Exploring the Concerns of Teachers and Principals Implementing Response to Intervention in a Pilot Project: Where Policy and Practice Collide

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated in loving memory of my dear friend, Jim Elliott,
who believed in me when I did not believe in myself and
who saw all the good in me when I could not.
Your life was a living testimony to your faith and your love for people,
and I am who I am today because of your friendship.
I am so fortunate to have called you friend and
To have benefited from your extraordinary example of a life well-lived.
I miss you every day, Jimbo.
I could not have done this without your encouragement and support.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this mixed-methods, multi-site study was to identify and explore the concerns of teachers and principals implementing a pilot Response to Intervention (RTI) model in three elementary schools in the southeast United States and to determine whether these concerns differed significantly from the beginning to the end of the first year of implementation. The Stages of Concern from the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (George, Hall, & Stiegelbauer, 2006; Hord, Rutherford, Huling, & Hall, 2004) served as the theoretical framework for the design and analysis of this study.

Between Fall 2008 and Spring 2009, 18 participants, including six administrators and 12 teachers, were interviewed through semi-structured interviews. Observations and documents also served as data sources. The Stages of Concern Questionnaire was completed by 168 teachers and principals in Fall 2008 and Spring 2009. Paired samples *t*-tests were performed on the data to determine if levels of concern differed significantly over time.

Themes developed in the fall suggested: (a) confusion over the RTI process and difficulty scheduling the required components of RTI; (b) additional responsibilities placed on teachers, questioning the appropriateness of the RTI model for schools' population of students, and delaying the process for referral for special education; (c) role impact on teachers feeling hampered in their duty to refer for special education services; and (d) improved instructional practices as a facilitating factor.

Spring themes included: (a) ongoing confusion over the RTI process and scheduling difficulties with additional concerns regarding insufficiency of training and

the need for additional resources to sustain RTI implementation; (b) delay of services for struggling students; (c) role impact as teachers being forced to learn new ways of teaching and principals having to lead their staffs through conflict, in addition to guiding and supporting them; and (d) improved outcomes for students as a facilitating factor. Implications for practice and research are discussed.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Chapter Introduction

When President George W. Bush signed the Individuals with Disabilities Educational Improvement Act (IDEA) into law on December 3, 2004, a new era for special education was born. Embedded within the law was a small term that has had potentially explosive consequences for the field. This term, response to intervention (RTI), was proposed as an alternative method of identifying students with learning disabilities in addition to the standard discrepancy between intelligence and achievement that has traditionally been utilized in identifying this category. This method requires measuring and monitoring a student's response to individualized intervention within the general education curriculum. As such, RTI represents a dramatic shift in the paradigm of identifying learning disabilities. The following statement is found in the regulations for the 2004 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA):

> In addition, the criteria adopted by the State—
>
> (1) Must not require the use of a severe discrepancy between intellectual ability and achievement for determining whether a child has a specific learning disability, as defined in § 300.8(c)(10);
>
> (2) Must permit the use of a process based on the child's response to scientific, research-based intervention; and
>
> (3) May permit the use of other alternative research-based procedures for determining whether a child has a specific learning disability, as defined

in § 300.8(c)(10). (Assistance to States for the Education of Children with Disabilities and Preschool Grants for Children with Disabilities: Final Rule, 2006, p. 46786)

The language of the law clearly states that State Educational Agencies (SEAs) cannot force a Local Educational Agency (LEA) to use a discrepancy formula to identify students with learning disabilities. The phrase, "must not require," very clearly states the prohibitive intent of the law. Furthermore, the LEA is given the choice regarding which model to use. It is worth noting, however, that although more control in identifying learning disabilities appears to have been given to the LEA, the law does not outright abolish the discrepancy formula. A LEA may use that method or it may not. Congress stopped short of dictating to states that RTI should be used exclusively.

Final regulations for the IDEA 2004 arose from proposed federal regulations for the implementation of the reauthorized law which were first published on June 10, 2005. A review of these proposed regulations indicates a strongly worded rationale for not utilizing a discrepancy formula in the identification of learning disabilities. For example, the following quote from the proposed federal regulations contains very direct language:

> There are many reasons why the use of the IQ-Discrepancy criterion should be abandoned. The IQ discrepancy criterion is potentially harmful to students as it results in delaying intervention until the student's achievement is sufficiently low so that the discrepancy is achieved. (Assistance to States for the Education of Children with Disabilities, 2005, p. 35802)

The language used implies that harm is actually done to children by using the discrepancy model. In addition, the phrase, "should be abandoned," clearly indicates that the practice of using the discrepancy model should no longer be tolerated in any state. The RTI model is endorsed, as evidenced by the following quote from the proposed regulations:

> For these reasons, models that incorporate response to a research-based intervention should be given priority in any effort to identify students with SLD [Specific Learning Disability]. Identification models that incorporate response to intervention represent a shift in special education toward the goals of better achievement and behavioral outcomes for students identified with SLD… . (Assistance to States for the Education of Children with Disabilities, 2005 p. 35802)

The language of the proposed regulations is a ringing endorsement for utilization of RTI. In addition, the language used appears to go over and above the language of the law, which seems more general in nature and more favorable to local option. However, the regulatory language strongly implies that the SEAs have the right to abolish the discrepancy model. This course of action is neither stated nor implied in the law itself.

While research has been conducted on two school systems implementing a RTI model (Grimes & Kurns, 2003; Marston, Muyskens, Lau, & Canter, 2003; Tilly, 2003), research on the challenges of implementing a RTI model within an actual school system is virtually absent from the literature. This omission has important implications for administrators of both general education and special education. Because RTI is recommended as an alternative method in the identification of learning disabilities in

IDEA and because the law appears at this time to give SEAs the choice of completely discarding the discrepancy formula, research is needed to address the practical issues LEAs will face in implementing a RTI model within school settings.

As RTI remains poised on the brink of becoming an alternative method of identifying learning disabilities, many lingering questions remain to be answered by researchers. The issue of treatment fidelity becomes paramount when using intervention responsiveness to determine whether a child has a learning disability (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006; Gersten & Dimino, 2006). In other words, are classroom teachers implementing the prescribed intervention treatment consistently as required by whichever model is adopted by a school district? Another issue to be addressed by researchers involves defining what constitutes nonresponsiveness and how it is measured (Bradley, Danielson, & Doolittle, 2005; Fuchs & Fuchs). Depending on how intervention responsiveness is measured, variability may be present in terms of which students respond to an intervention and which do not (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Compton, 2004).

Statement of the Problem

RTI is a process that will be implemented by school districts for the purpose of identifying learning disabilities and classifying students in need of special education services. To date, however, very few school districts have utilized a RTI approach in the identification of students with learning disabilities, and there are no clear-cut guidelines to assist districts in this implementation. While general education teachers will be responsible for implementing interventions prior to referral for special education services, there are currently no data available regarding the readiness, willingness, or ability of

these teachers to implement RTI, nor are any data available to assist principals in this process. This omission is unfortunate given school personnel's direct role in any RTI model formulated and implemented in a school district. No study on the challenges and issues involved in implementing a RTI model would be complete without giving voice to the administrators and teachers involved in the success or failure of the model. The grassroots implementers are the backbone of any implementation, and the success or failure of any implementation rests with these people. Fowler (2004) noted the importance of obtaining the input of principals and teachers in any implementation effort because this group of stakeholders has unique insights into both the opportunities and the potential challenges implementation will pose within the everyday life of a school. Thus, the absence of studies addressing the thoughts and perceptions of principals and teachers directly involved in implementing RTI is an area of tremendous need within the available literature at this time. This study sought to address this problem by focusing on a RTI model being piloted by one school district in the southeastern United States.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this mixed-methods, multi-site case study was to identify and explore the concerns (i.e., feelings, thoughts, and reactions) of teachers and principals as they experienced the implementation of RTI and to determine whether these concerns differed significantly from the beginning to the end of the first year of implementation. This purpose was realized by utilizing three elementary schools who are currently implementing RTI in the southeastern U.S.

Definition of Terms

This section provides definitions of terms used in this study. Because these terms are used frequently in RTI research and can have variable meanings, the definitions provided below represent how the terms are used in this study.

1. *Response to Intervention*: Response to Intervention (RTI) is an alternative method of identifying students with learning disabilities. This process is defined as a change in performance or behavior as a result of an intervention (Gresham, 2001).
2. *Universal Screening*: Universal Screening is a system of assessing all students in order to identify which students are at-risk for academic difficulties. For purposes of this study, only reading will be addressed, and the Universal Screening occurs three times a year in fall, winter, and spring.
3. *Progress Monitoring*: Progress monitoring refers to frequent assessment of students who are identified as at-risk for academic failure to see if there is a positive response to the interventions. In this study, progress monitoring refers to weekly assessment of at-risk students.
4. *Curriculum Based Measurement*: Curriculum Based Measurement (CBM) refers to short-duration tests that are directly derived from curricular materials (Shinn, 2002). CBM assessments used in this study were purchased by the district from AIMSweb, a commercially-available package of CBM assessment for reading, math, and writing. Only reading CBM was used in this study.
5. *Tiers*: Within a RTI framework, the term *tiers* refers to the various levels of intervention provided to at-risk students. How many levels, or tiers, of intervention

are provided and the duration of those tiers are determined by each state or school district. The RTI model design used in this study consisted of three levels or tiers of intervention referred to as Tier 1, Tier 2A, and Tier 2B. The RTI model design studied is thoroughly described in Chapter 4.

6. *At-Risk*: Each state or school district decides how *at-risk* will be defined in their RTI model design. The term refers to the status of a group of students who score below a specific set score on the Universal Screening. For this study, a student is considered to be at-risk if he or she scores below the 10th percentile on the AIMSweb CBM reading measure.

Research Questions

Given the absence of both qualitative and quantitative data addressing the thoughts and perceptions of teachers and principals directly engaged in the implementation of RTI, many research questions arise. For the purposes of the present study, however, these questions were confined to the concerns of teachers and principals in three elementary schools based on their experience and familiarity with implementing a RTI model in a moderately large school district in the southeast U.S. This study focused on the following questions:

1. What are the concerns of teachers and principals as they experience RTI implementation?
    a. What do teachers and principals perceive as barriers to implementing RTI?
    b. How are the roles of teachers and principals affected by RTI?

c. What factors facilitate RTI implementation?

2. To what extent do the concerns expressed by teachers and principals vary from the beginning to the end of the first year of RTI implementation?

The first question and accompanying subquestions address qualitative issues that were explored in this study, while the second question addresses quantitative issues measured by statistical analysis. These questions provide much needed insight into the thoughts and perceptions of teachers and principals in real-world contexts as they deal with the issues of implementing a RTI model. The Stages of Concern dimension of the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) served as the theoretical framework (see Chapter 2 for a complete discussion of this framework) through which these questions were viewed and analyzed. The data generated from analysis of these questions provided a basis for understanding the implementation process in regard to RTI and provided valuable insight into how teachers and principals experienced RTI based on their familiarity with the pilot model. Therefore, this study aimed to address a major knowledge gap within the literature.

Delimitations

I have imposed two delimitations on this study. First, the study focused on three elementary schools in a school district implementing a RTI pilot model in the southeast U.S. As a result, the study was delimited to elementary schools. In addition, this study focused solely on the concerns of teachers and principals engaged in the implementation process to the exclusion of other personnel involved in the implementation such as district-level administrators, assessment specialists, parents, and students. While the

concerns of these other personnel and stakeholders are certainly deemed worthwhile, to include them in this study went beyond the stated purpose and scope of this research. Another group omitted from the study design includes the parents of students participating in the RTI model. Because parent concerns, thoughts, and perceptions did not apply to the specific purpose of this study, this group was excluded. However, future studies of RTI would certainly benefit from including these groups as part of the study's design.

Limitations

Information generated from case studies is not considered to be highly generalizable (Maxwell, 2005; Merriam, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 2002). In particular, case study research has been plagued by criticisms of lack of rigor and lack of generalizability (Maxwell; Merriam; Yin, 2003). However, a distinction is drawn between case studies relying on single cases and case studies relying on multiple cases (Herriott & Firestone, 1983; Merriam; Miles & Huberman; Yin). Evidence from case study designs incorporating multiple cases is deemed more compelling and more robust than case studies relying on single cases (Herriott & Firestone). Merriam stated, "The more cases included in a study, and the greater variation across the cases, the more compelling an interpretation is likely to be" (p. 40). Yin also stated:

> In general criticisms about single-case studies usually reflect fears about the uniqueness or artifactual condition surrounding the case (e.g., special access to a key informant). As a result, the criticisms may turn into skepticism about your ability to do empirical work beyond having done a single-case study.

> Having two cases can begin to blunt such criticism and skepticism. Having more than two cases will produce an even stronger effect. (p. 54)

This limitation was addressed in this study by incorporating a multiple case design consisting of three cases, or schools, to improve the confidence and robustness of the results. While confidence in the results is improved through the use of multiple cases, the limitation of generalizability remains (Miles & Huberman; Yin). In addition, the design of this study imposed limitations through its focus only on elementary schools. Consequently, the results are not generalizable to grades other than elementary grades.

Significance of Study

The significance of this study lies in its addressing a missing component in the RTI literature/research base. Research on RTI has thus far primarily focused on quantifiable, methodological issues involved in the efficacy, design, and reliability of RTI. Available quantitative studies on classroom implementation are hampered by the fact that in most cases the interventions were either conducted directly by researchers or by teachers, who were heavily supported by researchers as they conducted the interventions. To date, there are few qualitative or quantitative studies of school-based personnel who are solely responsible for implementing the components of RTI. By addressing the lived experiences of teachers and principals who are actively implementing a RTI pilot model through a mixed methods research design, this study aimed to fill this gap in the literature base by giving voice to these grassroots implementers who hold direct influence over how RTI is perceived and implemented within the schools, as well as by providing vital input on issues of implementation for

administrators in special education and general education as they prepare to implement RTI.

Organization of Study

In Chapter 2, the Review of Literature presents the research that deals with RTI as a policy through the context of an historical overview of the Learning Disabilities category of the IDEA and the emergence of RTI as an alternative method of identification for this category. In addition, the theoretical framework, the Stages of Concern dimension of the Concerns-Based Adoption Model, utilized in this study is presented along with pertinent research. Chapter 3 presents the methods employed to address the research questions posed in this study and the participants utilized. A description of the school district, the RTI model adopted by the district, and the three elementary schools is presented in Chapter 4. Chapters 5, 6, and 7 contain analysis of qualitative and quantitative data collected in the fall for each school individually. Cross-case analysis for the fall data across the three schools occurs in Chapter 8. Chapters 9, 10, and 11 consist of analysis of qualitative and quantitative data collected in the spring for each individual school. Chapter 12 presents cross-case analysis for the spring data across the three schools. In the concluding chapter, Chapter 13, implications for practice, suggestions for further research, and the relationship between this study's findings and the literature (theory) are discussed.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Chapter Introduction

To encompass the context of the present study, this literature review will address several areas. Because Response to Intervention (RTI) as a policy seeks to address problems within the specific learning disabilities category, the history of learning disabilities as a category of special education will first be explored to provide the proper background for the emergence of RTI. Secondly, the development of RTI as a policy within the Individuals with Disabilities Educational Act (IDEA) of 2004 will be reviewed to illustrate how it came to be included within IDEA. Current research on RTI will then be reviewed to provide a foundation for the present study's pilot model that is being implemented. Finally, the theoretical framework for the present study will be reviewed and discussed.

An Historical Perspective of Learning Disabilities

The Emergence of Learning Disabilities

In order to fully understand RTI and to illustrate its emergence into the field of special education, one must first understand the history of learning disabilities. The earliest known references to learning disabilities occurred in Europe in 1802 in a letter by a German physician, Dr. Franz Joseph Gall (Hallahan & Mercer, 2001). In this letter, Gall explored the relationship between acquired brain injury and mental impairment, and he is credited with being the first to make this link. Other studies followed suit, and the focus remained on acquired brain injury. By 1872, Sir William Broadbent (as cited in

Hallahan & Mercer) reported a case of an intelligent adult patient who completely lost the ability to read after a head injury. With this case, the study of learning disabilities turned to the effect brain injury has on reading. The first known reference to a child with reading difficulties occurred in 1895. This child was believed to be of average intelligence but unable to recognize words. Of particular concern to the future study of learning disabilities, however, was the fact that no head injury or illness had occurred. The focus turned to "congenital word-blindness" and dealt with deficits in visual memory for words (Hallahan & Mercer).

Researchers and clinicians in the United States began to examine the Europeans' work in brain-behavior relationships around the 1920s. However, U.S. researchers focused on language and reading difficulties, along with perceptual and perceptual-motor difficulties and attentional disabilities. Primary researchers included Samuel Orton, Grace Fernald, Marion Monroe, and Samuel Kirk. Orton's work is arguably the backbone of U.S. foundation on reading disabilities. Of particular note is the fact that Orton stated in 1925 that he questioned whether IQ scores that were obtained on children with reading disabilities were valid measures of their intellectual ability. He also was the first to introduce the idea of multi-sensory training. Orton's research in reading disabilities was crucial in the development and treatment of dyslexia. Other factors identified as potential causes of learning difficulties were distractibility and hyperactivity. These studies led to an emphasis on controlling variables within the learning environment to improve school functioning by the 1960s (Hallahan & Mercer, 2001).

By the time the 1960s had arrived, the concept of learning disabilities began its emergence as a formal category of disability (Reschly, Hosp, & Schmied, 2003). Samuel Kirk has been credited with coining the term, *learning disabilities*, in 1963. A group of parents attending one of his conferences immediately banded together and formed the Association for Children with Learning Disabilities (ACLD), which is now known as the Learning Disabilities Association of America (LDA) and is generally acknowledged as the most influential special interest group for learning disabilities in the U.S. Another powerful organization was founded in 1968. The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) introduced its Division for Children with Learning Disabilities, which has become the largest division of the 17 special interest groups within the CEC (Hallahan & Mercer, 2001).

Federal Involvement with Defining Learning Disabilities

The federal government also began to take an interest in the emerging field in the 1960s. Three task forces were developed to study learning disabilities, with the first two task forces focusing on a definition. The title of the project, "Minimal Brain Dysfunction: National Project on Learning Disabilities in Children," indicated the division present in the field at that time in terms of the causes of learning disabilities. Task Force 1, composed mainly of medical professionals, elected to define minimal brain dysfunction as neurologically-based variations that led to learning difficulties or behavioral disorders in children with average or near average intelligence. On the other hand, Task Force II was composed primarily of educators. This group was charged to make educational programming recommendations, but they chose instead to provide an

alternative definition to the Task Force I approach to learning disabilities. The group could not agree on a single definition of learning disabilities so they put forth two definitions. The first definition stressed intra-individual differences while the second stressed achievement-intelligence discrepancy. In 1968, the U.S. Office of Education (USOE) appointed the National Advisory Committee on Handicapped Children (NACHC), headed by Samuel Kirk, to issue a report on learning disabilities and to include a definition that could possibly be used as a basis for introducing legislation for funding programs. This definition focused on a disorder of one or more basic psychological processes that were involved in understanding or in using oral or written language (Hallahan & Mercer, 2001).

The 1960s also marked the beginning of federal legislation for persons with disabilities. Public Law 89-10, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, was passed by Congress and authorized an initial budget of 1.3 billion dollars for the nation's public schools. Beneficiaries of this act included gifted and disabled children, as well as non-disabled children (Pizzuro, 2001). However, students with learning disabilities were not included. Murdick, Gartin, and Crabtree (2002) stated that the act proposed to fund programs for the assistance of disadvantaged children, improvement of instructional materials, creation of educational research centers, and funding of state educational agencies. Amendments to Public Law 89-10 included Public Law 89-313 (1965) and Public Law 89-750 (1966), which expanded funding and provided federal grants for the education of children with disabilities (Murdick et al.). In addition, Public Law 89-750 (1966) created the Bureau on Education and Training of the Handicapped

(BEH). The responsibilities of the BEH included administration of all federal programs involving children with disabilities. However, students with learning disabilities were again not included in these laws (Hallahan & Mercer, 2001). Pizzuro added that the legislation passed by the 89th Congress led the Council for Exceptional Children to proclaim the year 1966 as the greatest year for special education legislation. While the federal government prescribed services and offered financial incentives to states, educational services for students with disabilities were not federally guaranteed (Pizzuro). Parents and advocates of children with learning disabilities joined forces and were able to exert enough pressure on the BEH that the Children with Specific Learning Disabilities Act was passed in 1969. This act adopted the NACHC's definition of learning disabilities and supported service programs for students with learning disabilities in the form of model projects (Hallahan & Mercer).

Public Law 91-230, the Elementary and Secondary Education Amendments of 1970, provided consolidation of existing grant programs related to children with disabilities and was later renamed the Education of the Handicapped Act of 1970 (Murdick et al., 2002). Pizzuro (2001) noted that President Richard Nixon did not personally endorse the passage of this law, although he signed it due to pressure from a largely Democratic Congress. Nixon firmly believed that education should be left to the states and local districts and that the federal government had no right to dictate how states should educate their citizens. In terms of learning disabilities, the law still did not recognize learning disabilities as a formal category eligible to receive support in schools from Part B monies. However, Part G of the law continued allowing the USOE to award

discretionary grants for learning disabilities to support education of teachers, research, and service delivery programs (Hallahan & Mercer, 2001). While Public Law 91-230 is known as the original law for the education of children with disabilities, this law did not guarantee a free and appropriate education to children with disabilities (Pizzuro). Four years later, Public Law 91-230 was amended by Public Law 93-380. Included in requirements was the directive for states to develop state plans including timetables for providing complete and full educational opportunities for children with disabilities. In addition, procedural safeguards were offered in the identification, assessment, and placement of children with disabilities (Murdick et al.).

The period from 1975 to 1985 marked a fairly stable time in the history of learning disabilities. With the passage of Public Law 94-142 in 1975, the category of learning disabilities became officially recognized and received status as a category eligible for funding for direct services (Hallahan & Mercer, 2001). The passage of Public Law 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, was a pivotal event in the history of special education in general and learning disabilities in particular. This law was a revision of Public Law 91-230, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act Amendments of 1970. Like its predecessor, Public Law 91-230, the bill was passed reluctantly by the sitting president, Gerald Ford. Ford opposed the bill because it took educational decision-making away from the states and gave too much power to the federal government to dictate educational policy. Consequently, he threatened a pocket veto of the bill. Advocacy groups conducted a head count of members of Congress who could be counted on to override the Presidential veto and found that 97 percent were

committed to voting to override the veto. To avoid a huge political embarrassment, President Ford signed Public Law 94-142 into law in October 1975, although he stated he thought the law was a mistake for the country and looked forward to the law's eventual repeal (Pizzuro, 2001). By including learning disabilities as a category for special education eligibility in Public Law 94-142, the new law would create a debate within the field of special education that would last for decades to come.

Defining Discrepancy

With the implementation of Public Law 94-142 in 1977, federal regulations pertaining to the identification of students with learning disabilities introduced the idea of a discrepancy formula. The USOE first proposed the idea that achievement must fall below 50% of the child's expected achievement level. However, public response to this idea was overwhelmingly negative. The center of this dispute involved disagreement over how severe the discrepancy should be. In addition, consistent methods of determining discrepancy did not exist across states or even within states. The USOE backed down and did not include an expectancy formula in the final version of the federal regulations. Nonetheless, the USOE remained faithful to the idea of a severe ability-achievement discrepancy in the final regulations (Hallahan & Mercer, 2001; Reschly et al., 2003). The federal regulations did not provide any guidance in terms of how the discrepancy was to be determined or how to determine whether a discrepancy was severe. Consensus on how to measure this discrepancy, as well as how to define it, has never been achieved. Today, there is little consensus among the 50 states on how to determine discrepancy (Reschly et al.).

By 1985, however, events were occurring that threatened to tear the field apart. One pivotal event was that the definition of learning disabilities changed within some of the organizations, while the federal definition did not. The LDA definition in 1986 stressed the life-long nature of learning disabilities and the impact learning disabilities can have on adaptive behavior. In 1987, the Interagency Committee on Learning Disabilities (ICLD) added deficits in social skills as an area of potential learning disability and added Attention Deficit Disorder as a possible co-morbid condition. The National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (NJCLD) revised its definition of learning disabilities in 1988 and stressed the life-long nature of learning disabilities but disagreed with the ICLD idea that a deficit in social skills should be considered part of learning disabilities. In sharp contrast to change in the conceptualization of learning disabilities among advocacy groups, the federal definition as included in the most recent reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Educational Act (IDEA) of 1997 remains virtually unchanged since the inception of Public Law 94-142 in 1975 (Hallahan & Mercer, 2001).

By the late 1990s criticism of the ability-achievement discrepancy reached a crescendo. At the center of this maelstrom was the question of whether the severe discrepancy criterion was appropriate due to the lack of empirical reliability and validity. Numerous researchers have found that the discrepancy model of learning disabilities identification does not clearly predict academic success based on IQ alone (Lyon, 2001; Siegel, 1989, 2003; Stage, Abbott, Jenkins, & Berninger, 2003; Stuebing et al., 2002). Additional research (Arnold & Lassman, 2003; Coutinho, 1995; Fletcher et al., 2001;

Francis et al., 2005; Hallahan & Mercer, 2001; MacMillan, Gresham, & Bocian, 1998; MacMillan, Gresham, Lopez, & Bocian, 1996; MacMillan & Siperstein, 2001; Reschly, 2002; Reschly et al., 2003; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2002; Stage et al.; Stuebing et al.) at the end of the twentieth century indicated serious problems pertaining to learning disabilities. These problems include concern regarding identification procedures, overrepresentation of minorities, and the explosive growth of the number of students with learning disabilities. Due to their importance to the RTI movement, each of these issues will be addressed at length.

