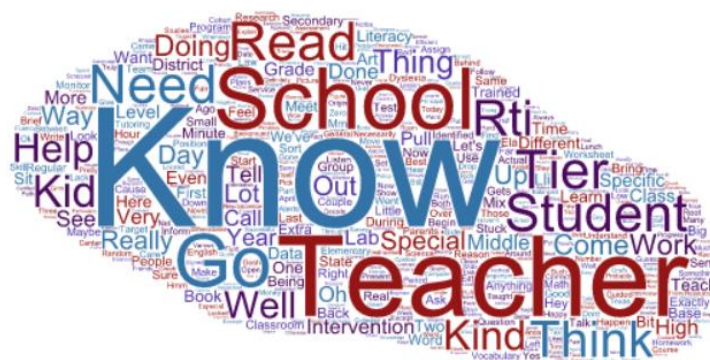
Sarah has been teaching at the university and PK-12 level for over three decades. At the time of the interview, she held multiple certifications: reading, English language arts, and elementary education. She was a reading teacher who worked with students in grades 7 and 8, at a middle school in the Middle Atlantic division of the United States. She also has a doctorate in literacy. Her school has around 650 students, with only two reading intervention teachers. See Figure 3.4 for a visual representation of her interview data.

Figure 3.4 Sarah

Although Zoey has been teaching for almost three decades, she has been working with literacy at her school only since 2004; originally as a part-time coach and then more recently as a part-time coach and part-time interventionist. Her role at the high school consists of her coaching teachers, coordinating the reading program for the high school, and working with students. Her school has around 1200 students that are mostly white, but some Hmong and Hispanic students. She described the school as being blue collar with a large special education population. It is a suburban school located in the East North Central division of the United States. The school has 5 periods per day of 75 minutes each. The school provides space for up to



Paige is currently working at an urban middle school of about 1,500 students that come from very diverse populations, and a high number of ESL and ESE students in the New England region of the United States. About 80% of the students are currently in the tiered process. At the time of the interview, her position at the school was a reading specialist, intervention teacher, that predominantly worked with students that were significantly below grade level, Tier 2 and 3 only. She is reading and elementary education certified. See Figure 3.7 for a visual representation of her interview data.



Perry works mainly with grades 9-12 in a large urban district in the West North Central area of the United States, as a secondary literacy specialist. His role consists around 1/3 curriculum development, 1/3 professional development, and 1/3 school improvement, with the addition of coaching and mentoring as needed or by request. The district has around 31% English language learners and 18% special education, and an overall district reading proficiency rate of around 38%. The free and reduced lunch population is around 60%. There are 12 high schools that he works with regularly. He has been teaching between 7 and 10 years, and is certified in reading and English language arts. See Figure 3.10 for a visual of his interview data.

Carter has been teaching almost two decades, but this is his first year at the current school where he works, in the South Atlantic area of the United States. He teaches grades 9 and 10 ELA at a Title 1 district where all schools are Title 1, and is English language arts certified. In terms of demographics, around 85% of the students are considered low socioeconomic status, 1/3 of the students have been either diagnosed with ADD or ADHD with just under 20% of them having either a 504 or an IEP. The school resides in a small city with students coming from the urban area and more rural areas outside of town. Around 83% of students are African American. The school system is known for having an abundance of psychologists at each school. See Figure 3.11 for a visual of his interview data.

Figure 3.11 Carter

Data Collection Procedures.

Once participants were randomly selected, an email was sent to confirm that selected participants would like to participate in the one hour recorded interview (duration would not go over 1 hour). A brief re-introduction of the purpose of the survey was provided as well as the consent form to acknowledge possible benefits and risks. If no reply was received within one

week, another email was sent to check on possible participation. After the second week, if no reply was received, another participant was randomly chosen from the represented regional division. This procedure continued until 1 participant from each regional division has been interviewed.

Once the consent form was received, an interview was scheduled at the convenience of the participant (taking into consideration time differences). Zoom was used as the platform for the interview as it allows for visual communication and recording of the conversation.

A semi-structured and open-ended interview (See Appendix 4 for Interview Procedures, Questions, and Guide) was used for this study, to allow the discussion to flow more naturally based on the participant's responses, questions, and opinions. Questions in the guide were used to assist the conversation but were not forced into the conversation.

Data Analysis.

Each participant interview recording was uploaded in NVIVO for transcription and transcribed verbatim within two weeks of the actual interview. Member checks were used to establish credibility (Guba & Lincoln, 1994) by sending complete transcripts and participant narratives to participants, however, not all participants responded creating an assumption of approval.

As the researcher, I presented the interviewee with his, or her, survey responses one at a time and asked the participant to elaborate, clarify, explain, or change each initial response for further understanding and clarity of the bigger picture (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). With the idea that each interview participant was chosen due to representing a specific area of the country and aligning their elaborations with specific survey questions, all interview data was coding and analyzed to provide the bigger picture of teachers' perspectives across the country.

To determine coding options, I carefully read various qualitative research texts (Creswell, 2013; Hatch, 2002; Merriam, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Saldana, 2016) to determine coding method options. In addition, I gave thoughtful consideration to the chosen coding techniques used in the studies that were similar to mine (Regan, et al., 2015; Cavendish et al., 2016), which both used a form of open coding or grounded theory methods based on research questions and then subsequent sub-coding. My analysis was ongoing and simultaneous with data collection, and a systematic process of analysis was used (Merriam, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), described below.

To understand and interpret data, I chose to go from a big picture to components to parts to theory and answering the research questions. As coding is the link between data collection and an explanation or interpretation of the meaning, open coding was chosen for the initial method (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Saldana, 2016) to provide a great wealth of data that went beyond the constructed responses of the RTI survey. In Vivo codes and descriptive codes were used in order to highlight the actual words of participants or to pull meaning from the comments. Consequently, this process produced over 600 initial codes.

Saldana (2016) posited that the “primary goal during second cycle coding is to develop a sense of categorical, thematic, conceptual and/or theoretical organization from your array of first cycle codes” (p. 234), and with over 600 initial codes from initial coding, data was lumped to make the data more manageable (Saldana, 2016), based on similarities across the initially coded data. There were a total of 8 lumped parent codes, or groups (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The parent codes were Training and Collaboration, Interventions and Instruction, Assessment and Data, Placement in Intervention, Systemic Issues and Support, Overall Teacher Attitudes, Student Qualities, and RTI in General.

Subcoding (Saldana, 2016) of the parent codes was then conducted, based on thematic commonalities, relevance to study research questions, and survey questions. After the three stages of coding were conducted, the eight parent codes were further refined into 45 very small categories. For example, when looking at RTI in general, there were five small categories created that were titled pre-identified for placement, use of teams for placement, data-screener for placement, fluidity of process with students, and placement issues. The data was read through again and smaller categories like these were collapsed based on commonalities to make a total of nine primary categories to represent the interview participants' elaborations and clarifications of survey responses. The previous example of five smaller categories was collapsed to become placement in RTI. When looking at these nine primary categories, two themes were identified: Teachers' Perspectives on Preparation and Professional Knowledge and Teachers' Perceptions and Descriptions of RTI Implementation.

A codebook was created for data analysis (available upon request), and an audit trail of dates for interviews were maintained (Merriam, 2009). In addition, see Appendix 3 for the drafted outline of the two themes and interview findings. This was followed based on data findings and flow of the section. To further enhance the consistency and trustworthiness of the analysis, the researcher sought out clarification and cohesiveness from colleagues and a committee member to ensure proper coding of data.

With the interview questions being based predominantly on the interviewee's survey responses, there was a need to include data from each participant throughout the findings section in the next chapter. As previously discussed, each participant was selected to "represent" a specific area of the country.

Trustworthiness.

In addition to taking the CITI training required by the IRB to conduct research with human subjects, I adhered to all APA standards and ethical guidelines relevant to this study. Timeliness was taken into consideration regarding how much time passed between interview and transcription. In addition, a field journal was kept in which I recorded various things that included my research progress, thoughts throughout, problems and how they were resolved, assumptions and biases that were present.

Limitations.

Like any research study, there were a few inherent limitations for my study. First, the assumption that gathering participants through national/state organization listservs was not as successful as anticipated. Therefore, the small sample size for a national study may not be as generalizable as desired. In addition, although participants may have learned about the study through colleagues, peers, and social media, the concept of using listservs from organizations means that the population and sample may not fully represent the entire United States. This is due to educators needed to know of the organization and having a desire to pay to join, which means that not all educators are familiar or members of any of the chosen organizations. Lastly, for the interview portion of the study, participants were chosen based on their voluntary participation by providing their name and contact information at the end of the survey. This means that the interview participants might not be representative of the entire sample population of the study.

Delimitations.

I attempted to reach out to secondary educators, with a focus on literacy, ELA, and special education, across the country and attempted to represent each region for the more

descriptive information obtained with the interviews. In addition, I attempted to member check interview information with participants by sending original transcripts and participant descriptions to each interview participant, to ensure appropriate representation and interpretation. Survey data were cleaned to ensure accurate analyses. For instance, looking at frequencies, descriptives, outliers and missing data.

Summary

In this chapter, I first explained how I sorted the research used for the literature review and then I explained the methodology of this study. I then described the foundational aspects of each methodology chosen. This included an explanation of why I chose each methodology and research supporting each for this type of study. Two data sources were described: survey and interviews. In addition, the way the data were collected and analyzed was described.

CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS

In order to better understand secondary teachers' perspectives across the country regarding the RTI policy, how RTI is being implemented in their schools, and to understand their confidence in implementing RTI in their own classrooms, a national study was conducted. More specifically, the following questions were addressed:

1. What are secondary teachers' perspectives of the Response to Intervention policy and are there differences across geographic regions?
2. What are secondary teachers' perspectives, or levels of confidence, in their own abilities to implement RTI effectively as well as confidence in their school's effective implementation of RTI and are there differences across the regional divisions?
3. Is there a relationship between secondary teachers' perspectives on the implementation and effectiveness of RTI at their school and their perspectives regarding the RTI policy?
4. Are there similarities across the nation regarding how the literacy component of RTI is being implemented at the secondary level?

As explained in chapter three, a survey and regional interviews were conducted and data were collected and analyzed to answer the research questions. This chapter first provides findings from statistical analyses of survey data and what that information might mean. The survey findings are presented by research question. Following the survey findings is the interview findings that are used to clarify, elaborate, and extend survey findings. For the interviews, words, phrases, and summaries of each participants' own words are used to enhance researcher interpretation while attempting to eliminate any possible bias. In addition, each

participant's perspective is included in each category due to the idea that interviewees were selected to "represent" their area of the country and elaborate or extend meaning from the survey findings.

Throughout analysis of interview data, codes were assigned to the data and two larger themes were decided based on commonalities, the research questions, and survey questions and findings. This portion of chapter four describes each theme and the larger categories that fall under each, in great detail. Specifically, the interviews addressed teachers' perspectives regarding preparation, professional knowledge, and the RTI implementation at their school sites. Due to the way interview data were analyzed, findings will be presented by theme with the larger categories following for each, while addressing how these findings relate to the survey responses.

Survey Findings

Response Rate.

Due to sending the survey link out through multiple state organizations, as well as the fact that members of these organizations could or could not meet the required target audience criteria, there is no way to determine the response rate for the survey. However, it was calculated that 33 organizations responded in some way to the recruitment email request, a 22% response rate can be used. In regards to the interview, there was a 69% response rate, as nine of the thirteen participants partook.

Survey Demographics.

As previously shown, there were 303 participants for this study that represented all 9 regional divisions from 41 states. There were 30 males and 264 females. Ethnicity and race were not asked with this study, as the foci was placed on teacher background. At the time of

taking the survey, 86% of participants were currently teaching either an ELA, reading, or literacy intervention for at least one period during the day, 97% responded that they used differentiated instruction based on the definition provided on the survey, with 23 % teaching general education classes only, 30% of participants teaching a Tier 2 or Tier 3 only, and 47% of participants currently working with both Tier 1 and a Tier 2 or Tier 3 intervention (See Figure 4.1). As previously discussed, 8% of the participant population have been teaching for 1-3 years, 7% for 4-6 years, 14% for 7-10 years, 69% more than 10 years, and 1% preferred to not answer. Therefore, the majority of the participant population are considered veteran educators.

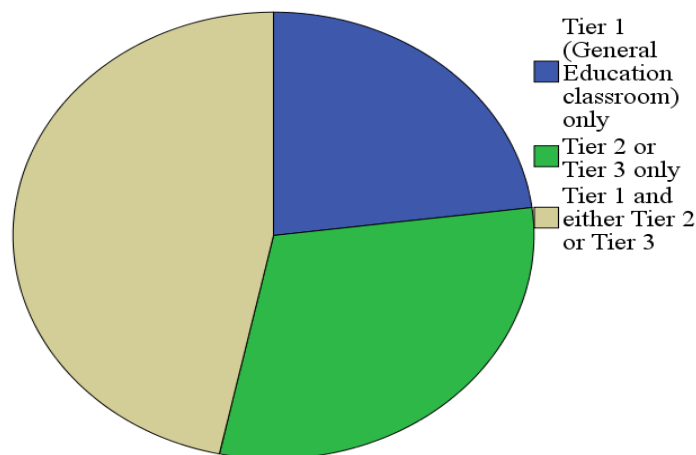


Figure 4.1 Tier Level Taught by Survey Participants

In regards to certifications, with participants being able to choose multiple options, the majority of participants either are reading certified or English language arts certified. As the table below shows, participants held a variety of certifications (See Table 4.1).

Missing Data and Outliers.

As previously mentioned, data were taken directly from Qualtrics and exported into SPSS. Blank responses are interpreted that the participant chose to not answer that question. With the survey being anonymous, there was not a way to check with participants to determine if they skipped the question on purpose or missed the question. Therefore, all missing or blank responses were coded as system missing. In regards to outliers, with the majority of questions being Likert, outliers were kept in the analyses.

Table 4.1 Aggregate for Participant Certifications

Reading	SPED	ELA	Elementary Ed	Psychology	Other Total*	Other: Content Area	Other: Administration	Other: ELL/ESL
50%	22%	55%	42%	2%	26%	8%	5%	3%

* Note. Additional certifications listed were Reading Recovery, Orton Gillingham, RTI leader, related arts, curriculum, and gifted.

Principle Component Analysis.

A Principle Component Analysis was conducted to reduce the number of items into components that represent the data. Measures of sampling adequacy revealed no issues with the factorability of the correlation matrix. Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant, $X^2(171) = 2791.72$, $p < .001$, and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was .90, considered marvelous (Beavers et al, 2013). Examination of the Scree plot suggested a 3 - 5 component solution. These three solutions were tested, but I selected a four-component solution, based on interpretability and reliability. Varimax rotation was chosen because it aids

interpretation when the components are to be used as dependent variables (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). Complex loading items (i.e., those that loaded on more than one component) and items that did not load $>.32$ on any of the components were deleted. The remaining items again underwent PCA, and items with low or complex loadings were deleted. This procedure was repeated until there were 19 items that loaded at least $.40$ on one of the components, with no complex loadings. Overall, the rotated four-component solution of the RTI Survey accounted for 67.91% of the variance, and the entire scale had an internal consistency of $.92$ (See Table 4.2 for loadings and scale items).

The first component, *RTI in our School* ($\alpha = .90$), contained eight items and accounted for 27.32% of the variance. Reflected in items like “Administration in my school recognizes the need to implement RTI ” and “Faculty in our school collaborate to design RTI instruction/intervention,” this component revealed information regarding how the participant felt about RTI at their own school site.

The second component, *RTI Policy* ($\alpha = .88$), contained five items and accounted for 19.23% of the variance. This component included items that represented teachers’ perspective regarding the RTI policy, in general. Sample items include “RTI connects general and special education practices” and “RTI represents intense prevention/intervention.”

The third component, *Participants’ Own Confidence with RTI* ($\alpha = .84$) included four items and accounted for 13.41% of the variance. Items represented how participant’s felt regarding their own implementation of RTI in their classrooms. Sample items include “I am confident that I have been trained well enough to implement RTI effectively” and “I am confident that I am implementing RTI effectively, in my classroom.”

Table 4.2 Principle Component Analysis with Varimax Rotation and Coefficient Alphas

Component 1: RTI School ($\alpha = .90$)	
Item	Loading
Administration in my school recognizes the need to implement RTI.	.62
Our RTI model involves two or more tiers of increasingly intense interventions.	.70
Faculty in our school have had opportunities to learn about the RTI model through training.	.77
Faculty in our school have had opportunities to learn literacy interventions for use with students at each tier level.	.72
Faculty in our school collaborate to design RTI instruction/intervention.	.75
Our RTI services involve individual and/or small instruction intervention groups.	.72
RTI is effectively implemented in my school.	.77
RTI is producing positive changes in students' reading achievement.	.60
Component 2: RTI Policy ($\alpha = .88$)	
Item	Loading
RTI connects general education and special education.	.70
RTI represents systematic prevention/intervention.	.87
RTI represents intense prevention/intervention.	.80
RTI represents evidence-based prevention/intervention.	.85
RTI can result in the improvement of academic achievement for many students who struggle to learn.	.80
Component 3: Participants' Own Confidence with RTI ($\alpha = .84$)	
Item	Loading
I am knowledgeable about the purposes and benefits of RTI.	.76

Table 4.2 Continued

I am confident that my students are receiving the necessary support in reading, through interventions	.42
I am confident that I have been trained well enough to implement RTI effectively.	.79
I am confident that I am implementing RTI effectively, in my classroom.	.75
Component 4: Training of Educators	
Item	Loading
RTI is conducted by certified educators at all tier levels.	.86
RTI is conducted by well-trained educators at all tier levels.	.68

The fourth component, *Training of Educators* ($\alpha = .78$), included only two items and accounted for 8.0% of the variance. Due to only having two factors that were conceptually appropriate being placed together in one component, we do not have Cronbach's alpha. These items identified participant's perception regarding the training and certification of faculty at their school that work with RTI components.

Research Question 1: What are secondary teachers' perspectives of the Response to Intervention policy and are there differences across the regional divisions?

Frequencies for responses (-2 strongly disagree, -1 disagree, 0 neutral, 1 agree, 2 strongly agree), M , and SD for participant responses for each of the five questions, as well as the M and SD score for Component 2 are shown in Table 4.3. This information represents the teachers' perspectives regarding the RTI policy. The mean scores demonstrate that participants' perceptions of the RTI policy consistently were positive, with the idea that RTI connects general education and special education ($M = .72$) and that RTI represents intensive

prevention/intervention ($M = .64$) scoring the lowest among participants. The question with the highest ratings by participants was regarding the concept that RTI can result in the improvement of academic achievement for many students who struggle to learn ($M = 1.21$).

To determine if there were any significant differences on the RTIP component based on regional divisions, an ANOVA was conducted with the RTIP composite score. This test showed that there was not a significant effect of regional divisions on the RTIP composite score at the $p < .05$ level, $F(8, 244) = 1.36$, $p = .22$.

Table 4.3 Aggregate Frequencies for Component 2 Questions and Composite Score

	<i>N</i>	-2	-1	0	1	2	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
RTI connects general education and special education	299	11	49	23	145	71	.72	1.11
RTI represents systematic prevention/intervention	298	10	24	17	147	100	1.02	1.01
RTI represents intense prevention/intervention	297	2	50	43	121	71	.64	1.14
RTI represents evidence-based prevention/intervention	298	9	29	22	136	102	.98	1.04
RTI can result in the improvement of academic achievement for many students who struggle to learn	302	5	17	18	133	129	1.21	.91
Component 2 RTIP Composite Score (entire sample)	302						.91	.85

Research Question 2: What are secondary teachers' perspectives, or levels of confidence, in their own abilities to implement RTI effectively as well as confidence in their school's effective implementation of RTI and are there differences across the regional divisions?

Frequencies for responses (-2 strongly disagree, -1 disagree, 0 neutral, 1 agree, 2 strongly agree), *M*, and *SD* for participant responses for each of the eight questions in Component 1 (RTI in our Schools) and the four questions in Component 3 (Participants' Own Confidence with RTI), as well as the *M* and *SD* score for all are shown in Table 4.4. This information represents

Table 4.4 Aggregate Frequencies for Components 1 & 3 Questions and Composite Scores

	<i>N</i>	-2	-1	0	1	2	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Component 1 RTIS Composite Score (entire sample)	303						.29	.94
Administration in my school recognizes the need to implement RTI.	299	13	24	22	105	135	1.09	1.11
Our RTI model involves two or more tiers of increasingly intense interventions.	284	19	54	23	103	85	.64	1.27
Faculty in our school have had opportunities to learn about the RTI model through training.	291	38	89	33	92	39	.02	1.30
Faculty in our school have had opportunities to learn literacy interventions for use with students at each tier level.	297	53	105	32	74	33	-.24	1.31
Faculty in our school collaborate to design RTI instruction/intervention.	295	52	96	42	74	31	-.22	1.29
Our RTI services involve individual and/or small instruction intervention groups.	291	27	27	22	132	83	.75	1.23
RTI is effectively implemented in my school.	291	52	84	39	81	35	.44	1.19
RTI is producing positive changes in students' reading achievement.	291	21	48	61	103	58	-.13	1.32
Component 3 POC Composite Score (entire sample)	300						.59	1.02
I am knowledgeable about the purposes and benefits of RTI.	299	9	16	23	110	141	1.20	1.00
I am confident that my students are receiving the necessary support in reading, through interventions.	296	30	73	46	90	57	.24	1.29
I am confident that I have been trained well enough to implement RTI effectively.	297	30	61	34	80	92	.48	1.38
I am confident that I am implementing RTI effectively, in my classroom.	292	19	62	55	84	72	.44	1.25

the teachers' perspectives regarding confidence in school implementation as well as their own confidence in their classrooms.