Current Problems With the Learning Disabilities Category

The primary problem facing the field of learning disabilities today involves the method of identification. Reschly and Hosp (2004) stated that 48 of the 50 states within the United States utilize a discrepancy formula to entitle students to receive special education services under the learning disabilities category. The ability-achievement discrepancy model has come under attack by researchers in recent years. Stuebing et al. (2002) noted that the discrepancy model often prevents early identification of students with learning disabilities due to difficulty with young children being able to move beyond the floor of basic academic achievement tests. In other words, the types of pre-reading tasks on reading achievement tests are not sufficiently difficult to be useful in identifying young, at-risk students. As a result, many school districts do not even attempt to assess students for learning disabilities until second grade due to these psychometric difficulties (Stuebing et al.). Stage et al. (2003) added that students must fail for one to three years before a discrepancy exists that is large enough to quantify as statistically significant.

Consequently, early intervention is not possible, and it is later in elementary grades when children are identified. A generally accepted premise is that the earlier intervention occurs, the more likely remediation is possible (Francis et al., 2005; Reschly et al.; Stage et al.; Stuebing et al.).

Stage et al. (2003) maintained that policy and legislation should be redirected into alignment with scientifically supported research. By focusing on treating children in upper grades for reading disabilities, educators are ignoring research clearly indicating the benefits and success of treating reading difficulties in beginning readers. In other words, prevention and early intervention are the keys to preventing reading disabilities in older children.

Another problem associated with the achievement-discrepancy model is the fact that better readers tend to do better on IQ tests. Known as the Matthew effect, it is believed that better readers know more about the world they live in and have more of a cultural foundation upon which to draw. Consequently, these children perform better on intellectual assessments. This raises serious implications for the performance of poor readers on IQ tests because it is very likely that those children would score lower on an IQ test, thus eliminating the possibility of obtaining a discrepancy between their IQ and reading score. These students then do not qualify to receive special education services due to a lack of discrepancy between their IQ and reading achievement. As a result, intervention and intense remediation do not occur (Hallahan & Mercer, 2001). Additional research (Hallahan & Mercer; O'Malley, Francis, Foorman, Fletcher, & Swank, 2002; Reschly et al., 2003) indicates that there is little difference in the

educational needs of children with high IQs and low achievement in reading and children with low IQs and low achievement in reading. In other words, discrepant and non-discrepant children exhibit the same educational needs and respond to the same types of instruction with comparable educational outcomes, thus raising the question of whether the practice of separating groups of poor readers based on IQ scores is valid or even ethical.

In addition, questions have been raised regarding the fairness of using IQ tests to identify minority students as learning disabled. Arnold and Lassman (2003) and Hosp and Reschly (2004) reported that there is a disproportionate placement of minority students in high-incidence disabilities such as mild mental retardation, learning disabilities, and behavior disorders. They further maintained that there is a marked difference between placement of minorities for high-incidence and low incidence disabilities. They added that there is little consensus regarding criteria for high-incidence disabilities and that it is possible for error to occur during the referral and evaluation process. The overrepresentation of minority students in special education is made even more troublesome by allegations that special education placement may be ineffective or even detrimental to the student (Reschly, 2002). While most of the concern has focused on minority students classified with mild mental retardation and behavioral/emotional disturbance, there is also clear evidence that the disproportionality is occurring with the classification of learning disabilities as well. Hallahan and Mercer (2001) reported that African Americans and American Indian/Alaska Natives were well over-represented within the category of learning disabilities based on data from the 1998-1999 school year.

The following possible causes for the over-representation of minorities in special education have been identified: racially biased tests, racially biased professionals, and inadequate community resources (Hallahan & Mercer).

The third major problem within the field of learning disabilities is the explosive growth of eligible students. In 1995, Coutinho (1995) stated that 4% of all students who have disabilities in the U.S. have learning disabilities. She noted a total of 2.4 million students being served for learning disabilities at that time. Huge increases had been noted, with a 200% increase from 1976 to 1993 alone (Coutinho; MacMillan & Siperstein, 2001). Reschly (2002) noted that the high-incidence disabilities of mild mental retardation, emotional disturbance, specific learning disabilities, and speech/language impairments comprise over 85% of all students with disabilities and are a huge drain on special education budgets. To further illustrate the explosive growth in students certified with learning disabilities, Scruggs and Mastropieri (2002) maintained that 50% of all students with disabilities and 5% of all students in school are certified learning disabled.

As the twentieth century came to a close, these issues were creating divisions which threatened the cohesiveness of the field of special education. As researchers, professionals, advocacy groups, and special interest groups grappled with trying to answer these questions about the appropriateness of current methods of classifying learning disabilities, the federal government stepped into the foray. The events that followed will be described in the following section.

RTI as a Solution to the Learning Disabilities Problem

Reform Begins

In 2000, the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) called for a planning committee consisting of researchers, parents, trainers, local education agencies, state education agencies, advocates, and policy makers. This group requested a select group of researchers to collect and synthesize key information available on learning disabilities identification. Known as the LD Initiative, the group included all stakeholders to make the event as representative as possible. Nine papers were commissioned dealing with the following areas of identification of learning disabilities: historical perspective, early identification and intervention, classification approaches, decision making, IQ-achievement discrepancy, alternative methods of LD identification, processing deficits, clinical judgment, and the reality of the LD construct. Those chosen to write the papers were well-accepted experts in the field of learning disabilities (Bradley & Danielson, 2004). The "LD Summit – Building a Foundation for the Future" was held from August 27 through 29, 2001, in Washington, DC. A summary of the findings of the nine White Papers indicates that the current practice of achievement-IQ discrepancy has resulted in a "waiting to fail" approach that must be abandoned. The need to re-conceptualize learning disabilities as a resistance to appropriate interventions was advocated (Elksnin et al., 2001).

Following the LD Summit, OSEP organized roundtables of key stakeholders consisting of all organizations that comprise the NJCLD in an attempt to examine the White Papers to find common ground on which all could agree. The group met on

February 4 and 5, 2002 and June 17 and 18, 2002 in Washington, DC. The following ten organizations were participants: Association for Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD), American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), Council for Exceptional Children's Division for Communicative Disabilities and Deafness (DCDD), Council for Exceptional Children's Division for Learning Disabilities (DLD), Council for Learning Disabilities (CLD), Learning Disabilities of America (LDA), International Dyslexia Association (IDA), International Reading Association (IRA), National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), and the National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD). The LD Roundtable recommended re-thinking referral and identification practices in the upcoming reauthorization of IDEA. Problem-solving approaches were recommended as practices to consider for the learning disabilities eligibility process. As a result, it was felt that further professional development and training would be needed at the school level. In short, the members of the LD Roundtable felt that reform was needed through further collaboration between regular education and special education (OSEP, 2002).

On October 2, 2001, President George W. Bush created the Commission on Excellence in Special Education. This action was an extension of the President's vision for educational reform. The committee acknowledged a strong need for reform due to the following issues: high dropout rate for students with disabilities, low enrollment rates in higher education for students with disabilities, lack of preparation of public educators to work with students with disabilities, certification of over half of all children with disabilities as children with learning disabilities, high percentage (80%) of children with

learning disabilities who have not learned to read, and overrepresentation of minority students in special education. The President sought a new era in special education—one that moves from a culture of compliance to a culture of accountability (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

Nine major findings were reported by the Commission. First, IDEA has placed process above results and bureaucracy above student achievement, largely due to litigation. In addition, the current system has adopted a "waiting to fail" model rather than acting proactively to improve student achievement. Third, special education and general education programs consider themselves separate, and this has fostered a system characterized by misidentification and alienation. Fourth, when children do not make adequate progress, parents have no recourse. Regarding eligibility, many of the current methods of identifying children lack validity. Sixth, children with disabilities require highly qualified teachers to teach them. In addition, the Commission noted that the field is slow to embrace evidence-based practices. Finally, the system has failed too many children with disabilities as evidenced by the high dropout rate and lack of transition into full employment after high school (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

Three major recommendations were made by the Commission of Excellence in Special Education. First, IDEA needs to return to its mission – to focus on the needs of every child rather than on compliance. Second, a model of prevention needs to be embraced, not a model of failure. Early intervention and identification were critically important in providing adequate services to children. Finally, children with disabilities need to be considered general education children first. Further collaboration between

regular education and special education is needed to rebuild a whole educational system. Among other recommendations made by the Commission, of RTI should be incorporated into the identification of learning disabilities (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

Response To Intervention: The Proposed Solution

Searching the available literature on RTI yields a modest number of articles focusing primarily on what RTI is (Fletcher, Coulter, Reschly, & Vaughn, 2004; Fuchs, Fuchs, & Compton, 2004; Fuchs, Mock, Morgan, & Young, 2003; Gresham, 2001; Vaughn & Fuchs, 2003), how it should be structured (Kovaleski, 2003; Marston et al., 2003; Mellard, Byrd, Johnson, Tollefson, & Boesche, 2004; Tilly, 2003; Vaughn, 2003), and whether it is an effective method of identifying learning disabilities (Fiorello, Hale, & Snyder, 2006; Flanagan, Ortiz, Alfonso, & Dynta, 2006; Fletcher et al., 2011; Fletcher & Denton, 2003; Francis, Fletcher, & Morris, 2003; Fuchs, 2003; Fuchs & Deshler, 2007; Fuchs, Fuchs, & Stecker, 2010; Gerber, 2003; Hale et al., 2010; Hale, Kaufman, Naglieri, & Kavale, 2006; Hollenbeck, 2007; Johnson, Mellard, & Byrd, 2006; Kavale, Holdnack, & Mostert, 2003; Kavale & Spaulding, 2008; Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2005; McKenzie, 2009; Reschly, 2005; Reynolds & Shaywitz, 2009; Scruggs, 2003; Speece, Case, & Molloy, 2003; Stuebing, Barth, Mofese, Weiss, & Fletcher, 2009; Torgesen, 2003; Vaughn, Linan-Thompson, & Hickman, 2003; Vellutino, Scanlon, Small & Fanuele, 2003). Much of the available research on RTI consists of papers presented at major conferences addressing the difficulties with the learning disabilities category (Fletcher et al., 2001; Hallahan & Mercer, 2001; Kavale, 2001; MacMillan & Siperstein, 2001), as well as RTI as the possible solution (Compton, 2003; Fletcher & Denton; Francis et al.;

Gerber; Gresham; Grimes & Kurns, 2003; Kamps & Greenwood, 2003; Kavale et al., 2003; Kovaleski, 2003; Marston, 2003; McMaster, Fuchs, Fuchs, & Compton, 2003; O'Connor, Fulmer, & Harty, 2003; Scruggs, 2003; Tilly, 2003; Torgesen, 2003; Vaughn, 2003). The researchers cited in this study are leading scholars in the learning disabilities and RTI categories, and these sources serve as vital guidelines in a practice as new to the educational scene as RTI.

RTI is defined as a change in performance or behavior as a result of an intervention (Gresham, 2001). At the core of the RTI movement is the idea that RTI models apply a high-quality instructional intervention in conjunction with continuous monitoring of student responsiveness to that intervention (Fuchs et al. 2003; Mellard, Deshler, & Barth, 2004). The components of RTI are reflective of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requirements: (a) emphasis on universal screening in reading for all students beginning in kindergarten or even earlier, (b) early intervention programs, and (c) close monitoring of student progress with accountability for results. Students can theoretically be classified as having a learning disability if they continue to exhibit deficient achievement, do not respond adequately to increasingly intense instruction, and do not exhibit evidence that one of the exclusionary criteria is the primary cause of the lack of achievement (Fletcher et al. 2004; Kovaleski, 2003). However, two key concepts apply to the intervention. First, the intervention must be implemented with integrity, and second, it must have validity (Gresham).

In addition, the research on RTI has been largely quantitative and focused on issues involving the efficacy of RTI models (Fletcher et al., 2011; Francis et al., 2003;

Kamps & Greenwood, 2003; McKenzie, 2009; O'Connor et al., 2003; Reynolds & Shaywitz, 2009; Speece et al., 2003; Vaughn et al., 2003; Vellutino et al., 2003) and effects of early screening on students (McMaster et al., 2003; Speece et al., 2003). Of particular importance to school districts attempting to design and implement RTI models, little research has been conducted to illustrate how many levels of intervention, or tiers, are needed to provide the opportunity for sufficient student growth in the academic area of concern. Two quantitative studies that are currently available (O'Connor et al., 2003; Vaughn, 2003) do not address a multiple tier system implemented across a school district by school personnel, but rather utilize research teams to conduct the interventions.

O'Connor et al. (2003) and Vaughn (2003) offer interesting insight into how a RTI model should be structured. However, the fact that researchers conducted the supplemental interventions or heavily supported teachers while they conducted interventions does not generalize well into an actual school implementation of RTI in which interventions are the sole responsibility of general education teachers. In addition, neither study provides evidence that there is a substantial and significant difference between student growth rates between the most intensive tiers. Also absent in the literature are studies comparing the growth rates of students undergoing RTI interventions within general education with the growth rates of students certified with learning disabilities who are receiving special education services. This comparison is highly critical in examining the efficacy of remediation attempts in both general and special education.

In determining what a RTI model should look like, Vaughn (2003) described a three-tiered model with Tier I consisting of core reading instruction provided within the general education setting as part of the standard 90 minute instructional time. Tier II supplements the core reading program with small group sessions that last approximately 30 minutes daily. Participants in Tier II are those students who did not respond to Tier I interventions in the core reading program. Intervention at Tier II lasts approximately 10 to 20 weeks and is implemented by general education, special education, or project staff. Tier III consists of students who did not respond to Tier II interventions and is more intensive and strategic in nature. Rather than small group instruction, Tier III utilizes groups consisting of one adult to three students led by an intervention specialist from the school or by project staff. These sessions are custom designed based on student needs and typically are implemented in two 30 minute sessions per day. The length of Tier III interventions can be considerably longer than the Tier II interventions. Specific information regarding what criteria were utilized to establish which students were at-risk in each tier was not provided (Vaughn). O'Connor (2003) and Mellard et al. (2003) also described a three-tiered model similar to that of Vaughn. On the other hand, Fuchs et al. (2003), Kovaleski (2003), and Marston et al. (2003) identified a two-tiered system of intervention with the third tier serving long-term programming needs of students who did not respond to Tier II interventions. In other words, the third tier essentially involved special education determination and service. Thus, there is no consistent agreement in the literature regarding the number of tiers required for sufficient intervention or how long those tiers should be.

Regarding interventions, there are currently two schools of thought on the process of delivering interventions to remediate academic difficulties. The first method, the problem-solving model, involves the following four steps: (a) problem identification, (b) problem analysis, (c) plan implementation, and (d) problem evaluation. First, the problem is defined in behavioral and observable terms. During the analysis phase, the existence of the problem is validated, along with identifying instructional and student variables that could lead to a solution. A plan to remediate is then developed and implemented based on this analysis. Finally, the plan is evaluated to determine whether it has been effective in remediating the area of concern. Theoretically, there could be alternative plans proposed and implemented in a trial-and-error fashion (Fuchs et al., 2003; Marston et al., 2003; Mellard et al., 2004). On the other hand, Fuchs et al. (2003) advocated a standard protocol approach to designing interventions. This approach to RTI involves using the same empirically validated intervention treatment for all children who exhibit similar problems in a given area. Advantages noted include familiarity with what is expected, easier training and staff development, and improved accuracy of implementation. While the problem-solving model provides more focus on the individuality of children's educational needs, the standard protocol model provides more quality control in implementation fidelity (Fuchs et al.).

Horowitz (as cited in Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2002) recommended that the interventions provided are research-based and occur within the general education program for 8 to 10 weeks. To monitor student progress or response to the intervention, most within the field recommend utilizing Curriculum Based Measurement (CBM)

(Fletcher et al., 2004; Fuchs, 2003; Fuchs & Fuchs,1998; Gresham, 2001; Scruggs & Mastropieri; Vaughn & Fuchs, 2003). CBM refers to short-duration tests that are directly derived from curricular materials. Children typically read aloud to an examiner for one minute, and the words correct and error rate per minute are noted (Jones & Wickstrom, 2002). The short tests, or probes, measure reading fluency which is dynamic, or highly sensitive to short-term effects of instructional interventions. As such, these measures assess change (Shinn, 2002). Deno (2003) noted that CBM procedures include specific duration, administration, directions, and scoring instructions and are considered standardized. When used as global or universal screening measures for all students in a school district, performance on the probes can then be directly compared to others in the class or grade (Shinn).

Deno (2003) and Shinn (2002, 2007) maintained that CBM provides an effective tool for monitoring pre-referral interventions conducted by classroom teachers. Because of the dynamic nature of CBM, probes can be administered frequently with changes in performance noted quickly. Shinn (2002) elaborated and linked CBM into a problem-solving model. He described the five components of a problem-solving model as follows: problem identification, problem certification, exploring solutions, evaluating solutions, and problem solution. These types of components are inherent in any pre-referral intervention program, such as RTI, and CBM easily fits into the model (Shinn, 2002, 2007). As a pre-referral strategy, CBM is very effective in linking interventions to areas of academic weakness (Dombrowski, 2003; Shinn, 2002, 2007).

Another proposed use of CBM is in identifying learning disabilities under the IDEA. Vaughn and Fuchs (2003) discussed the history of the learning disabled category and note the numerous problems with the aptitude-achievement discrepancy model, which they feel excludes children from special education services, introduces bias into the identification process, and leads to a "waiting to fail" situation. Gresham (2001) also identified the method of aptitude-achievement discrepancy identification of learning disabilities as problematic and suggested utilizing CBM as a method to gauge responsiveness to intervention. Burns, MacQuarrie, and Campbell (1999) agreed and also maintained CBM is a good alternative to traditional psychometric approaches to identification of learning disabilities. However, others argue that CBM is best utilized in conjunction with norm-referenced tests when identifying learning disabilities (Dombrowski, 2003; Fewster & MacMillan, 2002). Dombrowski stated that CBM is complementary with norm-referenced tests and should be considered as one component of an evaluation, not the only component. Fewster and MacMillan agreed with this idea and added that CBM was never intended to be isolated from other types of assessment. They noted that CBM is an excellent source of information in screening and functional assessments and should be utilized as a general indicator of difficulties at the elementary level (Fewster & MacMillan).

Among the limited number of actual school districts implementing RTI models, there is little consistency regarding how many levels of intervention are necessary, who provides the interventions, and whether the process is considered a precursor to evaluation for special education eligibility or whether the RTI process itself serves as the

eligibility decision (Fuchs et al., 2003). In addition, how to measure student response to interventions and what criterion to utilize in identifying at-risk students are further areas of inconsistency. Fuchs (2003) noted the following three methods of measuring intervention response: (a) final status of student performance at the end of the intervention, (b) amount of growth made by student during the intervention, and (c) measurement of student performance along with amount of growth for a dual-discrepancy analysis of whether student performance *and* growth rates fall substantially below that of his or her peers. Regardless of which method of measuring student response is utilized, Fuchs advocates a second normative assessment of a full range of students in order to distinguish responders from non-responders, as well as to provide a benchmark that corresponds to successful outcomes for students at a particular grade level.

Tilly (2003) described the level or tier system of the problem solving model used by Heartland Area Educational Agency (AEA) in Iowa. Heartland's problem solving model has been credited with sparking interest in RTI (Fuchs, Deshler, & Reshly, 2004). In 1990, Heartland AEA developed a four-tiered model of special education delivery to address concerns with the two-tiered model of special education delivery that had evolved out of Public Law 94-142 and subsequent Reauthorizations of the IDEA. Level 1 consisted of teachers and parents working together to improve student achievement. This level roughly equates with the general education component of the historical two-tiered model. Heartland added to general education a Level 2 that provided teachers helping teachers to problem solve on an individual basis for students. In addition, Level 3 was added to general education to allow for more rigorous data collection, problem

analysis, intervention fidelity, and results documentation and evaluation. Level 4 increased the rigor and intensity of the interventions and was equivalent with the special education system in the historical model (Tilly).

After utilizing the four-tiered model for thirteen years, Heartland AEA is moving to a three-tiered model. Reasons for this change include several problems that resulted from the four-tier model. First, working with relatively mild problems on a case-by-case basis was very time-consuming and not particularly efficient. In addition, a decrease in special education referrals was not noted. Furthermore, the four-tiered model was proposed originally because compensatory programs were not readily available through general education so special education avenues were utilized. The primary reason for going to a three-tiered model was given as the possibility of allowing mild and moderate problems to be addressed at group level. The proposed three-tiered model would allow modification and adaptation of the core instructional curriculum at Level 1, the use of core instruction and supplemental instructional resources at Level 2, and core instruction and intensive resources at Level 3. Levels 1 and 2 would be group interventions, while Level 3 remains an individualized application of the problem-solving process (Tilley, 2003). Despite the longstanding history of working with a RTI approach, research on Heartland's model does not adequately answer whether it is an effective program in terms of either prevention or identification (Fuchs et al., 2004).

In addition to Heartland AEA, the Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS) has implemented a problem-solving, three-tiered model since 1993 (Marston et al., 2003). Problem solving steps include the following issues: (a) describing student problem with

specificity, (b) generating and implementing strategies for instructional intervention, (c) monitoring student progress and evaluating effectiveness of instruction, and (d) continuing this cycle as necessary. Stage 1 consists of classroom interventions conducted by the general teacher. The multi-disciplinary team becomes involved at Stage 2, and refines instructional strategies for implementation in the classroom. Stage 3 comprises special education referral and initiation of due process procedures. Marston et al. described several outcome areas and areas of concern for RTI models. Regarding special education eligibility, the use of a problem-solving RTI model has not resulted in an "opening of the floodgates" as had been feared. An increase in referrals from Stage 1 to Stage 2 was noted, with the number doubling from 1997-1998 to 2001-2002. However, the number of students referred to Stage 3 did not increase significantly, suggesting good programming in Stage 2 (Marston et al).

More recent studies on RTI have attempted to examine how the process functions in upper elementary grades (Speece et al., 2010) and in middle school and high school settings (Brozo, 2009; Fagella-Luby & Wardwell, 2011; Fuchs, Fuchs, & Compton, 2011; Graves, Brandon, Duesbury, McIntosh & Pyle, 2011; Vaughn et al., 2010; Vaughn & Fletcher, 2010). After studying a large-scale implementation of RTI in reading with a group of sixth-grade students, Vaughn et al. (2010) reported positive gains in students receiving researcher-provided Tier 2 interventions, but these gains did not substantially relate to outcome achievement. Graves et al. (2011) also reported positive gains in oral reading fluency among middle school students receiving a 10-week Tier 2 intervention. However, neither Vaughn et al. (2010) nor Graves et al. (2010) achieved positive gains in

reading comprehension. Fagella-Luby and Wardwell (2011) found significant growth in the post-test scores of at-risk readers in one urban middle school after an 18-week Tier 2 intervention. The study by Speece et al. (2010) found multiple measures of reading were necessary to identify at-risk readers in middle childhood, thus bringing into question using one assessment measure for Universal Screening.

Based on the available studies of RTI in the middle school setting, Fuchs et al. (2010) propose using a modified version of RTI for middle school students which requires placing discrepant students immediately into the more intensive intervention then working downward to less intensive tiers when those students show improvement. The rationale for this proposal is that the deficits in academic skills seen in middle school students are more severe than those seen in elementary students, and there are fewer years left in which to remediate deficits in middle school students before they reach the end of their school careers. Vaughn & Fletcher (2010) agree and note other forms of assessment are better predictors of at-risk academic status for middle school students, such as state achievement measures, than using a Universal Screening assessment as is used in elementary RTI models. Likewise, Sansosti, Noltemyer, and Goss (2010) state significant barriers to implementing RTI at the secondary level exist in the limited availability of interventions and progress monitoring tools for use with high school students.

Advantages and Disadvantages of RTI

There are many advantages documented in the literature for utilizing a RTI model. RTI procedures lend themselves better to understanding instructional quality and

to being able to make informed decisions regarding instructional levels and response to instruction. In addition, RTI provides information pertaining to student performance in direct comparison to his or her peers and within the curriculum. Furthermore, the focus is on academic skills and student learning and can be more easily linked to what is actually going on in the classroom. By using a RTI model, there is no need to rely on the IQ-achievement discrepancy that has resulted in a "waiting to fail" model prior to identification under special education. A major advantage of RTI is that it makes intervention possible at an earlier time when children are most responsive to remediation. By so doing, RTI creates a focus on *prevention* as well as intervention, a facet the current model does not encompass (Mellard et al., 2004; Scruggs, 2003). In addition, RTI identifies those students who are not making progress due to lack of instruction by giving them a chance to succeed with interventions. These students who respond favorably to the intervention process are not identified as students with disabilities. As a result of this distinction, the use of RTI could lead to a reduction in special education enrollment and cost (Fuchs et al., 2003). Students who are at-risk are provided remedial services concomitantly with consideration for special education services, thus eliminating the long evaluation period of waiting with no assistance. A huge potential benefit of this style of program is that exit strategies are clearly and readily available. As soon as objective data are available on student performance at a specified level, exit plans from special education can begin rather than indefinitely leave a student in special education. At an administrative level, RTI offers increased accountability for both regular education and

special education and promotes the two systems working together as a team (Office of Special Education Programs, 2002).

On the other hand, there are also disadvantages associated with RTI. Mellard et al. (2004) reported several issues pertaining to the limitations of RTI. First, they noted that the vast majority of research has focused on the area of reading instruction. In addition, studies have been further limited by focusing almost exclusively on the lower grades of kindergarten through third grade. There is a gap in the research literature in subjects other than reading and in grades above grade 3. Furthermore, Fuchs et al. (2003) stated their preference for a two-level version of RTI with a standard-treatment protocol. The reason for their preference was the belief that fewer levels or tiers serve identification better. The authors see no benefit in having higher tiers or levels where the intensity of the instruction cannot be replicated or supported within the general classroom if the student makes enough progress to exit that upper level. In addition, Fuchs et al. warned that the field is entering a slippery slope, with the end of the LD category looming. Other researchers share this concern (Kavale, 2001; Kavale et al., 2003; Scruggs, 2003; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2002). The most serious possible disadvantage exists in the lack of empirical data in applied settings. While RTI and problem-solving have been implemented in Minneapolis and Heartland Area Educational Agency, along with several other districts, the data empirically illustrating the effectiveness of the model is simply lacking (Fuchs et al., 2003; Mellard et al., 2004). Further study in this area is needed.

Issues of Implementation

Many concerns exist among researchers regarding the practicality and feasibility of implementing the RTI concept on a wide-scale basis in school districts (Fuchs & Deshler, 2007; Hollenbeck, 2007). One of the primary concerns of implementing RTI models to classify students with disabilities involves the question of whether RTI can effectively discriminate between children with learning disabilities and those with other disabilities such as mental retardation, social/emotional disorders, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorders. In addition, many have questioned whether RTI can be defended as the sole determinant of eligibility for learning disabilities (Fiorello et al., 2006; Flanagan et al., 2006; Fletcher et al., 2004; Fuchs & Deshler; Fuchs et al., 2010; Hale et al., 2010; Hale et al., 2006; Hollenbeck; Johnson et al., 2005; Kavale et al., 2003; Kavale & Spaulding, 2008; Machek & Nelson, 2007; Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2005; McKenzie, 2009; Ofiesh, 2006; Reschly, 2005; Reynolds & Shaywitz, 2009; Scruggs, 2003; Vaughn & Fuchs, 2003; Wodrich, Spencer, & Daley, 2006). Of major concern is the fact that research on RTI has thus far focused primarily on reading in the early elementary grades. Implementing a RTI model in a school district begs the question of whether the model can be used for the identification of both elementary and secondary students in all major areas of academics (Compton, 2003; Fletcher et al.; Fletcher, Francis, Morris, & Lyon, 2005; Johnson et al.; Mastropieri & Scruggs; Scruggs; Torgesen, 2003; Vaughn & Fuchs). Difficulties with technical adequacy are also highly problematic (Fletcher 35 al., 2011; Kavale et al., 2003; Kavale & Spaulding, 2008; Reynolds & Shaywitz, 2009; Scruggs; Vaughn & Fuchs). Other concerns pertain to the questions of how adequate

student response to intervention should be defined and how the integrity of the interventions can be assured (Fletcher & Denton, 2003; Fuchs & Deshler; Hollenbeck; Gresham, 2001; Kavale et al.; Scruggs; Speece et al., 2003; Vaughn & Fuchs).

Finally, a major concern involves implementation of RTI by general education teachers. It is unclear at this time whether general education has the resources available in terms of financial resources, personnel, and staff development to implement a RTI model on a wide-scale basis (Fuchs & Deshler, 2007; Friedman, 2010; Kavale et al., 2003; Mellard et al., 2004; Scruggs, 2003; Speece et al., 2003; Vaughn & Fuchs, 2003). Furthermore, the question of whether general education or special education will be responsible for funding RTI implementation has not been addressed (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2005). In addition, Kovaleski (2003) noted that changes in the traditional view of how specialists are utilized in schools may need to be reconceptualized to provide intervention to the numbers of students likely to be identified as nonresponders. Mastropieri and Scruggs also questioned how implementation of RTI would impact the roles of teachers and diagnosticians. This question remains unanswered. Kamps and Greenwood (2003) and Kratochwill, Volpiansky, Clements, and Ball (2007) further pointed out that for RTI models to work, a commitment to increased professional development and training is necessary. Kratochwill et al. maintained that professional development for RTI must contain ongoing support and training within participating schools in order to facilitate successful implementation of RTI. In addition, Kamps and Greenwood noted that the following variables further influence RTI implementation: (a) a core group of teachers working together to accomplish tasks, (b) teachers in both

special education and general education pooling their resources, (c) early screening and targeting of at-risk students as dictated in the three-tiered model, (d) creative/flexible scheduling to provide sufficient time to devote to small group instruction, (e) creative uses of personnel resources, and (f) flexibility of providing curricular changes to support key early literacy skills. Hollenbeck (2007) argued the need to create a partnership between researchers and practitioners in order to increase the knowledge necessary for RTI implementation and to provide answers to these many unresolved issues.

Of critical importance to this study, few studies to date have been conducted to address the thoughts and perceptions of teachers and principals directly engaged in implementing a RTI model. Given the above-noted issues involved in implementation of RTI models, the support and buy-in of teachers and principals are crucial to the model's success within actual schools and school districts. As Fowler (2004) noted, any implementation effort that fails to take into account the concerns of grassroots implementers is missing a vital piece of the big picture. She stated, "More than any other participants, they will understand both the opportunities and potential difficulties the policy change brings with it" (p. 282).

Shepherd and Salembier (2010) describe a qualitative case study of one elementary school implementing RTI. The purpose of the study was to describe the benefits and realities of RTI implementation to assist in illuminating future change efforts. Themes developed included the following: (a) changing classroom practices through ongoing and systematic assessment of student learning, (b) re-defining roles and responsibilities of general and special educators to support the needs of all students, (c)

refining school structures to promote collaborative problem solving, (d) creating a common focus on literacy through initial and ongoing professional development, (e) engaging in instructional and shared leadership practices to build a school-wide learning community, and (f) addressing issues of eligibility. While three other elementary schools participated in the original study, only one school was described in the published article.

In another study of RTI implementation, Martinez and Young (2011) studied how RTI was implemented and perceived in a descriptive study of 99 general education teachers, special education teachers, diagnosticians, counselors, and administrators who were asked to complete an online survey soliciting their opinions on RTI. Findings suggested the majority of participants viewed RTI favorably but written comments suggested participants felt (a) they were already helping students prior to RTI, (b) the RTI process takes up too much time, (b) collecting the required data was too difficult, (c) progress monitoring was time-consuming, and (d) students were better served prior to the implementation of RTI. Because this study addressed staff other than teachers in the online survey, it is impossible to ascertain the opinions of the teachers versus the other staff in the study.

Mahdavi and Beebe-Frankenberger (2009) describe two elementary schools piloting RTI. Based on their observations, they recommend the following: (a) administrative support and leadership are essential in implementing RTI; (b) administrators need to be included in professional development on RTI to ensure they understand the process and can lead it; (c) time should be allotted for administrators to

collaborate with other administrators; and (d) implementations of RTI should incorporate change at an appropriate rate.

Of particular importance to this study, LaRocco and Murdica (2009) conducted a quantitative study of the concerns of teachers implementing RTI using the Stages of Concern Questionnaire (SoCQ). Thirty-eight teachers at two elementary schools completed the SoCQ in the fall 2008 and spring 2009. Results at the first school indicated the highest three Stages of Concern were Stage 0, Unconcerned, Stage 3, Management, and Stage 2, Personal. A paired samples *t*-test on the 17 matched samples indicated no significant change in these concerns from fall to spring. At the second school, the highest scores occurred on Stage 0, Unconcerned, Stage 2, Personal, and Stage 3, Management. Results of a paired samples *t*-test (N = 25) suggested a significant decrease on Stage 1, Unconcerned, from fall to spring. However, because the study focused only on the SoCQ and did not address qualitatively what the concerns actually were, there is no way to know exactly what these concerns were.

This study sought to address the gap in the RTI literature by addressing the lived experiences and concerns of teachers and principals engaged in implementing a pilot RTI model through a mixed-methods, multi-site case study design.

Theoretical Framework

Miles and Huberman (1994) noted that the theoretical framework of a study serves as the "orienting ideas" (p. 17) that each researcher brings to his or her research. Likewise, Merriam (1998) maintained, "The theoretical framework is derived from the orientation or stance that you bring to your study. It is the structure, the scaffolding, the

frame of your study" (p. 45). In defining a theoretical framework, Anfara and Mertz (2006) stated:

> Acknowledging that the term does not have a clear and consistent definition, we define a theoretical framework as any empirical or quasi-empirical theory of social and/or psychological processes, at a variety of levels (e.g., grand, mid-range, and explanatory), that can be applied to the understanding of phenomenon. (p. xxvii)

Thus, the theoretical framework of a study serves as a lens through which the researcher views, designs, and analyzes the study to be conducted. The present study utilized the Stages of Concern (SoC) dimension of the Concerns-Based Adoption Model as the theoretical framework to guide and focus the structure of the study design and analysis of the results obtained.

The Concerns-Based Adoption Model

The Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) arose from federally funded research to study educational change and improvement processes in order to understand how change could prove successful in the educational field. Conducted at the Research and Development Center for Teacher Education at the University of Texas at Austin, this research culminated in the development of the CBAM, which is based on several conclusions about change. First, change is viewed as a *process* rather than a single event. Successful implementation of change requires understanding that change occurs over time, usually a period of several years. Second, change is facilitated, or accomplished, by individuals. Change affects the *people* involved, and their role in the change process

should assume the primary focus of attention in any implementation effort. Change cannot occur until the individuals involved have absorbed the new innovation. Third, change is a highly personal and individualized experience. Each person involved in change will react differently, and change is most successful when support is aimed at the diagnosed needs of individuals involved in the process. By paying attention to individual progress, the change process can be greatly enhanced. Fourth, change incorporates developmental growth that tends to shift as individuals involved in the change process become more familiar with the innovation through experience. Fifth, change is best conceptualized and understood in operational terms. In other words, individuals relate best to change in terms of what that change will mean to them or, in the case of teachers, how the change process will affect their classroom practices. Finally, the focus of facilitating change should be on individuals, innovations, and the context within which the change occurs (Hord, Rutherford, Huling, & Hall, 2004).

The CBAM consists of three dimensions that address change. The first dimension of CBAM consists of the Innovation Configurations (IC), which addresses how innovations are implemented. The focus of the IC is on the operational forms of the innovation that result from different individuals implementing innovations within different contexts. Because individuals use parts of an innovation in various ways, the use of any innovation varies from individual to individual. CBAM uses the IC to identify exactly what is being implemented in operational terms through the use of a checklist specific to the individual components of the innovation being implemented. By identifying the different components of an innovation and the variations in the ways each

is implemented, the IC provides a tangible method for organizations to determine how innovations are implemented (Hord et al., 2004; Hord, Stiegelbauer, Hall, & George, 2006).

The second dimension of the CBAM is the Levels of Use (LoU), which describes the extent to which an innovation is being used by teachers. The eight LoU (see Table 1) focus on the knowledge, skills, and behavioral aspects of individuals' involvement with change (Hall, Loucks, Rutherford, & Newlove, 1975). This dimension of the CBAM focuses solely on the behaviors of innovation users and does not address attitudinal, motivational, or other affective aspects (Hord et al., 2004). The LoU consists of a focused interview that relies on a branching technique that guides the interview process, depending on the response of the interviewee (Hall et al., 2006).

The third dimension of the CBAM, the Stages of Concern (SoC), is the hallmark of the CBAM theory (Hall, Dirksen, & George, 2006). This dimension provides a framework for understanding the personal nature of the change process from the point of view of the individual engaged in implementing an innovation. Concern refers to the feelings, thoughts, and reactions individuals have when they are faced with implementing a new program or innovation. These concerns regarding change are universal, although the nature of these concerns varies from individual to individual. The SoC consists of seven distinct stages that are developmental in nature and vary in intensity as the implementation of an innovation progresses (see Table 2). These stages can be assessed through interviewing or the Stages of Concern Questionnaire (SoCQ), which consists of

Table 1

Levels of Use

Level		Description
0	Nonuse	User has little or no knowledge of the innovation, has no involvement with the innovation, and is doing nothing toward becoming involved.
I	Orientation	User has acquired or is acquiring information about the innovation and/or has explored or is exploring its value orientation and its demands on the user and the system.
II	Preparation	User is preparing for first use of the innovation.
III	Mechanical Use	User focuses most effort on short-term, day to day use of the innovation with little time for reflection. Changes are made more to meet user needs than client needs. User is engaged in stepwise attempt to master the tasks required for use, often resulting in disjointed and superficial use.
IV-A	Routine	Use of the innovation is stabilized. Few if any changes are being made in use. Little preparation or thought is being given to improvement or consequences.
IV-B	Refinement	User varies the use of the innovation to increase the impact on clients. Variations are based on knowledge of both short- and long-term consequences for clients.
V	Integration	User is combining own efforts to use innovation with related activities of colleagues to achieve a collective effect on clients.
VI	Renewal	User reevaluates the quality of use, seeks major modifications or alternatives to the present innovation to achieve increased impact on clients, examines new developments in the field, and explores new goals for self and the system.

Note. From *Measuring Implementation in Schools: Levels of Use* (p. 5), by G. E. Hall, D. J. Dirksen, and A. A. George, 2006, Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory. Copyright 2006 by Southwest Educational Development Laboratory. Adapted with permission.

Table 2

Stages of Concern

Domain		Stage	Description
SELF	0	Awareness	Little concern about or involvement with the innovation.
	1	Informational	General awareness and interest in learning more detail.
	2	Personal	Uncertain about the demands of the innovation, inadequacy in meeting those demands, and his/her role in the innovation
TASK	3	Management	Attention is focused on the processes and tasks of using the innovation and the best use of information and resources.
	4	Consequence	Attention focuses on the impact on students in sphere of influence.
IMPACT	5	Collaboration	Focus on coordination and cooperation with others using the intervention.
	6	Refocusing	Focus on exploration of more universal benefits from the innovation including possibility of changes or replacement with alternative.

Note. From *Measuring Implementation in Schools: The Stages of Concern*, by A. A. George, G. E. Hall, and S. M. Stiegelbauer, 2006, Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Library. Copyright 2006 by Southwest Educational Development Laboratory. Adapted with permission.

35 questions designed to identify where an individual is in the concern process (George, Hall, & Stiegelbauer, 2006; Hord et al., 2004).

Taken together, the SoC, LoU, and IC provide information regarding an individual's attitudes, perceptions, and feelings toward an innovation (SoC), how the individual is using the innovation (LoU), and what the innovation actually looks like on a continuum illustrating high-quality implementation practices to least desirable implementation practices (IC) (Hord et al., 2006). George et al. (2006) stated, "In the process of adopting a change, the Stages of Concern represent the *who*, the Levels of Use are the *how*, and the Innovation Configurations are the *what*" (p. 5). Because the focus of this study was on the concerns of teachers and principals through their attitudes, feelings, and perceptions of the implementation of the RTI pilot model and not on the behavioral aspects of how or what they are implementing, the SoC was the only dimension of CBAM that was utilized in this study. While studying *how* RTI is implemented by teachers and principals in the school setting and *what* that implementation consists of are certainly important and should be addressed in future studies of RTI implementation, this study focused on the affective aspects of RTI implementation through the thoughts and perceptions of the teachers and principals involved. Therefore, an in-depth review of the SoC premises was undertaken to provide specific information on this dimension of the CBAM in order to illustrate how that framework was utilized in structuring the design, data collection, and data analysis of this study.

Stages of Concern: The Theory

George et al. (2006) defined concerns as heightened feelings or thoughts that result from increased perception of events that arouse our attention due to external forces, internal forces, or a combination of the two. Individuals will perceive these events in various ways, depending on psychosocial makeup such as personality dynamics, motivations, personal history, needs, feelings, education, roles, and status. People experience many types of concerns, and the level of intensity varies from person to person. The more personally individuals are involved with an event, the more intense the concerns. Concerns are created and shaped by individual perception, or point of view (George et al., 2006; Hord et al., 2004).

As individuals engage in the change process, concerns become an important dimension to understand. Concerns research refers to the object or situation that is the focus of the individual's concerns by the generic name of *innovation*. While a person can experience many types of concerns regarding an innovation concurrently, some aspects of the innovation will be perceived as more important than others at a given time. Concerns will vary depending on the degree of knowledge about and experience with an innovation. For example, a person who has never used a certain innovation will experience different concerns at different levels of intensity than a person who has more familiarity with the innovation. As familiarity with an innovation occurs, concerns change in type and intensity (George et al., 2006; Hord et al., 2004).

As previously noted, there are seven SoC (see Table 2). The word, *stages*, is used to denote developmental movement through an implementation process. As an individual

experiences an innovation, he or she will experience a certain type of concern intensely, and as that concern subsides, another level of concern will emerge (George et al., 2006; Hord et al., 2004). The developmental nature of concerns is also reflected in the three dimensions the seven stages are grouped into – self, task, and impact (see Table 2). *Self* concerns (Stage 0, Awareness; Stage 1, Informational; Stage 2, Personal) represent the early stages of change. At this time in the change process, individuals want to know more about the innovation, how that innovation is similar to or different from what they are already doing, and how the innovation will affect them personally. *Task* concerns (Stage 3, Management) tend to become more intense at the beginning of an implementation as preparation is being made to begin use. Typical concerns in this stage include time management, scheduling, and planning. *Impact* concerns (Stage 4, Consequence; Stage 5, Collaboration; Stage 6, Refocusing) become more intense when individuals focus more on the effects an innovation has on students and how the innovation can be made more effective. Individuals within this dimension focus on the consequence to student learning, how to collaborate with others to improve effectiveness of the innovation, and how to better implement the innovation (Hord et al.).

In the SoC dimension, a person will progress from having little or no concern, to having personal or self concerns, to having task concerns, to having concerns about the type of impact the innovation is having on students. As earlier concerns are reduced in intensity, later concerns emerge through increased intensity. In general, an individual's concerns move toward higher-level stages with time, experience, and gaining new knowledge and skills. This progression of the stages cannot be engineered but rather is

due to the dynamic of the individual experiencing the innovation. Whether individuals move to higher levels of concern and with what speed they move through the stages depends on both the perceptions of the individuals experiencing the innovation and the environmental context of the innovation in terms of the amount of assistance and support provided. Innovations that are more complex in nature require more skilled facilitation of the change, and that facilitation must carefully attend to the concerns of the teachers involved in the change. The individual nature of change is stressed in the SoC framework, and the individuals themselves ultimately will determine whether change will occur (George et al., 2006; Hord et al., 2004).

Concerns can be assessed through face-to-face conversations, or interviews, and through administration of the SoCQ. The interviewing process works best when the interviewer asks questions designed to stimulate feelings and concerns. Analysis of the themes developed from the content of interviews can be grouped within the seven stages (Hord et al., 2004). Concerns can also be assessed from the SoCQ, a 35-item questionnaire that measures where along the continuum of concerns an individual is at a given point in time. Peak scores along the stages indicate at which stage the individual scored highest (George et al., 2006). By knowing the stage at which an individual or group of individuals is operating, change facilitators can provide assistance aimed at reducing the concerns of any particular stage to guide the implementation of an innovation and to assist those implementing that innovation in progressing to a higher stage (Hord et al.).

Uses of the Stages of Concerns Questionnaire in Research

Early research conducted on the Stages of Concern used the SoCQ to focus on the affective and behavioral changes in individuals engaged in an implementation (George & Rutherford, 1978). In addition, this research focused on the facilitation of change by using individuals as a reference (Hall, 1978). Longitudinal studies using the SoC in school environments were also conducted (Hall, Hord, & Griffin, 1980). These early studies illustrated the reliability of the SoC when used to describe and predict teacher progress in response to change (George et al., 2006).

Today, the SoCQ is the most frequently used tool for data collection in studies on implementation (George et al., 2006). Many studies have used the SoC to study the integration of technology into the schools (Atkins & Vasu, 2000; James & Lamb, 2000; Rakes & Casey, 2002; Yuliang & Huang, 2005). Other studies have used the SoC to study the effects of various implementations on teachers (Christou, Eliophotou-Menon, & Philippou, 2004; Dass, 2001; Hargreaves et al., 2002; Sevilla & Marsh, 1992; Van den Berg, 1993). Many researchers use the SoC to guide and support staff development to address teacher concerns during an implementation (Anderson, Rolheiser, & Bennett, 1995; Bresnitz, Ross, Hall, & Stiegelbaur, 1997; Burns & Reid, 1998; Dobbs, 2004; Howland & Mayer, 1999; McFarland, 1998).

Several studies have utilized the SoCQ in a pre- and pos*t-test* manner to illustrate change in individuals engaged in implementation of an innovation (Anderson et al., 1995; Bresnitz et al., 1997; Gershner & Snider, 2001; Hargreaves, Moyles, Merry, Paterson, & Esarte-Sarries, 2002; Hargreaves, Moyles, Merry, Patterson, Pell, & Esarte-Sarries, 2003;

Hope, 1997; Marsh, 1987; Ward, West, & Isaak, 2002). These studies examined whether significant change in the concerns of teachers occurred over a time period of five months to one year. The findings provided these researchers with data illustrating how change in implementation concerns is reflected in the expressed concerns of teachers over time. Other studies have utilized the SoC framework and the SoCQ in longitudinal studies to examine concerns of implementers over even longer periods of time (Christou et al., 2004; Gwele, 1997; Hawkes, Cambre, & Lewis, 1999; James & Lamb, 2000; Yuliang & Huang, 2005). These studies tracked the progression of implementer concerns over a time period ranging from one year to three years. The results generated from these studies enabled the researchers to continue refining the implementations based on analysis of the concerns of implementers involved.

Study designs utilizing the SoC are both quantitative (Anderson et al., 1995; Atkins & Vasu, 2000; Christou et al., 2004; Gershner & Snider, 2001; Hargreaves et al., 2002; Hope, 1997; Howland & Mayer, 1999; James & Lamb, 2000; Marsh, 1987; Rakes & Casey, 2002; Ward et al., 2002) and qualitative (McFarland, 1998). The quantitative studies involved statistical analysis of the SoCQ, while the qualitative study involved analysis of reflective journals using the SoC as a framework for thematic analysis over a one-year period of time. Of particular importance to the present study, however, the SoC has also been utilized in mixed-methods study designs (Bresnitz et al., 1997; Burns & Reid, 1998; Casey & Rakes, 2002; Dass, 2001; Gwele, 1997; Hargreaves et al., 2003; Hawkes et al., 1999). These studies utilized the SoCQ in conjunction with interviews and

observations in order to identify and analyze the concerns of implementers using the SoC framework.

In summary, the SoC has been utilized as a framework to study the implementation process of a variety of innovations and has proven useful in analyzing the concerns of individuals engaged in implementing new innovations. This framework is flexible for use in quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods study designs. For purposes of this mixed-methods, multi-site case study, the SoC has served as the lens through which the design and analysis of data were filtered.

Stages of Concern and the Present Study

The purpose of this mixed-methods, multi-site case study was to identify and explore the concerns (i.e., feelings, thoughts, and reactions) of teachers and principals as they experienced the implementation of RTI and to determine whether these concerns differed significantly from the beginning to the end of the first year of implementation. The SoC was used to provide the framework for how principals and teachers are responding to the implementation of the RTI pilot model in the first year of implementation. The focus of this study was purely on the affective aspects of implementation through the feelings, thoughts and reactions of teachers and principals as they experienced the implementation of RTI. By identifying and studying these concerns and determining whether these concerns changed over time, this study sought to give voice to teachers and principals as they experienced the first year of RTI implementation. Because of the affective nature of the concerns explored in this study, the SoC was utilized exclusively. Both the LoU and IC focus on behavioral aspects of

implementation. While behavioral aspects of any implementation are important and worthy of study, that dimension of implementation exceeded the scope and purpose of this study.

In order to identify and explore the concerns of teachers and principals engaged in implementing RTI during the first year of implementation, the following research questions guided this study:

1. What are the concerns (i.e. feelings, thoughts, reactions) of teachers and principals as they experience RTI implementation?
    a. What do teachers and principals perceive as barriers to implementing RTI?
    b. How are the roles of teachers and principals affected by RTI?
    c. What factors facilitate RTI implementation?
2. To what extent do the concerns expressed by teachers and principals vary from the beginning to the end of the first year of RTI implementation?

The first research questions and the two subquestions address qualitative issues that were answered through analysis of interview questions, observations, and documents, while the fourth question addresses quantitative issues addressed through statistical analyses of data collected from the SoCQ. The SoC was utilized as a framework to guide qualitative data analysis through viewing themes developed from these three questions along the dimensions of self concerns, task concerns, and impact concerns. By filtering the themes developed through the SoC lens, I was able to go beyond simply identifying a set of concerns regarding RTI and move into aligning those implementation concerns across a

spectrum of how those concerns impacted the individuals participating in the study. In addition, this alignment of developed themes with the SoC spectrum allowed me to analyze movement along the spectrum from the beginning of the first year to the end of the first year of implementation. Quantitative analysis of the SoCQ, in answer to the second research question, allowed me to examine whether the concerns expressed by teachers and principals varied significantly from the beginning of the year to the end of the year during the first year of implementation. In summary, the use of the SoC as my theoretical framework provided a lens that encompassed both qualitative and quantitative data analysis and facilitated the interconnectedness of this mixed-methods study by providing a unifying spectrum of how RTI concerns impact the individuals engaging in the implementation – self, task, or impact concerns.