For Component 1, how the teachers perceive RTI in their schools, participants are overall positive, with an average overall score between neutral and positive. However, with the standard deviation being .94, this means that any given participants response could fall below neutral and into the negative response range. Negative responses are seen with the average scores for questions pertaining to faculty having had opportunities to learn about either the RTI model ($M = .02$) or literacy interventions ($M = -.24$) being in the negative range, as well as the question that pertained to collaboration ($M = -.22$). However, participants were positive in regards to their administration understanding a need for RTI ($M = 1.09$) and the components of RTI: involving 2 or more tiers ($M = .64$) and using individual or small group instruction ($M = .75$). Interestingly, although participants felt positively about RTI implementation at their school ($M = .44$), they also felt that RTI was not producing positive changes in their students' reading achievement ($M = -.13$).

For Component 3, the Participants' Own Confidence with RTI, the majority of responses were positive, with the overall mean being .59. As a whole, teachers feel knowledgeable about the purposes and benefits of RTI ($M = 1.20$) and are fairly confident that their students are receiving enough support ($M = .24$). Teachers, on average, chose between neutral and agree regarding their confidence that they had been trained enough ($M = .48$) and confident that they were implementing RTI effectively ($M = .44$).

To determine if there were any significant differences for each component by regional division, an ANOVA was conducted with the composite score for each of these components. Prior to running the ANOVA test, Levene's test for Equality of Variances was performed. The

test was negative, therefore the variances in the different groups were similar and an ANOVA was appropriate to use. In addition, due to different sample sizes per regional division group, the standard deviation for each division was first reviewed. It was decided that the differences between the standard deviations for each group were not big enough to create an issue with the different group sizes among the regional divisions.

In regards to the participants' perception regarding RTI in their school (Component 1), there was a significant difference across the regional divisions, $F(8, 245) = 3.22, p = .002, \eta^2 = .1$. The effect size of 10%, determined by the η^2 , is considered a small effect size. Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated a few significant differences across divisional regions. First, the mean score for the West North Central Division ($M = -.01, SD = .97$) was significantly different than the East South Central Division ($M = .68, SD = .91$). Another significant difference was between the South Atlantic Division ($M = .06, SD = .90$) and the East South Central Division ($M = .68, SD = .91$). Finally, there was a significant difference between the West South Central Division ($M = -.42, SD = .91$) and the East South Central Division ($M = .68, SD = .91$). Taken together, these results suggest that depending on where in the country a participant lives, their perception regarding how their school is implementing RTI changes.

In regards Component 3, the Participants' Own Confidence with RTI, there was no significant difference across the regional divisions, $F(8, 244) = 1.74, p = .09$. Therefore, regardless where a participant lives, their perception on their own confidence level is similar.

Research Question 3: Is there a relationship between secondary teachers' perspective on the implementation and effectiveness of RTI at their school and their perspectives regarding the RTI policy?

Due to the PCA creating two different components to represent teachers' perspectives regarding implementation of RTI at their school (RTIS and POC), two Pearson's r were conducted.

The first Pearson's r looked to determine if there was a relationship between how the participants perceived their school's implementation and the participants' perceptions regarding the RTI policy. This test showed a positive correlation between the two, $r = .33$, $n = 302$, $p = .00$. Overall, there was a strong, positive linear correlation between the participant's perceptions regarding their school's implementation of RTI and their perceived knowledge of the RTI policy. Increases in one correlates with increases in the other. A scatterplot summarizes the results (See Figure 4.2).

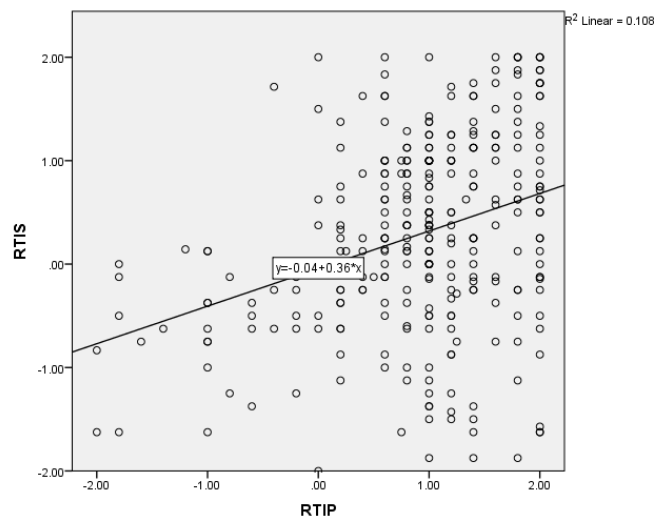


Figure 4.2 Scatterplot of RTIS and RTIP Components

The second Pearson's r looked to determine if there was a relationship between how the participants perceived their own confidence in implementing RTI and the participants' perception regarding the RTI policy. This test also showed a positive correlation between the two, $r = .37$, $n = 299$, $p = .00$. Overall, there was a strong, positive linear correlation between the

participants' confidence in regards to their own implementation of RTI and their perceived knowledge of the RTI policy. Increases in one correlates with increases in the other. A scatterplot summarizes the results (See Figure 4.3).

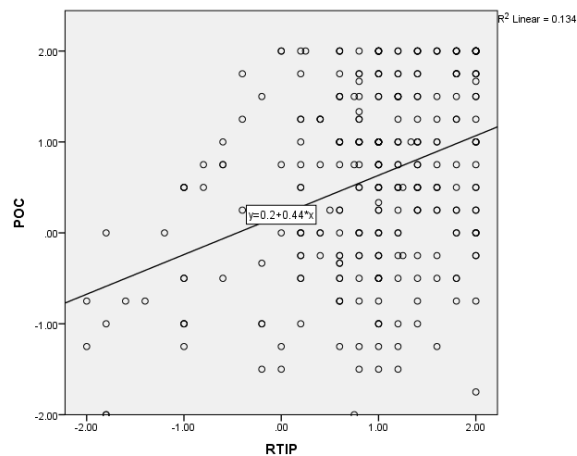


Figure 4.3 Scatterplot of RTIP and POC Components

Research Question 4: Are there similarities across the nation regarding how the literacy component of RTI is being implemented at the secondary level?

Questions that were specific to school site were either multiple choice or check all that apply items. For participants that did not work specifically with either Tier 2 or Tier 3, this section was automatically skipped on the survey. Numerous tables were created to show the findings to answer this research question, with tables by state available upon request.

For the two questions asking participants where Tier 2 and Tier 3 take place, participants were allowed to choose more than one option. Table 4.5 reflects this and shows that across the regional divisions, Tier 2 takes place in various classrooms and spaces, with the most common location for Tier 2 being in an intervention classroom and the most common place for Tier 3 also

being in an intervention classroom. Numerous regional divisions specified that Tier 2 and/or Tier 3 took place in a special education classroom (N = 12) or wherever there was space (N = 7). Additionally, five participants identified Tier 3 not existing at their school at all.

Table 4.5 Frequencies by Regional Division for Location of Tier 2 and Tier 3

	New England (N = 24)	Middle Atlantic (N = 34)	East North Central (N = 28)	West North Central (N = 34)	South Atlantic (N = 33)	East South Central (N = 55)	West South Central (N = 15)	Mountain (N = 25)	Pacific (N = 8)
Where does Tier 2 take place?									
Reading	13	13	9	16	16	22	4	9	4
ELA	4	16	7	11	9	26	6	12	4
Intervention	12	20	17	15	11	30	6	11	6
Other*	3	1	3	4	3	5	1	1	1
Where does Tier 3 take place?									
Reading	6	10	5	12	10	12	4	8	4
ELA	3	4	3	7	1	18	5	9	1
Intervention	17	18	16	15	18	38	7	11	5
Other**	1	4	5	7	1	2	1	4	1

* Places listed for Tier 2 Other consisted of General Ed classroom, Computer Lab, Wherever, Enrichment Class, Special Education classroom, and the Library.

**Places listed for Tier 3 Other consisted of Special Ed classroom, No Tier 3, Wherever, General Ed classroom, Off Campus, Computer Lab, Literacy Coach Office, and the Cafeteria.

When determining how students were placed or exited from tiered interventions, again, there were a lot of differences across the country. Although participants were allowed to choose multiple options, Table 4.6 shows that there are many ways to place and exit students into the tiered interventions. For instance, in most regional divisions, the main determining factor is a score on a test; whether it be a universal screener, a school or district assessment, or a state assessment. However, the East South Central division had many participants choose that students could be identified by a school team and/or teacher recommendation, which allows teacher input instead of determination on a high-stakes standardized assessment.

When identifying how students are exited out of intervention, again, there seems to be a stress on standardized testing versus teacher input. The RTI framework and state guidelines, as

Table 4.6 Frequencies by Regional Division for Placement and Exit - Tier 2 and Tier 3

	New England (N = 24)	Middle Atlantic (N = 34)	East North Central (N = 28)	West North Central (N = 34)	South Atlantic (N = 33)	East South Central (N = 55)	West South Central (N = 15)	Mountain (N = 25)	Pacific (N = 8)
Placement Into Interventions									
Identified by ELA teacher	8	12	11	10	7	19	4	6	3
Identified by School Team	14	19	18	11	15	30	6	7	4
Scores below grade level on Universal Screener	13	20	20	16	14	36	6	6	6
Scores below grade level on district/school assessment	17	17	15	21	13	26	6	5	3
Scores below grade level on the state assessment	13	19	11	18	19	23	8	5	2
Teacher Recommendation	15	16	16	18	16	30	6	7	3
Parent Request	8	12	6	7	11	12	2	7	2
Other*	0	3	4	1	3	5	3	2	1
Exit Out of Intervention									
Passing grade in Reading	2	4	4	4	2	15	2	1	0
Identified by School Team	2	13	8	9	8	22	0	2	2
At or above grade level on district/school assessment	11	19	16	16	12	28	6	6	5
At or above grade level on the state assessment	6	20	7	9	15	19	6	4	1
Progress Monitoring	15	22	19	21	11	39	6	8	6
Teacher Recommendation	6	12	8	17	10	24	5	6	4
Parent Request	7	9	5	4	3	4	1	4	1
Other**	2	0	4	3	2	2	3	2	1

* Other placement options included the use of multiple assessments, failing grades, reading specialist request, special education assessment, student request, lowest 25% of grade, and the teacher did not want the student anymore.

** Other exit options included no exit or when the year was over, multiple assessments, academic intervention plan, parent request, reading specialist request, ACT/SAT concordant scores, student request, pass reading course, or reaching the 25th percentile.

previously discussed, states that movement between tiers is supposed to be determine, at least in part, by progress monitoring. Yes, many participants did not select this option. It is important to also note that four participants identified that there was no way to exit a tiered intervention, once being placed in.

When looking at the amount of sessions per week and minutes per session for Tier 2 (See Table 4.7), there were vast differences across the participants and regional divisions.

Participants ranged from identifying that students only participate in Tier 2 intervention from one day a week to all five days per week. The majority of the participants by regional divisions [Middle Atlantic (39%), East North Central (69%), West North Central (42%), South Atlantic (54%), East South Central (72%), Mountain (36%), Pacific (71%)] chose 5 sessions per week, except for West South Central which tied between 4 or 5 sessions per week (25%) and New England where the highest percentage was at 2 sessions (38%).

The majority of participants per regional divisions selected that the Tier 2 intervention sessions lasted between 40-49 minutes: New England (43%), East North Central (36%), West North Central (23%), East South Central (33%) and Pacific (57%). However, both, the Middle Atlantic (45%) and South Atlantic (21%) regional divisions most selected 30-39 minutes per session and the West South Central participants tied between 10-19 minutes per session and 30-39 minutes per session (33%). Thirty-six percent of Mountain participants selected 60 or more minutes per session, being the regional division that identified the most minutes per session. Additionally, these participants had the greatest percent with 5 sessions per week.

Participants were also asked about the size, type of instruction, and amount of progress monitoring for Tier 2 intervention groups (See Table 4.8). The most selected option was ‘More than 7 students’ in a Tier 2 intervention: New England (43%), East North Central (36%), West

North Central (54%), South Atlantic (43%), West South Central (50%), Mountain (46%), and Pacific (39%). The most chosen option for the other two regional divisions [Middle Atlantic (39%) and East South Central (37%)] was having 4-5 students in the Tier 2 intervention group.

All regional divisions seemed to have the majority of their participants identify that Tier 2 intervention instruction was based on student need, with only the Pacific regional division having a tie between different based on need and same instruction for all students (43%).

Table 4.7 Tier 2 Sessions and Minutes Per Week Percentages by Regional Division

	New England (N = 24)	Middle Atlantic (N = 34)	East North Central (N = 28)	West North Central (N = 34)	South Atlantic (N = 33)	East South Central (N = 55)	West South Central (N = 15)	Mountain (N = 25)	Pacific (N = 8)
How many sessions per week do students meet for Tier 2 intervention group?									
1	0%	4%	0%	4%	0%	2%	8%	0%	0%
2	38%	18%	9%	4%	14%	0%	17%	7%	14%
3	5%	9%	18%	15%	18%	13%	17%	7%	0%
4	24%	0%	5%	19%	7%	4%	25%	18%	0%
5	29%	39%	69%	42%	54%	72%	25%	36%	71%
Not Sure	5%	11%	0%	15%	7%	9%	8%	27%	14%
How many minutes per session do students meet for Tier 2 intervention?									
1-9 minutes	0%	0%	0%	0%	4%	2%	0%	9%	0%
10-19 minutes	0%	4%	9%	8%	14%	7%	33%	0%	0%
20-29 minutes	5%	11%	0%	15%	14%	20%	0%	27%	0%
30 -39 minutes	14%	45%	32%	12%	21%	28%	33%	9%	0%
40-49 minutes	43%	29%	36%	23%	14%	33%	0%	9%	57%
50-59 minutes	24%	0%	14%	19%	7%	0%	8%	0%	29%
60 or more minutes	5%	4%	9%	8%	18%	2%	17%	36%	0%
Not Sure	10%	7%	0%	15%	7%	9%	8%	9%	14%

In three regional divisions [West North Central (31%), West South Central (42%), and Mountain (36%), the most selected option regarding progress monitoring was Not Sure. In two regional divisions [East North Central (41%) and East South Central (50%)], the most chosen option was that progress monitoring was happening every other week. Monthly progress

monitoring was chosen most in the New England (43%), Middle Atlantic (36%), South Atlantic (43%), and Pacific (71%) regional divisions.

When looking at the number of sessions per week and minutes per session for Tier 3 (See Table 4.9), there were few similarities across participant populations. Participants ranged from students meeting only one time per week to meeting all five days. With Tier 3, more participants stated that students met more often, towards all five days per week. Almost all regional divisions chose 5 days per week as the most often selected option. The only regional division that did not was Mountain, where the highest percentage for an option was Not Sure. Following that option, 18 percent of participants either chose 2, 4, or 5 days a week. This shows that how often a student meets with intervention is dependent on school site and not by regions. In comparing Tier 2 and Tier 3, more participants identified that Tier 3 students met more often for intervention group.

When looking at how many minutes students are in a Tier 3 intervention session, there is little in regards to similarity. Only the East South Central had a majority of their participants choosing one option, which was 40-49 minutes (52%). Two divisions had ties between options chosen by participants. New England participants equally (24%) chose 40-49 minutes and 50-59 minutes as the most chosen option, while the West North Central area had a three-way tie between 20-29 minutes, 30-39 minutes, and 40-49 minutes (19% each). Again, the Mountain area participants more often chose the Not Sure option with 40-49 minutes (27%) following.

Table 4.8 Tier 2 Intervention Percentages by Regional Division

	New England (N = 24)	Middle Atlantic (N = 34)	East North Central (N = 28)	West North Central (N = 34)	South Atlantic (N = 33)	East South Central (N = 55)	West South Central (N = 15)	Mountain (N = 25)	Pacific (N = 8)
What is the typical size of the Tier 2 intervention groups, in your school?									
One student	5%	4%	0%	4%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%
2-3 students	5%	4%	14%	19%	4%	7%	17%	18%	9%
4-5 students	29%	39%	27%	4%	32%	37%	33%	18%	28%
6-7 students	19%	25%	18%	12%	21%	20%	0%	9%	17%
More than 7 students	43%	18%	36%	54%	43%	28%	50%	46%	39%
Not Sure	0%	11%	5%	8%	0%	9%	0%	9%	6%
What is your experience with the instruction in the Tier 2 intervention?									
Same Instruction	38%	25%	27%	35%	29%	35%	33%	18%	43%
Different based on Need	57%	68%	68%	54%	68%	63%	67%	82%	43%
Not Sure	5%	7%	5%	12%	4%	2%	0%	0%	14%
How often are progress monitoring assessments used with students in Tier 2?									
1-2 times per week	5%	14%	23%	27%	18%	13%	33%	18%	0%
3-4 times per week	0%	0%	5%	4%	7%	7%	0%	0%	0%
Daily	5%	0%	5%	0%	11%	9%	0%	0%	0%
Every other week	14%	29%	41%	23%	4%	50%	0%	18%	0%
Monthly	43%	36%	23%	15%	43%	9%	25%	27%	71%
Not Sure	33%	21%	5%	31%	18%	13%	42%	36%	29%

Table 4.9 Tier 3 Sessions and Minutes Per Week Percentages by Regional Division

	New England (N = 24)	Middle Atlantic (N = 34)	East North Central (N = 28)	West North Central (N = 34)	South Atlantic (N = 33)	East South Central (N = 55)	West South Central (N = 15)	Mountain (N = 25)	Pacific (N = 8)
How many sessions per week do students meet for Tier 3 intervention group?									
1	5%	7%	5%	0%	0%	2%	9%	0%	0%
2	19%	0%	5%	12%	4%	2%	0%	18%	0%
3	10%	11%	5%	19%	25%	4%	9%	9%	29%
4	14%	0%	0%	12%	7%	4%	27%	18%	0%
5	38%	61%	77%	42%	54%	74%	46%	18%	43%
Not Sure	14%	21%	9%	15%	11%	13%	9%	36%	29%
How many minutes per session do students meet for Tier 3 intervention?									
1-9 minutes	0%	0%	5%	0%	0%	0%	8%	0%	0%
10-19 minutes	5%	0%	5%	4%	4%	7%	8%	0%	14%
20-29 minutes	10%	11%	0%	19%	11%	9%	17%	9%	0%
30 -39 minutes	10%	29%	36%	19%	11%	13%	8%	9%	0%
40-49 minutes	24%	39%	18%	19%	32%	52%	8%	27%	14%
50-59 minutes	24%	0%	18%	12%	7%	0%	8%	0%	43%
60 or more minutes	19%	7%	9%	15%	18%	9%	25%	18%	0%
Not Sure	10%	14%	9%	12%	18%	11%	17%	36%	29%

The typical size for a Tier 3 intervention group varies across the United States, just like with Tier 2 (See Table 4.10). Not one regional division has an option chosen by the majority of participants and selected responses vary greatly. The highest percentage for any option is a tie between More than 7 kids per group and Not Sure with the Pacific (43%) area. Great differences are even seen in the same area, from 27 percent of the East North Central participants choosing 1 student per Tier 3 group to another 27 percent stating More than 7 students per group.

In regards to how instruction is provided for Tier 3, the vast majority of the participants across the United States specified that instruction was different based on student needs. In addition, as a whole, there were fewer participants choosing the Not Sure option. The Pacific area is the only regional division where participants did not choose one option with a majority and the most often chosen option was that students received the same instruction in Tier 3 (43%).

Progress monitoring for Tier 3 instruction differs from Tier 2 with more participants identifying that students are monitoring 1-2 times per week. There are only two regional divisions with a majority of participants choosing one option: East North Central with 50 percent choosing 1-2 times per week and the Mountain area with 57 percent stating progress monitoring happens monthly. Again, many participants specified that they were not sure how often progress was monitored for Tier 3 students.

Table 4.10 Tier 3 Intervention Percentages by Regional Division

	New England (N = 24)	Middle Atlantic (N = 34)	East North Central (N = 28)	West North Central (N = 34)	South Atlantic (N = 33)	East South Central (N = 55)	West South Central (N = 15)	Mountain (N = 25)	Pacific (N = 8)
What is the typical size of the Tier 3 intervention groups, in your school?									
One student	5%	7%	27%	4%	7%	4%	8%	0%	0%
2-3 students	19%	21%	18%	27%	18%	20%	17%	27%	14%
4-5 students	24%	21%	18%	15%	21%	35%	25%	9%	0%
6-7 students	24%	14%	5%	19%	11%	4%	8%	0%	0%
More than 7 students	19%	14%	27%	19%	29%	24%	42%	36%	43%
Not Sure	10%	21%	5%	15%	14%	13%	0%	27%	43%
What is your experience with the instruction in the Tier 3 intervention?									
Same Instruction	14%	11%	14%	23%	22%	22%	25%	18%	43%
Different based on Need	71%	71%	73%	65%	67%	70%	67%	64%	29%
Not Sure	14%	18%	14%	12%	11%	9%	8%	18%	29%
How often are progress monitoring assessments used with students in Tier 3?									
1-2 times per week	19%	25%	50%	35%	18%	27%	18%	14%	25%
3-4 times per week	5%	4%	5%	4%	7%	9%	9%	0%	6%
Daily	0%	0%	14%	4%	18%	0%	9%	0%	7%
Every other week	10%	21%	9%	19%	11%	0%	9%	0%	20%
Monthly	24%	21%	9%	19%	25%	18%	9%	57%	18%
Not Sure	43%	29%	14%	19%	21%	46%	46%	29%	25%

Summary of Survey Findings.

These data show that throughout the country, there are few similarities between how schools are implementing RTI, from placement through exiting criteria. Overall, participants' perceptions of RTI policy were positive and that there were no significant differences between regional divisions regarding the RTI policy. In regards to the participants' ratings on confidence in their school's implementation, participants were overall positive, however, with a high *SD*, ratings could actually be more negative. Participants seemed positive regarding their administration and support, but felt that RTI was not producing positive changes in their students' reading achievement. When looking at their own confidence with RTI, overall participants felt knowledgeable about RTI and fairly confident that students were receiving enough support. However, participants identified a need for more training. In addition, when

comparing each component by region, there were few significant differences across regions, except for component 1, the participant's perception of RTI in their school. In addition, there was a positive correlation between the participant's perceptions regarding their school's implementation of RTI and their perceived knowledge of the RTI policy.