Summary

This review of literature focused on several aspects to provide a proper context for the present study. The first purpose was to provide a context for RTI as a policy through a review of the learning disabilities category within the IDEA. Thus, an historical perspective of learning disabilities was provided through definitions used, methods of measurement, and current problems with the construct. A second purpose was to describe how RTI evolved as a solution to the problems with the learning disabilities category. This task was accomplished through reviewing definitions of RTI, how RTI is used as a reform effort, advantages and disadvantages of the method, and issues involved in the implementation of RTI. Finally, the third purpose of the literature review was to provide information on the theoretical framework used in this study. Literature on

CBAM, and SoC in particular, was reviewed to illustrate how this framework guided the present study. In so doing, the reader has a better idea of how the present study fits in the context of the RTI movement and how this study was designed in relation to data collection and data analysis through the SoC framework.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Chapter Introduction

The purpose of this mixed-methods, multi-site case study was to identify and explore the concerns (i.e., feelings, thoughts, and reactions) of teachers and principals as they experienced the implementation of RTI and to determine whether these concerns differed significantly from the beginning to the end of the first year of implementation. This purpose was realized by utilizing three elementary schools who are currently implementing RTI in a moderately large school district in the southeastern U.S. This study attempted to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the concerns (i.e. feelings, thoughts, and reactions) of teachers and principals as they experience RTI implementation?
    a. What do teachers and principals perceive as barriers to implementing RTI?
    b. How are the roles of teachers and principals affected by RTI?
    c. What factors facilitate RTI implementation?
2. To what extent do the concerns expressed by teachers and principals vary from the beginning to the end of the first year of RTI implementation?

Questions 1 and the two subquestions are qualitative and were addressed through qualitative methods of data collection and analysis. Question 2 is quantitative and involved statistical analyses of data collected from the Stages of Concern Questionnaire.

This chapter provides an outline and description of the methods and procedures that were utilized in this study. All methods and data collection strategies discussed in this study were submitted to The University of Tennessee's Institutional Review Board for approval prior to beginning data collection.

Assumptions and Rationale for Using a Mixed-Methods Design

Mixed-methods research merges the concepts of quantitative research and qualitative research through the value-ladenness of inquiry, belief in the theory-ladenness of facts, belief in the nature of multiple and constructed realities, belief in the fallibility of knowledge, and the belief in the underdetermination of theory by fact (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) further contended that mixed-methods research offers researchers the opportunity to use a method and philosophy that combine the insights of both quantitative and qualitative methods in order to achieve a workable solution. Because this study merged both qualitative and quantitative data, a mixed-methods design was chosen as the best approach to convey the findings generated. Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) stated, "It should be noted that the term *mixed methods* typically refers to both data collection techniques *and* analysis given that the type of data collected is so intertwined with the type of analysis that is used" (p. 43).

In deciding to utilize a mixed methods approach to this study, I followed the guidelines posited by Greene, Caracelli, and Graham (1989). They provided the following five purposes for using mixed methods studies: (a) *triangulation* or convergence of results; (b) *complementarity* or examining different facets of a phenomenon that overlap; (c) *initiation* or the discovery of paradoxes, contradictions, and

fresh perspectives; (d) *development* or the use of methods sequentially in such a way that results from the first method inform the use of the second method; and (e) *expansion* or adding to the scope and breadth of a study through mixed methods. This study met three of these purposes. First, the intent was to use quantitative data from the SoCQ in conjunction with qualitative data to triangulate findings in a cohesive and seamless manner. Secondly, this study examined the phenomenon of implementing RTI from both qualitative and quantitative perspectives through the analysis of qualitative data (i.e. interviewing, observing, and collecting artifacts) combined with quantitative analysis of the results of the SoCQ in a way that is complementary to the phenomenon being examined from both points of view. In other words, the statistical analysis of the SoCQ added to, or complemented, the qualitative analysis of the case study. Finally, this study utilized qualitative and quantitative data to expand the breadth and depth of knowledge gained from the findings.

Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) argued that the very act of combining two distinct research methods into one mixed-methods study has both strengths and weaknesses. Strengths include using words, pictures, and narrative to supplement and add meaning to numbers, and using numbers to add precision to words, pictures, and narrative. In addition, using mixed methods in research can answer a broader and more complete range of research questions because the researcher is not confined and constrained to only one research method. In fact, a researcher can employ mixed methods designs to capitalize on strengths of one method to overcome weaknesses in the other, and the convergence and corroboration of findings through a mixed methods

approach can provide stronger evidence for a conclusion drawn from a study. Mixed methods studies can be used to add insights and understandings that might be missed through using only a single research method. By using mixed methods designs, researchers can increase the generalizability of their results and produce more complete knowledge in order to inform theory and practice (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie).

There are also weaknesses noted in combining qualitative and quantitative research into mixed methods designs. First, mixed methods designs are more expensive and time consuming to conduct. These designs are often too difficult for one researcher to conduct both the qualitative and quantitative components, particularly if those two approaches are used concurrently in a study. In such cases, it is often necessary to use a research team. To effectively conduct mixed methods studies, the researcher must know and understand multiple methods and approaches to be able to mix them appropriately. In addition to these methodological issues, the methodologist "purists" of both qualitative and quantitative camps still maintain that these two methods should not be mixed and that one should always work within either a qualitative or quantitative paradigm. Finally, there remain details of conducting mixed methods research that must be further resolved by research methodologists, such as problems with paradigm mixing, how to use qualitative methods to analyze quantitative data, and how to interpret results that are in conflict (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

The strengths of mixed-methods studies were capitalized in this study in several ways. First, the qualitative data generated from interviews, observations, and collection of documents were supplemented by the quantitative data generated by the Stages of

Concerns Questionnaire, and the Stages of Concerns Questionnaire gave precision to the qualitative data. As noted previously, combining qualitative and quantitative methods in this study improved the depth and breadth of these findings by addressing a wider range of research questions than either method alone could have addressed. Consequently, the results generated in this study provide added insights into the teachers' and principals' experiences of RTI than either method alone would have provided.

Study Design

In order to fully explore the stated purpose of this study and to address and answer the research questions generated for this study, an exploratory, mixed-methods case study design was utilized. Merriam (1998) stated:

> By concentrating on a single phenomenon or entity (the case), the researcher aims to uncover the interaction of significant factors characteristic of the phenomenon. The case study focuses on holistic description and explanation. (pp. 28-29)

This study aimed to concentrate on the single phenomenon of implementing RTI from the teachers' and principals' perspectives and sought to provide depth of insight into the real-world context of the participants' experiences of this phenomenon. A case study design was chosen to best meet the goals of this study.

In defining a case study, Yin (2003) noted, "A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (p. 13). He

further clarified that this lack of distinction between the phenomenon and context creates the second part of the technical definition of a case study. Yin maintained:

> The case study inquiry copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result, relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result, benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis. (pp. 13-14)

For purposes of the present study, this is the definition of the case study research design that was utilized.

In describing the strengths of case study designs, Merriam (1998) noted that a researcher selects a case study design based upon the nature of the problem to be researched and the questions being asked in the study. She stated:

> The case study offers a means of investigating complex social units consisting of multiple variables of potential importance in understanding the phenomenon. Anchored in real-life situations, the case study results in a rich and holistic account of a phenomenon. It offers insights and illuminates meanings that expand its reader's experiences. These insights can be construed as tentative hypotheses that help structure future research; hence case study plays an important role in advancing a field's knowledge base… . Educational processes, problems, and programs can be examined to bring about understanding that in turn can affect and perhaps even improve practice. Case study has proven

particularly useful for studying educational innovations, for evaluating programs, and for informing policy. (p. 41)

A gap exists in the current literature base on RTI. While many quantitative studies have been published on the efficacy and measurement of RTI, there currently are few studies to describe the lived experiences of school personnel directly involved in the implementation. This study sought to address that gap by providing information on real-life contexts of individuals experiencing the pilot RTI implementation. A case study was selected as the best method of obtaining and conveying this information. As an educational innovation, RTI certainly provides a rich backdrop to study how teachers and principals experience the innovation.

Based on Yin's (2003) guidelines for three types of case studies, this study is defined as exploratory in type. He noted exploratory case studies were appropriate when the research goal is to describe a phenomenon's incidence or prevalence or when prediction is the goal of the research. Because there is no information on teachers' and principals' experiences with or concerns regarding the implementation of RTI, this study largely explored unchartered territory.

To define the type of design that was utilized in this study, the taxonomy for using mixed methods designs proposed by Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) was utilized. They described three designs that incorporate mixed methods structures. Equivalent status designs can be either sequential (QUAN/QUAL or QUAL/QUAN) or parallel/simultaneous (QUAN + QUAL or QUAL + QUAN). In these designs, the researcher uses both quantitative and qualitative approaches equally to understand the

phenomenon of interest. Dominant – Less Dominant designs can also be either sequential (QUAN/qual or QUAL/quan) or parallel/simultaneous (QUAN + qual or QUAL + quan). These types of designs incorporate one method dominantly, while a small component of the study is derived from the other method. The third type of mixed methods design incorporates multilevel use of approaches. These designs use data from more than one level of the organization or group under study to reach more comprehensive results. This study will utilize a dominant – less dominant, parallel/simultaneous, mixed-methods design. Because the primary emphasis of data collection, analysis, and interpretation involved qualitative data from interviews, observations, and collection of documents, the study's dominant feature was qualitative. The quantitative analysis of the SoCQ served as another source for triangulation within the case study and thus had a less-dominant designation. Consequently, this design assumed the form of QUAL + quan. In all, I have designed a case study characterized by Maxwell (2005) as highly interactive and one that will yield vital information for the field. Figure 2 summarizes the interconnectedness of the design of this case study.

Role of the Researcher

As noted above, this study was a mixed-methods case study and incorporated both qualitative and quantitative data in its design and analysis. Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) noted that epistemology in qualitative and quantitative research differ based on assumptions inherent in each method. In quantitative research, the knower and the known are separate which results in the role of the researcher being independent and apart from the research topic. On the other hand, qualitative researchers operate under

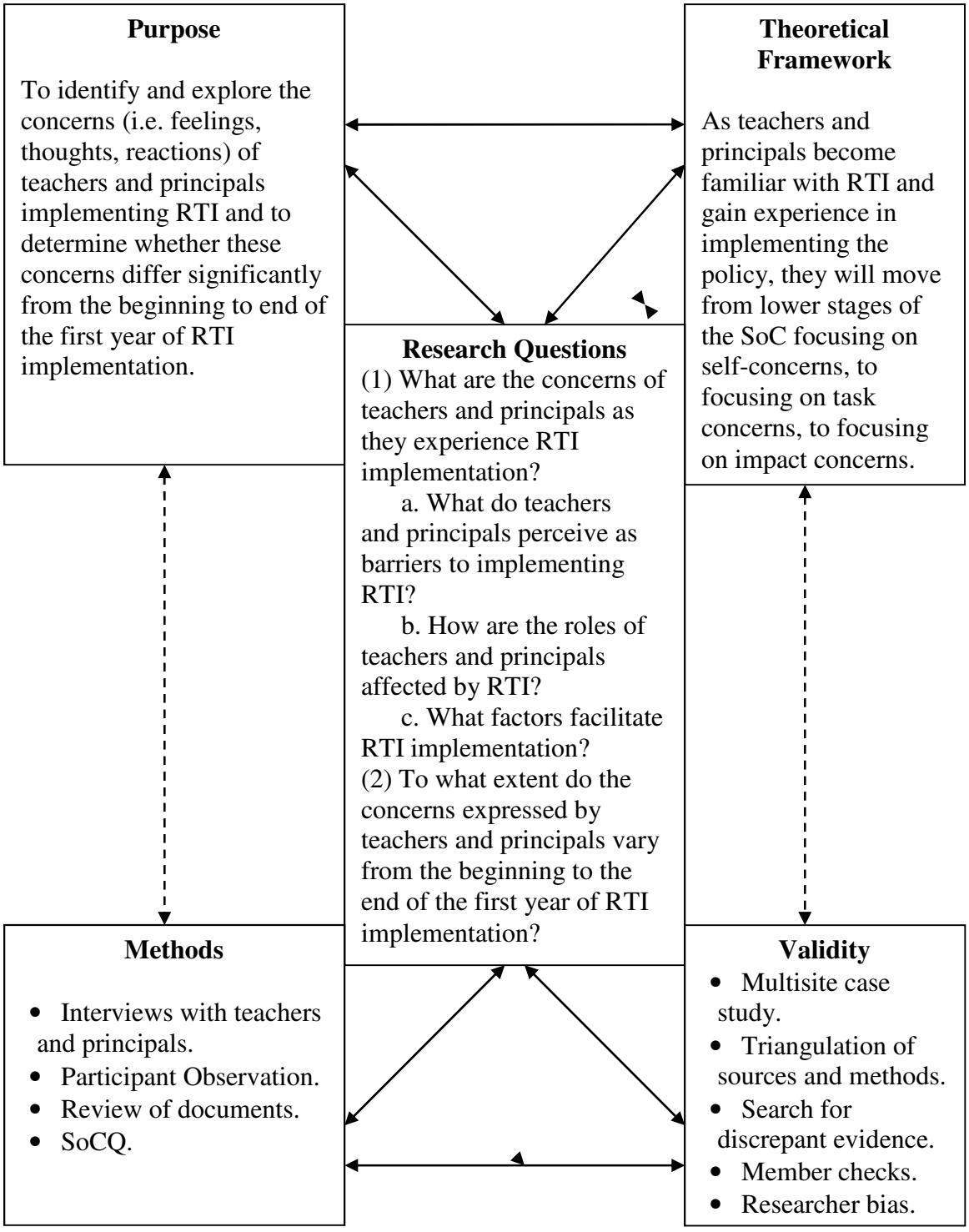


Figure 1. **Research Design.**

the belief that the knower and the known are inseparable due to the subjectivity of reality. In mixed-methods studies, the researcher can be both objective and subjective depending on which methodological tool he or she is using (Tashakkori & Teddlie).

As this mixed-methods study involved the collection of qualitative data, as well as quantitative data, certain precautions against researcher bias had to be taken. Merriam (1998) maintained that the role of the researcher in qualitative research is to function as the primary instrument for data collection and data analysis. She stated:

> Because the primary instrument in qualitative research is human, all observations and analyses are filtered through that human being's worldview, values, and perspective. It might be recalled that one of the philosophical assumptions underlying this type of research is that reality is not an objective entity; rather, there are multiple interpretations of reality. The researcher thus brings a construction of reality to the research situation, which interacts with other people's constructions or interpretations of the phenomenon being studied. The final product of this type of study is yet another interpretation by the researcher of others' views filtered through his or her own. (pp. 22-23)

Because I am involved with the pilot RTI project as an administrator at the district level, the potential for researcher bias is introduced into this study. Specifically, I am a special education coordinator and oversee numerous programs. As mentioned previously, the school district has taken the stance that RTI is a general education initiative. However, one of areas I oversee in my capacity as special education coordinator is that of the referral process. As RTI falls within the referral process, I have a role in its

implementation. Consequently, I serve on the district-level Oversight Committee that facilitates the district's RTI implementation. It should be noted, however, that I have no direct authority, either perceived or implied, over the teachers or principals involved in implementing the RTI pilot model. The potential for bias occurs due to prior knowledge of RTI concepts through research and my role as one of the district-level team members overseeing the RTI pilot program. Because of my position within the school district, the role I assumed in the research process was by definition that of a participant-observer.

Yin (2003) stated, "Participant-observation is a special mode of observation in which you are not merely a passive observer. Instead, you may assume a variety of roles within a case study situation and may actually participate in the events being studied" (pp. 93-94). He further noted that participant-observation offers many advantages to a study such as better accessibility to events or groups in the study, the ability to perceive reality from the viewpoint of an insider rather than an outsider, and the ability to manipulate minor events to produce a variety of situations for data collection purposes (e.g., convening a meeting of persons involved in the study). However, there are also distinct disadvantages pertaining to the biases produced through participant-observation. These include the potential of having to assume various roles other than purely observer, becoming overly supportive of the group or organization under study, spending too much time in the participant role and losing time in the observer role, and finding the time to be in all places at the right time when the organization or group is physically dispersed. The challenge for me will be to find balance between the two roles. As Patton (2002) noted:

> Experiencing the setting or program as an insider accentuates the participant part of participant observation. At the same time, the inquirer remains aware of being an outsider. The challenge is to combine participation and observation so as to become capable of understanding the setting as an insider while describing it to and for outsiders. (p. 268)

Given these issues pertaining to bias and participant-observation, several procedures were introduced into this study to control for effects of bias.

To reduce the impact of bias resulting from prior knowledge, I engaged in two activities. First, I wrote an identity memo according to procedures outlined by Maxwell (2005). This document requires the writer to reflect on his or her own goals and their relevance for the proposed research, but this document can also be utilized to explore researcher assumptions and experiential knowledge. By engaging in this activity, I explored not only my goals for this study, but also ways my assumptions and experiential knowledge could impact this study. For example, because I have worked directly with RTI in another school district, I have direct experience with the process of implementing RTI and overseeing the process. I bring assumptions into this study regarding how RTI should be implemented, how to avoid pitfalls of implementation, and how school personnel involved in the implementation of RTI should perform duties specific to RTI. By reflecting and writing about these assumptions and experiences, I kept myself aware of potential sources of bias in the data analysis of this study. Second, the threat of previous knowledge creating a barrier to findings contrary to that knowledge was addressed through what Yin (2003) referred to as reporting to critical colleagues. This

procedure involved reporting preliminary findings, as early as the data collection stage, to two or three critical colleagues whose responsibility it is to offer alternative explanations and suggestions. By producing documentable rebuttals, bias from inflexibility to contrary findings will be reduced.

To address the issue of my role as both participant and observer in the RTI implementation process, teachers and principals at the three schools participating in this case study were given a Study Information Sheet (see Appendix A), along with the SoCQ, describing the purpose of this study, the voluntary nature of participation in the study, and the confidentiality of study records. The purpose was described as giving voice to teachers' and principals' thoughts and perceptions regarding the implementation of RTI and that the results were for my doctoral dissertation. Teachers and principals selected for interviewing were asked to sign an informed consent form (see Appendix B) clearly stating that the purpose of the interview was for my doctoral research. Confidentiality was assured to all participants to alleviate any possible fears of identification and reprisal by district-level administrators.

Site and Participants

In selecting the sample for this study, I followed Merriam's (1998) guidelines. She maintained the first task is to identify the case, the bounded system or unit of analysis, to be studied. Because this study focused on the implementation of a pilot RTI program in one school district in the southeast, the unit of analysis was defined as teachers and principals participating in the pilot RTI model. Thus, the sample was confined to those teachers and principals at schools participating in this pilot program.

Consequently, the technique described by Creswell (2005) and Patton (2002) as purposeful sampling was utilized to select participating schools. This sampling technique is used to select individuals and sites to understand the phenomenon under study by choosing sites and participants that are rich in information pertaining to the phenomenon. All schools were selected prior to data collection.

As previously summarized, six elementary schools began piloting the three-tiered RTI model during the 2008-2009 school year. Of these schools, three were selected randomly for participation in this study (see Table 3). I deliberately selected three schools because I wanted to utilize a multi-case, mixed-methods design and because I wanted to obtain a rich variety of information from more than one source to improve the robustness of my findings (Herriott & Firestone, 1998; Merriam, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 2003). Teachers and principals in each school stood alone as a case, or unit of analysis, in and of itself.

Participants were both teachers and principals at the three schools selected for participation. All three principals along with their assistant principals participated, and teachers were randomly selected for interviewing. The criterion for participation was that the teachers must have experience with students engaging in the RTI program. Interviews were conducted October 6-10, 2008 and March 12-26, 2009. The number of teacher participants was dependent on the amount of new information that was received during interviewing. As noted by Merriam (1998), sampling is discontinued when a point of saturation, or redundancy, is reached and no new information is forthcoming. Teachers interviewed in this study provided information that was very consistent, and

Table 3

Participating Schools and Faculty Demographics

School	Teachers	Administrators
(1) Magnolia Elementary	4	2
(2) Gardenia Elementary	4	2
(3) Camellia Garden Elementary	4	2

interviewing was discontinued after four teachers at all three schools. It appeared that the point of saturation had been reached given that no new or different information was expressed by the participants. The same teachers who were interviewed in October were interviewed again in March to maintain consistency. All three principals and three assistant principals were interviewed in October and March. Thus, a total of eighteen participants were interviewed in the fall and then again in the spring.

Data Collection Procedures

Describing data collection procedures for a mixed-methods study requires discussing procedures utilized for collecting both qualitative and quantitative data. As noted previously, this mixed-methods case study assumes the form of QUAL + quan because the predominant source of data is qualitative with less emphasis on the quantitative. In discussing the data collection procedures utilized, I will first describe the qualitative data collection procedures, followed by the quantitative data collection procedures.

Qualitative Data

Yin (2003) noted that the major strength of case studies is the opportunity to use multiple sources of data to study the phenomenon under investigation. He stated:

> …the most important advantage presented by using multiple sources of evidence is the development of *converging lines of inquiry*… . Thus any finding or conclusion in a case study is likely to be much more convincing and accurate if it is based on several different sources of information, following a corroboratory mode. (p. 98)

Having multiple sources of data allows triangulation among these sources and greatly improves the internal validity of a study (Merriam, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002; Yin). This study was based on multiple sources of information via interviewing, observations, and collecting documents from the three elementary schools piloting RTI. The relational aspect of these sources of data to the research questions posed in this study is summarized in Table 4.

Interviews

Patton (2002) stated the purpose of interviewing is to enable the researcher to enter the perspective of the person being interviewed. For this study, I conducted semi-structured interviews with the three principals and three assistant principals in the three selected schools and with four randomly selected teachers at each school in order to gain insight into their thoughts and perceptions on implementing RTI (see Appendices C and D). To obtain information that answers the research questions I posed for this study, I designed the interview questions to guide the thoughts of the interviewees (see Table 5). In addition, interview questions were analyzed according to Merriam's (1998) classification of experience/behavior, opinion/value, feeling, knowledge, sensory, and background/demographics (see Table 6). Based on this analysis, I designed interview questions that were varied and led to a variety of information from the respondents, as well as provided answers for my research questions.

All interviews were conducted with the written consent of the person being interviewed (see Appendix B). Two interviews occurred with each participant. The first interview took place during October 2008 in the initial stages of the district's

Table 4

Research Questions in Relation to Data Sources

Research Questions	Interviews	Observation	Documents	SoCQ
(1) What are the concerns (i.e., thoughts feelings, and reactions) of teachers and principals as they experience RTI?	X	X	X	X
(a) What do teachers and principals perceive as barriers to implementing RTI?	X	X	X	
(b) How are the roles of teachers and principals affected by RTI?	X	X	X	
(c) What factors facilitate RTI implementation?	X	X	X	
(2) To what extent do the concerns expressed by teachers and principals vary from the beginning of to the end of the first year of RTI implementation?				X

Note. SoCQ = Stages of Concern Questionnaire

Table 5

Research Questions in Relation to Interveiw Questions

Research question	Interview question
(1) What are the concerns (i.e., thoughts, feelings, and reactions as they experience RTI implementation? (Qualitative Research Question)	T2, T3, T4, T5, T6, T7, T8, T9, T13 P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P10, P13
(a) What do teachers and principals perceive as barriers to implementing RTI?	T14, T15, T16, T17 P14, P15, P16, P17
(b) How are the roles of teachers and principals affected by RTI?	T10, T11, T12 P8, P9, P11, P12
(c) What factors facilitate RTI implementation?	T10, T11, T13, T15 P12, P13, P15
(2) To what extent do the concerns of teachers and principals vary from the beginning of to the end of the first year of RTI implementation? (Quantitative Research Question)	SoCQ Stage Scores

Note. SoCQ = Stages of Concern Questionnaire

Table 6

Interview Question Analysis

Type of Interview Question	Teacher Interview	Principal Interview
Experience/behavior	T1, T6, T10, T11	P1, P6, P8, P9, P10, P12
Opinion/value	T13, T14, T15, T17	P13, P14, P15, P17
Feeling	T7, T16b	P7, P16b
Knowledge	T4, T8, T9, T12, T16a	P4, P11, P16a
Background/demographics	T2, T3, T5	P2, P3, P5
Key	Appendix C	Appendix D

implementation of RTI. The second interview occurred in March 2009 at the end of the first year of implementation. Appointments were made with principals and teachers to interview them at a convenient time. Confidentiality was assured to all participants, both. verbally and in writing. Interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder and were later transcribed and analyzed.

Observations

Merriam (1998) noted that observation provides a firsthand encounter with the phenomenon of study rather than a secondhand account as represented in an interview. She further stated, "Observations are also conducted to triangulate emerging findings; that is, they are used in conjunction with interviewing and document analysis to substantiate the findings" (p. 96). As noted previously, my role within the school district under study necessitated my role as participant-observer, and steps previously outlined were followed to reduce the potential for researcher bias.

My role as a district-level administrator provided the unique opportunity to gain entry into all three pilot schools that participated in this study. In addition, this entry and the amount of time I spent in the schools afforded the possibility of observing many facets of the implementation of RTI. From the classroom to related Intervention-Team (I-Team) Meetings, my role in this process allowed me to observe the implementation of the RTI pilot model from many different angles. Specifically, I concentrated observations on the classroom implementation through observing the interventions being done. From this, I gained information on how RTI impacts classroom functioning by witnessing the phenomenon firsthand while it was occurring. I also observed I-Team

Meetings where teachers and principals communicated the results of interventions and planned the next phase of the intervention process. Finally, I observed as many staff meetings as possible at the participating schools to observe how the faculty interact and communicate regarding RTI. A total of 100 hours were spent in observations. All observations were written in the form of field notes then typed and filed by date. The results of these observations were utilized for triangulation of data during the analysis phase of this study.

Documents

Merriam (1998) defined documents as written, visual, and physical material that are relevant to the study under investigation. These documents, or artifacts, consist of public records, personal documents, and physical material. In addition, she identified researcher-generated documents that consist of documents prepared for the researcher or by the researcher regarding the phenomenon of interest. For example, the researcher can suggest that participants in a study keep a journal, or the researcher can keep a journal or log of activities that can later be used as documentary evidence. Finally, quantitative data utilized in a study can also be considered a document for further analysis. She warned that verifying the authenticity of documents is imperative before utilizing them in research (Merriam).