Although the survey provided information from 303 participants around the country, the survey only provides answers through a forced format without allowing participants to provide additional details, explanation, or clarification. Therefore, interviews with nine participants, represented by regional divisions, were conducted based off of the survey responses and the findings are presented below.

Interview Findings

As previously discussed, interviews were conducted to allow participants to elaborate, clarify, expand, or change survey responses, therefore allowing the interview to be guided by each participant's survey responses. Due to the interview being broken down by general questions that pertain to the study research questions, but also by specific survey questions and responses, the findings described below are presented by the two major themes and nine primary categories, that were identified through multiple rounds of coding and subcoding the interview data. In addition, participants had been chosen to include one per regional division, therefore, each participant's elaboration and responses are included to gain a full understanding of examples of teachers' perspectives across the country.

All interview findings were viewed through the theoretical lens of this study, Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory, attempting to understand participant's perceptions regarding confidence in their own literacy instruction and the implementation of RTI at their schools. Bandura (1997) posited that all self-efficacy judgements are based on how each person processes various pieces

of information and that the level of self-efficacy determines the effort that will be placed into tasks found to be difficult and the resiliency facing setbacks. He identified that cognitive processing takes place in two steps: first the type of information a person uses and the second being the amount of importance a person attributes to the various types of information. Bandura (1997) theorized that self-efficacy is formed through four sources of information used for cognitive processing.

The first, mastery experiences, refers to the cognitive processing of prior successes and failures, which produce an internal view on a teacher's capabilities to produce successful outcomes. Mastery experiences include student achievement, positive and negative, as seen with studies in mathematics and self-efficacy (Stevens, Oliver, Lan, & Tallent-Runnels, 2004; Usher & Pajares, 2009) or the ability to feel knowledgeable about teaching literacy. Once these experiences, either current teaching or experiences with literacy, are processed, the teacher's self-efficacy can grow, diminish, or have no change.

Vicarious experiences are the second form of cognitive processing, which refers to an individual comparing his/her capabilities to that of others. For teachers who do not feel knowledgeable or capable of incorporating literacy in their classrooms or implementing literacy interventions, this could be remedied through appropriate professional development and collaborate with others that are more knowledgeable to substantiate their own level of self-efficacy.

Verbal and social persuasions, the third source of information for cognitive processing, refers to the faith, or lack thereof, that others have in an individual's abilities, or the capabilities of a teacher in working with struggling readers and literacy. Other people's views can impact the teacher's level of self-efficacy, as they struggle to figure out how to teach with limited or

lack of literacy knowledge. The final cognitive processing source of information is physiological and emotional states, based on the teachers own state of mind. This could include anxiety, fear, isolation, or stress, which could affect how efficacious a teacher feels regarding teaching literacy and struggling readers, impacting their teaching habits as well as continuation on the job.

Theme One: Teachers' Perspectives on Preparation and Professional Knowledge.

This theme encapsulates how the interview participants perceived preparation and professional knowledge, regarding literacy in their schools. When discussing the survey responses and after coding the data, the following major categories fell under Theme One: reading certification and being well-trained in literacy, with both positive and negative thoughts, the benefits for collaboration among faculty members and why there is a need for this, current professional development that has been provided for them based on instruction and instructional topics, and the needs and requests for additional training. All of these categories directly relate to the participant's preparation and professional knowledge regarding literacy and instruction, as well as their perception regarding faculty at their school. These categories directly influence a teacher's self-efficacy, successful implementation of RTI at a school, and to some extent the ability for literacy growth among teachers and students.

Certification and Being Well-Trained.

In regards to certification and being well-trained, survey results showed that the majority of the 303 participants felt positively about educators at their school being certified. Results showed that 25% either chose strongly disagree or disagree, 6% were neutral, and 65% either agreed or strongly agreed. In regards to the question asking if RTI was conducted by well-trained educators at all tier levels, there was a slight decline, with 30% choosing either strongly disagree or disagree, 12% were neutral, and 53% chose either agree or strongly agree.

To further understand these findings and to provide a possible explanation as to why participants answered the way that they did, interview participants were asked to elaborate on their chosen response, with the understanding that the survey questions were asking not only about themselves, but about all educators working with students at their school site, as RTI would be incorporated in general education classrooms with Tier 1 instruction. In addition, clarification was provided regarding what well-trained meant by the researcher: having specific knowledge and background in literacy.

Certification.

Out of the nine interviewees, four participants identified that all educators teaching literacy interventions were reading certified and one participant identified that any educator working with Tier 3 literacy had to be either in the process of reading certification or reading certified. Another participant discussed that he chose strongly agree regarding certification and disagreed with being well-trained because “all are certified by the state to teach, but not [all are] well-trained in balanced literacy or RTI.”

Literacy Knowledge.

One participant, Layla, identified that although she was certified in reading, no one else at her school was. She identified herself as being very confident in her own abilities due to the many years of training and experience she has had and due to experimenting various ways to teach and determining what works and what doesn't, for each student population she has had. She viewed her role as supporting teachers behind the scenes, when she had the opportunity to go in and coach teachers. A strong statement she made was that the key to working with struggling readers is the right teacher; that has experience, training, and knowledge, for RTI to be successful.

Jennifer identified that RTI literacy teachers, and her as an interventionist, were ELA teachers who were asked to take on this responsibility, even though they all lacked reading certification. However, she felt comfortable working with students that were slightly behind or not motivated, and researched and adopted the Reader's Workshop framework with her students. In addition, she has written and received various grants allowing her to provide over 1,000 books in her classroom library.

Most participants discussed that by being reading certified, or well-trained, this allowed them to be knowledgeable; knowing what to do, as well as how to find appropriate resources for students and instruction. Examples from the participants follow for how they explained using their knowledge in their classrooms.

Zoey discussed her self-confidence in teaching literacy, as she "is knowledgeable based on many years of experience" as a literacy consultant and author. She identified some of the many ways she adapted her instruction based on her students' needs and her literacy knowledge: content relevancy, inclusion of video clips, lots of discussion and independent reading, and introduction of specific skills scaffolding at the students' pace. She knew of outside resources like ReadWorks.org and NewsELA for creating text sets and used various young adult literature book lists to purchase classroom libraries.

Due to Layla's background and certification in reading, she felt comfortable pushing back against the school dictate in regards to using specific designated programs, as students do not all need the same type of instruction, nor will the program individualize instruction. She felt that if teachers were knowledgeable about literacy, they would be able to first see the whole picture of each student and then know how to supplement instruction or whatever curriculum is required to meet the needs of each as individuals. Sarah also pushed back against her

administration regarding mixed ability classrooms, stating that “there is a need to stand up for the students and their needs,” while also providing them appropriate materials and instruction.

Paige used the knowledge of her students and their abilities to find appropriate articles, books, and magazines through various sources, like ReadTheory.org where she can find specific articles that address certain skill areas at various reading levels. Carter kept in mind his students’ demographics and interest when choosing Young Adult literature for his classroom. He used his background and experience working with students to consistently reflect, monitor, and adjust. Carter also described how another ELA teacher at his school, due to his experience and expertise with ELA, adapted all instruction based on student needs and had amazing results with his students, despite not being reading certified but considered knowledgeable.

Perry voiced that staffing for the reading courses was not based on reading certification or knowledge, but was based on community decisions for certain staff members, in other words, nothing to do with teaching. This was expressed as a point of contention for him, as he felt that “we often are asking our most vulnerable students to be learning reading from someone who is not even technically licensed [in reading] right now. Sarah also felt this way when she stated that “teachers do not know what to discuss or how to collaborate and collaboration is depending on liking each other. [It’s like a] seat of the pants thing”.

The “beliefs of one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments” (Bandura, 1997, p. 3), or self-efficacy for teachers of this study, is the belief that they are capable to control the outcome (students’ literacy success) due to their knowledge of literacy and struggling readers. Therefore, teachers not only need the knowledge of literacy, literacy strategies and skills, but also the need of understanding how to work with struggling readers and finding/using appropriate resources based on their needs. If teachers are

not certified in reading, which many content areas teachers are not, then there is a need for either only hiring teachers who hold a reading certification or collaboration among faculty members to share and learn together.

Problems When Not Well-Trained.

Participants identified various problems that arose if teachers were not, or did not, feel knowledgeable or well-trained. These included that teachers did not know what to do, developed negative attitudes about students, relied on scripted programs, or had a negative teaching experience and, or, quit. These issues identified by participants directly related to how teachers could develop negative self-efficacy, as they do not feel knowledgeable (Bandura, 1997).

Kelly as a Language arts teacher, felt that she could not be successful due to her lack of knowledge regarding literacy and struggling readers. She emphasized that graduate school, for her, did not cover literacy and that she felt

how can I teach when these kids are at a 5th grade reading level...I don't know what more I can do. All I can do is keep trying things but I need, like, I wish there was someone who could, like a literacy person, who could come help me.

She continued to discuss how she felt isolated as there were not many other teachers for her to talk to at her school, as they were all in a similar situation. "They don't know what to do" either. There are no reading teachers at her school and she has students that barely speak English. She provided an example of how her curriculum used various classic texts and she felt a lot of pressure to "be the person that teaches them how to read", but she did not know how or where to start. She felt that without collaboration and help, she and the other teachers did not

have the necessary tools and did not know “what else that [they] can do except pretend that we know what we’re doing and that’s, that’s not working”.

Jennifer identified that she would like to run small group instruction, but she doesn’t know how as she is not trained in literacy or this type of teaching style. Layla discussed how the intervention teachers at her school were not very knowledgeable, since they were not certified in reading, and they not only did not know what to do with a struggling reader, but also did not know how to assess students when they were reading in their intervention class.

When teachers do not know what to do with struggling readers, there can be a tendency to either make excuses or blame the students (Tovani, 2000). For instance, Sarah described how the teachers at her school first identified as not having any interest in teaching people how to read and then, these same teachers stated that if students in their classrooms could not read, it was the students’ fault. These same teachers would go to Sarah stating that particular students had various disabilities, yet Sarah could not find anything wrong with these students.

Paige’s fellow teachers also did not feel it was their job to teach reading in their content areas, but more importantly, they did not understand how they could teach multiple reading levels at the same time. This deficit mindset (Dennis, 2013) continued with administrators and teachers at Jennifer’s school who believed that it would take greater lengths to help her struggling readers as opposed to other students, and other teachers at commented that certain students could not do anything. Layla had a more extreme situation, where one of her reading teachers simply did not want to learn how to work with struggling readers, even though this was his job. She described him as having “low will and low skill”, as he sat in a district provided reading course for a year and did not pay attention.

These negative attitudes towards students and not wanting to teach struggling readers allows students to continue to fall through the cracks or allows for a reliance on various commercial programs or curricula that are sold to schools as a “silver bullet.” Mandy explained how at her school, the teachers were “really good technicians...that can follow things, but not necessarily people that want to understand the contexts and the research behind what’s going on.” The teachers in her school wanted to be told what to do. The intervention teachers were only provided worksheets to work with, so being knowledgeable did not matter, however, the students were not necessarily improving either.

Zoey understood the appeal that administrators might have for scripted programs, as any teacher could then run a program and “having a program is better than having nothing.” For Jennifer, when students struggled and were far behind grade level, without a knowledge base of what exactly could be done to help these students, she relied on whatever her principal recommended. Perry astutely commented that providing teachers with autonomy was important, however, without knowledge supporting autonomy, “teachers end up doing whatever they want.”

When this type of instruction occurs, teachers often took that mentality to “do the best they can,” as Mandy explained of teachers at her school. She commented that every teacher was assigned a caseload of students to work with, but without understanding of what to do, it was very disorganized. Jennifer stressed the insecurity she felt daily, as she wants to keep her job, so she does not push back when inappropriate ideas have been shared, as she is not sure she has the right answer anyway. Carter identified that “due to stress and not knowing what to do” there has been a very high turnover rate at his school, meaning each year a lot of teachers leave either the profession or that school site. He mentioned that there have been times that teachers would leave

without a moment's notice. He was very concerned that he was letting his students down because he did not have "the magic diagnosis" or knowledge to help struggling readers.

Kelly also talked about high turnover rates, as she is currently working with the third special education teacher this year, at the time of the interview. With the classroom being co-taught and the constant changes, she does not trust the co-teacher to conduct a small group without her help, making her feel like the co-teacher is similar to having "a para[professional] in the room." She spoke very kindly of the co-teacher, but without the proper guidance, felt there was a lot of pressure on her with this arrangement. Sarah "feared for our kids" due to teachers not knowing how to best address the needs of struggling readers.

Improvement.

Even with these issues that were addressed, which influence the development of low self-efficacy, which in turn reflects their teaching and student success, participants felt that through proper and useful collaboration, these issues could be remedied. Various participants recognized that even though they might not have been considered highly qualified from the start, nor are many of their colleagues, many were trying and liking what they were doing. They were learning on their own and improving.

Sarah felt that although many of her teachers, ELA and special education, were not well-trained to teach reading, a few of them were trying to teach students based on skills. Both, Mandy and Kelly, identified that at their school sites, there were certain teachers who were trying because they cared about the kids and wanted to figure out how to help them.

Jennifer felt that it was a moral decision on the part of the teacher to figure out what was appropriate for students. She highlighted that she chose her position due to a passion and interest in reading, in general, as well as teaching reading. Although she did not have a background in

literacy, she reads a lot on her own; including books by literacy well-knowns such as Penny Kittle, Kelly Gallagher, and Donalyn Miller, as well as taking additional coursework on her own regarding teaching reading. She recently joined various literacy organizations and has quickly become more knowledgeable about how to participate with the members. In her own words, she thought the position was a good fit for her because “I LOVE reading and I LOVE literacy, and I feel like I’ve kind of started taking that active role and developing myself again. Seeking out information...” by making and building needed connections.

Carter recognized the need to learn more and stressed that summer was his personal professional development time where he learned how to adapt his ideas based on his past student demographics and abilities. Mandy decided to learn on her own because she felt the need and knew how important it was. Kelly identified that she constantly questioned herself and her lessons, and knew that she had to do this on her own. She would ask herself what was working and what can she do to help _____ (fill in the blank with any of her students). She confessed that a lot of it has been trial and error, but has been happy when things went well.

Zoey identified the need to constantly keep up with best practices and research to keep learning and stay current. Sarah identified how she, and colleagues, attend yearly literacy conferences and read journals to stay in touch with best practices. She also described that in her state, there were various teaching centers and workshops available to learn how to teach struggling readers. Paige attended conferences when they were local and also tries by trial and error instruction. Her main focus has been on understanding student data and learning how to turn that into instruction based on students’ needs. She learned that if she talked with other teachers and reading specialists, she could find out possible reasons for why some students’ scores go up and some go down.

These findings regarding issues with teachers who are not well-trained in reading instruction, as well as how participants have learned on their own, provide a possible explanation as to why 27% of the survey participants overall either strongly disagreed or disagreed that they felt confident and well-trained with literacy strategies and interventions (Component 3: Participants' Own Confidence with RTI). Thirty-one percent were neutral and 45% chose either agree or strongly agree. Overall, the participants understood that being knowledgeable in literacy was a work in progress at their school sites. They have witnessed various teachers honing their craft through conversations and discussions with others and they are seeing results, even if they are small.

Need for Collaboration.

When interview participants were asked about collaboration at their schools, all participants addressed the need for collaboration among faculty members, which aligns with the survey results ($M = -.22$, between neutral and disagree): 49% strongly disagree or disagree, 14% neutral, 34% strongly agree or agree. To understand why so many participants felt negatively about collaboration, interview participants were asked to elaborate or clarify their survey response.

Zoey expressed that RTI was working for her school, mainly because “all teachers are working together, learning together, and incorporating literacy. Every Single Teacher.” Her school not only met as a faculty, but they also have a literacy data team that meets monthly. She provided various examples of how each content area teacher has incorporated close reading in their classrooms, and how these teachers present at faculty meetings.

Kelly held a similar mindset although not supported at her school, as she stated that “it’s that collaboration with other teachers across contents” to discuss similarities and differences for

how a student is working and responding, that allows student success. She identified herself as a “singleton” as the only 11th grade ELA teacher at her high school, and that teachers at her school were not often provided time or opportunity to talk to other teachers. She expressed that when she could meet with other teachers, it really helped her to hear what was working for others so that she could try new things in her own classroom. She also identified that teachers not only needed to collaborate at one particular school site, but across the grade levels to provide for vertical alignment. After observing an 8th grade classroom, she noticed that the expectations were different than what she expects in her own 11th grade classroom, and there was a need for this collaboration so that all teachers were on the same page.

Carter, Layla, Paige, and Jennifer discussed that meeting often allowed for teachers to share and talk about what was happening, with some people meeting daily and others meeting monthly. Carter identified this need for discussion due to the fact that his students would go to their intervention room, a resource room, with materials, yet “little is known what is done with student[s] and what is needed.” Layla discussed that her school had multiple ways to collaborate; through PLC’s, ILC’s (Individual Learning Contract), and RTI committee meetings. These were designed for multiple opportunities for teachers to work with others in the school, however, not all teachers participated. Paige identified an additional need for collaboration being that students were not transferring literacy strategies across content areas, which was seen as problematic for their struggling readers.

Jennifer reflexively identified that she needed the collaboration with others at her school, as she tended to run her classroom unstructured and if problems arose, she could check with other teachers to find out if it was a student issue or a possible instruction issue. In addition, together, they could discuss what was working and what was not, as well as attempt to guess

why a particular student was struggling. For her, she stressed the importance of this communication, as like Kelly, she identified herself as alone. Although there were weekly EBIS team meetings (team that looks at teacher concerns regarding students and the team decides the type of intervention provided for the student), there was a lack of time to collaborate. She went to the ELA team meetings, but was not included in the discussion, so she tended to create her own instruction. Working with the special education interventionist tended to produce the same results for her, with the two not getting connected very often. She has sought for a more formal process to be used to track what is currently being done already in the classroom, who is receiving intervention, who will carry out the intervention, and meeting with the group that works with this.

Perry identified that his school believed in collaboration among faculty, as each person was considered an expert in their own area. Reading teachers in their meetings created a “two lane highway conversation with the content area courses,” allowing the possibility that teachers would feel more capable and prepared to work with struggling readers. He also identified that this was a newer development in his school, as PLC’s previously were not embedded in the day, causing there to be a lack of communication and mixed messages. Therefore, this was still a work in progress at his school. Mandy addressed that there was little collaboration at the meetings she had been to, talk, but not help in the means of training and discussion.

One of the definitions for the term “Collaboration” based on the Merriam-Webster online dictionary is ‘to work jointly with others or together especially in an intellectual endeavor’ (Merriam-Webster). Survey and interview participants have addressed that collaboration was needed for RTI to be successful, for teachers to feel knowledgeable about literacy, and for struggling readers to improve.

Current Professional Development (District or School Site).

On the survey, participants were asked if they felt confident that they had been trained well enough to implement RTI effectively, as well as if faculty in their school have had opportunities to learn about literacy interventions for use with students at each tier level.

In regards to the overall survey participants view on personal confidence in being trained well enough to implement RTI effectively, 30% of the participants chose either strong disagree or disagree, 11% chose neutral, and 56% chose either strongly agree or agree. However, when participants were asked if the faculty in their school have had opportunities to learn literacy interventions for use with students at each tier level, 53% chose strongly disagree or disagree, 11% were neutral, and only 35% felt they had received opportunities on literacy interventions (strongly agree or agree).

Therefore, there was a need to dig deeper to find out what types of professional development were provided and to find out possible issues with the current PD. Interview participants were asked to discuss the types of professional development they had received, either by their school or district. The provided findings include participant perspectives regarding instruction and instructional topics; to include literacy interventions and differentiated instruction.

In regards to professional development and instruction, Zoey specified that there was ongoing training for regular and special education teachers on the main chosen intervention, Comprehension Focus Group. This training was provided throughout the year and coaching was available, as her colleagues tried new things with her. Each year her school chose something to focus on at faculty meetings. Two years ago, the focus was on Gradual Release of Responsibility and this year the focus was on close reading, pre-reading and after reading

strategies, as well as text dependent questions, as described by Fisher and Frey (2014). These meetings were provided once a month for a few hours each and open to the entire faculty. There were also “quick snip-its” provided during monthly staff meetings.

Sarah identified that there had been lots of opportunities in the past for faculty to work and learn together, as well as outside sources that were available to all teachers. Kayla identified periodic trainings, mainly regarding AVID strategies, but that AVID was not implemented to the full extent. She specified that once a week, grade level groups met to discuss strategies for high-risk students. Administration at her school stated that this would change for this year, but at the time of the interview in January, nothing had changed.

Paige identified that the district provides much of the training, mainly during the first week of summer when “teachers are fried...and they just leave,” with reading specialists sometimes going to the content area meetings to provide strategies for specific content areas. However, she identified that this did not happen often due to time constraints. Jennifer discussed that most of the veteran teachers had gone through Sheltered Instruction training years ago, but that the last several years, the focus had been on Constructing Meaning, with the definition of that being backward planning. During this time, participants were provided examples, sentence frames and strategies for struggling readers and ELL’s to provide better access to completing assignments. Jennifer conducted a department book study, but not everyone participated.

Layla stated that the county provided most of the training, but there were also coaches training that she could participate with. She identified that in her school, although there wasn’t full faculty training, the staff participated with PLC’s and a select few worked with her through an ILC. ILC’s were for either new teachers, or at the principal or teacher request. However,

only 3-5 were worked with at one time. In addition, she has provided the faculty book studies and workshops, but she did not feel that many were following through after the trainings.

Kelly addressed the fact that her school adopted a schoolwide reading strategy, however, there was little effective professional development to assist and support the faculty at her school, as most of the trainings were the same thing but “delivered slightly differently” each time. For example, the day after the interview, she was to go to a professional development on feedback, the 7th time for this content. Carter identified that training was provided on Balanced Literacy to “ensure that there is reading going on in every class and nonfiction writing in every class, and that students are reading a minimum of 30 minutes a day in every English class throughout the district”, however, it was only a quick overview with a few handouts provided. In addition, he felt that an issue was with when the training was provided, as it was one week before classes started, and without deep understanding, it was impossible to implement well.

Differentiated instruction was addressed by a few participants’ faculty, however, Zoey and Layla specified that although their faculty was trained, only some teachers were incorporating it in their classrooms. Mandy felt that differentiated instruction had been discussed informally, as some ELA middle school teachers had training, however, to her knowledge, there had not been any training on this at the high school level. What she witnessed, was teachers asking students if they needed help, in general, and then teachers attempting to help the student. Interestingly, 97% of the survey participants identified as using differentiated instruction in their classrooms.

Needed Professional Development.

With the lack of strong professional development to prepare teachers to work with struggling readers and implement RTI effectively, the participants provided requests of additional PD that was needed.

All the participants identified a need for additional training, with many emphasizing the need for literacy training, in particular. Participants felt that if teachers knew what to do, then they would know what to do with students that struggled with literacy, which would allow students, and RTI, to be more successful. But, as Layla expressed, the training needed to be ongoing throughout the year.

Layla identified that her teachers did not know what to do and lacked training in literacy across the board. She specified that even the reading teachers did not know how to supplement instruction, which made them reliant on one-size-fits-all scripted programs. Her intervention counterpart would use the script and paraphrase it, but mainly used the worksheets from the program for instruction. In addition, the teachers did not know how to diagnose student needs and then use this information to adapt, differentiate, or modify instruction. She currently used a Google document to enlist student information from ELA and reading intervention teachers and expressed that in the past she would send this to all teachers. However, the majority of teachers in the past would simply state that kids cannot read without any clarity of what that meant. She emphasized a huge need for her teachers to understand literacy and how to incorporate strategies and skills in their day-to-day instruction, as well as the need for them to understand how to differentiate learning.

Jennifer, similar to Layla, felt that her colleagues did not know what differentiated instruction or guided reading meant, as they have had no training on this. She wanted the faculty

at her school to understand how to incorporate this in their classrooms so that they knew how to modify instruction based on student needs. For herself, she felt the same training was needed, so that if she was “not loving the phonics based program” required, she would know what to do with the students. She identified that neither the district, nor the school, had provided any literacy training and this was needed.

Although Mandy was the district literacy educator, she expressed that there had been no district-wide literacy training and everyone was “just all kind of on our own.” She mentioned that teachers came to her for assistance stating that their students could not read and they did not know what to do. She felt that teachers at her school were “locked into specific programs and not necessarily thinking about, um, how students learn to read.” She specifically requested more literacy training on strategies, “instead of a bunch of activities” for teachers to use.

Sarah also identified that the high school teachers at her school had no training on literacy or differentiated instruction, and that there was a need for literacy training with all teachers, including special education teachers. She felt that there was no skill development being conducted, at any tier level.

Paige felt that there was a need to support all teachers, including general education, to support Tier 1. She described teachers at her school viewing struggling readers through a deficit mindset due to not knowing how to work with these students. She wanted literacy training “in smaller settings, because in those large faculty meeting settings, people are ready to go home and not hearing what you’re saying.” She felt that it was really difficult to change this mindset, but felt that it directly impacted students and behaviors when teachers did not understand how to work with all students.

Perry also addressed this deficit mindset, as teachers in his high school felt that students were in high school and should be able to read at this point. He felt that although some teachers might have tools in their tool box to “say here is this strategy that we are going to use today to be able to access this [text], or be able to identify main idea or analyze author’s craft,” many did not. He felt an additional priority was training teachers how to incorporate small group and differentiated instruction, as well as conferencing with students, to align instruction.

Carter felt there was a need for literacy training with all faculty, so that teachers knew what to do with various students and used small group instruction and guided reading. He also felt that discussion needed to take place regarding the types of students that attended his school, so that teachers understood more of their culture and backgrounds. He thought that school districts should not only look within their own teacher population, but should also consider bringing in outside speakers that were considered experts in literacy. He felt that this would allow his colleagues to learn from the speaker, but then “take our own skills and our own ideas, and adapt them to meet the needs of [their] student population.”

In regards to the RTI model and policy, several participants identified a need for training on this with the entire school faculty. For instance, Kelly felt that teachers that had been at the school for a long time should be respected due to the time they have committed to students and their background knowledge, but she felt that no one at her school “knows what to do. I think we’re just kind of like trying it and seeing if it works, with a lot of things. And I just wish someone could come in and say, this is how you run RTI effectively.”

Sarah felt that teachers and the administration at her school “would not know the term Tiers or other RTI lingo [Sic]” and Mandy felt there was a great need to start from the beginning of what RTI is and the purpose of it. She wanted information regarding research behind it, what

it was, and discussion on how instruction in general education differed from the intervention courses. She feels there was a need to discuss RTI from the beginning and all the parts and pieces of it: screeners, progress monitoring, instruction, etc. Layla felt that due to lack of training and knowledge of RTI, the chosen interventions were not appropriate. She felt that her administration did not know a lot about RTI and therefore the teachers at her school did not either. She felt there was a need for understanding prior to expecting teachers to change the way they were teaching without any training or knowledge.

Jennifer realized through our discussion that she was trying things on her own, but that there was a lack of formal training. As her, and the other participants expressed, ongoing training and learning along the way, these were needs for a successful implementation of RTI and for teachers to feel confident and knowledgeable in their teaching, ultimately leading to higher self-efficacy.

Summary of Theme One.

Based on the survey results and elaboration by interview participants, many teachers might have low self-efficacy, based on their current experiences, lack of knowledge, and need for additional professional development. This could not only impact their own feelings, as some felt isolated and alone, but it could also impact students and their possible growth. As participant's have stated, when teachers do not know what to do, there are many negative effects.

Participants identified that overall, faculty at their schools were not well prepared or knowledgeable, and at times viewed students with a deficit mindset due to this. Many of the interview participants expressed that teachers had not been provided with necessary training or collaboration for them to believe in their capabilities of working with struggling readers, which will impact the success or failure of RTI. There were many similarities across the country, albeit

it many that were negative, regarding needs for modifying implementation of RTI for it to be successful. Teachers' perceptions during the interviews provided the needed deeper understanding for how survey participants across the country might feel regarding preparation and professional knowledge.

Theme Two: Teachers' Perceptions and Descriptions of RTI Implementation

The second theme for this study that I drew from the interview data, pertained to the participants' perceptions and descriptions regarding implementation of RTI at their school sites. As I formally analyzed the interview data, keeping in mind the questions that were asked based on each participant's survey responses, there were many categories that seemed to fit under the concept of RTI. Therefore, I found that the content of the teachers' perceptions and descriptions could be generalized into the same categories that were found with RTI: background of RTI, placement and fluidity in RTI, data throughout the process, and instruction and interventions. Although some of this was touched upon with Theme One, the majority of the interview participant's data seamlessly fit under these categories. In addition, participants discussed their overall thoughts on RTI. Figure 4.4 visually shows the subcategories within the five larger categories.

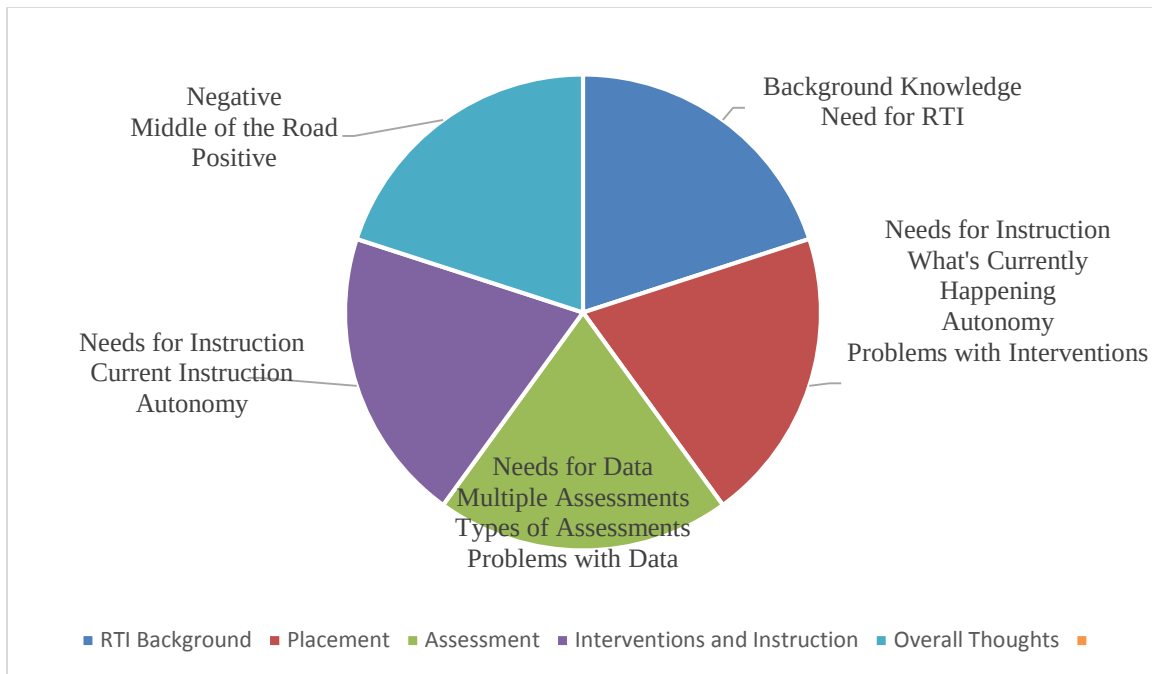


Figure 4.4 Breakdown of Theme Two

Background on RTI in School Sites.

On the survey, there was not a question regarding how long RTI had been implemented in their schools, yet while interviewing participants, a few provided this information, with three stating that RTI had been implemented within the past two to four years (Paige, Zoey, Jennifer) and one stating that it had been implemented since 2012, with multiple iterations and changes along the way (Kelly).

On the survey, there was a question that asked all 303 participants their perception regarding their training about the RTI model. Forty-three percent identified negatively regarding these opportunities, 11% were neutral, and 43% were positive. This could mean either that there was no training provided or that the training provided was not helpful. Additionally, on the survey, there was a question that asked all participants if they felt knowledgeable about the purposes and benefits of RTI, with the majority of participants (83%) identifying as being

knowledgeable. Therefore, there seemed to be some confusion regarding how participants learned about RTI, so interview participants were asked to further explain their chosen responses.

Although four participants mentioned being provided training specifically on RTI, all specified that it was brief and not helpful. For instance, Layla and Paige commented that the county provided training in one day, but it was only about the background of RTI and not how to implement it. Due to this, Layla and her school created an RTI committee that met every 4-5 weeks, made up of various teacher leaders, and then the teacher leaders would go back to their colleagues and discuss what they had learned.

Kelly also stated that the district briefly talked about it and provided a pyramid of interventions, based off of the prior behavior portion of RTI that had already been implemented, but then the district told the individual schools that decisions were left to them. Therefore, and because most students at her school in RTI were in special education, RTI was mainly discussed during weekly Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings where teachers, parents, counselors, and the student discussed ways to help the student in intervention. Carter posited that his district had not provided any trainings on RTI at all.

Jennifer was the only participant that felt her school provided information and support regarding RTI. For instance, their school created an EBIS team (participant wasn't sure what the acronym stood for) that included administration, content-area teachers, the English language development teacher, LEAD teachers, special education teachers, and her as the reading interventionist. These meetings were on a 6-week cycle, where different academic teams met each week to discuss needs and gather ongoing support regarding students and types of interventions to continue, modify, or retire.

During this discussion, some participants provided additional information regarding their own background of RTI and their thoughts on why RTI was needed. For instance, Sarah discussed that she was only aware of what was happening in her school, but was not familiar with any RTI mandates. However, she knew there was a need for intervention based on the fact that many of her middle school students could not read. Due to the fact that the majority of students in Kelly's classes were struggling and very far behind in literacy, she took a graduate level course that discussed RTI. However, through class discussions, she realized that "every person in that room, from every school, had a different understanding of it [RTI] and it was extremely limited."

Both, Carter and Perry, identified as not knowing a lot about RTI and that their schools did not use RTI terms often. However, Carter also realized the need for literacy interventions in his school, as the majority of his students were three or more grade levels below, with quite a few students reading at the 3rd or 4th grade reading level. He also noticed that even his "brightest students were constantly asking for help with vocabulary and main ideas." He intuitively commented that many adults at his school blamed students' personal issues as the reason for why kids cannot read, but he understood that it really was the fact that students did not understand the material and tended to "check out...all they keep doing is failing but being passed along anyway."

On the other hand, Layla felt very knowledgeable as she had worked with RTI from the beginning as a literacy consultant across the country. Mandy participated in a national cohort on RTI, where she learned how other states were incorporating literacy interventions at the secondary level and Zoey was included in the creation of an RTI committee from the start with other teachers, where they researched and discussed, in depth, what RTI meant for their school.

The fact that there was great variance among participants and their background in RTI, from some participants having no knowledge and others being hired as literacy consultants, it is of little surprise that the survey had showed inconsistencies across the country. To implement a policy, like RTI, without a background or purpose, could set the policy up for failure from the start.

Placement and Fluidity in RTI.

As previously discussed in Chapter 1, there have been few specifications provided by the federal government regarding how to implement RTI in schools. One of the choices schools and districts needed to make, is whether to include special education students in the RTI literacy interventions, or to not allow them to participate. Zoey cleverly pointed out that at her school, their belief was “if the point of intervention is to determine if kids need to be in special education, then what are we doing with all of these special education kids in here and not kids that we need to see if they need it?” She felt that not all students that needed literacy interventions were included as of yet, and therefore, students that had already been identified should not be taking those spaces. Zoey is correct, RTI is supposed to be a preventative intervention preventing kids from needing special education.

Jennifer’s school, similar to Zoey’s, had two separate literacy intervention tracks: one for general education students and one for special education students. As long as students do not have special education status or a diagnosed learning disability, then even if they are many years below grade level, they were included in the general education intervention group.

However, Sarah, Kelly, Layla, and Paige all specified that the intervention classes were inclusive of anyone that was struggling with reading. Although, Paige stated that special

education students were only included if they were reading 3 or more years below grade level. Otherwise, at her school, those students were serviced by their special education teacher.

On the survey, participants were asked how students were placed into interventions, while being allowed to choose multiple answers. With that being an option, survey responses were scattered with many participants having at least chosen that students were placed due to various assessment scores as one of the answers. However, I wanted to understand this to a greater extent, and therefore asked the interview participants how placement into interventions was done at their schools, across the country.

One option that was presented during the interviews regarding placement that was not on the survey, was the idea that students were originally placed into interventions based on pre-existing placement at another school, regardless of accuracy or appropriateness. For instance, Kelly, Sarah, Zoey, and Carter identified that students were initially placed into interventions based on the student having been pre-identified in the school prior to entering either the middle or high school. Carter also discussed how some students that were not pre-identified, were identified at an IEP meeting, as most students in intervention at his school were special education students.

Kelly discussed that due to having to use the pyramid required by the district, which was primarily based on attendance and behavior, students were often misplaced based on these qualities and not based on literacy struggles. She explained that students placed in Tier 3, either academic or behavior, meant that the student was on his or her way to expulsion. Mandy explained that students were primarily placed based on grades, expressing that the decision was not targeted to specific students due to not collecting additional data.

On the other hand, there were participants that were at schools that attempted to ensure proper placement in interventions using multiple measures of data. Jennifer elaborated on her earlier response by explaining that placement discussions occurred throughout the year, at the EBIS meetings. She stressed the need for using multiple measures to determine patterns that might signify that a student was truly a struggling reader. She looked at grades, benchmark placement on state tests and the EasyCBM, talked with various teachers for input, and used the Really Great Reading program subtest on word reading. Paige also discussed how monthly meetings were provided to continuously look at placement based on test scores and progress.

Layla elaborated on her earlier response by stating that although students were initially placed based on test data, the school also looked at the STAR data to see if any students fell below the 25th percentile and were not already in an intervention. If that happened, then the student would be more closely looked at for a possible pattern of struggling. Namely, Layla would meet with the students' teacher to find out if the student had tried on the assessment and she would retest them, if needed. In addition, she used additional assessments and data points, such as AimsWeb, Maze, fluency probes, state assessment history of the past few years, grades, and talked with the guidance counselor to see if anything might have happened at home that could have influenced the test results.

Due to Zoey only having room for up to ten students in her intervention class, her school first placed all students from a middle school intervention into a master list. Then, Zoey looked at every students' overall data. She first looked at the STAR screener data, placing any student in the 20th percentile or below on a watch list. Then, she had all students on the watch list take the Maze assessment, starting with 8th grade probes and moving up through 11th grade probes, as appropriate. She also used the MAP assessment.

As these last participants demonstrated, there was a need for multiple measures of data to be used for placement due to various issues that could cause only using a state assessment inappropriate, as Johnston (2011) had also identified. The following participants spoke about the issues that have occurred due to using only a single assessment for placement into interventions.

Sarah commented that she was forced to hurry students through testing, which meant that students might not have had time to finish or felt rushed. In addition, Sarah, Zoey, and Layla commented that if a student did not take the screener assessment seriously, they would be placed inappropriately. Paige discussed the issue that her school used PARCC for the initial screening tool, which was brand new to the students. Students who were considered on grade level prior were now considered at a lower level. In addition, her school started using STAR for the first time, too. Therefore, both screening tools were new to students and could have inappropriately identified students for placement.

Fluidity refers to the ability to enter and exit students from an intervention based on student needs and progress, moving students in and out of various interventions when appropriate. One of the complaints that secondary teachers have made about RTI at the secondary level is the idea that scheduling was difficult which made RTI unsuccessful (Sanger, et al., 2012). The interview participants, as whole, concurred with this mentality, as many stated that students were only able to be removed from an intervention at the end of a semester or trimester (Zoey, Jennifer, and Perry). At Mandy's school, exiting an intervention was even more difficult with her stating that once a student was placed into RTI, they were there for the rest of their schooling. Zoey specified that when she saw students in Tier 2 too long, she worked on moving them into Tier 3, due to its smaller class size and more attention provided, however, they would not be able to leave an intervention course until the semester ended and the student met

the exit criteria: 25th percentile on two of the four assessments (CBM, fluency from AimsWeb, Maze, or STAR), or at least the 80th percentile on an Informal Reading Inventory. She also placed students directly into Tier 3, if needed, skipping Tier 2 completely.

Layla and Paige were the only participants that stated scheduling was not an issue at their school, due to administration creating a schedule that included a class period meant for intervention courses. This way, students could be moved fluidly in and out of interventions and back to regular classrooms, when appropriate. When asked to explain how this was done, both stated that the class period happened for all students and teachers and students not directly involved with an intervention may either use the time for enrichment activities or find something else to do. Both expressed that although this type of schedule was quite helpful for intervention courses and student motivation, as students understand that they are able to move out the very next day when they are ready, the teachers not involved in the interventions had expressed some discontent.

Additional issues that caused inappropriate placement that participants elaborated on included the fact that various students came to the school with no background information or prior testing data, as they came from home schooling environments, or parochial or religious settings (Zoey and Perry). In addition, Sarah commented that the psychologist at her school would place students simply based on parent complaints regarding lack of homework completion, without having talked to the student or looking at other possible data. She felt that students were often placed into an intervention course simply due to scheduling conflicts and ease of finding a place for the student to go. Zoey's school used the 40th percentile on state assessments as a cut point, causing an overabundance of students being identified for

intervention, even though most state RTI frameworks specify only a small percent of students needing intervention (www.rtinetwork.org).

Both, Jennifer and Paige, identified confusion and a lack of understanding regarding how to refer a student for intervention placement at their schools. When asked to elaborate on this confusion, the two participants commented that although they had received some training on what qualified for student intervention referral, when teachers brought student names for discussion regarding possible placement, there was inconsistency regarding which students would qualify and even more confusion regarding what counted as classroom based intervention and the criteria for placement. Mandy identified another issue regarding placement and services of students, stating that the main issue with RTI at her school was the fact that students with dyslexia ended up getting no services as they got placed into RTI and never leave.

These issues could cause too many students being placed into an intervention and students that need an intervention not qualifying. As some of the participants stated, there was a need to be thorough when deciding if a student needs to be in an intervention, through the use of multiple assessments, and fluidity to allow students to move in and out of an intervention based on their needs.

Assessment Data.

In addition to screener assessments used for placement into interventions, the RTI framework identified a need to continuously use assessment to determine progress of students and to determine if interventions were working or needed modified based on student needs. When referring to the survey, participants from across the country identified various time frames for how often progress was monitored. On the Likert questions, participants were asked if they felt that assessment data were used appropriately to determine progress of students in Tier 1 ($M =$

.47), Tier 2 ($M = .43$), and Tier 3 ($M = .48$), showing that overall, the participants were slightly positive. Therefore, I asked the interview participants from across the country to elaborate on their choices and provide an explanation for each. Participants spoke about the need for data and use of multiple assessments for progress monitoring, the types of assessments that they currently used, and problems with the data.

Jennifer and Perry discussed the need for a standards-based or proficiency-based type of grading, so that data could be directly pulled from grades, assignments, and class notes. Jennifer also stressed the need for the use of diagnostic data to determine “where a student is and then meet them there” with instruction so that it is based on the students’ needs. Layla felt that students should be pulled often for ongoing assessment to monitor their progress and adapt instruction based on how the student was progressing. Perry felt that due to his state pulling the state test as a requirement for students, and their reliance on that specific data to determine if a student was struggling due to most teachers not understanding how to assess students’ reading skills, their school needed a way to find appropriate and descriptive data for students so that teachers did not “invent narratives about each student.” Finally, Carter was told that he would have access to student data, but at the time of the interview, no one had thus far shown him how to access anything.