Several documents were collected and used in this study. First, teacher lesson plans and daily schedules were collected from teachers participating in the interviews for purposes of reviewing how RTI implementation affects the day-to-day functioning of the classroom. In addition, the School Improvement Plans of each participating school were

collected to glean information regarding values based on what was deemed by faculties as important enough to be included in mission statements, beliefs, and goals for the schools. This information provided a rich background for describing the participating schools. I also collected principal schedules to gain insight into how actively principals were involved in RTI implementation and how much time principals were devoting to RTI activities. I collected referral forms and other documents used by the school district to delineate the RTI process. Information on school achievement was collected through the State Report Cards, which indicate the achievement levels of the schools. Data on both the state achievement and district achievement were also collected for comparative purposes. Finally, I kept a journal during my fieldwork, and the entries of this journal were utilized as documentary evidence for my own thoughts and perceptions. The purpose of all of this information was to provide a further area for triangulating data collected in this study.

Quantitative Data

As noted previously, this study utilized a mixed-methods approach to incorporate both qualitative and quantitative data into the case study. As indicated by Greene et al. (1989), mixed-methods studies are appropriate for triangulation, complementarity, initiation, development, and expansion. This study sought to utilize a QUAL + quan design to incorporate quantitative data for purposes of triangulation, complementarity, and expansion.

Participants

Participants consisted of teachers and principals at three randomly selected elementary schools piloting the RTI model in the school district. Each SOCQ was assigned a letter denoting position, a number designating participant name, and the letters designating the school (e.g., T15CGE) instead of using participants' names. I kept a master list of each participant's name, code for the duration of this study, and whether he or she had returned the questionnaire. In this manner, questionnaires could be matched to participants and the confidentiality of participants was protected. In addition, those who had not returned their questionnaires could be identified. Participants were grouped according to the school at which they worked.

The SoCQ was placed in each participant's school mail box on September 24, 25, and 29, 2008, and March 12, 13, and 16, 2009, to obtain data regarding the concerns (i.e., thoughts, feelings, and reactions) of principals and teachers both prior to and nine months after beginning implementation of RTI. A Study Information Sheet (see Appendix A) was attached explaining the purpose of this research and soliciting participation by completing the questionnaire and returning it to large, envelope left in the school office for me to collect at the end of the allotted time. Principals made announcements reminding and encouraging teachers to complete and return their questionnaires midway through the timeline for completion of the questionnaires. Participants were given until October 24, 2008 and April 1, 2009, respectively, to return their questionnaires for inclusion in this study. Return rates for the fall data collection period were 76% for

Camellia Garden Elementary, 39% for Magnolia Elementary, 40% for Gardenia Elementary with an overall rate of 51%. Rates were better in the spring with 59% for Camellia Garden Elementary, 47% for Magnolia Elementary, 62% for Gardenia Elementary with an overall return rate of 56%. These return rates were less than optimal. Table 7 summarizes the return rate for fall and spring at the end of the data collection period.

In an attempt to increase the return rates of the SoCQ, a follow-up letter and questionnaire was placed in the school mail boxes of the participants who had not returned their questionnaires. These participants were given from October 29 to November 14, 2008 in the fall and from April 26 to May 8, 2009 to return their questionnaires if they wanted to participate in this study. Principals again announced reminders and encouragement to participate in the study prior to the ending date. Table 8 provides a summary of the total response rate with this second attempt included. Overall return rates for fall were 92% for Camellia Garden, 47% for Magnolia Elementary, 65% for Gardenia Elementary, with an overall return rate of 68%. Between the fall and spring data collection periods, three teachers at Gardenia Elementary left at mid-year which affected this study. Because their replacements had been involved with RTI for less than the full year, these teachers were excluded from participation in this study. Therefore, the number of overall staff decreased from 40 to 37, with the overall number of SoCQs distributed decreasing from 115 in the fall to 112 in the spring. The overall return rates for spring were considerably better than those for fall, with 81% for

Table 7

Summary of First Attempt Questionnaire Return Rate

School	Percentage Returned Fall		Percentage Returned Spring	
Camellia Garden	28/37	76%	22/37	59%
Magnolia Elementary	15/38	39%	18/38	47%
Gardenia Elementary	16/40	40%	23/37	62%
Total Return	59/115	51%	63/112	56%

Table 8

Summary of Overall Questionnaire Return Rate

School	Percentage Returned Fall		Percentage Returned Spring	
Camellia Garden	34/37	92%	30/37	81%
Magnolia Elementary	18/38	47%	25/38	66%
Gardenia Elementary	26/40	65%	35/37	94%
Total Return	78/115	68%	90/112	80%

Camellia Garden, 66% for Magnolia Elementary, 94% for Gardenia Elementary, and an overall return rate of 80%, which is considered to be a moderately good return rate.

Instrument

As previously noted, the SoCQ is a 35-item questionnaire measuring the concerns (i.e., thoughts, feelings, and reactions) of teachers and administrators as they engage in the implementation of an innovation. The questionnaire measures the seven SoC as outlined in the CBAM framework (see Table 3, in Chapter 2). The questionnaire consists of an introductory page and the questionnaire itself (see Appendix E). The SoCQ is a two-page questionnaire that consists of 35 items with a 0-7 Likert response. No items on the questionnaire will be changed as per recommendations in the manual (George et al., 2006). Typically, the questionnaire takes approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete. The final page of the questionnaire contains demographic information. The SoCQ can be scored either by hand or by the SoC computer scoring software that accompanies the manual. I chose to use the computer software to improve the accuracy of these results. To further verify the accuracy of the computer software, I hand scored several questionnaires to verify the accuracy of the computer scoring software, as is recommended in the SoCQ manual (George et al.). The SoCQ, administration and scoring manual, and scoring software were purchased from the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory in Austin, Texas. The use of the SoCQ and SoC framework was governed by the terms of the license agreement (see Appendix G).

Validity

There have been numerous validity studies on the SoCQ beginning in May 1974. Two analyses were performed to determine whether the stages as separate constructs were related in a developmental manner. An analysis of the data indicated 83 percent of the items correlated more highly with the assigned stage than to the total score on the instrument. In addition, 72 percent correlated more highly with the assigned stage than with any other stage's scale score. The interpretation of this analysis was that the items on a particular scale tended to have similar responses, and the inference was noted that the items comprising each scale measured distinct ideas. In addition, when these data were subjected to correlation, the resulting correlational matrix indicated a simplex pattern, indicating the set of objects had degrees of similarity and dissimilarity with one another in a manner that could be arranged on a line. Therefore, the scales on the pilot questionnaire were considered to demonstrate an order consistent with the hypothesized order of the SoC. Factor analysis confirmed the presence of 7 factors. The seventh factor was highly relevant because it represented Stage 0 concerns. These items were originally written for Stage 1. Consequently, the researchers noted that Stage 0 was a unique entity that was measurable so the SoC was changed to reflect that stage. The overall results of the factor analysis led researchers to infer that the seven scales were representative of seven independent constructs that were readily identifiable with the seven SoC proposed by the CBAM model (George et al., 2006).

Reliability

To ensure high internal reliability, the creators of the SoCQ conducted reliability studies in the fall of 1974. A Kuder-Richardson Formula 20 for dichotomous items was conducted to determine if responses for each scale correlated with other items on that scale. Coefficients ranged from .64 on Stage 0 to .83 on Stage 2. Test-Retest correlations ranged from .65 on Stage 0 to .86 on Stage 1. Results of reliability studies have indicated internal reliability (George et al., 2006).

Data Analysis

In analyzing data collected from a mixed-methods study, qualitative data and quantitative data are analyzed either sequentially or simultaneously to provide answers to research questions. Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) noted that while parallel analysis of each of the two types of data (QUAL and QUAN) leads to better insight and understanding of the variables and their relationships, focusing on each subset of data constricts the researcher to one type of data analysis (QUAL or QUAN). Rather, they recommend the following strategies for improving insight gained from mixed-methods analysis:

1. Performing both types of data analysis (QUAL and QUAN) simultaneously on the same data set;
2. Confirming and expanding inferences obtained from one method of data analysis through a secondary analysis of the same data with a different approach;
3. Using obtained results from one approach sequentially as a beginning

point for data analysis using the alternative approach; or

4. Using results of one analysis approach as a beginning point for designing additional steps or collecting additional data using the alternative approach.

This mixed-methods case study sought to explore the implementation of a pilot RTI model through the lived experiences of teachers and principals engaged in the implementation based on their familiarity with RTI. Qualitative data and quantitative data were analyzed concurrently through what Tashakkori and Teddlie refer to as *parallel mixed analysis* and are described below.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Miles and Huberman (1994) pointed out that the multiplicity of data generated by a case study can be overwhelming. Yin (2003) agreed and advised against letting the data pile up, but rather he maintained that constant interaction with the data as they become available is a must for case study research. To analyze the data generated in this study, the method described by Merriam (1998) as the *constant comparative method* was utilized. She noted that this method is highly compatible with the type of inductive, concept-building orientation that is typical of qualitative research, the dominant model in this mixed-methods case study. Because this study was a multi-site case study consisting of teachers and principals in three elementary schools engaged in RTI implementation, the constant comparative method allowed comparison across cases (i.e., all schools) as well as within cases (i.e., school to school).

Data in the form of interviews, observations, and documents from each of the three schools in this study were first analyzed and coded. Using the constant comparative method, these data were constantly compared to each other as each new piece of data became available. This process continued until patterns or regularities become apparent and were coded. When coding was completed, the codes were analyzed in a second and third iterative process and placed into categories. All category development was guided by the recommendations of Lincoln and Guba (1985) which stated that categories should be heuristic and reveal information relevant to the study and that the units of information contained within these categories should be the smallest units that can stand alone. Once the data were coded into the initial categories, the categories were again analyzed for patterns or themes and merged into the third level of categories to propose theory. As previously discussed in Chapter 2, analysis of developed themes was filtered through the SoC framework. To assist with data management, QDA Miner was utilized to store and retrieve coded information. This process of data analysis occurred during pre-implementation and nine months after implementation in order to analyze similarities and differences in themes over time based on the SoC framework.

Quantitative Data Analysis

Scoring of the SoCQ results in a raw score for each of the seven Stages of Concern for a total of seven raw scores for the stages of Awareness, Informational, Personal, Management, Consequence, Collaboration, and Refocusing (see Chapter 2 for a complete discussion of these stages). The scoring method referred to by George et al. (2006) as *peak stage scoring* was utilized to create graphs illustrating each school's

profile of score distributions in the fall and spring of the first year of RTI implementation. The highest stage score for each participant was tallied for each stage and displayed in a graph for each of the three schools to provide a graphic illustration of the distribution of participants across the seven stages before and after RTI implementation began.

To determine whether levels of concern changed significantly over the first year of RTI implementation, paired samples *t*-tests were performed on each of the seven stages for each of the three schools. Participants' total raw scores for each of the seven stages were matched based on coding and entered into a SPSS spreadsheet by school with columns designating pre-implementation scores and post-implementation scores. Using SPSS, seven paired samples *t*-tests were performed on the pre- and post-implementation data for each school. Based on the Stages of Concern framework, individuals engaged in an implementation would initially have higher scores in the lower levels of self-related concerns (Awareness, Informational, and Personal) before decreasing in those areas and exhibiting higher scores in task-related concerns (Management) and impact-related concerns (Consequence, Collaboration, and Refocusing). The paired samples *t*-tests examined whether lower levels of concern decreased significantly and whether higher levels of concern increased significantly over the first year of implementation. Time of implementation was the independent variable, and the stages of concern were the dependent variable. An alpha level of .05 was used for the purpose of determining statistical significance. The null hypothesis holds that no significant differences exist between the levels of concern over time.

While the paired samples *t*-tests examined whether pre-implementation and post-implementation scores differed significantly within schools over the first year of RTI implementation, this analysis does not indicate whether significant differences existed in the levels of concern across schools before and after the first year of RTI implementation. To address this issue, Analyses of Variance (ANOVA) were performed on each of the seven stages for the pre-implementation data and for the post-implementation data. Participants' raw scores on each stage were entered into an SPSS spreadsheet by school for pre-implementation and post-implementation. Analysis of these data allowed me to determine whether individual schools varied significantly in level of concerns at the beginning and at the end of the pilot year of implementation. Time served as the independent variable, while the stages of concern served as the dependent variable. An alpha level of .05 was used to establish statistical significance. The null hypothesis posits that no significant difference exists across schools between levels of concern.

The results of the statistical analysis were used to supplement the qualitative data generated in this mixed-methods case study (see Figure 2). This source of information was another area for triangulation and provided a frame of reference for qualitative analysis. By providing statistical analysis of the concerns of teachers and principals implementing RTI through the SoCQ, I was able to provide a background for the results of the sample selected to participate in this case study. I believe this information further clarifies and elaborates the results obtained through interviews, observation, and analysis of artifacts by illustrating whether the level, or degree, of concerns expressed by

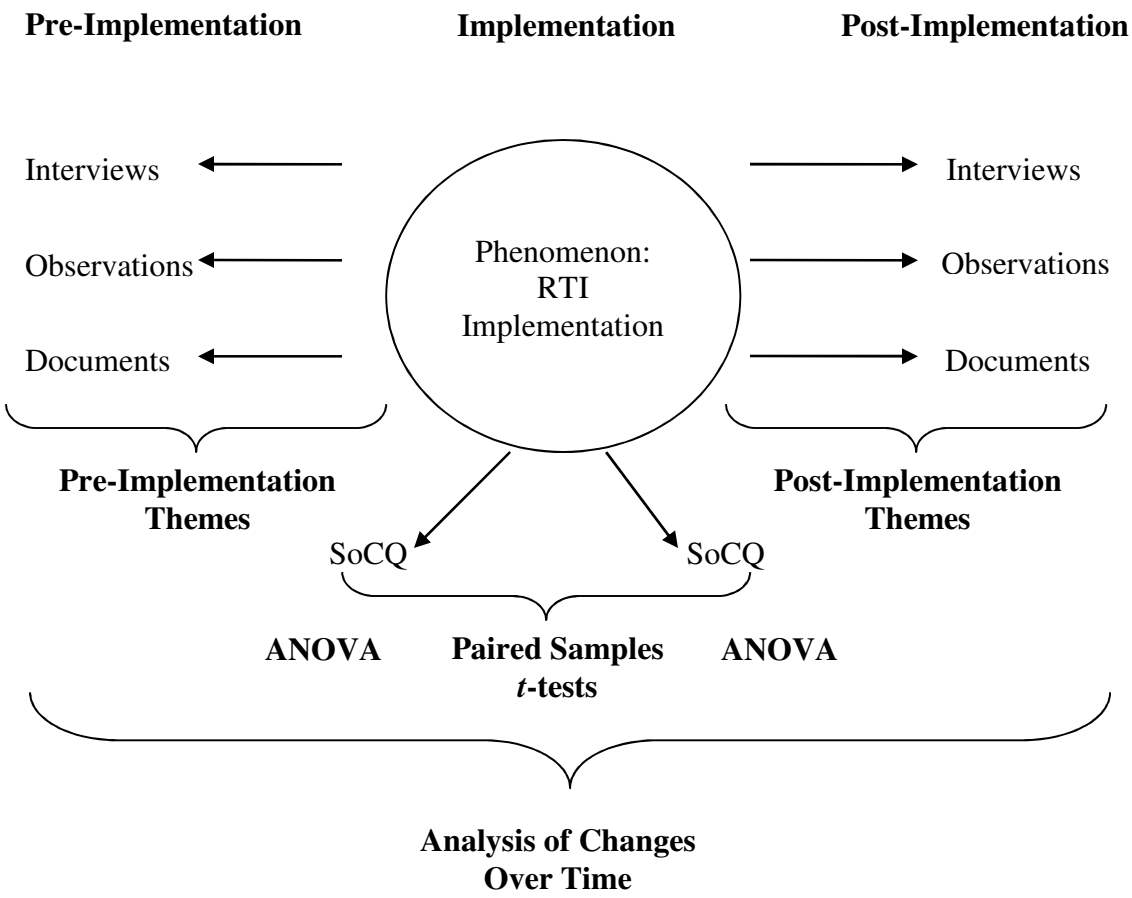


Figure 2. **Structure of Study Analysis.**

principals and teachers differs significantly with experience and familiarity with the pilot model. Thus, this study utilized quantitative data to do the following: (a) add insights and understandings about the population sample that would have been missed using only a qualitative research method, (b) use numbers to add precision to words and narrative, and (c) provide stronger evidence from conclusions drawn from this study through convergence and corroboration.

Levels of Analysis

The first level of analysis occurred at the school level. Schools were described individually and pertinent descriptive data regarding school demographics were provided. Themes were developed and analyzed for each of the three schools individually for pre-RTI implementation and post-RTI implementation. This portion of the data analysis is considered within-case analysis, and led to discovery of similarities or differences between the grouped cases. Descriptive statistics from the SoCQ were used as another piece of triangulation to further elaborate and expand qualitative themes, along with the results of the paired samples *t*-tests which were run for each school to further illustrate whether levels of teacher concerns regarding RTI implementation changed significantly within schools over time with experience and familiarity. The second level of analysis occurred across all three schools participating in the study. Known as cross-case analysis, this global view of the three participating schools illustrated themes and patterns developed in the case study in its totality. The ANOVAs performed on pre- and post-implementation data provided further illustration of whether individual schools

differed significantly in levels of concern prior to and after the first year of RTI implementation.

Methods of Verification

In order to improve the trustworthiness or internal validity of my study, I employed several strategies. First, by using a mixed-methods research design that focused dominantly on the qualitative aspect of human perception, I have brought this study closer to reality. Merriam (1998) stated:

> And because human beings are the primary instrument of data collection and analysis in qualitative research, interpretations of reality are accessed directly through their observations and interviews. We are thus 'closer' to reality than if a data collection instrument had been interjected between us and the participants. Most agree that when reality is viewed in this manner, internal validity is a definite strength of qualitative research. (p. 203)

She listed the following six strategies to enhance internal validity: (a) triangulation, (b) member checks, (c) long-term observation, (d) peer examination, (e) participatory or collaborative modes of research, and (f) clarifying researcher bias. Five of these six strategies were utilized in this study. I triangulated data from interviews, observations, and documents in my findings, as well as incorporating quantitative data to further enhance and support the results. Because of my involvement with the school district, I have the ability to conduct long-term observations, as well as to perform member checks with those participating in this study. Typed transcripts from the fall and spring interviews were sent to all 18 interview participants, and each of the 18 interview

participants received a document of the fall and spring themes for his or her school. This document contained the research question, the themes answering each research question, and the quotes from interviews used to develop those themes. I have clarified the potential for researcher bias and indicated in a previous section the strategies I undertook to avoid this bias. Peer examination was listed as one of these strategies.

Once I collected the data and began the analysis process, I took additional steps to further improve the trustworthiness of the findings. In order to publicly disclose how themes from this study were developed, I followed suggestions from Anfara, Brown, and Mangione (2002) and provided a code mapping of the stages, or iterations, of the themes. As summarized in Table 9, the first iteration consisted of "manageable chunks and meaning and insights" (p. 32) that were gained from the words and actions of the participants. As these initial chunks, or initial codes, were analyzed and evaluated, several themes began to develop and are summarized in Table 9 under the Second Iteration: Pattern Variables section. These underlying patterns were further analyzed to reach a level of hypothesis or theory development as a result of this study and are summarized under the Third Iteration: Application to Data Set section of Table 9 for the fall data and Table 10 for the spring data. In addition, this process was also utilized to illustrate theme development for each school. Code mapping tables for Camellia Garden Elementary, Gardenia Elementary, and Magnolia Elementary are provided in Appendices G, H, and I for the data collected in the fall and Appendices J, K, and L for the data collected in the spring. Data summarized in Appendices G, H, and I led to the creation of

Table 9

Code Mapping: Three Iterations of Analysis: Fall Data for Meadowlands School District

Code Mapping for RTI

(Qualitative Research Questions 1, 1a,1b, and 1c)

Research Question 1: What are the concerns of teachers and principals as they experience RTI implementation? Themes 1A, 1B, 1C, 2A, 2B, 2C

Research Question 1a: What do teachers and principals perceive as barriers to implementing RTI? Themes 3A, 3B, 4A, 4B, 5B, 5C

Research Question 1b: How are the roles of teachers and principals affected by RTI? Themes 6A, 7B, 8C, 9A, 9B, 9C

Research Question 1c: What factors facilitate RTI implementation? Themes 10A, 10B, 10C

(Third Iteration: Application to Data Set)

RQ1	RQ1a	RQ1b	RQ1c
(Second Iteration: Pattern Variables)			
Understanding RTI	**Another Add-On**	**Three Perspectives**	**Improved Instruction**
1A The Cart Before the Horse: Lack of Clarity About the RTI Process	3A Juggling One More Thing Amidst a Sea Of Change	6A Hampering the Referral Process: Teachers' Duty to Refer Students	10A Creating Responsive Instructional Practices through RTI
1B Swimming in Mud: Lack of Clarity for the RTI Process	3B One More Thing: Finding Time to Implement RTI	7B Improved Teaching Through RTI	10B Following the Principal's Lead to Improved Instruction
1C Struggling to See "The Big Picture" of the RTI Process		8C Pressure to Get it Right: Increasing the Stress Level of Teachers	10C Improved Instructional Practices that Help Children
Scheduling RTI	**Not at Our School**	**Support, Guide, Learn**	
2A Scheduling RTI: How to Manage the Process	4A Paradigm Shift: What is a Student with a Disability?	9A Principals Supporting Teachers Through implementation of RTI	
2B Challenges in Scheduling RTI	4B Reluctance to Perceive RTI as Applicable to Their School	9B Principals: Providing Guidance	
2C Struggling to See "The Big Picture" of the RTI Process		9C Principals: Learning Alongside Teachers	
	Slowing Down Referrals		
	5B Slowing Down the Referral Process		
	5C Change to Referral Process		
RQ1	**RQ1a**	**RQ1b**	**RQ1c**
(First Iteration: Initial Codes/Surface Content Analysis)			
1A confusion about the RTI process	3A one more thing for teachers to do	6A blocked from referring 6A hampers parent	10A improves instruction 10A informs instruction

1A accuracy of CBM
1A lack of training

1B RTI process unclear
1B roles of parties
1B documenting RTI
1B process keeps changing
1B lack of training

1C inability to see "the big picture"
1C lack of training

2A scheduling 90 minutes for reading
2A scheduling time for interventions
2A scheduling time for CBM
2A what to do with other students

2B scheduling RTI

2C how to schedule RTI
2C what to do with other students

3A managing other district initiatives

3B one more thing for teachers to do

4A does not work at our school
4A are we identifying the right students?
4B cut-off is too low for our school

5B uncertainty of how referral process works

5B takes too long to get help

5C longer referral process

communication
6A perceived lack of trust for teachers

7B better instructional practices
7B more information for teachers

8C pressure to get it right

9A role of principal: supporting teachers
9B role of principal: providing guidance for teachers
9C role of principal: learning with teachers

10A shows student growth

10B principal led process to improve instruction
10B data driven process
10B will help more children
10B will lead to prevention

10C informs instruction
10C assists in grouping
10C will help children

DATA: Interviews DATA: Observations DATA: Documents

A = Camellia Garden Elementary B = Gardenia Elementary C = Magnolia Elementary

Table 10

Code Mapping: Three Iterations of Analysis: Spring Themes for Meadowlands School District

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Code Mapping for RTI
(Qualitative Research Questions 1, 1a,1b, and 1c)

Research Question 1: What are the concerns of teachers and principals as they experience RTI implementation? Themes 1A, 1B, 2A, 2B, 3A, 3B, 3C, 4B, 4C

Research Question 1a: What do teachers and principals perceive as barriers to implementing RTI? Themes 5A, 5B, 5C

Research Question 1b: How are the roles of teachers and principals affected by RTI? Themes 7A, 7B, 7C, 8A, 8B, 8C

Research Question 1c: What factors facilitate RTI implementation? Themes 9B, 9C

(Third Iteration: Application to Data Set)

RQ1	RQ1a	RQ1b	RQ1c
(Second Iteration: Pattern Variables)			
Confusion over Process	**Process Delays Help**	**Learning New Ways**	**Improved Outcomes**
1A Accuracy of CBM for Universal Screening	5A Doesn't Align with Our School or Students	7A Learning a New Way of Teaching	9B Improved Outcomes for Students
1B Confusing Process	5B Movement Through the Tiers	7B Improved Teaching	9C Improved Outcomes for Students
Insufficient Training	5C Process is Overly Cumbersome and Lengthy	7C A Positive Process Leading to Improved Instruction	
2A Insufficient Training to Implement RTI			
2B Lack of Training		**Leading through Conflict**	**Outlier Theme**
	Outlier Theme	8A Leading and Learning through Conflict	10A Improved Instructional Practices
Scheduling RTI	6A Blocked from Accessing Services		
3A Effect of RTI on Scheduling		8B Changes in Leadership Style	
3B Time Management		8C Supporting, Sharing Leadership, and Collaborating	
3C Scheduling Difficulties			
Need More Resources			
4B Need for Additional Resources			
4C Need More Resources			

RQ1	RQ1a	RQ1b	RQ1c
(First Iteration: Initial Codes/Surface Content Analysis)			
1A fluency as indicator?	5A doesn't work for our school	7A learning a new process	9B student growth
1A using timed tests		7A don't want to make a mistake	9B supports students
1A better ways of assessing reading	5A our students don't fit in this model	7A teacher judgment questioned	
1B understanding whole process	5B inappropriate goal setting	7B better instructional practices	9C prevention
1B confusing data analysis	5B length of time/	7B teaching with more data	9C student growth

1B understanding the tiers
2A training for grade levels needed
2A inadequately prepared

2C insufficient preparation
2C unanswered questions

3A time consuming
3A what to do with other Students
3A social studies and science

3B time for progress monitoring
3B time for interventions

3Ctime for interventions
3C what to do with other Students

4B need interventions
4B need personnel to support RTI

4C need resources for Professional development
4C need interventions
4C need additional support positions

waiting to intervene
5C lots and lots of assessments
5C takes too long

6A delay in accessing reading specialist
6A loss of classroom support

7C a good process
7C informs instruction

8A learning together collaboratively
8A dealing with teacher frustration/conflict
8A encouraging to stay the course

8B leading staff through conflict to understanding
8B a more direct leadership style

8C supporting teachers
8C sharing leadership among teachers
8C collaborating with other RTI principals

10A 90 minute reading instruction
10A informs instruction

DATA: Interviews DATA: Observations DATA: Documents

A = Camellia Garden Elementary B = Gardenia Elementary C = Magnolia Elementary

Table 9, while data summarized in Appendices J, K, and L led to the creation of Table 10.