Although participants expressed the need for data to understand students’ needs and progress, as identified with the screener for placement, participants understood a need for multiple assessments to provide a thorough understanding of what the student needed help with. Eight of the participants commented on this need at their school. Jennifer expressed a love-hate relationship with data, as she felt that most testing only provided a “snap-shot” of what a student could do. In fact, to test her theory, she had her entire language arts department take the

EasyCBM to see if it was reliable, yet not one of the teachers received a 100%. Zoey also provided an example about a girl that was in her Tier 2 intervention. The data showed that this student did not need intervention anymore, based on her test scores, however, Zoey knowing the student well and through informal observations of the student, she realized that this student actually needed a more intense individual intervention based on her needs. Had she only used test scores, the student would not have improved or shown academic growth, as she would have been removed from the intervention completely.

Some participants identified what they used, in regards to multiple assessments, to determine progress of students. Sarah used Fountas and Pinnell to diagnose students, but also used observational data, watching students in authentic reading and writing situations. She felt that this “softer data” was needed to see how her students interacted with text daily. Kelly purchased her own diagnostic reading assessment, after being told that she was to go through each question from the Aspire test to determine what each student might need. Paige also stressed the need for informal data gathering through the use of observations, listening to them read, talking with them, asking questions, and monitoring their grades. Jennifer identified that there was a lot of informal assessment that goes on constantly, through observation, engagement, and use of strategies during class. She felt that this type of data “is in many cases just as important as the test scores.”

When survey participants were asked if they felt that they were kept adequately informed about students’ progress in reading intervention, 57% felt positively that they were. To find out possibilities as to why the survey participants felt so informed, I asked the interview participants to elaborate on their response for this question. A number of the participants felt adequately informed due to the fact that they were the intervention teacher, and therefore the person to run

the data. Zoey identified this way and stated that due to having the ability to use Informal Reading Inventories with all her students, she was able to understand exactly what her students would need. Jennifer, who was not a certified reading teacher but taught all tier levels, used her own data to help her feel informed. She expressed that if she needed additional data, she had easy access to student test scores and historical data for each student. Paige confessed to being a “data nerd” and constantly looked at her students’ data to see if they were improving or needed changes in their instruction. She also provided a document for the entire school faculty, so that they could be informed on how best to work with various students. Layla and Kelly also created a document to provide to faculty, although Layla only provided it to the ELA and reading intervention teachers and Kelly shared the document at the check-in meetings.

With every participant identifying the importance of ongoing and various types of assessments needed in his, or her, school, a few participants emphasized a need for training on how to use and interpret data so that instruction was based on student needs. For instance, Kelly felt that at her high school, there was not a formative assessment process established. She felt that due to being secondary teachers, they were not ever taught how to use data intentionally. Carter identified that his district recently changed their progress monitoring tool to the Fountas and Pinnell assessment, but emphasized that teachers only had one hour of training on this and there was a need for much more. Sarah felt that the teachers at her school also did not understand how to interpret data to create appropriate instruction.

Instruction and Interventions.

Instructional Needs.

When participants on the survey were asked if their school had appropriate supports in place for the various tiered levels of instruction, participants’ agreeance diminished as the tier

level changed in intensity. For instance, 59% percent of the survey participants felt that there was appropriate support in Tier 1, but only 50% agreed with this in Tier 2 and only 46% with Tier 3 instruction. Therefore, I asked participants to explain their responses and identify what they felt was needed for tiered intervention and then explain what was currently happening in their school.

Perry provided an excellent analogy of how all basketball players struggled with some element of the game or play. He described that each player might have different needs, but each player worked on what he, or she, needed to improve upon to become a better basketball player. He felt that this was the point of how instruction should be in all tiered levels, using data to teach students based on what they needed.

Kelly focused on the fact that students at all tier levels needed to have choice in their materials, as well as independent reading, regardless of curriculum requirements. Carter touched on ideas from Theme One with teachers, but referenced the fact that students also needed time to collaborate, discuss, permission to express own ideas, knowledge of how to check for understanding, and work in small groups. Perry felt that there was a need to include small group instruction, conferencing, “upping the volume in reading” for all students, choice in what to read, and personalized learning for each student.

Sarah felt that instruction needed to be based on a responsive teaching model that grouped students by reading level and used conferencing to get to know each student. She felt that there should be an abundance of high-low material so that all students had something to read.

Mandy felt that the main focus with students that struggled to read was on letter and sound knowledge. She felt that until teachers understood the neuroscience behind the reading

process, then students would not be taught accurately. She felt that decoding should be the primary focus during intervention due to the idea that if the student does not know the sounds of letters and cannot decode text, then they will not be able to gain meaning from the text. On the other hand, Layla felt that students needed instruction on comprehension with a focus on motivation, instead of phonics instruction, at the secondary level. She felt that teachers needed to include reading and writing in every lesson and that administration should require this. Mandy felt that there was a great need for vocabulary instruction, as her students had very limited background knowledge with texts at the secondary level. She also felt that teachers needed to understand that RTI intervention was not special education and that all teachers had to play a part in helping struggling readers.

Although there were some differences regarding participant's thoughts on what the focus should be during instruction, the majority of participants felt that instruction needed to be student based and to include ways of continuously getting to know the student. In addition, there was a need for students to be able to generalize strategies learned in intervention throughout the day in other classes, too.

Types of Interventions.

As seen with the survey findings, the types of interventions and aspects of the intervention class varied greatly across the United States. During the interview, I asked participants to describe what was happening in the intervention courses, at their school, to further understand possible similarities or differences across the country.

Jennifer, who was not reading certified but did teach the reading intervention courses, discussed that for Tier 2, the school used to use Accelerated Reader with struggling readers. However, when she took the intervention class over as the teachers, she had made a deal with

administration to allow for more of a Reader's Workshop framework. Her classes had around 16-24 7th and 8th grade students per class. Instruction included a lot of choice independent reading at the students' reading level, for pleasure to build fluency, stamina, and student confidence, as well as scaffolding and conferencing with students.

The mini-lessons tended to revolve around finding appropriate, high interest books, but also on fix-up strategies for students to read when they got stuck in a book. She also started including writing and reflecting to find out what students were noticing as they read. Her Tier 3 classes at her school differed, with only 7-14 students in each, depending on their reading level. There were separate Tier 3 courses for general and special education students, respectively. The Tier 3, for general education students, used Really Great Reading as the program, which included a lot of phonics on a five-day cycle. Instruction included letter tiles, video clips, read alouds, tracking reading errors, and independent reading. When asked if her students seemed to enjoy the class, she commented that they liked it better than other programs, but it was boring for them. She felt that the program provided a variety to do and with a smaller group of students, she was able to have more focused small group instruction. For the special education Tier 3, with non-reading certified but literacy trained teachers, students were on the Corrective Reading program that focused a lot on fluency, vocabulary, and phonics instruction.

Kelly, an English language arts certified teacher, discussed how Tier 1 included gradual release of responsibility, allowance of retesting and test corrections, grouping students based on interest and learning styles, reteaching of skills in small groups, and the focus on developing positive teacher-student relationship to support motivation. In her specific ELA courses, she read out loud often, dissected texts into manageable chunks, and used close reading techniques.

She has “stop and talk” moments for discussion and incorporates various reading comprehension and vocabulary strategies to support all students.

For Tier 2, intervention was provided in the Tier 1 ELA course, but with a co-teacher, traditionally a special education teacher that was not literacy trained. The addition of another teacher was meant to allow for additional support, modeling and guided practice, chunking of assignments, and focused close readings. For what would be considered Tier 3, but did not have a label, students were placed on FastForward, which was an online, phonics driven program. Students listened to sounds on the computer and they needed to identify accurate sounds to move forward. She described students being on their own during this process.

Zoey, a reading and English language arts certified teacher that only worked with Tier 2 and 3 interventions, explained that her school was part of a country partnership, called Partnerships for Comprehensive Literacy (PCL) group, that used Comprehension Focus Groups (CFG) as their primary intervention. With this type of framework, there was a main mentor text at grade level and then three supplemental texts on the same topic. The student chose the order in which to read the supplemental texts. Individual conferencing took place with each text and then a literature discussion group after about the text. This was repeated with all three supplemental texts and then the student wrote something in the style of the chosen text. For instance, if they were reading about fairy tales, students would then have to write a fairy tale upon completion of the text set. With the focus of CFG’s tending towards elementary-based genre units, Zoey decided to add additional nonfiction units and took it upon herself to find articles that would be of interest to her secondary students. She stressed that instruction was student based and that there were no required textbooks or mandated computer programs.

The school provided 75 minutes daily for intervention and students received a ½ credit for passing the course, and had around 5-10 9th or 10th grade students in each class. With Tier 2, there were separate courses for general and special education students, but Tier 3 might have included special education students at times. Tier 3 was included in a Tier 2 classroom, and was conducted at the same time. However, at the time of the interview, there was only one student placed in Tier 3. The current intervention being used was Language Live. Due to the teacher of Tier 3 not being reading certified, there was little supplemental instruction provided.

In regards to Tier 1, the general education classroom, she explained that those courses tended to be co-taught to allow time for grouping and differentiated instruction. This type of teaching took place with ELA, science, math, and health courses.

Layla, a reading certified Tier 2 and 3 interventionist, explained that her school mainly relied on scripted programs, such as Reading Plus, Language Live, Wilson, and Rewards. Due to her background in literacy, in her classroom only, she provided additional support through either small group instruction on word sorts and multi-syllabic word lessons or through conferencing while students worked on the computer. When asked to elaborate on how she worked with students while on the computer, she explained that as students read, she would introduce various comprehension strategies with the text they were reading. She felt there was a need to always relate instruction back to the state test, as that was what they would be tested on at the end of the year. She also explained that her school had a Tier 4 that was specifically designed for special education students that needed extra help.

Paige, a reading certified intervention teacher, explained that Tier 2 was for students that were 1-2 years below grade level and the focus was on vocabulary and test taking skills. For Tier 3, she felt that it was more strategy based. She spoke about how the intervention teachers

met daily to discuss what was working and what was not, to modify instruction regularly based on the students' needs in each class. Although she used to have 18 students in her intervention classes, she now had between 6-13 students. With her only working with Tier 3, she provided information on what she did in the classroom: warmup, usually on vocabulary, and then 3 zones for instruction. One of the zones was students working directly with her in small guided reading groups based on student need, the next was independent choice reading, and the last zone was a computer zone. She provided an example of her guided reading by stating that if she had students that were struggling with inferencing, she would pull a small group to work on that, but if another group of students struggled with main idea, she would pull them, too. Therefore, small group focused on different strategies each day. At the time of taking the survey in the fall of 2016, the selected computer program had been Read180. However, at the time of the interview in January of 2017, the school was switching to Achieve3000. However, training had not been provided yet so no information was provided on how that would work.

Sarah, a reading certified teacher that taught reading courses at her middle school, identified that due to all intervention teachers either being reading certified or working towards their reading certification, they all had autonomy to create their own lessons based on student needs. She discussed that differentiated instruction and small groups were supposed to be within these classrooms, and delivery could be done through push-in, pull-out, or tutorials. For Tier 1, there was a Reading Lab for students that needed additional support.

Mandy, a certified reading teacher that was the district dyslexia specialist, explained that at the middle school, Tier 2 was predominantly through pull out and Tier 3 took place during a 30 minute Drop Everything and Read class period that every teacher had at this time. She identified that this intervention resembled a resource room, as teachers would send students

down to her, during this time, with worksheets or classwork to work on. There was no planning or lesson-type involvement on her part, as each day brought different students. The only course that was truly labeled as Tier 3, was for special education students, and these students met with her to work on phonics through programs for dyslexia.

For high school, she explained that there was no true intervention time for students. Informal tutoring, a zero hour before school started, extra help after school, or a Learning Lab were available for students to go to of their own volition. She also explained that as the school got closer to state testing dates, instruction switched from a curriculum based classroom to more targeted test preparation instruction. Mandy explained how the schools in her district were implementing Balanced Literacy and Guided Reading, but she expressed great displeasure with this fact and thought there was a greater need for additional training and focus to be provided on phonics-based instruction.

Carter, an English language arts teacher who had just started at his current school, did not know a lot about what was happening during the reading interventions. He described interventions at his school being similar to a resource room, where students were sent with worksheets. The teacher would read over a section of text and then provided students a worksheet as follow-up.

Perry, a certified reading teacher who was the district reading specialist, described how the main focus at his schools was to intervene within the general education classrooms first, and therefore, there were no apparent labels such as Tier 2 or Tier 3 at his schools. What would traditionally be called Tier 2, he stated took place in the general education classroom through co-teaching with a content-area teacher and a special education teacher. With the use of two teachers during the class, the focus was on small group and responsive teaching. Although this

was considered as their Tier 2 instruction, the class met for the regular amount of time any ELA course would meet.

For lack of a better term, Perry described the three types of reading courses, that would be comparable to Tier 3, that took place at most of the high schools. He explained that all courses were taught by either reading certified teachers or teachers that were working towards their reading certification and the courses provided an additional 45-50 minutes of instruction time for struggling students. In addition, no special education or English language learners were included in these courses. The first course, a reading Foundations Course, was for students that were reading well below grade level, and the course focused on independent reading while making concrete connections to their content area courses. Perry commented that did not feel that instruction was authentic or responsive to student needs. Another course offered was a Content Area Literacy class that was for students near grade level and the focus was on helping students to read like disciplinarians. For instance, reading like historians or mathematicians. The last course offered was a College and Career Ready course that was meant only for 11th and 12th grade students, that focused on how to read college texts.

Intervention Issues.

Layla's primary issue was the fact that Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions met at the same time in one classroom, making it difficult to run different types of instruction and programs. She also felt, as previously discussed, that there was a lack in understanding of how to differentiate, throughout all tiered levels. Carter stressed that he felt many students were not receiving necessary intervention and the interventions that were being used were not aligned to student needs. Zoey was told to follow district protocol, but then when an intervention was not working, she was questioned on why.

Both Jennifer and Kelly discussed issues with the actual chosen programs. Jennifer felt that with Really Great Reading, there were more students identified as needing this program than existed in reality. She felt that this made it difficult for students and created motivation issues for the students when they spent years on remedial word calling practice. She expressed understanding of why the students had a hard time investing and working hard in this course. Kelly felt that the use of FastForward was inappropriate. She felt that her district got sold on things, usually an online program, and then told to implement it with little training. Although she was not literacy knowledgeable, she felt that the program was too elementary and that not all students needed to be on it. However, as previously discussed, without background knowledge on literacy, she did not want to speak up without an answer of what else could be done to help these students.

Sarah felt that there were quite a few issues in regards to interventions at her school. She felt that the idea that the reading teachers were to create their own lessons was not actually happening and that no one was really differentiating instruction to address the needs of the students, as students were being grouped inappropriately with too many per group, the programs were scripted, and the students were then unmotivated. She felt that with teachers depending on worksheets for instruction, the teachers were miserable and hated teaching the RTI intervention and students were miserable and “fake working.” She also speculated that Tier 2 classroom instruction was not actually occurring unless a student was identified with a learning disability. In addition, she felt that students were inappropriately placed into the Reading Lab without regards to students’ needs.

As previously stated, Mandy felt there was a need for greater focus on phonics instruction at her school and issues with placement of students that might be dyslexic, as once students were placed into RTI, they never received needed services.

Intervention Successes.

Sarah spoke about how a student in her classroom was successful at understanding various parts of a book and how the student was very excited as this was the first time he had figured things out on his own. Paige felt that through her class, students were developing a love for reading as they were now allowed to choose books based on their own interests.

Perry focused on the fact that interventions used to be program and textbook based, but now, it was more about data and instruction based on students' needs. At the district level, he created an example unit for each quarter that teachers either used directly or as a reference to create their own instruction. He pushed for a de-centering of the whole class novel and instead allowing student book choice with the inclusion of independent reading. He also spoke about how a partnership with the local library was created to first, provide a one-time forgiveness of all student debt, and second, to allow student access to all public library content on their 1:1 Ipads.

Overall Thoughts on RTI.

On the survey, participants were asked various questions regarding their overall thoughts on RTI with specific questions asking if RTI was producing positive changes in students' reading achievement and if RTI implementation was effectively implemented. Based on the PCA discussed in the survey findings, Component 2 discussed the participant's overall thoughts on RTI, in general. In addition, the survey asked participants if they felt that administration recognized the need for RTI.

In regards to survey participants' thoughts on RTI producing positive changes in students' reading achievement, the average was .44, which is in between neutral and agree. This is slightly positive in terms of survey participants from across the country. Regarding if participants felt RTI was being effectively implemented, there was a negative outcome, $M = -.13$, which is between neutral and disagree. However, the participants on the survey were overall positive in the belief that RTI could become successful ($M = .91$), if implemented well, based on their responses with Component 2, RTI Policy, the first six questions of the survey that asked about what RTI should represent. In addition, as a whole, participants felt that their administration recognized the need for the implementation of RTI ($M = 1.09$). Therefore, with the range of negative to positive with these questions and component, there was a need to understand more of what was happening at the school and district level regarding administration and school supports that influenced the negative mindset regarding how RTI was being implemented.

Lack of Resources.

Lack of resources was an important issue that participants discussed. This could include lack of time, lack of personnel, or lack of materials. For instance, Sarah identified she felt the use of an appropriate assessment would take quite a bit of time, while she was supposed to also be teaching. In addition, she felt that there was a need for built-in planning time for teachers to collaborate during the day. Paige had a similar thought about the need for more time for literacy training and time to collaborate, as well as wanting more time in the class period to work with students individually.

Five participants (Zoey, Sarah, Layla, Paige, and Perry) identified the need for additional certified reading teachers. Sarah discussed how due to budget cuts, there were many reading teachers laid off with only two reading teachers left to work with over 200 students. Perry was

the only district reading specialist, to cover 12 high schools alone. Paige and Layla wanted the hiring of a reading coach, to help support teachers by coaching and modeling. Budget was mentioned as to the main reason for lack of personnel.

Zoey identified the difficulty of finding appropriate student materials that would be of interest and relevance to her students, as well as on various students' reading levels. She took it upon herself to purchase independent reading books for her classroom library, and had spent many hours finding articles through online websites (NEWSELA for nonfiction and ReadWorks for fiction) that would be of interest to her students. Mandy also identified the need of the Internet and computer use to find appropriate resources. Both, Paige and Carter identified improvement for material access at their schools, but thought it was still a work in progress. Both participants identified that last year, they needed classroom libraries at students' reading levels, but this year, their schools have started to provide this for them. Carter's school received \$2,000 Title 1 money specifically to purchase books for various classroom libraries.

Administrative and School Site Issues.

As research has pointed out (Lipsky, 2010), there is a need for strong administrative support to implement changes in a school and provide teacher's with a stronger self-efficacy (Nunn, et al., 2009). Kelly addressed a main issue with the overall success of RTI in her school being that the administration did not address the lack of resources, especially the lack of a literacy person on campus, as well as the lack of knowledge being distributed to faculty about the purpose and implementation of the literacy component of RTI. The interventions at her school were mainly based on behavior and attendance, without any true support for struggling readers. She felt that there was a lack of accountability required by administration of teachers to make

sure struggling teachers were provided with necessary supports, in all classrooms throughout the entire school day.

Carter focused on how mandated high-stakes state and End of Course assessments created great fear and frustration among teachers at his school, due to the focus the administration placed on these test scores for teacher evaluations. Teachers felt that by working with struggling readers at their own pace to help each individual student improve, with no extra support or training, that it was too much of a responsibility and took away from their curriculum requirements. He heard teachers comment that unless they took their own time out of the day from lunch or before/after school, they felt there was not a way to help students individually while not getting behind in their mandated instruction.

Jennifer also discussed school and principal issues regarding literacy support for students at her school. She commented that the principal was under pressure for high test scores and other hard data, and therefore, pushed the teachers for improvement, but without any support. She commented on the fact that there still was no clarity for who was and was not allowed to be placed into interventions, and this might have been understood better if the principal attended the EBIS meetings with clearer guidelines. This meant that not all students were receiving necessary support. In addition, due to the focus on test scores, her principal had attempted to focus instruction on mandated programs, but allows limited autonomy only to Jennifer.

Zoey was concerned that throughout the school day, students were being subjected to reading texts that were at a much greater reading level than what students could read. She felt that due to the focus on passing the state test, students who were learning at their own level with appropriately leveled texts in intervention were then thrown into classrooms where they could not read or be successful. This schoolwide issue would cause students to not transfer their skills

learned in intervention, get frustrated, and continue to zone out the rest of the school day. She felt these students needed constant support from all teachers.

In addition, Zoey discussed how her principal had inappropriate and unclear expectations for her and her intervention courses. For instance, she worked with students labeled as being in the 5th percentile for literacy, yet was expected to get the students to pass the ACT and the state assessment. She consistently had to ask her principal if the goal was to get students to the 25th percentile for exit criteria or to get higher ACT scores, as instruction and assessments were not aligned well depending on the answer.

Sarah felt that her administration could be doing more in regards to provided time for conducting proper student assessments that would provide specific information on what students struggled with. Due to the fact that not all students that needed help with reading were getting support, she felt that the implementation of RTI at her school was not going as well as it could be. In addition, she felt that identification of special education students “was a joke” as students would get “tested, classified, placed in programs, [and] pushed through curriculum” without proper assistance provided. Based on her experiences working with other school districts, she felt that this was the case throughout her state, too.

Perry noticed that the value of RTI was not viewed by all, or even most faculty at his school. Although most of his administrators seemed to believe in the need to support RTI, he saw that many counselors did not. For instance, when a parent called the school to remove their child from an RTI course, the counselors did not provide any push back or explanation as to the purpose of the intervention course or the benefits the child might receive. Therefore, counselors removed the child immediately without understanding the importance and need of the class.

Administrative and School Site Positives.