The development of themes in this study was further made public through the use of a two-dimensional model proposed by Constas (1992) which provides a process to document category development. The first dimension, *components of categorization*, refers to the various procedural components used in category development and include the following procedural elements: (a) origination, (b) verification, and (c) nomination. The second dimension, *temporal designation*, refers to when the categories were specified and include the following temporal descriptors: (a) a priori, (b) a posteriori, or (c) iterative. Tables 11and 12 provide an analysis of theme development according to Constas' model for fall and spring themes. Tables for theme development at each school are provided in Appendices M, N, and O for fall and Appendices P, Q, and R for spring. In illustrating and supporting the themes developed in the written report, I used verbatim language of the participants, other than removing utterances such as, "uh," "um," and long pauses noted by dashes by the transcriptionist. By doing so, I attempted to avoid researcher interference and interpretation in order to keep themes in the words of the participants.

Organization of Data Analysis Chapters

Chapter 4 consists of a description of Meadowlands School District, along with descriptions of planning the RTI model, implementing the model, timeline for implementation, and the design of the model chosen by the school district. In addition,

Table 11

Development of Categories for Fall Data

COMPONENT OF CATEGORIZATION	TEMPORAL DESIGNATION		
Origination	**A priori**	**A posteriori**	**Iterative**
Where does the authority for creating categories reside?			
-participants			UR SR AA NS SDR SGL II
-programs			
-investigative			
-literature			
-interpretative		TP	
Verification			
On what grounds can one justify a given category?			
-rational		TP	UR SR AA NS SDR SGL II
-referential			
-external			
-empirical			
-technical			
-participative			
Nomination			
What is the source of the name used to describe a category?			
-participants			AA NS SGL
-programs			
-investigative			
-literature			
-interpretative		TP	UR SR SDR II

Category Label Key:
1a Understanding RTI (UR)
1b Scheduling RTI (SR)
2a Another Add-On (AA)
2b Not at Our School (NS)
2c Slowing Down Referrals (SDR)
3a Three Perspectives (TP)
3b Support, Guide, Learn (SGL)
4 Improved Instruction (II)

Table 12

Development of Categories for Spring Data

COMPONENT OF CATEGORIZATION	TEMPORAL DESIGNATION		
Origination	**A priori**	**A posteriori**	**Iterative**
Where does the authority for creating categories reside?			
-participants			CP IT SR PDH LC IO
-programs			
-investigative			
-literature			
-interpretative		NR LNW	
Verification			
On what grounds can one justify a given category?			
-rational		NR LNW	CP IT SR PDH LC IO
-referential			
-external			
-empirical			
-technical			
-participative			
Nomination			
What is the source of the name used to describe a category?			
-participants		NR LNW	IT SR LC
-programs			
-investigative			
-literature			
-interpretative			CP PDH IP

Category Label Key:
Confusion over Process (CP)
Insufficient Training (IT)
Scheduling RTI (SR)
Need More Resources (NR)
Process Delays Help (PDH)
Learning New Ways (LNW)
Leading through Conflict (LC)
Improved Outcomes (IC)

the three participating schools, Camellia Garden Elementary, Gardenia Elementary, and Magnolia Elementary, is provided in Chapter 4. Chapters 5, 6, and 7 contain analysis of qualitative and quantitative data collected in fall 2008 for Camellia Garden Elementary (Chapter 5), Gardenia Elementary (Chapter 6), and Magnolia Elementary (Chapter 7). Chapter 8 consists of the description of analysis of fall data across the three sites. Chapters 9, 10, and 11 contain analysis of qualitative and quantitative data collected in spring 2009 for Camellia Garden Elementary (Chapter 9), Gardenia Elementary (Chapter 10), and Magnolia Elementary (Chapter 11). Analysis of spring data across the three sites occurs in Chapter 12. Conclusions and implications for practice and research are discussed in Chapter 13.

Summary

This chapter described the justification for the method of data collection and analysis used in this study. A mixed-methods, multi-site case study was selected as the Teachers and principals at three elementary schools participated in the case study. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documents. Themes were developed and analyzed using the SoC as a theoretical framework. The SoCQ was mailed to each teacher and principal at the three schools prior to the schools' beginning the RTI implementation and nine months after implementation began. ANOVAs were performed on pre- and post-implementation scores on the SoCQ to determine whether significant differences in levels of concern existed across schools in data collected before and after RTI implementation. Paired samples *t*-tests were also performed to determine whether levels of concern changed significantly within schools based on gaining

experience and familiarity with the model. This QUAL + quan, multisite case study design addresses a major gap in the current research base by giving voice to teachers and principals who are actively engaged in implementing RTI in a school district.

CHAPTER 4

DISTRICT INFORMATION, RTI MODEL, AND SITE DESCRIPTION

Chapter Introduction

Fowler (2004) noted that one of a school leader's most important tasks lies in implementing new policies. She described the following three phases of implementing a new policy: mobilization, implementation proper, and institutionalization of the new policy. She argued that the *mobilization* phase is the most crucial step in policy implementation. This phase consists of policy adoption, planning, and gathering resources. During policy adoption within a school district, the district answers the following three key questions:

1. Do we as a district have good reasons for adopting this policy?
2. Is this policy appropriate for the needs of our school or district?
3. Do we have sufficient support for this policy among key stakeholders?

She recommended that planning for implementation occur within steering committees comprised of key stakeholders. Whether this steering committee is large or small, Fowler maintained that building principals and teachers *must* be included because of all stakeholders, this group will best understand both the opportunities and potential challenges an implementation will bring. The third phase of mobilization, gathering resources, consists of allocating sufficient money, time, personnel, space, and equipment/materials to support the implementation (Fowler).

After a solid foundation has been laid through mobilization, *implementation proper* begins. Fowler (2004) identified the following three components that characterize

successful implementations from beginning to end: monitoring and feedback, ongoing assistance, and problem coping. She recommended that school administrators, both at the building level and at the central office, remain informed about the course of the implementation and be a visible presence at implementation sites. She stated:

> Such knowledge cannot be gained by sitting at a desk; it can only be obtained by listening closely to the implementers and visiting them in the field. Only leaders who are in touch with the implementation will be able to revise old methods and develop new ones, making needed changes as the process unfolds. Their ability to respond to the dilemmas that emerge as the abstract policy confronts the concrete setting of the implementation will help guarantee that mutual adaptation occurs, rather than either midgetization or failure. (p. 289)

In addition, Fowler posited that skillful leaders actively scan the implementation environment in order to identify problems in the earliest stages of an implementation and to engage in open and honest discussion of these problems in an attempt to resolve them.

The final phase of implementation, *institutionalization*, occurs when the policy has been seamlessly integrated into the routine practices of the school or district in which the implementation occurred (Fowler, 2004). For full institutionalization to occur, the implementation has moved beyond something new and has become simply a routine practice. Fowler noted that this phase of implementation can occur during early or late implementation, and she advised school leaders to be alert for opportunities to accomplish institutionalization. She maintained that budgeting issues become critical at this juncture and that school districts must move temporary funding for the

implementation into more permanent line items in the regular budget to prevent funding for the implementation from evaporating (Fowler).

To use Fowler's (2004) terminology, this implementation study occurred during the first year of RTI implementation proper. In order to fully describe the actual implementation, several areas should be addressed to place this implementation in the proper context. These areas include the following: (a) pertinent background details of the school district, (b) the mobilization or planning phase of RTI implementation, (c) establishing a universal screening for use in the district's RTI model, (d) the design of the RTI model being piloted, (e) interventions utilized in the model, (f) timeline for school participation in the model, and (g) description of the schools participating in this study.

Background of the School District

Meadowlands School District (a pseudonym) is a moderately large school district in the southeast U.S. This school district consists of 22 elementary schools, seven middle schools, and eight high schools. All schools are accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. The school district has experienced tremendous growth over the past 17 years, with an average gain of 1500 students per year over the past five years. As a result of this explosive growth, the district has had to build new schools to accommodate these students (see Table 13). From 1990 to 2000, the school district built 14 new schools consisting of 12 new elementary schools, one new middle school, and one new high school. An additional 10 schools were built from 2001 to 2007, with six elementary schools, two middle schools, and two high schools opening. At the time of

Table 13

Timeline for Opening Newly Constructed Schools by Year

Year	Elementary Schools	Middle Schools	High Schools
1990	4		
1992	2		
1993	2		
1994		1	
1995	2		
1996			1
1999	2		
2001	1	1	
2002	1		1
2003	1		
2004			1
2005	1		
2006		1	
2007	2		

this study, plans were underway to build four new schools. These schools include two elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school.

Constructing new schools has led to the need of hiring new employees to fill positions in each building. Principals, assistant principals, teachers, and support personnel have been hired with varying levels of experience. Many of the personnel hired have come from outside of the school district, thus bringing new ideas and experiences into the district. As a result, Meadowlands School District has become a metaphorical melting pot of educators.

Demographics for Meadowlands School District include a current student enrollment of 28,345. Table 14 provides information regarding the demographic composition of students in the school district. As can be readily seen, the ethnic makeup of the district is predominantly white, with approximately 10 percent minority students in the overall population. There are 1,775 teachers in the school district with 98 administrators. Of all professional employees in the district, 55 percent hold a Master's Degree; 7 percent have an Ed.S. Degree; and 4 percent have a Ph.D. or Ed.D. In total, the district employs 2,373 certificated personnel and 2,030 support personnel. The following teacher/student ratios were reported by the district on its website: 19.8:1 for kindergarten through third grade, 20.9:1 for fourth grade to fifth grade, 19.2:1 for sixth grade through eighth grade, and 20.8:1 for high school.

Student achievement in Meadowlands School District is among the highest in the state. Students in this school district have consistently outperformed the state achievement levels. Table 15 provides a comparison of the Annual Yearly Progress

Table 14

Demographics for Student Population

Demographic Characteristic	Total Number	Percentage
African American	1,241	4.3
Asian/Pacific Islander	1,071	3.7
Hispanic	851	3.0
Native American/Alaskan	33	0.1
White	25,550	88.9
Limited English Proficient	545	1.9
Students with Disabilities	3,776	13.3
Economically Disadvantaged	2.550	9.3
Title 1	231	0.8
Female	13,911	48.4
Male	14,835	51.6

Table 15

Comparison of District and State Annual Yearly Progress Indicators for Grades K-8

	Meadowlands District		State	
Academic Area:	% Proficient	% Advanced	% Proficient	% Advanced
Math (All)	**24.4**	**73.3**	**45.4**	**45.6**
African American	41.0	53.6	57.7	26.1
Asian/Pacific Islander	16.1	83.2	26.7	70.4
Hispanic	40.9	55.0	54.0	34.7
Native American	15.4	84.6	49.2	43.6
White	23.6	74.2	40.9	52.8
Economically Disadvantaged	45.6	46.5	55.0	31.4
Students with Disabilities	54.0	28.5	50.7	17.2
Limited English Proficient	47.2	47.2	58.4	23.9
Reading/Language (All)	**25.0**	**73.2**	**46.1**	**45.9**
African American	40.3	55.9	59.2	27.7
Asian/Pacific Islander	21.2	77.0	31.3	64.5
Hispanic	41.8	55.6	52.5	32.8
Native American	29.7	64.9	46.7	44.8
White	24.1	74.2	41.3	52.9
Economically Disadvantaged	44.6	48.9	56.4	31.3
Students with Disabilities	58.3	28.4	57.3	16.6
Limited English Proficient	57.1	36.0	57.4	17.0

indicators for grades K-8 for Meadowlands School District and the State. As can be seen, elementary and middle school students in Meadowlands School District scored much higher as Advanced on the state achievement test in reading and math than did other students in the State. This pattern held true when data were disaggregated by ethnicity, as well as by socioeconomic group. As a result of these Annual Yearly Progress Indicators, all elementary schools in Meadowlands School District are in Good Standing with the exception of one elementary-middle school.

A review of the district and state report cards also suggests Meadowlands School District is performing well above the State averages in all academic areas and outperforming the State averages for growth using value added. Table 16 provides a summary of the comparison of district and state achievement. A significant drop in math was noted from 2007 to 2008 for the district when growth was examined, resulting in a grade of B for value added. However, the district scored consistently above the state in all academic areas assessed, as measured by the national curve equivalent on the state achievement test.

System-wide implementations are nothing new to Meadowlands School District. The district began implementing site-based management during the 1992-1993 school year. Currently, all schools are run at the building level with school administrators and Building Leadership Teams providing leadership in decision-making. This management style greatly impacted this study. While the framework for a RTI model was provided at the district level, each of the principals at the participating schools was allowed great latitude in implementing the model in his or her building through the use of how

Table 16

Comparison of District and State Percentile Scores and Growth Gains K-8 by Area

	Meadowlands School District			State		
Area:	NCE	Grade	Gain	NCE	Grade	Gain
Math	72	A	1.3	58	A	0
Reading/Language	69	A	2.3	57	A	0
Social Studies	69	A	1.8	55	B	0
Science	69	A	2.3	56	B	0

intervention time was scheduled each day and which interventions were utilized in the model. In addition, the district moved from placing special education students outside of their general education classes and/or zoned schools toward providing full inclusion through the general education program during the 2001-2002 school year. This implementation of providing inclusive support for students with special needs was the result of careful, purposeful work through a steering committee consisting of board members, administrators, teachers, parents, community members, State Department personnel, legislators, and students. Full implementation across the entire district took four years to achieve, but full inclusion was present by the 2005-2006 school year. The school district's policy on inclusion impacted this study through the design of the RTI model to be implemented by Meadowlands School District.

Mobilization for RTI Implementation

Meadowlands School District first attempted to establish a Universal Screening using Curriculum Based Measurement (CBM) from 2001 to 2003. A group of school psychologists led the charge and pushed for general education to participate in benchmarking and progress monitoring using CBM. The previous Special Education Director also attempted to move the district in this direction. However, district-level administrators within general education did not buy into the concept and refused to initiate the process. Moreover, the system-wide implementation of inclusion was occurring at this same time period. The previous Special Education Director left in November 2003, and the current Special Education Director was appointed in January 2004.

The Special Education Director analyzed the situation and believed that the best course of action was to delay trying to implement Universal Screening until inclusion was fully implemented in the district. In addition to implementing inclusion, the school district began an examination of the core reading program and was taking steps to improve reading instruction from 2000 to 2002. The result of this effort to improve reading instruction was the placement of a reading specialist in every elementary school, as well as to align the reading curriculum used by the district with state curricular standards. Rather than trying to force another implementation during this time period, the Special Education Director began raising awareness with key players within general education, such as the Director of Curriculum, Curriculum Specialists, and Reading Specialists. She accomplished this by taking groups of these individuals to conferences and providing research articles for them to read.

With the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in December 2004, the subject of RTI gave the Special Education Director a reason to raise awareness within the district of the need to move toward implementing a RTI model. She approached the Director of Curriculum with the law in hand and shared the urgency in examining district practices in identifying Learning Disabilities in light of changes in the IDEA. The Special Education Director also shared the information with the other Directors and the Superintendent in meetings of the senior administration and continued "planting seeds" throughout the 2004-2005 school year.

During the 2005-2006 school year, the Special Education Director began meeting regularly with the Reading Specialists. During these meetings, the group focused on the

referral process utilized by the district and took steps to ensure that all five areas of reading were covered during reading instruction. In addition, the group created forms for the referral teams that documented interventions that occurred prior to referral for special education eligibility evaluation. At the same time, the Special Education Director facilitated bridge building between the reading specialists and school psychologists by conducting a book study on dyslexia. This book study lasted throughout the school year and culminated with a presentation at schools conducted jointly by the school psychologists and reading specialists.

All potential stakeholders in RTI implementation had awareness of what RTI was by the 2006-2007 school year. Consensus building began during that school year with ongoing conversations among the directors, principals, and support personnel. In addition, the Coordinator of Professional Development for the district attended a state-sponsored training on RTI in order to bring her knowledge back to the school district and to provide future trainings. During this same school year, two elementary schools took the initiative to begin using CBM for benchmarking and progress monitoring during interventions. In May 2007, the directors visited 3 elementary schools where possible Tier 2 interventions were occurring beyond interventions during core reading instruction. By the summer of 2007, the Directors of Special Education and Curriculum met with principals and identified people to serve on the Steering Committee for RTI implementation led by one of the Directors of Elementary Education. By fall of 2007 general education administrators had the idea of RTI and were leading the implementation effort.

The Steering Committee began meeting in September 2007. The group of 35 people consisted of district administrators, building principals, school psychologists, curriculum specialists, reading specialists, general education teachers, and special education teachers. The agenda for this group was the following: (a) to identify a Universal Screening; (b) to examine current district-level assessments for redundancy; (c) to establish a timeline for implementing Universal Screening; (d) to define the RTI model to be used by the district; and (e) to establish the timeline for implementing RTI in the 22 elementary schools. The Steering Committee met throughout the 2007-2008 school year and accomplished its goals by the spring of 2008. Table 17 provides a brief summary of the mobilization.

Establishing Universal Screening

The first step in moving to a RTI model involved providing a way to screen students for at-risk status, as well as providing a method to monitor response to interventions. To establish a universal screening measure, the school district began implementing Curriculum Based Measurement (CBM) through AIMSweb, a commercially available web-based program during the 2008-2009 school year. Benchmark measures are taken three times a year during the fall, winter, and spring to monitor how students are progressing within the general curriculum in early literacy and early numeracy for kindergarten and first grade and oral reading fluency and math for first grade through fifth grade.

Because the first year of implementation of the Universal Screening coincided with the first year of implementation of RTI, the school district did not yet have local

Table 17

Timeline for Mobilization of RTI Implementation in Meadowlands School District

Year	Activity
2000-2002	Evaluation of Reading Curriculum
2001-2003	Failed CBM Implementation
2003-2004	Raising Awareness
2004-2005	Information Sharing (IDEA 2004)
2005-2006	Building Bridges
2006-2007	Building Consensus
2007-2008	Steering Committee – Model Defined and Plans to Implement
2008-2009	Piloting Began in 6 Schools

norms. However, the district relied on AIMSweb national norms during the pilot year which allowed for comparisons of student performance by classroom, school, and district. For purposes of RTI at the participating pilot schools, students are designated at-risk if they score at or below the 10th percentile on any of the three benchmarks in reading, including early literacy for kindergarteners for the entire school year and first graders at the beginning of the school year. Following the dual discrepancy model proposed by Fuchs and Fuchs (1998), students designated at-risk must also demonstrate growth rates less than those at the 25th percentile.

Special education teachers within the district also began using progress monitoring CBM probes to track the progress of special education students during the 2008-2009 school year. This information has been tied into Individual Education Programs (IEPs) to illustrate progress on goal attainment. This capability allows comparisons between the growth rates of students going through the RTI model and students already receiving special education services, as well as provides progress monitoring for students who will be designated Tier 3.

Design of the Pilot RTI Model

The pilot RTI model implemented by Meadowlands School District consists of three tiers of intervention as summarized in Figure 3. When a student is designated at-risk on the CBM benchmark probes, the first tier is provided within the general education classroom by the general education teacher and consists of differentiating the core reading curriculum within the 90-minute reading block. Tier 1 lasts for nine weeks.

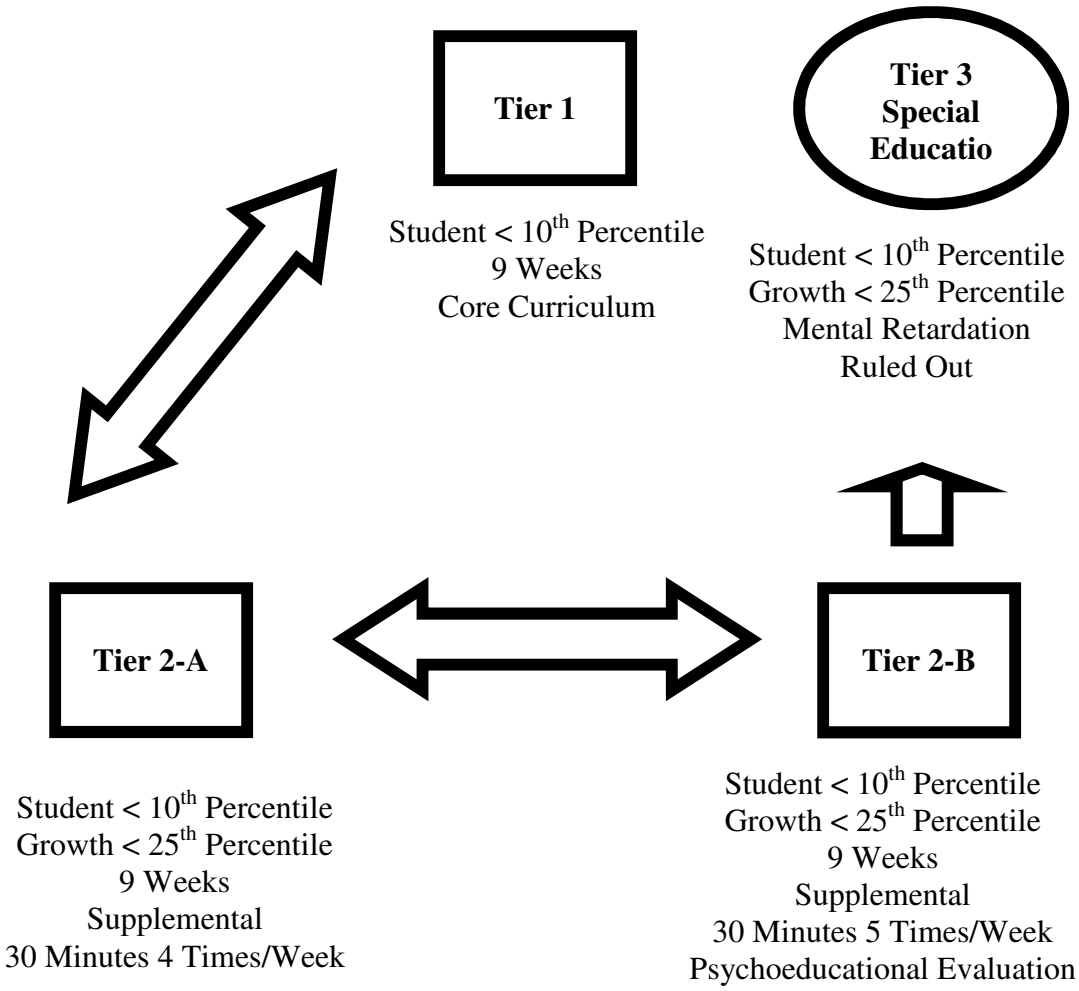


Figure 3. **Design of the Pilot RTI Model.**

Progress monitoring is conducted once weekly by the general education teacher via CBM probes. Once Tier 1 is completed, the teacher takes the progress monitoring data, along with required forms, to the Intervention Team (I-Team) for input. Lack of response to Tier 1 is defined as performance at or below the 10th percentile and growth rate less than that of a typical student at the 25th percentile based on national AIMSweb norms.

Students who meet these criteria enter Tier 2-A, which consists of four 30-minute sessions of specific, targeted intervention within the general education classroom. This intervention time is supplemental to the ongoing Tier 1 intervention. Progress is monitored once weekly by the general education teacher using CBM probes. Tier 2-A lasts a minimum of nine weeks. At the end of that time, the I-Team reconvenes to examine progress. If the student shows progress in either performance or growth rate, the team may decide to implement another round of Tier 2-A. On the other hand, if the student remains at or below the 10th percentile with growth rate less than that of a student at the 25th percentile, he or she then enters Tier 2-B. Tier 2-B is the most intensive of the three tiers and consists of five 30-minute sessions per week. Progress is monitored once weekly by the general education teacher using CBM probes. In addition to adding an additional 30 minutes per week to the intervention time in Tier 2-B, parental consent for psychoeducational evaluation is also obtained for purposes of ruling out Mental Retardation, a procedure which is required by the State Regulations for eligibility under the learning disabilities category. Tier 2-B lasts for up to 8 weeks, or forty school days, to remain in compliance with the State Regulations for psychoeducational evaluation timelines. The I-Team reconvenes at the end of the Tier 2-B interventions and

psychoeducational evaluation to determine whether the student has made sufficient progress.

If the student remains at or below the 10th percentile and growth rate is less than that of a student at the 25th percentile and if the psyhcoeducational evaluation rules out Mental Retardation, he or she is then eligible for special education services as a student with a Learning Disability. The student then enters Tier 3, or special education, with weekly progress monitoring to illustrate the responsiveness of the student to individualized instruction. Duration of a student's time in Tier 3 depends on the individual progress of that student.

However, students can also move in reverse through the tiers. As previously depicted in Figure 1, the arrows indicating movement between tiers are pointed at both ends to denote the possibility of going in either direction. For example, once a student goes above the 10th percentile or if growth rate rises above the 25th percentile, he or she can move from Tier 3 to Tier 2 or from Tier 2 to Tier 1. The model incorporates a step-down approach to provide ongoing support to students who are making progress but are not yet able to perform successfully without additional interventions and support.

Interventions Used in Model

As the district began making plans for implementing RTI, one of the first decisions considered by the RTI Oversight Committee involved which interventions to use. Tier 1 involves the core curriculum and modifications the general education teacher can make through differentiated instruction. The focus of Tier 1 intervention is to ensure that the core curriculum is being delivered effectively, and this is insured through

differentiation and flexible grouping. Thus, no additional interventions are needed at that level. However, Tier 2-A and Tier 2-B are supplemental to the core curriculum and thus require additional materials. Because Meadowlands School District operates as a site-based managed district, the decision made by the Oversight Committee was that instructional decisions regarding which interventions to use should be left to each of the participating schools, all of whom have their own budgets. The schools had the choice to purchase educational software for interventions in Tiers 2-A and 2-B in an attempt to alleviate the burden that the time-intensive interventions would place on general education teachers. At the time of this study, the schools were considering and investigating various types of educational software such as ThinkLink, Destination Reading, Orchard, and Compass Learning. Any educational software programs used must be deemed appropriate scientific, research-based programs by the Florida Center for Reading Research at the University of Florida. In addition to possibly using educational software interventions, the schools also had the choice to incorporate teacher-led interventions through their reading specialists if they preferred teacher-led interventions for small-group instruction. These interventions also meet the criteria of being scientific, research-based interventions. Because the choice of interventions to be utilized in the pilot RTI model were unique to each of the participating eight schools, interventions will be described in a later section of this study, along with pertinent information about each pilot school.

Timeline of School Participation

To implement RTI in Meadowlands School District, a staggered approach was utilized. As summarized in Table 18, the implementation process began during the 2008-2009 school year with six schools piloting the district's RTI model in kindergarten through fifth grade to identify students with learning disabilities. For these six schools, eligibility for the learning disabled category was based solely on lack of response after Tier 2-B. The district's other 16 elementary schools, along with middle and high schools, continued using the discrepancy method. For the 2009-2010 school year, the same six schools continued to pilot the district's RTI model to further identify any possible problems prior to involving the remainder of the elementary schools. The remaining 16 elementary schools, all middle schools, and all high schools continued to utilize the discrepancy formula for identification of learning disabilities. An additional eight elementary schools began using RTI in the 2010-2011 school year, with the final eight elementary schools beginning RTI in the 2011-2012 school year. Plans are currently underway to build two more elementary schools between now and 2012. Those schools were scheduled to use RTI with the final eight schools in 2011-2012. All elementary schools were scheduled to be utilizing RTI for identifying learning disabilities by the 2011-2012 school year. Once RTI has been fully implemented in the elementary schools, the district plans to begin RTI implementation in the middle and high schools.

Descriptions of the Participating Schools

When the Oversight Committee first began planning for the pilot year, eight elementary schools were planning to participate in the pilot RTI project. However, two

Table 18

Timeline for Elementary School Participation in Pilot RTI Model

School Year	Number of Schools	Grades	Identification Method
2008-2009	6	K-5	RTI Only
	16	K-5	Discrepancy
2009-2010	6	K-5	RTI Only
	16	K-5	Discrepancy
2010-2011	14	K-5	RTI Only
	8	K-5	Discrepancy
2011-2012	22	K-5	RTI Only

schools were dropped from the list due to the fact that both had first-year principals for the 2008-2009 school year. These two principals requested that they be given the opportunity to form relationships with their staffs before engaging in implementation of RTI. Their request was granted by the Elementary Directors. Of the six remaining pilot schools, three were randomly selected to participate in this study. These schools will be described in detail to provide a proper context for interpreting the results of this study.

Camellia Garden Elementary

Camellia Garden Elementary is one of the oldest schools in Meadowlands School District, going back 125 years. The current building opened in August 1992 and holds 33 classrooms for the 707 students attending the school. A tour of the building reveals a strong emphasis on student growth throughout its halls and classrooms. Bright murals painted on the school's pale yellow walls depict trees, which are symbolic of growth, and student artwork displayed throughout the building also depicts many trees. The growth motif continued in the school's office with artwork on the walls illustrating garden themes. The halls are very bright and cheerful, with large blocks of primary colors painted on each wall to serve as a background for displays of student work. Student work is prominently displayed throughout all of the halls and classrooms. Flags were displayed down the hall with the following content: Respect, Responsibility, Perseverance, Caring, Courage, Citizenship, and Honesty. A large, prominent bulletin board in the foyer of the school was titled, "Ordinary, Extraordinary Courage." On this bulletin board were multiple samples of student work illustrating what they perceived courage to be. Some students wrote papers illustrating stories of courage, while some

drew pictures depicting scenes of courage. There were several Dr. Seuss themes in the artwork of the halls with student artwork and student reading assignments displayed.

The staff at Camellia Garden Elementary consists of 33 general education teachers for grades kindergarten through five and three special education teachers. All teachers at Camellia Garden Elementary meet the federal definition of highly qualified. Support staff includes six general education teaching assistants and nine special education teaching assistants, one full-time nurse, one full-time speech/language pathologist, one library media specialist, one reading specialist, two physical education coaches, two school counselors, one music teacher, one art teacher, one instructional technology coach, one part-time gifted consultant, and one part-time school psychologist. These staff members are led by a principal, referred to in this written document as PCGE, and an assistant principal, referred to as APCGE. PCGE has been principal at Camellia Garden Elementary for eight years. She brings 23 years of experience as a leader to her role as principal. APCGE is in her third year as an assistant principal at Camellia Garden Elementary. Both PCGE and APCGE hold doctoral degrees in Educational Administration.

The commitment to student growth, so evident in the murals and student artwork of the school, continues in the mission statement and beliefs of the faculty and staff at Camellia Garden Elementary. The school's mission statement reads as follows:

> Our mission is to cultivate the ability, intellect, and character of each student. Camellia Garden [pseudonym used] is a caring community in which all members share in the challenge to develop a lifelong love of learning, cultivate respect for

others and themselves, and grow to their full potential as individuals. (CGE Mission Statement)

This emphasis on cultivating student growth continues throughout the staff's belief statements contained in the School Improvement Plan:

a. Student growth is the primary focus at Camellia Garden Elementary [pseudonym used]. All children can and will learn in a safe, caring environment.

b. Students learn best when provided developmentally appropriate practices that meet each child's unique intellectual, physical, emotional, and social needs.

c. A variety of engaging, stimulating strategies are utilized to provide differentiation of instruction for all students.

d. Students will be involved in the learning process and provided continuous opportunities for growth and success.

e. The learning community shares the responsibility and commitment to support the school's mission and beliefs. (School Improvement Plan, CGE Website)

As summarized from the School Improvement Plan for Camellia Garden Elementary, targeted goals for improvement include expanding reading skills, strengthening math skills, and enhancing writing skills (School Improvement Plan, CGE Website).

Student enrollment is currently at 707 students based on information from the school's report card issued by the State. Table 19 provides a demographic summary of these 707 students. As can be seen, the student population of the school is predominantly

Table 19

Student Demographics for Camellia Garden Elementary

Descriptive Category	Number	Percentage
African American	13	1.8
Asian/Pacific Islander	17	2.4
Hispanic	8	1.1
Native American/Alaskan	0	0.0
White	669	94.6
Economically Disadvantaged	11	1.6
Students with Disabilities	62	9.0
Female	341	48.2
Male	366	51.8

white, with very little diversity. In addition, the school's percentage of 1.6 percent for economically disadvantaged students is somewhat lower than the district's percentage of 9.3. In addition, the percentage of 9 percent for students with disabilities is slightly lower than the district's percentage of 13.3 percent.

As summarized in Table 20, Camellia Garden's student achievement as measured by Annual Yearly Progress indicators is highly commensurate with that of the school district in the areas of math and reading. In math, a total of 98.3% of the school's students are either proficient or advanced as compared to the total of 97.7% of students in the district who are either proficient or advanced. Likewise, a total of 99.7% of students at Camellia Garden are either proficient or advanced in reading while 98.2% of students in the district are either proficient or advanced. One difference between the school and district occurred in the percentage of advanced students in reading. The total percent of students who were advanced at Camellia Garden was 81.9%, while 73.2% were advanced in the district. When examining disaggregated data for the school and district, this pattern continued with white students. Math achievement appeared to be commensurate, while a higher percentage of white students at Camellia Garden were advanced. Perhaps the biggest difference in achievement at Camellia Garden and Meadowland School District as a whole occurred among students with disabilities in the area of reading. The total percentage of students with disabilities either proficient or advanced was 100%, while the total percentage of students with disabilities in the district was 86.7%. Disaggregated data were not reported for other minority groups, economically disadvantaged students, or limited English proficiency students because the total number

Table 20

Comparison of CGES and District Annual Yearly Progress Indicators

	Camellia Garden Elementary		Meadowlands District	
Academic Area:	% Proficient	% Advanced	% Proficient	% Advanced
Math (All)	**22.4**	**75.9**	**24.4**	**73.3**
African American	N/A	N/A	41.0	53.6
Asian/Pacific Islander	N/A	N/A	16.1	83.2
Hispanic	N/A	N/A	40.9	55.0
Native American	N/A	N/A	15.4	84.6
White	22.8	75.8	23.6	74.2
Economically Disadvantaged	N/A	N/A	45.6	46.5
Students with Disabilities	46.4	42.9	54.0	28.5
Limited English Proficient	N/A	N/A	47.2	47.2
Reading/Language (All)	**17.8**	**81.9**	**25.0**	**73.2**
African American	N/A	N/A	40.3	55.9
Asian/Pacific Islander	N/A	N/A	21.2	77.0
Hispanic	N/A	N/A	41.8	55.6
Native American	N/A	N/A	29.7	64.9
White	17.6	82.2	24.1	74.2
Economically Disadvantaged	N/A	N/A	44.6	48.9
Students with Disabilities	54.7	45.3	58.3	28.4
Limited English Proficient	N/A	N/A	57.1	36.0

in each category, previously summarized in Table19, was less than 45 which is the minimum number required by the State for mandatory reporting of Annual Yearly Progress.

When value-added growth gains are examined, a noticeable difference between Camellia Garden's achievement and that of the district becomes quite obvious. Table 21 summarizes the average scores and growth gains for the school and for the district and provides the grade assigned by the state. A loss of -1.3 was noted in the area of math for Camellia Garden Elementary, while the district as a whole showed a gain of 1.3. This pattern of a drop in performance was noted across the last three years among fourth graders. Thus, the staff of Camellia Garden has incorporated the need to improve their math scores in their school improvement plan. Other areas of achievement were commensurate, although it was noted that Camellia Garden's gains in both reading/language arts and science were not as robust as that of the district as a whole.

Gardenia Elementary

Gardenia Elementary is the newest elementary school in Meadowlands School District. The school was opened in the fall of 2007 due to overcrowding of elementary schools in that area of the district. Gardenia Elementary holds 37 classrooms for the 666 students attending. In addition, there are three Early Childhood special education classrooms and a pre-kindergarten classroom on the school's campus. Standing two-stories tall, the physical structure of the school is very large and majestic. The foyer of the school has many glass doors and sky lights, lending a bright and airy atmosphere to the building. The walls are sand-colored with accents of bright, primary colors. Samples

Table 21

Comparison of CGES and District NCE Scores and Growth Gains by Area

	Camellia Garden Elementary			Meadowlands District		
Area:	NCE	Grade	Gain	NCE	Grade	Gain
Math	73	D	-1.3	72	A	1.3
Reading/Language	70	A	1.4	69	A	2.3
Social Studies	73	A	1.9	69	A	1.8
Science	71	A	0.8	69	A	2.3

Note. Growth gains are only available for CGE and MES due to GES only having one set of scores on the state-mandated achievement test since the school had only been operational for one year prior to this study.

of student work and student artwork are displayed very prominently throughout the building. A total of 16 bulletin boards containing student work and art work were noted throughout the building. In addition, more student work and art work were displayed outside of each of the 37 classrooms and down the hallways of each grade level. On the first floor, which contains the primary grades, a common theme of reading and writing was noted with many displays of Dr. Seuss. On the second floor for the upper grades, the theme centered around wildlife such as, "Wild About 4th Grade," or "Wild about AR." Walking around the school, a visitor would immediately be struck by the theme of "welcome" that was so prominent throughout the school. A total of 14 posters, signs, bulletin boards, classroom doors, and other artwork contained the word, *welcome.* This theme fit well with the friendly and helpful office staff who were the first to greet visitors to the school.

The staff of Gardenia Elementary consists of 37 general education teachers for grades kindergarten through fifth, two special education teachers, and three Early Childhood special education teachers. All teachers at Gardenia Elementary meet the state's definition of highly qualified for purposes of No Child Left Behind. Other staff members include one art teacher, one music teacher, one media specialist, one Pre-Kindergarten teacher, one school nurse, three physical education teachers, one reading specialist, one speech/language pathologist, one part-time school psychologist, and thirteen paraprofessionals. The principal of Gardenia Elementary, referred to in this document as PGE, has been in the principalship for two years. Prior to that, he served as an assistant principal for three years and taught for eight years. He holds an Educational

Doctorate as his highest degree. His assistant principal, referred to as APGE, is in her first year as an assistant principal and taught four and a half years prior to that.

Because Gardenia Elementary is a newly opened school, they have not yet fully rotated on the district's schedule for developing/revising School Improvement Plans. However, they have begun the process with building consensus for their school motto, mission statement, and values. The school motto is as follows:

> Listening with our hearts,
>
> Learning together,
>
> Leading the way to our future.

This motto is displayed prominently throughout the building. The emphasis on mutual learning continues in the school's mission:

> Understanding the diverse challenges of the future, it is the mission of Gardenia Elementary School [pseudonym used] to equip our learning community with the necessary learning tools that will inspire a strong desire for achievement through the implementation of innovative, diverse, and real world learning experiences. (Mission Statement, GES Website)

The staff at Gardenia Elementary have identified the values that define them as a staff. These values are as follows:

a. Exemplary Achievement – Achieving excellences in every endeavor.
b. Respect – Valuing and honoring self and others with compassion.
c. Integrity – Being trustworthy, honest, responsible, doing what is right and being accountable.

d. Unity – Working together to accomplish a common vision.

e. Leadership – Guiding others through being a positive role model.

f. Innovation – Using creative methods to meet diverse challenges.

(Beliefs and Values, GES Website)

The staff will continue to expand on these ideas to formulate their School Improvement Plan in the future.

There are 666 students enrolled at Gardenia Elementary as noted on their 2008 State Report Card. Table 22 provides a summary of the demographic representation of students at Gardenia Elementary. As can be seen, the student population is predominantly white with nearly 92% of the student body noted as white. There is little diversity in the ethnic makeup of the student population, and less than 10 percent of the entire student population was noted to be minority. To look at the total number of students with disabilities at Gardenia Elementary School, only students in kindergarten through fifth grade were counted because the Early Childhood classes are comprised of pre-school children from other school zones, as well as Gardenia Elementary's school zone. Thus, it was felt that this number could be misleading, as only a few elementary schools in the whole district host Early Childhood classrooms and are not necessarily a reflection of the identification practices of those host schools. Of particular interest, Gardenia Elementary has more students who are classified Economically Disadvantaged than Camellia Garden Elementary. A little over 12 percent of the student population at Gardenia Elementary are considered to be economically disadvantaged, while only

Table 22

Student Demographics for Gardenia Elementary

Descriptive Category	Number	Percentage
African American	27	4.0
Asian/Pacific Islander	9	1.3
Hispanic	18	2.7
Native American/Alaskan	1	0.1
White	616	91.8
Economically Disadvantaged	79	12.1
Students with Disabilities	45*	7.0
Female	331	49.3
Male	340	50.7

Note: This number only includes students from Kindergarten through 5th Grade

slightly less than two percent were considered economically disadvantaged at Camellia Garden Elementary.

As summarized in Table 23, student achievement at Gardenia Elementary is fairly commensurate with that of the school district in reading and math. In math, a total of 97 percent of all student were either proficient or advanced in math at Gardenia Elementary, while 98% of all students in Meadowlands School District were either proficient or advanced in math. In reading, 98 percent of all students at Gardenia Elementary were either proficient or advanced, while 98 percent of all students in Meadowlands School District were proficient or advanced in reading. Two discrepancies between school and district achievement were noted when examining the disaggregated data based on ethnicity. For African Americans at Gardenia Elementary, achievement in math was much less than that of African Americans as a whole in the district. At Gardenia Elementary, 85 percent of African Americans were either proficient or advanced in the area of math, while 15 percent were below proficient. In Meadowlands District, 95 percent of African Americans were either proficient or advanced with only 5 percent below proficient. Although not as dramatic a difference, 91 percent of Hispanic students at Gardenia were proficient or advanced in math, while 96 percent of Hispanic students in the school district were proficient or advanced. Reading achievement was commensurate among the disaggregated populations. Based upon their student achievement, Gardenia Elementary is classified by the State as being in Good Standing in terms of No Child Left Behind.

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Table 23

Comparison of GES and District Annual Yearly Progress Indicators

	Gardenia Elementary		Meadowlands District	
Academic Area:	% Proficient	% Advanced	% Proficient	% Advanced
Math (All)	**35.9**	**61.4**	**24.4**	**73.3**
African American	46.2	38.5	41.0	53.6
Asian/Pacific Islander	N/A	N/A	16.1	83.2
Hispanic	36.4	54.5	40.9	55.0
Native American	N/A	N/A	15.4	84.6
White	35.4	62.7	23.6	74.2
Economically Disadvantaged	42.9	52.4	45.6	46.5
Students with Disabilities	56.3	25	54.0	28.5
Limited English Proficient	N/A	N/A	47.2	47.2
Reading/Language (All)	**33.7**	**64.5**	**25.0**	**73.2**
African American	36.7	56.7	40.3	55.9
Asian/Pacific Islander	N/A	N/A	21.2	77.0
Hispanic	44	48	41.8	55.6
Native American	N/A	N/A	29.7	64.9
White	33.2	65.5	24.1	74.2
Economically Disadvantaged	31.3	62.5	44.6	48.9
Students with Disabilities	44.4	41.7	58.3	28.4
Limited English Proficient	N/A	N/A	57.1	36.0

Because Gardenia Elementary is a new school and has only been open since fall of 2007, there is only one state-mandated achievement test in its history thus far. Students at Gardenia Elementary took their first state achievement test in the spring of 2008. Consequently, there is no information regarding gains or losses in year-to-year achievement available for review.

Magnolia Elementary School

Magnolia Elementary School is a rapidly growing school in a rural area of Meadowlands School District. Since 1992, the school has split three different times to form three new schools due to the large growth of students which has averaged 125 students per year. The school is very clean and bright with pale blue walls with a primary colored stripe going down the middle of the wall. This stripe contains children's handprints in many different colors. Each grade level has a hall, and samples of student work and art are prominently displayed in each grade level. Student validating slogans and posters are displayed throughout the building. For example, a poster above the Assistant Principal's door states, "Believe in your dreams and they may come true. Believe in yourself and they will come true." The walls of Magnolia Elementary School are covered in bright artwork. One wall contains a very large American Flag made totally out of children's handprints in red, white, and blue paint. Adjacent to this flag is the State flag made out of red and white handprints. A common theme among the wall art concerns reading. On a prominent wall in the school, the staff have created a testimony of their own love of reading by placing large pictures of each faculty member above his or her favorite book. Magnolia Elementary School is also working with a local

university to implement positive behavior support, which is a school-wide initiative to improve behavior. There are numerous posters throughout the building clearly stating behavioral expectations. The overall atmosphere of Magnolia Elementary School is very welcoming, and there are many posters and signs stating, "Welcome." A random count indicated 12 such posters and signs in just the first two hallways.

There were 665 students at Magnolia Elementary School in grades kindergarten through fifth grade at the commencement of this study, based upon information on their 2008 report card. Staff at the school include 33 general education teachers for kindergarten through fifth grade, all of which meet Highly Qualified standards. In addition, there are four special education teachers, two preschool teachers, one reading specialist, one art teacher, one music teacher, one guidance counselor, one librarian, one part-time speech-language specialist, one part-time school psychologist, and one part-time English as a Second Language teacher. Support staff include seven special education paraprofessionals and seven general education paraprofessionals. The staff at Magnolia Elementary School are led by a principal, referred to in this document as PME, and an assistant principal, referred to as APME. PME holds a Master's Degree in Educational Administration and taught seventh and eighth grade science and social studies prior to entering the principalship. He had been a principal for four years at the commencement of this study. The assistant principal has a business background and holds a Master's Degree plus 30 in reading and administration. She has been an assistant principal for eight years.

The mission statement for Magnolia Elementary School states, "The mission of Magnolia Elementary School [pseudonym used] is to prepare all students to develop their full potential as educated, productive, and responsible citizens." This mission statement is supported by the following beliefs:

a. We believe that each child learns best through active participation in developmentally appropriate activities that prepare the child intellectually, socially, physically, and emotionally.
b. We believe that the worth and individuality of each child requires learning experiences directed toward nurturing positive self-esteem, encouraging natural curiosity, and developing responsibility.
c. We believe that a safe and physically comfortable school environment promotes successful learning experiences.
d. We believe that teachers must be committed to increasing their knowledge and proficiency in curriculum, teaching strategies, and technology in order to be facilitators of learning in our ever changing world.
e. We believe that facilitation of learning requires a cooperative partnership including the student, the parent, the staff, and the community.

(Mission Statement and Beliefs, MES Website)

A review of the School Improvement Plan for Magnolia Elementary School indicates a focus on increasing the number of students scoring proficient or advanced in math and science, improving advanced scores in reading for third and fourth grades, and enhancing

social-emotional learning through school-wide positive behavior support (School Improvement Plan, MES).

Table 24 summarizes student demographic information for Magnolia Elementary School. The population of 665 students is comprised of 95.4 percent white students, with less than 6 percent of the student population consisting of minority students. Slightly more than 12 percent of the student population is considered Economically Disadvantaged. The percentage of 8 percent of students with disabilities at Magnolia Elementary School is slightly lower than the overall district percentage of 13.3 percent.

Table 25 summarizes student achievement at Magnolia Elementary School in comparison to overall student achievement in Meadowlands School District. Math achievement at Magnolia Elementary is slightly less than student achievement in the district. The largest discrepancies occurred among the Economically Disadvantaged and Student with Disabilities disaggregated subgroups. A total of 86 percent of Economically Disadvantaged students were either proficient or advanced in math, leaving a total of 14 percent below proficient for this subgroup. In comparison, 8 percent of students in the Economically Disadvantaged subgroup were below proficient in the overall data for Meadowlands School District. For students with disabilities, a total of 77 percent were either proficient or advanced, while 23 percent were below proficient in comparison with 17 percent below proficiency for the district. It thus appears that math achievement, in particular for these two subgroups, continues to be an area of need for Magnolia Elementary. Reading achievement at Magnolia Elementary School is very commensurate

Table 24

Student Demographics for Magnolia Elementary School

Descriptive Category	Number	Percentage
African American	9	1.4
Asian/Pacific Islander	8	1.2
Hispanic	13	2.0
Native American/Alaskan	0	0.0
White	629	95.4
Economically Disadvantaged	79	12.1
Students with Disabilities	64	8.0
Female	307	46.6
Male	352	53.4

Table 25

Comparison of MES and District Annual Yearly Progress Indicators

	Magnolia Elementary		Meadowlands District	
Academic Area:	% Proficient	% Advanced	% Proficient	% Advanced
Math (All)	**32.2**	**63.2**	**24.4**	**73.3**
African American	N/A	N/A	41.0	53.6
Asian/Pacific Islander	N/A	N/A	16.1	83.2
Hispanic	N/A	N/A	40.9	55.0
Native American	N/A	N/A	15.4	84.6
White	31.6	63.8	23.6	74.2
Economically Disadvantaged	48.3	37.9	45.6	46.5
Students with Disabilities	56.7	20	54.0	28.5
Limited English Proficient	N/A	N/A	47.2	47.2
Reading/Language (All)	**34.2**	**63.4**	**25.0**	**73.2**
African American	N/A	N/A	40.3	55.9
Asian/Pacific Islander	N/A	N/A	21.2	77.0
Hispanic	N/A	N/A	41.8	55.6
Native American	N/A	N/A	29.7	64.9
White	33.3	64.5	24.1	74.2
Economically Disadvantaged	62.9	30	44.6	48.9
Students with Disabilities	63.8	26.1	58.3	28.4
Limited English Proficient	N/A	N/A	57.1	36.0

with that of the district as a whole. In fact, more students with disabilities were either proficient or advanced at Magnolia Elementary than in the district as a whole. Overall, Magnolia Elementary School met Annual Yearly Progress standards and is considered to be in Good Standing.

When value-added gains are examined by content area, Magnolia Elementary School exceeds the gains of the district in Reading/Language and Social Studies (see Table 26). The 3.8 gain in reading is higher than the gain of 2.3 for Meadowlands School District, while the 4.5 gain in Social Studies is more than twice that of the 1.8 gain of the school district. On the other hand, the gain of 0.6 in math for the school is less than half of the gain of 1.3 for the district. This discrepancy is the result of a three-year average loss of -2.1 for fourth graders at Magnolia Elementary and is represented as a goal in the school's School Improvement Plan. The loss of -0.8 in Science is nearly three times lower than the district gain of 2.3 and is reflective of a three-year average loss of -1.4 for fourth graders and a -0.2 for fifth graders at the school.