Five participants, Jennifer, Paige, Sarah, Zoey, and Layla, expressed the need and ability of having teacher autonomy in their classrooms. Although not all of these participants were reading certified (all but Jennifer are), they all had worked incredibly hard to become knowledgeable about literacy and working with struggling readers, as previously discussed. Jennifer sought out autonomy with her students by incorporating a Reader's Workshop framework in her classes. Paige was told that she could have the autonomy based on her knowledge and expertise, and therefore felt supported by her administration. Zoey sought out autonomy so that she could teach strategies and skills that were needed by her students and Sarah emphasized that she was allowed to invent her own instruction and create her own units and lessons. Four of these participants spoke about their enjoyment of teaching the interventions based mainly on the fact that they were able to teach how they saw fit. Layla, who was also reading certified, worked in a district that was very dependent on scripted programs. However, due to her relationship and trust with the principal, she was allowed some autonomy to provide supplemental instruction while still using the required scripted programs.

In addition to the administration at Sarah's school seeing her success with her students and providing her with autonomy, they also wanted, supported, and encouraged collaboration among staff and faculty. At Zoey's school, the administration there required all teachers to include a literacy component in their Effectiveness Project (teacher evaluation system) and the faculty there have accepted this. Zoey felt that RTI in her classroom, and possibly across the school, was successful due to this support. Carter's principal sent him and another teacher to a professional literacy conference to gather new knowledge and bring back to share with other teachers. In addition, Carter felt that his administration was encouraging collaboration among

faculty and attempting to provide support, but he wasn't sure that they knew how or what to provide.

Although Jennifer identified that her administration was under pressure due to test scores and that he did not show up for many of the EBIS team meetings, she did feel that her principal was supportive in other ways regarding instruction and implementation of RTI. For instance, her principal purchased books for students and allowed her to attend a conference for additional professional development. Her principal also allowed her to take some control of the classroom, as long as she provided a "good faith attempt" to incorporate the program, as well.

District Issues.

Similar to Kelly's request identified earlier regarding types of training, Sarah felt that there was a need to understand how things changed from elementary to secondary, to see the bigger picture. She felt that as students moved up in grade levels, literacy instruction fell apart and by the time students got to the high school, students had little, to no, support. Carter also identified with Kelly and Sarah, by stating that he felt the district was "paying more lip service to it [RTI] and trying to avoid law suits from parents or anything like that, with very little actually being done practically in the classrooms or in terms of training the general education teachers" as there were too many students arriving at the high school way below grade level. Carter summed up his thoughts on implementation of RTI by stating that his county "brings in these new ideas, fund them for a year or two, and then jump on the next band wagon, but expect you to keep doing the old one, too."

Perry also discussed this issue, from a district perspective, as he felt that there was a need for a K-12 approach with so many students reaching high school and not being able to read. He addressed the human element regarding implementation by stating that in his district, "there were

a bunch of principals who all have their own ideas and a bunch of teachers who have different levels of expertise and different school cultures...” but without communication between all of them, there was little consistency and many differences regarding implementation and resources by school. For instance, in one school, there was a strong focus and requirement regarding collaboration with PLC’s (previously discussed). This school had a top-down approach but teachers were provided a lot of autonomy. Students at this school were increasingly performing better on state assessments each year. However, another school had no reading classes at all with the mentality that 60% of student were proficient and that was enough. There was no discussion regarding what might happen to scores if they did incorporate reading classes.

In addition, although Perry was not privy to budgets, he noticed that money was not equally divided across all schools in his district. For instance, one school had only two reading teachers to help hundreds of students, while another school had at least five reading teachers with a much smaller count of students in interventions. Each school in his district was competitive of one another and wanted to stand out by any means possible, but that meant there was little consistency or discussion regarding RTI and how to help students become successful readers.

Paige was the only participant that addressed the fear teachers had regarding evaluation. She expressed that her teachers were afraid to use data for student instruction, or even look at it at all, for fear that teachers would be evaluated poorly if their students did not grow, regardless of possible reasons for this lack of growth. They were concerned that they would be labeled as bad teachers. Paige also addressed the issue that her school district chose to implement brand new curricula for math, science, and ELA all at once. With these curricula series, teachers have been told to follow the provided scope and sequence of instruction regardless of students’

achievement or struggles. Therefore, teachers were confused on how to keep going and also address student needs, at the same time.

Both Jennifer and Zoey specifically identified that RTI implementation at their schools was not effective because implementation was a top-down initiative forced upon the schools with little support or discussion. Zoey felt that “decisions for RTI got made in a vacuum and we don’t all get to sit down at the table” to discuss students, instruction options, and resources. For instance, when RTI first was discussed in her district, her school created their own RTI committee and met often to establish what they felt was needed for helping struggling readers. She felt that this committee and their approach was successful and was helping students grow and success. However, when a new district curriculum director came to the district, they were forced to disband the committee without any reason or explanation. Zoey felt that the attitude from this district person was that teachers could not be better or more knowledgeable than her and she needed to show her superiority. This lack of trust in teachers caused many to develop lower self-efficacy as they did not want to try new ways of teaching only to be told to only follow orders or that they were wrong. Sarah felt that there was a need for the school and district to acknowledge the lack of student resources and prior background and experiences, such as homelessness, poverty, lack of time in the evenings for school work.

District Positives.

Perry identified that at his district, there had been ongoing discussions regarding the amount of reading in core classrooms and if literacy was at the forefront in these classes. Carter also identified some positive things happening at the district level. For instance, the district was pushing a new initiative to either renew or obtain a reading endorsement or certification. The district provided information on online courses and then the district would reimburse the

participant of the course up to half of the costs. This initiative was meant mainly for content area teachers to get them more knowledgeable about literacy.

Systemic Issues.

Sarah identified that in her state, teachers have been “villainized” by the state governor. She explained that due to new teacher evaluation systems in her state, teachers were put through a process that was meant to “catch” certain teachers and this message was made clear throughout media venues. Due to the changes for teacher evaluations, and the fact that many teachers, even with tenure, were being dismissed from their positions, teachers felt as if they were constantly “under fire.” She continued with the idea that most funding went towards either computer-based programs or test-preparation type classes, instead of staff development. She felt that the media and the government painted a picture that represented teachers as greedy, stubborn people that did not care about educating children.

Paige identified that she did not feel confident in the overall effectiveness of RTI mainly because her school was still at the initial stages. A main concern she had about her school was the fact that teachers regarded students negatively. For instance, if a teacher did not want to deal with a particular student, they would send him, or her, to intervention. And as Paige stated, “That is not the purpose of RTI!” Kelly also did not feel that her school was implementing RTI effectively due to no one at her school being knowledgeable of literacy or reading certified. She addressed this same problem with an English language learners support person, that was only found at the elementary level with the only support sent for high school educators in the form of email updates. She addressed that every elementary school was provided at least one person, but the lack of anyone at the high school level was an oversight.

On the Way to Improvement.

Although Paige had great concerns and felt that RTI was not completely effective at her school, she did express that there have been some improvements. For instance, Paige discussed that at the time of the survey, her intervention classes were meeting too infrequently (45 minutes every 4th day) and there were too many students in each class. Although this had not been completely fixed, she now sees her students daily and the classes have gotten smaller in size. In addition, she was seeing her students' scores increase and most have increased their reading level since the start of the year. She felt that this success was due to improvements regarding supplies, time, autonomy, class size and administrative support.

Jennifer also felt that due to time, there were issues, but as time goes on, the teachers were learning what to do and things were becoming more clear. In her own classroom, she was informally seeing student progress. For instance, she had some students comment that prior to the class with her, they hated reading. However, now they were finding books they enjoyed. In addition, the STAR scores were showing significant improvement from the prior year and current testing.

Although Zoey felt that her school was not implementing RTI effectively, she understood that they were still learning. She felt that teachers were becoming more comfortable. In regards to her own classroom, she was seeing student success as students were moving out of Tier 2 and back into only Tier 1 instruction. After working with various schools in her area and their lack of implementing RTI at all, she was happy with the progress that her school had made.

Kelly felt that there were many students still “slipping through the cracks” but that many were receiving necessary supports and were showing improvement. Layla felt that RTI was being implemented well since students that needed to be in an intervention, were in an

intervention. In addition, for the first time in her teaching career, she watched students get completely removed from special education, due to their improvements. Many other special education students were being placed only on consult, due to interventions, which meant that they were no longer receiving direct services from a special education teacher. Sarah also had started seeing the data to support that her instruction was working and students were improving.

Summary of Theme Two.

Based on the survey results and elaboration of survey answers by interview participants, the implementation of RTI varied greatly across the country. This theme addressed the differences regarding background of RTI in schools, placement decisions, data and assessment purposes and types, types of interventions, and overall thoughts on RTI. There were discrepancies regarding all elements of RTI with many issues identified by interview participants in the form of lack of resources, school and district issues, as well as systemic issues like high-stakes testing and a deficit mindset towards struggling readers. Participants differed regarding their view on the effectiveness of RTI in their schools, with some participants feeling that things were getting better and improving and others feeling that there were a lot of needs that needed to be addressed prior to improvements to take place with RTI.

Summary of Interview Findings

Interview findings helped to deepen understanding as to why educators across the country might have responded the way that they did on the survey with survey findings have a wide range of possible answers for each question. Bandura (1997) postulated that mastery experience was the strongest source of self-efficacy in regards to affecting a person's efficaciousness, as it is the cognitive processing of prior successes and failures, which then produces an internal view on

an individual's capabilities. Once processed, mastery experiences could improve, reduce or make no change at all in an individual's feelings of self-efficacy.

Based on the interview findings, there was limited participant feedback on having mastery experiences. Not only did participants lack confidence regarding their own knowledge on literacy instruction and interventions, as identified with the survey findings, but their schools and districts also lacked the practical knowledge and skills necessary to implement many of RTI's critical components, shown through the great diversity regarding placement, assessments, interventions, and support. Perry stated that "sometimes I feel like we are the only ones who aren't doing it well" and it seems that this thought could be stated across all interview participants. There was notable confusion as to the understanding of RTI at each school site or district, what to do with struggling readers, and how to place and assess students throughout the RTI process. This was exacerbated by the lack of resources identified.

As previously discussed, Nunn et al., (2009) found that teacher efficacy was directly associated with their perceptions of improved student outcomes, collaboration with faculty, and the use of data to inform instruction. Therefore, when viewing the data through the self-efficacy lens, it is safe to state that these teachers currently had limited self-efficacy. With participants consistently expressing issues regarding lack of training, support, collaboration, literacy knowledge, and how to work with struggling readers, they identified a convincing need for additional professional development, administrative support, and resources. These findings also exposed the wide array of differences across the country, and possible reasons for why RTI has not been successful nationwide.

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I provide a brief summary of the study, to include the purpose, methodology, and findings. Then I provide a discussion for each of the three main ideas that were addressed through the survey and interview findings: appropriate high quality professional development, strong administrative support, and additional resources. I wrap up this chapter with implications of this study and suggestions for future research

Summary of the Study

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (2004) allowed states to choose and implement Response to Intervention (RTI) as a way to lessen the number of students incorrectly identified as Specific Learning Disabled (SLD) in their schools (Johnston, 2011) and to enhance the educational outcomes for all students (High School Tiered Interventions Initiative, 2010). The literature related to RTI and the IDEA legislation does not provide specifics regarding implementation (Brozo, 2011; Dulaney, 2012; Fuchs, Fuchs, & Compton, 2012; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2006), with the most common form of implementation using a 3-tiered model (Hale, et al, 2006). This places Tier 1 in the general education classroom, with Tier 2 and Tier 3 meant for more intensive instruction and duration based on student needs (Kovaleski, 2007). Many states have chosen to implement RTI in their school districts, however, most states indicate that each district needs to make their own adaptations based on students' needs, demographics, and resources available (Berkeley, et al., 2009).

Current research on RTI implementation (e.g. Greenfield, Rinaldi, Proctor, & Cardarelli, 2010; White, Polly, & Audette, 2012) has been with elementary teachers where RTI has been more fully implemented, implementation at one particular school site with researcher support (Fisher & Frey, 2013) or looking at teachers' perspectives in one district or setting (Cavendish, et

al., 2016; Regan et al., 2015; Sanger, et al., 2012). Due to secondary students not performing well on various state and national assessments (Camera, 2016; NAEP, 2015), RTI has been implemented at the secondary level.

Bereiter and Bird (1985) emphasized that by the time secondary students are identified as having issues with literacy in the content areas, the types of instruction that are needed are either gone or replaced with basic reading strategy instruction. This common problem is the fact that many secondary teachers, who are already constrained by school-level demands and available resources (Lieberman, 1982), do not see themselves as reading or literacy instructors (Hall, et al., 2011; Lester, 2000; Zipperer, Worley, Sisson, & Said, 2002) and believe that if a student can read the words then they are comprehending everything, which is not true (Edmonds, et al., 2009).

In addition, many secondary educators have not received any training in literacy (Ness, 2009), yet are being asked to assume full responsibility to not only teach their own content and discipline, but also to differentiate their instruction to the needs of the students and incorporate literacy instruction in each classroom. Typically, teachers teach from what they know and understand (Coburn, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 1996), which is a problem when content-area teachers are not prepared to help our most vulnerable students, struggling readers (Buehl, 1998; Ciullo et al, 2016).

With teachers playing a key role in RTI implementation and many current studies neglecting to consider the role of the general education teacher (Fuchs, 2003) and given that RTI is a relatively new framework at the secondary levels and the idea that secondary educators are not prepared to meet the literacy needs of middle and high school students (Ciullo et al., 2016) due to a lack of literacy background knowledge (Barry, 1997) through the use of specific reading

strategies and practices known to improve student literacy achievement (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Vaughn, 2014; Leko & Mundy, 2012; Swanson, 2008), there is a need to find out how teachers' perceive their own abilities and their perceptions of their school's abilities to implement RTI successfully, across the country.

This sequential explanatory mixed methods national study (Greene, 2007), uses a survey to first understand the bigger picture and then interviews to expound on the survey findings, providing a deeper understanding for how teacher's perceive their own confidence and confidence in their districts implementation of RTI, as well as needs for RTI to be successful (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Participant perceptions in this study were consistent with the existing secondary RTI literature on teachers' perspectives, but extends it to a national context. This study contributes to the field of RTI literacy research by documenting teachers' perspectives on the implementation of RTI at their schools, beginning with their knowledge of the RTI policy and specific implementation features at their schools, and ending with their perspectives about the success or failure of the implementation. In addition, it provides support for appropriate PD and knowledge of RTI for a successful implementation.

In this study, I examined secondary teachers' perspectives regarding their own confidence and confidence in their school site/districts regarding the implementation of RTI. Through the use of a national survey and regional division interviews, I sought to better understand these perceptions. Specifically, I hoped to find out their perception regarding the RTI policy and any differences across the geographic regions, their perceptions of their own ability to implement RTI effectively and confidence in their school's ability to effectively implement RTI and any differences across the regional divisions, and if there was a relationship between

secondary teachers' perspectives on the implementation and effectiveness of RTI at their school and their perspectives regarding the RTI policy.

The recruitment email for the survey was sent to NCTE, ILA, and CEC state council contact persons, as well as an email sent through the LRA member listserv. A total of 303 participants from across the country took the survey. Participants were asked at the end of the survey to provide their contact information if they wanted to participate in the next step of the study, interviews. To allow for deeper understanding of survey findings, nine participants were randomly chosen for interviews based on specific geographic area, regional divisions of the United States. These interviews allowed for more probing questions to explain and elaborate the reasoning behind participants' perspectives and survey choices (Flick, 2009).

A researcher-created survey that had been created based on current literacy literature in the field, as well as through expert advice and cognitive interviews, was pilot tested, revised, and it was then sent to participants through an emailed link using Qualtrics. The data were then exported directly to SPSS for analysis. All data were cleaned, recoded and renamed, based on needs for analysis. Following the data cleaning, frequencies and descriptives were run on all final variables to observe any remaining issues. In addition, skewness and kurtosis was examined and histograms were created to ensure the assumption of normality was met (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Prior to running analyses, a Principal Component Analysis was conducted to reduce the number of scale variables into smaller, more usable, constructs, with four components being identified: Component 1: RTI in our Schools, Component 2: RTI Policy, Component 3: Participants' Own Confidence with RTI, Component 4: Training of Educators. Levene's test of equality of variances, the Kaiser-Meyer-Oling for sampling adequacy and the Bartlett's test of sphericity were conducted. Frequencies and descriptives were conducted, as

well as using composite mean scores, ANOVA's, bivariate correlations, and tables to answer the research questions.

In regards to the interviews, verbatim transcripts were written from the recording sessions and then sent back to each participant as a form of member checking (Guba & Lincoln, 1994) to ensure accuracy and allow participants a chance to modify or expand upon their responses. Coding followed Merriam and Tisdell's (2016) open coding recommendations. Over 600 initial codes were then lumped (Saldana, 2016) by commonalities, the theoretical framework, and survey questions, to create 8 parent codes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Subcoding of these parent codes (Saldana, 2016) created 45 smaller categories that were collapsed based on similarities to make a total of 9 primary categories with two overarching themes: Teachers' Perspectives on Preparation and Professional Knowledge and Teachers' Perceptions and Descriptions of RTI Implementation.

Interpretation of Findings and Discussion

This study provides depth and understanding to the greater literature in regards to teachers' perspectives and RTI. Because of the knowledge gleaned through this study, we have evidence to believe that teachers agree with the concept of RTI, but feel that there is a need for greater preparation to take place prior to implementation and there should be some guidance regarding the RTI components. This study, first through the nationwide survey and then through interviews, provides a clearer picture, nation-wide, regarding how teachers perceive their own confidence and confidence in their schools implementation of RTI, in their schools and across the country. Two themes emerged: teachers' perspectives on preparation and professional knowledge and teachers' perceptions and descriptions of RTI implementation. Within these themes, there were nine primary categories that support the themes. In looking at these two

themes and nine primary categories, there were three main ideas that came from the data, based on needs that participants identified for successful implementation of RTI: the need for appropriate high quality professional development, the need for strong administrative support throughout the process, and the need for additional resources. Throughout the rest of this section, I go through the three main ideas that come from the research questions and survey and interview findings, and provide interpretation and related literature on each main idea.

Big Idea 1: Appropriate High-quality Professional Development.

Survey findings showed that overall, participants were positive regarding the RTI policy and there were few significant differences based on region. Participants were also fairly positive regarding RTI in their schools, but negative towards opportunities for collaboration and training, regardless of participant location. The bivariate correlation showed that there was a positive correlation between a participant's confidence in implementation and their perceived knowledge of RTI. Tables created showed that there was little consistency across the US regarding how RTI was implemented.

Interview findings deepened understanding of the survey findings regarding all topics and survey questions. Not only did participants lack confidence regarding their own literacy knowledge but their schools and districts also were reported to lack the practical knowledge and skills necessary to implement many of RTI's critical components.

Despite positive findings on the survey, when discussing survey responses with interview participants, study findings indicated that additional professional development was needed while also considering the need for additional resources and need for administrative support, similar to other study findings (Brozo, 2011; Cavendish, et al., 2016; Regan, et al., 2015; Sanger et al., 2012). These findings directly align with the idea that to understand teachers' perceptions

regarding their confidence in teaching literacy strategies and interventions directly relate to their self-efficacy, which in turn affects their own teaching experience and the actions they choose to take with struggling readers (Pajares, 1992; Bandura, 1997). All participants felt that if RTI was implemented correctly, it would improve student achievement, similar to the Sanger et al., (2012) study.

On the survey, 151 participants identified as having a reading certification, which is half of the population that took the survey. In regards to the interview, two-thirds of the participants were also reading certified. However, as previously discussed, when interview participants were asked to elaborate on the survey questions regarding instruction and intervention being taught by reading certified and literacy knowledgeable educators, there was overwhelmingly negative results, regarding faculty and their literacy knowledge at their school sites. This is similar to findings in the Bineham, et al., (2014), Cavendish, 2016), and Sanger et al., (2012) studies.

Four participants did explain that in regards to the reading teachers at their schools, they had to be reading certified or working on their reading certification. However, content-area teachers were thought of not being knowledgeable with literacy instruction or interventions. The participants spoke about this being a main barrier for successful RTI, as teachers are being asked to incorporate literacy in their content-area classrooms and to teach the various interventions, but are not knowledgeable of literacy and are not considered expert literacy teachers.

Even though it would be best to have the interventions taught by someone with a reading certification or reading specialist degree (Allington, 2009a), reality of schools and funding options means that not all intervention courses will be instructed by reading certified educators. In addition, with literacy being included in instruction in all content-areas through the integration of reading skills and strategies in these classrooms and the constant use of assessments for data-

driven instruction, there is a strong need for ongoing, embedded PD that focuses on the needs of all teachers to improve their literacy knowledge. By including professional development with all, or by subject area, teachers, this also will address the much needed collaboration (Duffy, 2007; McGill-Franzen & Smith, 2013) that the participants identified needing.

Challenges identified in RTI literature show that issues for successful RTI at the secondary level include class schedules, teacher beliefs and attitudes towards reading in the secondary grades, teacher knowledge of differentiated instruction and literacy strategies, resources, and youth culture (Brozo, 2011; Duffy, 2007; Noll, 2013). Survey participants felt that there were not enough opportunities to learn about literacy and many of these barriers were mentioned by interview participants. When discussing needs for professional development, all of these ideas were addressed as they identified professional development to include learning how to modify their instruction to include literacy skills and strategies, to increase their literacy knowledge, to understand how to differentiate instruction, and to understand how to analyze and interpret data from formal and informal assessments (Fisher & Frey, 2013; Langer, 2004; Lipson & Wixson, 2012), which fits with the idea that for “instruction to be effective, [it] must be delivered by well-prepared professions (Quatroche, Bean, & Hamilton, 2001, p. 292). In fact, participants that were knowledgeable expressed greater confidence in what they were doing for instruction and greater student success, based on this knowledge.

Participants felt that when teachers were not knowledgeable in regards to literacy, teachers did not know what to do, relied on scripted programs, developed negative attitudes about students, and reported negative teaching experiences. This aligns with current RTI research that states there is a need for all teachers to have literacy knowledge (Danielson, Doolittle, & Bradley, 2007; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2011; Fisher & Frey, 2013;

Fletcher & Vaughn, 2009; Mellard, McKnight, & Jordan, 2010; Seedorf, 2014; Vujnovic, Fabiano, Morris, Norman, Hallmark, & Hartley, 2014) to build teacher expertise, which is the most important attribute for successful instruction and intervention (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 1999; Fuchs et al., 2012; Lipson & Wixson, 2012; Murakami-Ramvalho & Wilcox, 2012; O'Connor, Briggs, & Forbes, 2013; Slavin, Lake, Davis, & Madden, 2009; Wilkins & Shin, 2010). Although many participants felt knowledgeable of literacy, to some degree, they all felt that there was a need for more specific guidance and training on how to incorporate literacy in content-area classrooms.

Professional development needs to first take teachers' prior knowledge and experience into consideration (McGill-Franzen, 2000) while also thinking about the learning environment of the school regarding implementing change. These prior connections provide a higher degree of confidence when making changes in instruction because they are starting with what is familiar (Regan et al., 2015) positively influencing the teacher's attitudes and connections with what is being asked of them (Coburn, 2004). It is important to understand that the teacher's instruction and expertise is key to successfully progressing students' reading abilities.

Participant ideas for what is needed, in regards to topics for professional development, align with current literacy research. For instance, participants asked for training on how to differentiate instruction and incorporate literacy skills and strategies (Moje, 2008; Pearson & Hiebert, 2013), how to use small group instruction (IRA, 2010), understanding of text complexity and knowing how to find additional tools for learning (Lenski, 2012) and to supplement instruction based on student interests and reading abilities. In addition, participants identified that there was a need for inclusion of programs and instruction that consists of multiple components (Edmonds, et al., 2009; Gelzheiser, Scanlon, Vellutino, & Hallgreen-Flynn, 2011;

Wanzek, Wexler, Vaughn, Ciullo, 2010), as well as understanding of the connections between the instruction, curriculum and the students' lives (Angelis, Close, Preller, 2000). Participants expressed the need to understand how to teach students at their own instructional level (Morris, Ervin, & Conrad, 1996; Vygotsky, 1978).

In regards to instruction, participants felt there was a need for all teachers to understand how to make instruction student-centered, through the use of discussion, choice, questioning, and collaboration (Mallette, et al., 2013) as well as instruction being authentic, relevant, and integrated (Nagy & Scott, 2000). Strong evidence shows that teaching specific reading and comprehension strategies yields achievement for struggling secondary readers (Kamil, Borman, Dole, Kral, Salinger, & Torgesen, 2008). This focus on how to teach in the content areas is due to the idea that participants and research have regarding the need for high-quality first instruction (Lipson, et al., 2011) based on literacy pedagogy (Parris & Block, 2007; Tatum, 2004) for RTI to be successful (Brozo, 2009; IRA, 2010). Classroom teachers are more likely to meet the needs of all students if they are familiar with content literacy best practices (Fisher & Frey, 2001; Fisher & Frey, 2013; Scammacca, et al., 2016).

Special consideration needs to take place for secondary teachers, as many secondary educators have a negative mindset regarding teaching reading at the secondary level (Regan et al., 2015). As interview participants mentioned, all secondary teachers need to learn how to incorporate literacy in their specific disciplines-specific classrooms and know how to scaffold instruction in ways that allow the students to think of literacy in their specific discipline (Langer, 2011) to ensure raising achievement of students (Houseal, Gillis, Helmsing, & Hutchinson, 2016; Lai, et al., 2014; Tatum, 2004). Consequently, there is a need for professional development of general reading strategies and also a need for understanding that based on specific content areas,

there are certain literacy skills and strategies that work best (Edmonds, et al., 2009; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008). Disciplinary literacy recognizes that literacy is an essential part of any disciplinary practice and that different skills, knowledge, and reasoning processes hold sway as one moves from one discipline to the next (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008). The understanding that a strategy could be used in multiple content areas allows for collaboration across the subjects, however, the additional understanding that the strategy might be used differently depending on the discipline is also needed.

Educators also need to know how to use data to make educational and appropriate decisions. For instance, if an intervention is not working, as interview participants noted, there is a need to modify instruction instead of continuation of the same intervention (Lipson & Wixson, 2012; Smith, Fien, Basaraba, & Travers, 2009).

With participants identifying limited background knowledge of RTI at their school site and the fact that secondary RTI differs across the country, there is a need to demystify what RTI is (Fuchs & Deshler, 2007), the purpose of it, and all of the components that will be used at their particular school, for a successful implementation. This could be done through practical guidance and explanation that address each RTI component. As Regan et al., (2015) found, this could be accomplished by addressing the “w” questions: who is in charge of instruction and intervention at each tier level, what forms of instruction and intervention is needed at each tier level, where intervention and literacy instruction will occur at each tier level, when literacy instruction and intervention will occur for each tier level, and how the decisions will be made throughout the process. This professional development could include what is considered evidence-based, why certain programs have been chosen, how placement decisions are decided, how to monitor student progress, and other RTI components. This clarity sets the purpose for

educators to not only understand why they are using RTI and literacy across the curriculum, but also how they can implement RTI components and literacy in their own classrooms.

Through appropriate professional development, collaboration could become possible, as teachers work together to learn together, which was a need identified by the participants of both, the survey and the interview. For instance, Carter, one of the interview participants, felt this was a need as he was not kept informed as to which students were in an intervention, what they were doing, or what was even happening during that time frame. There is a need for collaboration between literacy experts and discipline-specific experts, as each brings different information to the discussion (Doer & Temple, 2016; Fang & Coatoam, 2013). Collaboration at participants' schools was felt to be lacking, which was detrimental for teachers that were unsure of what to do to help struggling readers. This also caused participants to feel isolated, like Kelly. However, participants like Zoey, identified that one of the reasons RTI was working for her schools, was due to all teachers at her school working and learning together to incorporate literacy in all classrooms, expressing that collaboration was needed and that it should happen often. Collaboration is also needed to ensure student transfer of knowledge and to ensure that expectations and instruction are similar across all classrooms (Howard, 2009; Pyle, Wade-Woolley, & Hutchinson, 2011).

With participants identifying that faculty at their school were not well prepared or knowledgeable, regarding literacy or RTI, teachers were not addressing student needs and at times viewed students through a deficit mindset. Like other instructional innovations, RTI needs to be implemented in a high-quality professional development context, or it too can fail to meet students' needs (Bender, 2012; Galloway & Lesaux, 2014). Teachers who receive high quality,

appropriate professional development, do change the way they instruct (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Lai, Wilson, McNaughton, & Hsiao, 2014).

Big Idea 2: Administrative Support.

Research shows that for successful implementation of changes in literacy and RTI, there is a need for strong principal and administrative support (Barton & Stepanek, 2009; Berebitsky, Goddard, & Carlisle, 2014; Callender, 2012; Fuchs & Deshler, 2007; Mellard, Prewett, & Deshler, 2012; Murakami-Ramalho & Wilcox, 2012; Putnam, 2008; Ward, 2013) providing teacher's with a stronger self-efficacy (Nunn, et al., 2009) and including all teachers in making decisions regarding implementation of RTI (Dulaney, 2012). To provide a school with literacy knowledgeable teachers, administrators need to place value in the professional development needed and identified by participants, as well as consider hiring reading certified specialists. Administration needs to make better use of their funding so that money is used to better support and improve reading instruction throughout the school (Allington, 2015) so that students are frequently engaged in literacy-promoting activities (Weinstein & Walberg, 1993). This will allow teachers to feel valued as they are provided what they need to teach and autonomy could be allowed based on their knowledge of literacy and their students, which four participants identified as a need to instruct students based on their individual needs.

In addition to using funding for literacy-related needs and professional development, administration needs to understand the effectiveness, or lack thereof, of the chosen interventions based on student progress at their school. Participants Carter and Mandy discussed how the intervention periods were either before school or were similar to a resource period, and both felt that administration needed to value RTI more. Participants identified the need for administrators to understand that there is not a one-size fits all program that will work with all students

(Allington, 2015; Callender, 2012; Lipson & Wixson, 2012; Thomas & Dykes, 2011) and that they should understand their student population and needs prior to forcing this upon teachers and students.

Eight interview participants commented on the need to have access to diagnostic tools to understand each students' reading difficulties, as well as the understanding that informal data should be encouraged and accepted by their administrators. Sarah referred to this as soft data, but that if teachers used authentic reading and writing to determine student progress, it would be more informative. Participants wanted administrators to understand and acknowledge that a state assessment is only a "snap-shot" of what a student could do (Schatschneider, et al., 2008), and teacher's knowledge of the student is needed to be included.

As previously identified, scheduling at the secondary levels is a known barrier for RTI success. However, two participants addressed how administrators in their school created a schedule that showed value in RTI and support by administration. In addition, Kelly addressed the need for administration to hold teachers accountable through their teacher evaluation to include literacy in their instruction daily while also letting teachers feel comfortable using test scores to influence instruction without repercussions when students might not progress with a specific strategy, as Carter explained.

Lipsky (2010), expounds the idea that teachers have control over some classroom-based decisions, but ultimately, administrators are the ones that structure implementation. Teachers are alienated when they are not included in the decisions regarding creating and implementing policies, like RTI, as Jennifer and Zoey pointed out. Due to this, teachers tend to either adapt to their situation, reject their responsibility completely, or modify it to fit their needs and beliefs. Therefore, RTI success depends upon how administrators support RTI and their teachers.

Big Idea 3: A Need for Additional Resources.

Lack of resources was an important issue for the interview participants. They felt that in addition to having knowledge of literacy pedagogy, they needed additional time, personnel, and materials for RTI to be successful. As previously mentioned, participants want administrators to understand the need for the use of multiple measures of assessment to provide diagnostic information regarding students' strengths and weaknesses, allowing instruction to be focused and targeted (Dulaney, 2012). Therefore, there is a need for these to be available for all teachers, not by only having one kit, as was the case at Carter's school.

Time was a big issue identified by participants, to include time in classrooms for inclusion of differentiated instruction and small groups, time for collaboration and planning to be built into the school day, and timing provided to assess students appropriately. Five participants identified the need for additional certified reading teachers, or reading coaches, as they could be used for coaching, modeling, and creating the needed professional development (McCombs & Marsh, 2009). As Keller-Margulis (2012) posited, to ensure that interventions are delivered effectively, there is a need for coaching of the practice.

The majority of the participants identified the need for additional instructional materials, based on student needs and interests. For instance, Zoey and Mandy discussed the need to provide student choice, which means having access to various websites, book lists, and the purchasing of these sites or books for each classroom library (Brozo & Hargis, 2013). Participants identified the need to have supplemental texts at students' independent and instructional levels (McGill-Franzen & Allington, 2008; Scanlon, Vellutino, Small, Fanuele, & Sweeney, 2005) due to many students not being able to access and understand textbooks (Buehl, 1998), as they are often too difficult for struggling readers, as they require comprehension

strategies and content-specific vocabulary that these students do not have (Allington, 2009a). One way to alleviate this issue would be to create multi-sourced and multi-level text sets (Allington, 2015; Fisher & Ivey, 2007). Text sets are “a collection of materials that can include digital texts, Internet-based resources, books, video, art work, music, maps, and artifacts” (McGill-Franzen & Lubke, 2011, p. 230) at varying reading levels and interests. Therefore, there is a need for purchasing ways to access these materials and/or purchasing licenses for online sites that provide this or purchasing books for each classroom library.

As participants identified, there is a need for availability and use of multiple measures for assessment purposes, to include various diagnostic assessments, teacher expertise, classroom observations, running records, informal reading inventories, or other classroom based measures (Howard, 2009; Tompkins, 2010) that are responsive to what is seen on a daily basis (Brown, 2010; Johnston, 2011) so that decisions are not made on a single setting one-size-fits-all assessment where other variables could have influenced the results (Kame-enui, et al., 2006). Participants identified various forms of informal assessments that they use and emphasized that informal assessment could even be as simple as listening to a student read aloud or provide a retell of what was read (Peterson, et al., 2001) during a student-teacher conference (Serravallo & Goldberg, 2007). Cloze readings were also identified as a way to understand comprehension skills, as it allows for identification of struggling students (Lenski, 2014). As the participants explained, more than one measure allows for different and more in depth insights (Lipson, et al., 2011) for each student.

For all of these resources to be provided, there is a need for proper amount of funding (Wiener & Soodak, 2008) provided to administrators and distributed equally and based on need,

as discussed by Perry and the fact that each high school in his district used their funding differently and did not receive equal funding.

Implications of Findings

This study aimed to better understand how secondary teachers across the country perceived their own confidence and confidence in their school's effectiveness of implementing RTI. Based on the data gathered from this study, policymakers, States' Department of Education literacy staff, and district and school administrators, can access how secondary teachers across the country perceive their own abilities and their perceptions of their school's abilities to implement RTI, with implications for additional professional development, support, resources, and guidance needed for successful implementation. These groups will be able to see at a national level if there is a need to make possible modifications for secondary implementation of RTI. This study aimed to inform current policy debates on RTI and allow educators to build on lessons from implementation research. The implications discussed in this section are suggestions and implications based on my own understanding of the data as I constructed meaning through the survey responses and interview explanations.

Based on the idea that teachers with higher self-efficacy will have a higher ability and desire to deal with stresses on the job, such as changes in instruction and implementation of new strategies, there are needs, like professional development, administrative support, and additional resources, like obtaining advanced degrees, which need to be addressed for successful implementation of RTI. The implications of this study's findings support the need for collaboration among all school faculty and staff, additional ongoing high-quality professional development, supportive administration, and additional funding and resources equitably shared among schools in the district. All of these ideas are interconnected and dependent upon one

another. It could be assumed that by providing teachers with literacy knowledge and allowing them to have a voice in their own professional development through collaboration with others, they will develop higher self-efficacy, and will in turn become more interested and happy in their positions. Findings from this study support current research that if ample time is not devoted to the first stage of implementation, to include discussion among all stakeholders and identification of needs prior to implementation, then implementation of RTI will have less chance for success. The implications are clear: it is time to listen to the research and provide what secondary teachers across the country need, for RTI to be effective and successful.

Recommendations for Future Research

Although research of RTI at the secondary level is occurring more often, there is a need to further understand how RTI is implemented in secondary settings, with and without researcher and university connections. Additionally, although this study focused on participants across the country, all participants were members of various educator organizations, which means that they might not truly represent the general population of educators. Therefore, there is a need to gather additional data regarding teachers' perceptions on RTI across the country, through other means and ways. Professional development was a main need identified by the participants of this study, and therefore, there is a need to find out if providing the requested professional development helps in teachers' self-efficacy regarding RTI and literacy instruction in schools, as well as to determine if student achievement can be tied to this idea. Additional research needs to be conducted for best practices with secondary struggling readers, appropriate interventions, and type of evidence used for making school-based decisions.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Consent Forms
RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION IMPLEMENTATION ACROSS THE UNITED STATES SURVEY

You are invited to participate in a national survey that will be used for preliminary data in regards to a research study on the implementation of Response to Intervention in the secondary schools across the United States. The purpose of this survey is to gain insight on the teachers' level of knowledge of Response to Intervention (RTI and RTI2), the level of knowledge of literacy interventions, and teachers' perspectives of the implementation of RTI in their own classroom.

INFORMATION ABOUT PARTICIPANTS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY

This online, web-based survey contains 52 questions in the form of Likert-scale items, Checklist, and open-ended items. The survey should take between 10 to 15 minutes to complete. All information will be kept on the researcher's password protected computer or in a locked drawer in the researcher's locked office.

BENEFITS

Gathering information about RTI implementation is vital for research in the new state mandates of implementing RTI and all information is greatly appreciated. Through this survey, research will show what various states across the country are doing, in regards to their implementation, as well as what interventions are being provided, by whom, and for how long. Finally, the perspectives of the teachers will be shown through this survey, regarding their own schools and implementation situations. This study has the potential to contribute to the development of a valid and reliable survey for obtaining this pertinent information.

RISKS

While there are limited risks to participating in this study, you might be asked questions that you are not comfortable answering or do not have the knowledge to answer right away. This could be frustrating and cause you to feel that you are being evaluated with the survey. However, no identifiers will be collected, so all of your data will be anonymous, and only seen by the researcher and her committee.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All data will be kept on a secure, password protected computer that will be kept with the researcher at all times on campus or locked in my house when not on site. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which could link participants to this survey.

CONTACT

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher, Rachelle Savitz, at (352) 215-2454, or her advisor, Dr. Dick Allington, at (865) 9745448.. If you have questions about your right as a participant, you may contact the Office of Research Compliance Officer at (865) 974-7697.

PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Going to the next page and completing this survey will constitute your consent to participate.

IRB NUMBER: UTK IRB-15-02374-XP
IRB APPROVAL DATE: 11/23/2016
IRB EXPIRATION DATE: 11/08/2017

Interview Consent Form

RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION INTERVIEW FOLLOW-UP

You are invited to participate in an interview that will be used to provide additional, more in-depth information regarding the implementation of RTI across the United States. The purpose is to find out additional information regarding your perspectives on the curriculum being used, thoughts on how students are progressing and interested during intervention, and other more specific questions regarding Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 literacy RTI implementation. The interview will be in an open-ended, semi-structure format to allow each participant to speak freely about his/her own opinions and information.

INFORMATION ABOUT PARTICIPANTS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY

A single, 60 minute interview will be conducted with 8 randomly selected participants from the Teachers' Perspective on RTI Survey. The questions will be open-ended and in a semistructured format. The session will last no more than one hour in length, and follow-up conversations will be scheduled, as needed. All information will be kept on the researcher's password protected computer or in a locked drawer in the researcher's locked office.

BENEFITS

Gathering information about RTI implementation is vital for research in the new state mandates of implementing RTI and all information is greatly appreciated. Through this interview, the information gathered will allow a much more in-depth description of the RTI implementation across the United States. This research will identify strengths and weaknesses of the current implementation of the policy. Your perspective as a secondary literacy teacher is greatly appreciated and needed, as you will be bringing your own thoughts and experiences to the discussion.

RISKS

While there are limited risks to participating in this study, you might be asked questions that you are not comfortable answering or do not have the knowledge to answer right away. This could be frustrating and cause you to feel that you are being evaluated by me, as the researcher.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All data will be kept on a secure, password protected computer that will be kept with the researcher at all times on campus or locked in my house when not on site. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which could link participants to this interview or study, and pseudonyms will be provided for all participants.

IRB NUMBER: UTK IRB-15-02374-XP
IRB APPROVAL DATE: 11/23/2016
IRB EXPIRATION DATE: 11/08/2017

CONTACT

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher, Rachelle Savitz, at (352) 215-2454, or her advisor, Dr. Dick Allington, at (865) 974-5448. If you have questions about your right as a participant, you may contact the Office of Research Compliance Officer at (865) 974-7697.

PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

CONSENT

I have read the above information. I will keep a copy of this form for my own records and will email a copy to the researcher for her records. I agree to participate in the interview.

Participant's Signature _____ Date _____

Researcher's Signature _____ Date _____

IRB NUMBER: UTK IRB-15-02374-XP
IRB APPROVAL DATE: 11/23/2016
IRB EXPIRATION DATE: 11/08/2017

Appendix 2 Survey Instrument

Secondary (Grades 6-12) Teachers' Perspectives of RTI Survey

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this study. Please click on the link below to view the Consent Statement. Thank you.

IRB Informed Consent Form (Link will go here)

I currently teach an ELA, reading, or literacy intervention for at least one period during the day.

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

Response to Intervention Definition: RTI incorporates assessments, instruction, and intervention through the use of multiple tiers of support for students, depending on the level of reading difficulty students may be experiencing.

Directions: For the following questions, think about how you think RTI should be implemented in schools, and then please select whether you Strongly Disagree, Disagree, are Neutral, Agree, or Strongly Agree with each choice listed. Please select Not Sure if you are unsure.

RTI services are preventative in that they can decrease the number of students eligible for special education services.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Sure
RTI connects general and special education practices.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Sure
RTI represents systematic prevention/intervention	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Sure
RTI represents intense prevention/intervention	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Sure
RTI represents evidence-based prevention/intervention	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Sure
RTI can result in the improvement of academic achievement for many students who struggle to learn.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Sure

Differentiated instruction is to recognize the students' varying interests, readiness levels, and levels of responsiveness to the standard core curriculum and to plan responsively to address these individual differences. Instruction can be differentiated by tailoring the curriculum, teaching

environments, and practices to create appropriately different learning experiences for students in order to meet each students' needs.

I use differentiated instruction techniques in my classroom.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

I currently work with the following:

- ☐ Tier 1 (General Education classroom) only
- ☐ Tier 2 or Tier 3 only
- ☐ Tier 1 and either Tier 2 or Tier 3

(This is a skip question on the survey. If the participant chooses Tier 1 only, they will be taken to the open-ended questions. If the participant chooses that they work with either Tier 2 or Tier 3 at all, the participant will be taken to the next question listed here).

Directions: For the following questions, please select all responses that apply to the question being asked.

How are decisions usually made, in your school, to determine placement of a student in Tier 2 or Tier 3 intervention? Please check all that apply.

- ☐ Student is identified by their English language arts teacher.
- ☐ Student is identified by a team at the school.
- ☐ Student scores below grade level on the universal screening assessment.
- ☐ Student scores below grade level on the district/school assessments.
- ☐ Student scores below grade level on the state assessment.
- ☐ Teacher recommendation
- ☐ Parent request
- ☐ Other (Please specify): _____

How are decisions usually made, in your school, to determine when a student exits a reading intervention? Please check all that apply.

- ☐ Student is identified with a passing grade in reading.
- ☐ Student is identified by a team at the school.
- ☐ Student scores at or above grade level on district/school assessments.
- ☐ Student scores at or above grade level on the state assessment.
- ☐ Through the use of progress monitoring in the intervention class.
- ☐ Teacher recommendation
- ☐ Parent request
- ☐ Other (Please specify): _____

Where does Tier 2 intervention take place? Please check all that apply.

- ☐ Inside a reading classroom
- ☐ Inside an ELA classroom
- ☐ Inside an intervention classroom
- ☐ Other (Please specify): _____

Who delivers the Tier 2 instruction? Please check all that apply.

- ☐ General Education Classroom teacher
- ☐ Certified Reading teacher
- ☐ Certified Special Education teacher
- ☐ Intervention teacher
- ☐ Other specific teacher (please specify type): _____
- ☐ Instructional assistant
- ☐ Paraprofessional
- ☐ Volunteer
- ☐ Parent
- ☐ Other personnel (please specify): _____

Where does Tier 3 instruction take place? Please check all that apply.

- ☐ Inside a reading classroom
- ☐ Inside an ELA classroom
- ☐ Inside an intervention classroom
- ☐ Other (Please specify): _____

Who delivers Tier 3 instruction? Please check all that apply.

- ☐ General Education Classroom teacher
- ☐ Certified Reading teacher
- ☐ Certified Special Education teacher
- ☐ Other specific teacher (please specify type): _____
- ☐ Paraprofessional
- ☐ Instructional assistant
- ☐ Volunteer
- ☐ Parent
- ☐ Other personnel (please specify): _____

How are decisions made regarding the selection of the reading intervention program(s)? Please check all that apply.

- ☐ Person providing the instruction selects the intervention program(s) from those already available by the school/district.
- ☐ Person providing the instruction selects the intervention program(s) from outside of what's available by the school/district.
- ☐ Person providing the instruction develops his/her own intervention program.
- ☐ School administration
- ☐ District Administration (Central Office)
- ☐ Not Sure
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

Directions: For the following questions, please select the one option that best fits the question.

What is your experience with the instruction in the Tier 2 intervention?

- ☐ all students receive the same instruction
- ☐ different instruction used for each student based on identified need
- ☐ not sure

What is the typical size of the Tier 2 intervention groups, in your school?

- ☐ One student
- ☐ 2-3 students
- ☐ 4-5 students
- ☐ 6-7 students
- ☐ More than 7 students

How many minutes per session do students meet for Tier 2 intervention group?

- ☐ 1-9 minutes
- ☐ 10-19 minutes
- ☐ 20-29 minutes
- ☐ 30-39 minutes
- ☐ 40-49 minutes
- ☐ 50-59 minutes
- ☐ 60 or more minutes

How many sessions per week do students meet for Tier 2 intervention group?

- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5

How often are progress monitoring assessments used with students in Tier 2?

- ☐ once to twice per week
- ☐ three to four times per week
- ☐ daily
- ☐ every other week
- ☐ monthly
- ☐ not sure

What is your experience with the instruction in the Tier 3 intervention?

- ☐ all students receive the same instruction
- ☐ different instruction for each student based on identified need
- ☐ not sure

What is the typical size of the Tier 3 intervention groups, in your school?

- ☐ One student
- ☐ 2-3 students
- ☐ 4-5 students
- ☐ 6-7 students
- ☐ More than 7 students

How many minutes per session do students meet for Tier 3 intervention group?

- ☐ 1-9 minutes
- ☐ 10-19 minutes
- ☐ 20-29 minutes
- ☐ 30-39 minutes
- ☐ 40-49 minutes
- ☐ 50-59 minutes
- ☐ 60 or more minutes

How many sessions per week do students meet for Tier 3 intervention group?

- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5

How often are progress monitoring assessments used with students in Tier 3?

- ☐ once to twice per week
- ☐ three to four times per week
- ☐ daily
- ☐ every other week
- ☐ monthly
- ☐ not sure

In the space provided below, list all core reading program(s) that you know are being used in your school for Tier 1 instruction. If you are not sure, please write Not Sure in the box.

In the space provided below, list all intervention program(s)/interventions that you know are being used in your school for Tier 2 instruction. If you are not sure, please write Not Sure in the box.

In the space provided below, list all intervention program(s)/interventions that you know are being used in your school for Tier 3 instruction. If you are not sure, please write Not Sure in the box.

Directions: For the following questions, please select whether you Strongly Disagree, Disagree, are Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree, or are Not Sure with each question listed.

Administration in my school recognizes the need to implement RTI.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Sure
Our RTI model involves two or more tiers of increasingly intense interventions.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Sure
Faculty in our school have had opportunities to learn about the RTI model through training.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Sure
Faculty in our school have had opportunities to learn literacy interventions for use with students at each tier level.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Sure
Faculty in our school collaborate to design RTI instruction/intervention.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Sure
Our RTI services involve individual and/or small instruction intervention groups.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Sure
My school has the appropriate supports in place for students in Tier 1.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Sure
My school has the appropriate supports and interventions in place for students in Tier 2.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Sure
My school has the appropriate supports and interventions in place for students in Tier 3.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Sure
In my school, assessment data are used appropriately to determine progress of students in Tier 1.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Sure
In my school, assessment data are used appropriately to determine progress of students in Tier 2.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Sure
In my school, assessment data are used appropriately to determine progress of students in Tier 3.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Sure

RTI is conducted by certified educators at all tier levels.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Sure
RTI is conducted by well-trained educators at all tier levels.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Sure
I am knowledgeable about the purposes and benefits of RTI.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Sure
I am kept adequately informed about my students' progress in reading interventions.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Sure
I am confident that my students are receiving the necessary support in reading, through interventions.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Sure
I am confident that I am implementing RTI effectively, in my classroom.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Sure
I am confident that I have been trained well enough to implement RTI effectively.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Sure
RTI is producing positive change in students' reading achievement.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Sure
RTI is effectively implemented in my school.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Sure

Demographic Information

Directions: Please answer the following Demographic questions to the best of your ability, in reference to you and your school. All responses will be kept confidential when analyzing the data.

Gender:

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Prefer Not to Answer

Years of teaching experience:

- ☐ 1-3
- ☐ 4-6
- ☐ 7-10
- ☐ More than 10
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

Current teaching position in your school: (Please check all that apply)

- ☐ Reading Teacher
- ☐ Instructional Coach
- ☐ English Language Arts Teacher
- ☐ Intervention Teacher
- ☐ Content Area Teacher
- ☐ Administration
- ☐ Guidance Counselor
- ☐ Other (Please specify): _____

Current certification(s) held: (Please check all that apply)

- ☐ Reading
- ☐ Special Education
- ☐ English Language Arts
- ☐ Elementary Education
- ☐ Psychology
- ☐ Other (Please specify): _____

Grades you currently teach: (Please check all that apply)

- ☐ 6
- ☐ 7
- ☐ 8
- ☐ 9
- ☐ 10
- ☐ 11
- ☐ 12

If you would like to be included in a follow-up interview, please include your name and email below

Appendix 3 Survey Codebook

Table A.1 Survey Codebook

Question	Label	Codes
State		
StateN	All states with a number	
Regions	regions based on census	1 = Northwest 2 = Midwest 3 = South 4 = West
RegDiv	Divisional Regions	1 = New England 2 = Middle Atlantic 3 = East North Central 4 = West North Central 5 = South Atlantic 6 = East South Central 7 = West South Central 8 = Mountain Division 9 = Pacific Division
Teach	I currently teach an ELA, reading, or literacy intervention for at least one period during the day in a grades 6-12 classroom.	1 Yes 0 No
policy1	RTI is preventative and decreases eligibility for SPED	-2 strongly disagree -1 disagree 0 neutral 1 agree 2 strongly agree
policy2	RTI connects general and special education practices.	-2 strongly disagree -1 disagree 0 neutral 1 agree 2 strongly agree
policy3	RTI is systematic	-2 strongly disagree -1 disagree 0 neutral 1 agree 2 strongly agree
policy4	RTI is intense prevention	-2 strongly disagree -1 disagree 0 neutral 1 agree 2 strongly agree
policy5	RTI is evidence-based	-2 strongly disagree -1 disagree 0 neutral 1 agree 2 strongly agree
policy6	RTI can improve student academic achievement	-2 strongly disagree -1 disagree 0 neutral 1 agree 2 strongly agree

Table A.1 Continued

Question	Label	Codes
DI	Do I use DI?	0 = No 1 = Yes
TierLevels	I currently work with which:	1 = Tier 1 only 2 = Tier 2 or Tier 3 only 3 = Tier 1 and either Tier 2 or Tier 3
Placement_	Procedures for placing in intervention	
Exit_	Procedures for exiting intervention	
tier2_RC	Where Tier 2	Reading Classroom
tier2_ELA	Where Tier 2	ELA classroom
tier2_INT	Where Tier 2	Intervention classroom
tier2_Other	Where Tier 2	Other
tier2_Otext	Where Tier 2	Other text
tier2_GECT	Who provides Tier 2	General Ed Classroom Teacher
tier2_CRT	Who provides Tier 2	Certified Reading
tier2_CSPED	Who provides Tier 2	Certified Special Ed
tier2_INTT	Who provides Tier 2	Intervention Teacher
tier2_OST	Who provides Tier 2	Other Specific Teacher
tier2_IA	Who provides Tier 2	Instructional Assistant
tier2_Para	Who provides Tier 2	Paraprofessional
tier2_V	Who provides Tier 2	Volunteer
tier2_P	Who provides Tier 2	Parent
tier2_OtherPer	Who provides Tier 2	Other personnel
tier2_OSTT	Who provides Tier 2	Other specific teacher text
tier2_OPT	Who provides Tier 2	Other personnel text
Tier3_RC	Where Tier 3	Reading Classroom
tier3_ELA	Where Tier 3	ELA classroom
tier3_INT	Where Tier 3	Intervention classroom
tier3_Other	Where Tier 3	Other
tier3_Otext	Where Tier 3	Other text
tier3_GECT	Who provides Tier 3	General Ed Classroom Teacher
tier3_CRT	Who provides Tier 3	Certified Reading
tier3_CSPED	Who provides Tier 3	Certified Special Ed
tier3_OST	Who provides Tier 3	Other Specific Teacher
tier3_IA	Who provides Tier 3	Instructional Assistant
tier3_Para	Who provides Tier 3	Paraprofessional
tier3_V	Who provides Tier 3	Volunteer
tier3_P	Who provides Tier 3	Parent
tier3_OtherPer	Who provides Tier 3	Other personnel
tier3_OSTT	Who provides Tier 3	Other specific teacher text
Tier3_OPT	Who provides Tier 3	Other personnel text
Decision1	Decision on instruction for interventions	Person providing selects from programs available by school/district
Decision2	Decision on instruction for interventions	Person providing selects programs from outside school/district options
Decision3	Decision on instruction for interventions	Person providing develops own
Decision4	Decision on instruction for interventions	School Admin

Table A.1 Continued

Question	Label	Codes
Decision5	Decision on instruction for interventions	District Admin (Central Office)
Decision6	Decision on instruction for interventions	Not Sure
Decision7	Decision on instruction for interventions	Other
Decision7Text	Decision on instruction for interventions	Other Text
Tier2Ins	Tier 2: Instruction	1 = all students receive the same instruction 2 = different instruction for each student 3 = not sure
Tier2Size	Tier 2: Size	1 = 1 student 2 = 2-3 students 3 = 4-5 students 4 = 6-7 students 5 = more than 7 6 = not sure
Tier2Min	Tier 2: Minutes per session	1 = 1-9 minutes 2 = 10-19 minutes 3 = 20-29 minutes 4 = 30-39 minutes 5 = 40-49 minutes 6 = 50-59 minutes 7 = 60 or more minutes 8 = Not Sure
Tier2Sess	Tier 2: Sessions per week	1 = 1 2 = 2 3 = 3 4 = 4 5 = 5 6 = Not sure
Tier2PM	Tier 2: PM how often	1 = once or twice per week 2 = 3-4 times per week 3 = daily 4 = every other week 5 = monthly 6 = Not Sure
Tier3Ins	Tier 3: Instruction	1 = all students receive the same instruction 2 = different instruction for each student 3 = not sure
Tier3Size	Tier 3: Size	1 = 1 student 2 = 2-3 students 3 = 4-5 students 4 = 6-7 students 5 = more than 7 6 = not sure
Tier3Min	Tier 3: Minutes per session	1 = 1-9 minutes 2 = 10-19 minutes 3 = 20-29 minutes 4 = 30-39 minutes 5 = 40-49 minutes 6 = 50-59 minutes 7 = 60 or more minutes 8 = Not Sure

Table A.1 Continued

Question	Label	Codes
Tier3Sess	Tier 3: Sessions per week	1 = 1 2 = 2 3 = 3 4 = 4 5 = 5 6 = Not sure
Tier3PM	Tier 3: PM how often	1 = once or twice per week 2 = 3-4 times per week 3 = daily 4 = every other week 5 = monthly 6 = Not Sure
Tier1Prog Tier2Prog Tier3Prog schools1	Tier 1 Programs Tier 2 Programs Tier 3 Programs Administration in my school recognizes the need to implement RTI.	-2 strongly disagree -1 disagree 0 neutral 1 agree 2 strongly agree
schools2	Our RTI model involves two or more tiers of increasingly intense interventions.	-2 strongly disagree -1 disagree 0 neutral 1 agree 2 strongly agree
schools3	Faculty in our school have had opportunities to learn about the RTI model through training.	-2 strongly disagree -1 disagree 0 neutral 1 agree 2 strongly agree
schools4	Faculty in our school have had opportunities to learn literacy interventions for use with students at each tier level.	-2 strongly disagree -1 disagree 0 neutral 1 agree 2 strongly agree
schools5	Faculty in our school collaborate to design RTI instruction/intervention.	-2 strongly disagree -1 disagree 0 neutral 1 agree 2 strongly agree
schools6	Our RTI services involve individual and/or small instruction intervention groups.	-2 strongly disagree -1 disagree 0 neutral 1 agree 2 strongly agree
SST1	Appropriate supports for students in Tier 1	-2 strongly disagree -1 disagree 0 neutral 1 agree 2 strongly agree
SST2	Appropriate supports for students in Tier 2	-2 strongly disagree -1 disagree 0 neutral 1 agree 2 strongly agree
SST3	Appropriate supports for students in Tier 3	-2 strongly disagree

Table A.1 Continued

Question	Label	Codes
		-1 disagree 0 neutral 1 agree 2 strongly agree
SAT1	Assessment data is used appropriately to determine progress in Tier 1	-2 strongly disagree -1 disagree 0 neutral 1 agree 2 strongly agree
SAT2	Assessment data is used appropriately to determine progress in Tier 2	-2 strongly disagree -1 disagree 0 neutral 1 agree 2 strongly agree
SAT3	Assessment data is used appropriately to determine progress in Tier 3	-2 strongly disagree -1 disagree 0 neutral 1 agree 2 strongly agree
TP1	RTI is conducted by certified educators at all tier levels.	-2 strongly disagree -1 disagree 0 neutral 1 agree 2 strongly agree
TP2	RTI is conducted by well-trained educators at all tier levels.	-2 strongly disagree -1 disagree 0 neutral 1 agree 2 strongly agree
TP3	I am knowledgeable about the purposes and benefits of RTI.	-2 strongly disagree -1 disagree 0 neutral 1 agree 2 strongly agree
TP4	I am kept adequately informed about my students' progress in reading interventions.	-2 strongly disagree -1 disagree 0 neutral 1 agree 2 strongly agree
TP5	I am confident that my students are receiving the necessary support in reading, through interventions.	-2 strongly disagree -1 disagree 0 neutral 1 agree 2 strongly agree
TP6	I am confident that I have been trained well enough to implement RTI effectively	-2 strongly disagree -1 disagree 0 neutral 1 agree 2 strongly agree
TP7	I am confident that I am implementing RTI effectively, in my classroom.	-2 strongly disagree -1 disagree 0 neutral 1 agree 2 strongly agree
TP8	RTI is producing positive changes in students' reading achievement.	-2 strongly disagree -1 disagree 0 neutral

Table A.1 Continued

Question	Label	Codes
TP9	RTI is effectively implemented in my school.	-1 agree -2 strongly agree -2 strongly disagree -1 disagree 0 neutral 1 agree 2 strongly agree
Gender	Gender	1 = male 2 = female 4 = prefer not to answer
yearsE	Years of teaching experience	1 = 1-3 2 = 4-6 3 = 7-10 4 = more than 10 5 = Prefer not to answer
CTP_RT	Current Teaching Position: Reading Teacher	
CTP_IC	Current Teaching Position: Instructional Coach	
CTP_ELA	Current Teaching Position: ELA	
CTP_IT	Current Teaching Position: Intervention Teacher	
CTP_O	Current Teaching Position: Other	
CTP_A	Current Teaching Position: Administration	
CTP_GC	Current Teaching Position: Guidance Counselor	
CTP_CAT	Current Teaching Position: Content Area Teacher	
CTP_OT	Current Teaching Position: Other Text	
Cert_R	Certification: Reading	
Cert_SP	Certification: Special Ed	
Cert_ELA	Certification: ELA	
Cert_EE	Certification: Elementary Ed	
Cert_Psy	Certification: Psychology	
Cert_O	Certification: Other	
Cert_OT	Certification: Other Text	
GT6	Grades Teach: 6	
GT7	Grades Teach: 7	
GT8	Grades Teach: 8	
GT9	Grades Teach: 9	
GT10	Grades Teach: 10	
GT11	Grades Teach: 11	
GT12	Grades Teach: 12	
RTIS	Composite Score of RTI in my Schools (Factor 1)	
RTIP	Composite Score of RTI Policy (Factor 2)	
POC	Composite Score of Participant's Own Confidence in RTI (Factor 3)	

Appendix 4 Interview Procedures, Questions, and Guide

Interview Procedures:

1. Introductions and thank each for participating.
2. Engage in some small talk to put subject at ease.
3. Review with each participant purpose of interview.
4. Assure that the information from the interview will be kept confidential by me.
5. Review the consent form that was previously signed.
6. Get verbal permission to record the interview.
7. Ask if they are ready for me to begin recording.
8. Test equipment by recording the following information:
 - a. Date
 - b. Time
 - c. Location
 - d. Participant(s) pseudonym
 - e. Interviewer's name
9. Conduct the interview.
10. Watch the time and do not go over the time allotted. Schedule follow-up sessions, as needed.
11. Stop the recorder.
12. Thank the participant again.

Interview Questions (These questions are just a guide and might not all be covered or worded exactly the same way.):

Describe your understanding of RTI.

How is RTI implemented in your school?

How is instruction being implemented in Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 (i.e., differentiated instruction, small group, whole group, partners, etc.)

What are the pros and cons for the type of intervention program/instruction you are using and which tier are you referring to?

What are the pros and cons for the curriculum being used in your instruction?

Do you feel that you are provided enough information regarding the progress of each student in the various tiers?

Do you feel your students are progressing at an appropriate rate?

What are your thoughts regarding the program and the interest level/appropriateness for reach student?

What are changes that you could recommend in regards to either instruction, curriculum, differentiation, etc.?

What more do you think could be done to help struggling readers, and what resources would be needed to do this?

Is there anything we haven't discussed yet that you would like to mention?

Appendix 5 Interview Outline

Theme 1: Teachers' Perspectives on Preparation and Professional Knowledge Certification and Being Well-Trained

- knowledge of what to do with students
- knowledge of how to get/find appropriate resources
- survey questions regarding certification and well-trained
- problems when not well-trained
 - not well trained: don't know what to do
 - not well-trained: attitude about students
 - not well-trained: reliance on programs
 - not well-trained: quitting and negative feelings
- not well trained: trying and liking what they are doing
 - learning on their own
 - trying and improving
- survey questions: Component 3 total

Collaboration

- needs
- purpose and benefits
- survey question on collaboration

Current PD (by district and school)

- survey questions on trained well enough and had opportunities to learn literacy
- interventions and the RTI model.
- instruction opportunities
- instruction not working and why
- differentiated instruction (+ and -)
- RTI (+ and -)
- assessment (+ and -)
- problems with PD

Types of Training Requested

- RTI
- general
- literacy
- alignment

Theme 2: Teachers' Perspectives and Descriptions of RTI Implementation

Background on RTI

Placement in RTI

- inclusive or exclusive of SPED
- pre-identified
- how (teams)
- why (data-screener, etc.)

Data issues

- fluidity of process
- placement issues (referral procedures, too many, misplaced, unknown data)

Data Throughout the process

- why need data

- why need multiple assessments
- types of assessments used
- creating own data sources
- problems with data

Instruction and Interventions

- aspects of Interventions
- need for instruction
- what's happening in the classrooms Currently
- specific programs mentioned
- differentiated instruction
- autonomy
- pro's and success of instruction
- problems with Instruction/Interventions
- lack of Resources

Overall Thoughts on RTI

- negative
 - lack of support
 - elementary to secondary issues
 - test scores and eval pressures
 - implementation issues
 - systematic problems
- positive
 - support of administration
 - trust/autonomy
 - district support

VITA

Rachelle Savitz was born in Pittsburgh, PA, to the parents of Stanley and Erika Savitz. She is the youngest child. She attended Gateway Senior High School and headed to Slippery Rock University after graduation, to pursue a degree in Music Education. After graduating from Slippery Rock University, she began her teaching career in a suburb of Pittsburgh, as a middle school music teacher. After two years, she moved to Gainesville, FL and taught music there for four years. While there, she pursued a Master's degree in Special Education at The University of Florida and was granted the Secondary Teacher of the Year for reading, from the Secondary Reading Council of Florida. After the four years in Gainesville, she moved to Boynton Beach, FL, and taught literacy for six years there. She first taught at Boynton Beach High School, but then worked for the district office in the Secondary Literacy Curriculum Department. While in South Florida, she also was President of the Secondary Reading Council of Florida and on the board for the Florida Reading Association. She accepted a Chancellor's Fellowship and graduate teaching assistantship at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, in the Literacy Studies department. Throughout her teaching and student career, she presented at various local, state, national and international conferences, as well as published articles in various literacy journals. In addition, she volunteered at local schools and community organizations, as well as, as a reviewer for various journals. Rachelle graduated with a Doctor of Philosophy in Education with a focus on literacy studies in May 2017. She is currently interviewing for professor positions at various universities.