Summary

This chapter provided a description of Meadowlands School District and pertinent information regarding demographical information, student achievement, and historical information on previous district-wide implementations. The mobilization, or planning, phase of developing the RTI model for Meadowlands School district was presented, along with establishing AIMSweb as the Universal Screening and progress monitoring tool to be utilized in the district's RTI model. The design of the pilot RTI model was provided, along with a timeline for implementation for implementation. Interventions to

Table 26

Comparison of MES and District NCE Scores and Growth Gains by Area

	Magnolia Elementary			Meadowlands District		
Area:	NCE	Grade	Gain	NCE	Grade	Gain
Math	68	B	0.6	72	A	1.3
Reading/Language	65	A	3.8	69	A	2.3
Social Studies	67	A	4.5	69	A	1.8
Science	66	C	-0.8	69	A	2.3

Note. Growth gains are only available for CGE and MES due to GES only having one set of scores on the state-mandated achievement test since the school had only been operational for one year prior to this study.

be utilized in Tier 2A and Tier 2B were described. Finally, the three sites participating in this study were described in detail.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS OF FALL DATA FOR CAMELLIA GARDEN ELEMENTARY

Chapter Introduction

Fall data were collected at Camellia Garden Elementary during September and October 2008. The principal, assistant principal, and four teachers were interviewed on October 6, 2008, while observations were conducted on September 12, 2008, September 29, 2008, and October 6, 2008. The SoCQ was delivered to the staff on September 24, 2008 and collected on October 24, 2008. However, a second attempt was made to improve the return rate by delivering another SoCQ to non-responding teachers and collecting those returned on November 14, 2008. In total, 32 teachers and the two school administrators returned their SoCQ for a return rate of 92%.

During the Fall data collection period, the staff at Camellia Garden Elementary was involved in administering the AIMSweb Curriculum Based Measurement (CBM) benchmark for the fall as the Universal Screening, or the first step in identifying at-risk students to begin participation in Tier 1 interventions. Training had consisted of a half-day workshop on the administration and scoring of CBM and information on the RTI model presented at a faculty meeting. Based upon my theoretical framework using the Concerns Based Adoption Model (CBAM), the staff were considered non-users of RTI as they were just beginning the implementation (George et al., 2006; Hord et al., 2004). Themes were developed using the CBAM as the theoretical lens through which to view the data. A summary of each theme developed with the corresponding Stage of Concern

is provided in Table 27. A full discussion of each theme will be addressed through the research question it answered.

Research Question 1: What are the concerns of teachers and principals as they experience RTI implementation?

When the qualitative data were analyzed, two themes were developed that answered the first research question. The intent of the question was to identify major concerns experienced by teachers and principals in terms of the thoughts, feelings, and reactions they had as they began RTI implementation. As the fall qualitative data were collected as the implementation had just begun, these themes are thus the very early thoughts and perceptions of the participants. The first theme concerns confusion among the participants regarding what RTI was and how they were to carry out the process. As noted in Table 14, this theme is considered to be a Stage 2 (Personal) theme. The second theme addressed difficulties the teachers were experiencing scheduling RTI-related tasks into the daily schedule. This theme falls within the Stage 3 (Management) area of the SoC framework. These two themes are thoroughly discussed below.

The Cart Before the Horse: Lack of Clarity About the RTI Process

At the beginning of the first year of RTI implementation, the teachers and administrators at Camellia Garden Elementary were very confused about the RTI process and how to implement that process. As summarized in Table 27, this theme represents the Stage 2 (Personal) level of the SoC and is considered to be a Self Concern in that the participants appeared to be very uncertain about the demands of RTI implementation and

Table 27

Analysis of Qualitative Themes by Stage of Concern

Research Question	Theme	Stage of Concern
1	The Cart Before the Horse: Lack of Clarity About the RTI Process	2 Personal
	Scheduling RTI: How to Manage the Process	3 Management
1(a)	Juggling One More Thing Amidst a Sea of Change	2 Personal
	Paradigm Shift: What is a Student With a Disability?	2 Personal
1(b)	Hampering the Referral Process: Teachers' Duty to Refer Struggling Students	2 Personal
	Principals Supporting Teachers Through the Implementation of RTI	2 Personal
1(c)	Creating Responsive Instructional Practices through RTI	4 Consequence

how they were to carry out the implementation. When asked how she would characterize her experience with RTI thus far, T31CGE (see Chapter 3 for explanation of coding for participants) stated:

> I have to say that part was negative for me. We were introduced to it at a faculty meeting last year with the principal, but that was at the end of the year, and then it just kind of sat – for me it sat dormant through the summer. And then we were introduced back to the program and what we were required to do at a faculty meeting, and there was a lot of confusion as to what we were supposed to do with it. So I took it upon myself to go talk to our reading specialist to say I know I have to do this, and I want to be professional about it, but I feel very negative about it. I don't know what I'm supposed to do.

She clearly states that she does not have the knowledge to enable her, personally, to carry out the process of implementing RTI. She certainly was not alone. As I walked down the halls during the CBM Benchmarking, I heard comments from several teachers. One stated, "What are we supposed to be doing?" Another asked, "What are our next steps?" A third exclaimed, "I don't have a clue what this is or what I'm supposed to do!" (Observation, 9-12-08).

The assistant principal was cognizant of the confusion among the teachers and stated:

> I think there was some confusion at the beginning-exactly what is it? Maybe folks didn't quite understand it was just another way of identifying a learning disability in reading at this point. A little bit of cart before the horse in some of the talking about and catching up training to what, maybe, you had heard about. And so I think in that process teachers may have developed some attitudes that now they're backtracking and feeling different about.

The principal had also noticed the confusion and commented on it. She noted:

> Probably I would say at this point, at this juncture, is the confusion or the lack of clarity and communication as to the process and what we should be doing and where we are and having that unified. That really has been more scattered and frustrating as we go through the process, and that's probably part of it in that it's unknown and there's nothing clearly defined. But we just want to have the

> guidance of what to do and how to do it, and that probably has been frustrating because the communication lines have been unclear at times.

She further added that she believed the teachers were frustrated by the RTI process because they did not fully understand what they were to do and how they were to do it. She added:

> I think the key to success is going to be the communication and how it's implemented and what we do and the resources that we have to do it, because that can be overwhelming because unless it's clearly defined and explained, teachers feel like they're the special ed teacher now, or do I have the resources to implement this, or who's going to help me in Tier 2, what's happening in Tier 1, I need to serve all the kids, how is this going to eventually impact the kids that I know need assistance?

An area of further confusion regarding the RTI process centered around the teachers referring to CBM as RTI, rather than a component of RTI. Throughout the interviews, the teachers referred to the CBM benchmarking as RTI and often discussed CBM on questions pertaining to RTI. This pattern was also noted during observations and walking throughout the school during the CBM process. A total of 10 such comments were heard from teachers (Observation, 9-12-08).

The teachers also expressed concerns regarding the accuracy of CBM as a measurement used in the RTI process. Used as the measure for the Universal Screening and progress monitoring, CBM is an integral part of the RTI process. T4CGE noted her concern regarding using Letter Sounds rather than a measurement of word reading. She stated, “I guess the trickiest part for that would be you want to teach them to bring letters together, and then they're not wanting them to do that on the test, so they miss that part.” For other teachers, the concern was the lack of a comprehension element on CBM oral reading fluency. T15CGE noted:

> I don't think that it is an accurate reading because some of my students who read extremely well did not score very well on the RTI, on their scores. So that's a little frustrating because it doesn't have anything to do with comprehension. It has to do with fluency, and that doesn't cover everything a child knows.

She went on to elaborate by stating:

> I think the probes are okay, but I think that there needs to be a comprehension element to it. And I know that AIMSweb can be considered that, but that's a lot of vocabulary more than understanding the whole story, and so there needs to be more of a comprehension element.

The assistant principal also noted doubt that CBM provides an accurate measure of student performance in reading. She said:

> I have a concern about those kids that are high achievers – I mean are high cognitively and they're achievement may be in the middle, but they will never show up as learning disabled because they will not show up on this particular type of screening instrument.

This doubt was echoed by a second grade teacher at the grade level meeting in which the fall benchmark data was being reviewed to identify students who were at risk by being at or below the tenth percentile on the Universal Screening. The teachers were unhappy with the results and stated that they did not feel the results were descriptive of what they were seeing in the classroom. One teacher stated, "This test doesn't measure anything that matters. It's not accurate," (Observation, 9-29-08).

In addition, teachers and administrators at Camellia Garden Elementary clearly stated that they do not feel they received adequate training for implementing RTI. T15CGE stated, "I feel like I've kind of been thrown into it. I don't think it's a total waste and I think there are probably good components in it, but I just feel like we haven't had enough time to completely understand everything about it." She certainly was not alone in her perception. T31CGE stated:

> I guess I wish that I had had some training over the summer, some more hands-on learning experiences on how to really effectively use this program with my kids instead of them being the guinea pigs. I don't want to waste a semester with them learning how to use this program effectively. I don't know that that's really fair to my kids.

Training for the administration and scoring of AIMSweb CBM probes was conducted in half-day sessions on August 5, 2008. Teachers of all grade levels participated in the trainings, and there was no differentiation based on grade level. This was an area of concern for T31CGE who noted:

> I think for teachers who are going to be introduced to this in the future there needs to be more training and not just an hour to two hour faculty meeting because the younger grades have to do some different testing than the older grades. I think the trainings need to be separate because you're going to be working with teachers who are working with students who don't understand their letters. Well, that's not relevant to the upper grade levels where the kids know their letters and know their words but are just struggling on comprehending. So I think there needs to be more training.

Her concern was related to the need for teachers of younger students to administer early literacy CBM probes such as Letter Names and Letter Sounds while teachers of older students administered Oral Reading Fluency and Maze probes.

Training on the RTI model and procedures occurred through faculty meetings and were led by the principal. In addition, the school psychologist and reading specialist conducted grade level meetings to review the AIMSweb benchmark data with the teachers to assist them in determining which students were at-risk and needed to begin Tier 1 intervention (Observation, 9-29-08). However, teachers did not feel this training was sufficient in explaining the RTI process. T31CGE stated:

> I think the training part of it, to really sit down with individual grade levels and say this is how you do it and this is how you teach across the curriculum, here are some materials for you to use, instead of just saying, here, this is what you're

> supposed to do, do it. I think the training part of it, just more information would be helpful to teachers who are going to start implementing this… I think our willingness to embrace this would have been a lot higher if there were some models. Just handing me a packet and saying, let's go through the packet and this is what you do, doesn't work for me. That's not how I learn. I need hands-on. I need someone to say, okay, you do this, and then you do this, and then you do this, and why are we doing this, you can do that, and you're not allowed to do this, but you can do that– I mean just things like that for me. And I feel like the average teacher learns that way. But we need some kind of model, and we need it in smaller groups versus fifty to sixty teachers in a room saying, oh, here, this is what you're going to be doing.

T10CGE also felt that the training was lacking in preparing her to use RTI. She noted:

> The other thing is I played around at the computer and I kind of found the data and stuff but we really weren't well trained on that part, on what that meant. Like I went to the graphs and I figured it out. I played around with it for awhile. But, you know, somebody needs some prior training on how to determine if a child really qualifies or not.

Thus, the trainings provided on AIMSweb and RTI, including the small-group grade level trainings with direct assistance and guidance by the school psychologist and reading specialist, were deemed insufficient by the teachers to prepare them for understanding and implementing RTI in the classroom.

Scheduling RTI: How to Manage the Process

A second concern was noted in the area of managing the requirements of RTI. This theme is most aligned with Stage 3, Management, on the SoC. Individuals in this stage are focused on the processes and tasks of using the innovation, and the issues of concern pertain to the efficiency, organization, management, and scheduling of the implementation. For the teachers and administrators at Camellia Garden Elementary, this scheduling concern centered around four issues: scheduling time for the 90-minute reading block, scheduling time for the interventions for RTI, scheduling time to

administer the CBM probes, and managing the other students in the class while conducting interventions with at-risk students.

Because the school district had mandated that all reading classes operate within a 90-minute period of time, teachers had to incorporate the additional time into their daily schedules. This action created difficulty for the teachers. T31CGE noted:

> Well, I think the fact that they said it has to be a ninety minute solid block of reading is challenging. However, I think all of us have just tried to get a little more creative, and we're reading more social studies and more science during that time. As far as with my grade that I teach, I teach young children. An hour and a half of something solid is an extremely difficult thing to do without a break… But t I think just being told that we have to have that ninety minute solid block is a little frustrating – because that's just not life, you know.

In addition, teachers were having difficulty determining exactly what to do within the 90 minutes of uninterrupted reading instruction. T31CGE stated:

> I think that was my biggest grief, starting the year out with I want to do this right but I don't feel like at the beginning we were given the necessary tools, if you want to call it that. I felt like I needed to spend some one on one time with our specialist to get a little more comfortable with it. She helped me work out my schedule, she told me what I could do during my ninety minute block, and that was a lot more helpful. And I feel like if that had been initially discussed and maybe in the separate grade levels or a combination of grade levels where the information would be relevant across, maybe, a couple of grade levels, that probably would have eliminated some of the negativity to begin with.

Concern was also expressed regarding having time to cover the grade level standards in other subjects with implementing the 90-minute reading block. T31CGE added, “Doing the 90-minute block literacy is a good concept for me but it was also a little staggering in my mind because I'm responsible for not just reading standards but math standards and language standards and social studies standards and science standards and just how to put all that together.”

In addition to having to find additional time in the daily schedule for incorporating the 90-minute reading block, the teachers also had to think ahead to scheduling time to add a supplemental 30 minutes to the schedule for Tier 2 instruction. T4CGE reported:

> Well, for kindergarten it's a little bit easier, I guess, to have that time for RTI. During our literacy centers I can just pull him aside, and I mean it takes four minutes, tops to get everything going. So I can just quickly go through and progress monitor him then, or I can also use our free choice time if it's not too loud. As a kindergarten team, we decided that we would keep our free time. That way we would have at least twenty minutes available for RTI intervention time.

However, for other teachers, incorporating intervention time for RTI was more difficult. T31CGE said, "The schedule, working in an extra thirty minutes – and that will be later on in the school year – but figuring out where that extra thirty minutes is going to come from to teach a small group." T10CGE added:

> And then I think as a classroom teacher your hands are tied. Not only are you trying to meet that one child's needs from RTI but you've also got the gifted child and the high achiever that you're providing extra work for. You've also got your middle of the road kids. Well, you don't want them to fall in the cracks either. So I think first of all, it needs to be the teacher's responsibility, and then I think it would be great to have extra help in the reading intervention from somebody outside of the classroom, whether it be a reading specialist or someone else. The reading specialist has worked with us some. And now I know they're changing her role a little bit, but I really liked it when she works more directly with our kids to give us the extra hand. But that's my belief.

Other teachers at Camellia Garden Elementary were also concerned about finding the time to incorporate the additional 30-minute intervention time into their schedules. Several noted that they were very concerned regarding how this time would be located in a daily schedule already full and noted that no plans were underway to develop a master

schedule with built-in intervention time (Observation, 9-12-08). PCGE was also concerned about the scheduling of intervention time. She noted:

> We had to go back and review and re-evaluate our scheduling. So we have to kind of go back and piecemeal things as it all fits together. So I think it's as we go, we're going to learn and know what we need to do so that next year we'll know, okay, this is the time block that we need, and I think it will be different going in. We've already gone as far to reserve that thirty minute time in tier two. Although, that most likely will not start in the pilot school until January, the teachers are prepared and know that's the time. They want to know how does it look, and we really don't have that clearly defined yet.

Scheduling time to conduct the CBM probes for benchmarking and progress monitoring was also noted to be problematic. Although the CBM probes for benchmarking consist of three one-minute passages, the teachers nonetheless felt that the administration of the probes was very time consuming. T15CGE noted:

> I think it's pretty time consuming. Three minutes doesn't sound like a long time when you are talking about one minute probes, but when you have a class of twenty students or more and you're trying to put in three minute increments and make sure that everything's okay in your classroom, and you run all that at the same time, three minutes is not just three minutes. And so it takes a long time.

The teachers felt that they needed additional help to get the CBM component of RTI done along with all the other demands they are facing in the classroom. T4CGE stated:

> I hear a lot of teachers complaining about the time, you know. I know that I've heard other schools have built in time where someone else would take their class to a computer lab and they would have a few minutes, like five minutes, to progress monitor really fast. And then that way it's a quiet environment, a controlled environment, to do the progress monitoring.

T15CGE elaborated on this need by saying, “I think they need to provide some time for teachers to do this instead of in the middle of their day along with trying to manage a classroom and the needs that go along with that.” These teachers certainly were not alone in their thoughts on this matter. During a walk-through on one of my school visits during

which teachers were administering CBM probes for fall benchmarking, I heard several teachers making comments about the amount of time the benchmarking was taking. These comments include the following:

- "This process is cumbersome and takes too long to do."
- "When am I supposed to find time to teach?"
- "How do I do this and still find time to teach the rest of my class?"
- "I need help with this. I can't get it all done." (Observation, 9-12-08)

A third management area of concern for teachers centered around what to do with other students while providing intervention to the struggling students. T10CGE noted:

> So that's the key because what do you do with the other eighteen students in your class? That's another concern, what do you do with the other eighteen when you're giving individualized attention, especially at the end of the day for first grade because their attention span right now is so low. I think it's a time element where what do you do with the rest of the children when you are implementing that thirty minutes one on one instruction?

T31CGE echoed these thoughts in her concerns by adding:

> And then figuring out what do I do with the rest of my class while I'm working with this small group? My biggest frustration is what am I going to do if I have some behavior problems that I have in my room right now? I have students who cannot work independently without someone sitting next to them. What do I do with those kids while I am working with my small group?

She went on to clarify her frustrations by stating:

> And a huge frustration for me right now is that I want to use this program effectively but I have twenty-five kids. If I'm working with these five, and I've got these two over here who can't work independently, what do I do with them? And how do I make sure everybody's learning and that someone isn't feeling like they're being left out or parents aren't feeling like I'm not working enough with their child? I've got, essentially, fifty parents who are saying, "What are you doing for my child? Are you teaching my kid?"

These concerns were shared by other teachers at CGE as well. During a grade-level meeting for second grade, the following comments were made by teachers:

- "What are we supposed to do with the rest of the class?"
- "This is preventing me from being able to teach the rest of my class."
- "How do I find time to do the interventions, work with my special education inclusion students, and teach the others in my class?" (Observation, 9-29-08)

Research Question 1a: What do teachers and principals perceive as barriers to implementing RTI?

In analyzing the fall qualitative data for CGE, two themes were developed that identified areas the teachers and the principals perceived as potential barriers to implementing RTI. These two themes involve the idea that teachers are being given additional responsibilities to carry out and challenges to the commonly held perception of what identifies students with disabilities. These themes are thoroughly discussed below.

Juggling One More Thing Amidst a Sea of Change

The first potential barrier to RTI implementation consists of the perception that teachers are being asked to do "one more thing" in addition to many other responsibilities and duties they are currently expected to do. While at first glance, this theme appeared to best align with the Management level of the SoC framework, a closer examination revealed the very personal nature this theme identified. As data were read and reread, I realized that there was an intense level of self-concern present in this theme that centered around the demands the teachers and principals felt were being placed on them.

Teachers at CGE clearly felt like they were being asked to do "one more thing." T10CGE noted:

> Well, at first we were like. . one more thing. To be honest with you, I was like, oh gosh, we don't want to do this. This is just one more thing. I don't know how beneficial it's really going to be, so I'll have to wait and see as the year goes on. But at first we were frustrated because it was like here we go again. We've got so much going on and here's another new program being implemented. That was our first reaction.

Other teachers had the same concern. One third grade teacher stated, "When do we have time to teach? The district doesn't seem to understand that and keeps giving us more to do," (Observation, 9-12-08). APCGE also expressed concern regarding the additional responsibilities and duties teachers were being given. She said:

> Once you really get it going and you have different groups and different needs and different interventions and doing the probes and keeping track of it and just matching everything up and keeping a lot of balls in the air at one time, and that's just for reading, plus they have lots of other curriculum areas that they're responsible for.

T31CGE added that being able to see the relevance of all the things teachers were being asked to do would help tremendously. She said, "I see that there will be benefits –but just [being given] more information and that way the morale of the staff is a lot higher, versus here's something else to add to your plate."

Contributing to the idea that teachers are being given one more thing to do is the fact that the school district also began implementing several other initiatives simultaneously with RTI. These other initiatives include Gradespeed, new State standards for math and social studies, and new report card formats. PCGE expressed her concern that teachers were feeling overwhelmed in the midst of all of these changes. She stated:

> Being that it's combined with several other initiatives, major initiatives, not only Gradespeed, report cards, double standards in math, social studies, it's a challenge to balance it all and to come to decide what are the priorities. And RTI is and has been a priority, not that we want anything else to not be addressed as much, but that's really a challenge insofar as having RTI, as it fits into our daily instruction, a priority.

Teachers at CGE were definitely feeling overwhelmed by all of the new initiatives they were being asked to implement. At a grade-level meeting for first grade, one teacher said in response to the new initiatives, "This is too much!" Another added, "I can't keep up with all of these initiatives the district is making us do," (Observation, 9-12-08). T31CGE also stated, "Especially when within the same year we've been given the standards in several different subjects, and it's just overwhelming. And, thank goodness, we're not doing school improvement this year because that would have really probably put us all over the edge."

Paradigm Shift: What is a Student with a Disability?

The second potential barrier to implementing RTI encompasses the perception teachers have regarding how to identify students with disabilities. Teachers felt like the CBM benchmark results did not accurately identify students who they felt were at-risk for potential learning disabilities. As a result, questions arose whether the RTI process would be effective at their school.

This concern of whether at-risk students were being correctly identified through the RTI process was clearly articulated by T10CGE who stated:

> The problem that I see is two of the kids that really do need intervention as far as I'm concerned from Stars testing and from DRA testing and from my observations of them in the classroom did not qualify because they knew their letters and sounds…. I also think the challenge is I'm not so sure our kids who are really at risk showed up at risk on RTI. And that was a concern because now I feel like

> not only do I have to work with the low kids that I know [are at-risk] from all the other testing, from everything else and my knowledge base, but somebody else might just show up out of the blue[on the CBM benchmark]…. This is just one measurement.

In addition, other teachers expressed this same concern at the initial grade-level meeting in which the results of the CBM fall benchmark were reviewed to identify students at-risk so the RTI process could begin. Several teachers were frustrated because the students they had concerns for did not show up at-risk on the fall CBM benchmark. Once second-grade teacher stated, "I know this student is struggling. This process does not show what I am seeing in the classroom." Another said, "So do we just wait until they [students the teacher was concerned about] are low enough [on CBM] to be considered at-risk?" Frustration at the meeting was running high when another teacher noted, "This is not fair to students," (Observation, 9-29-08).

Further complicating the matter is the fact that only one student in the entire school scored low enough on the fall CBM benchmark to fall within the at-risk range (AIMSweb Fall Benchmark Chart). Teachers at CGE thus began to feel that RTI was not an effective method of identifying students at their school. T10CGE noted:

> I question whether it's really beneficial at [Camellia Garden Elementary]. I think the program will probably be more successful at other schools because we do have higher achieving students here. Now, that is not to say just because we're at [Camellia Garden Elementary] we don't have children who are at need, but I think all of our faculty and the children tend to meet the kids' needs where they're at and grow with it. So if we have a lower achieving student we've already jumped on that bandwagon to give them that extra attention that they need.

Likewise, T15CGE expressed the same thought:

> I feel like at our school – at least I know with my team and many other teams – we really try to do a lot of differentiation in our class already, but maybe in a school where you have more students or they come from lower income, I can see

> where it might be a success there. You might have a larger group of students to work with and see larger growth. We already have so many students that are above average that we have such a small number in that low percentile.

This concern was also expressed at the grade-level meeting for second grade where the fall CBM benchmark results were reviewed. None of the students in second grade scored at or below the 10th percentile. Teachers were very unhappy with these results and felt that the process was unfair. One stated, "I don't see how this process is going to work here at [Camellia Garden Elementary]. Our kids are always going to test higher than other schools." Another said, "I don't think it's fair for our school, which is high achieving, to have to use that low of a cut-off like lower achieving schools," (Observation, 9-29-08). The teachers at CGE thus do not see the relevance of RTI as a method of identifying learning disabilities in students, and this perception poses a significant barrier to successful implementation of the process.

Research Question 1b: How are the roles of teachers and principals affected by RTI?

Analysis of fall data indicated two themes in relation to the second research subquestion for this study. Teachers at CGE perceive a duty to refer students who are struggling for extra help, and this extra help has historically involved evaluation for special education services. They perceive the RTI process as hampering their ability to refer students and to communicate with parents effectively. The principal and assistant principal perceive their role within RTI implementation to be that of a support for teachers. When viewed through the lens of the SoC framework, these themes fall within the Personal stage and are marked by how each individual perceives him or herself fitting

within the new innovation. These themes are discussed in detail in the following sections.

Hampering the Referral Process: Duty to Refer Struggling Students

Teachers at CGE strongly perceive the duty to refer struggling students for extra help as a vital part of their role as teachers. Many perceive the RTI process as blocking that duty. In a conversation with the school psychologist for CGE, she stated that the teachers at CGE are very conscientious about referring struggling students for help and take that responsibility very seriously. She stated that she feels the teachers' perceptions are that they have been blocked from getting their students help (Observation, 10-6-08). T15CGE echoed this idea by stating:

> Right now we're in a holding pattern, and that's hard because I know of a couple of students who I feel could benefit from some support but we're waiting on the results from our RTI reports and what to do next since we're still learning. And time is precious, especially in the grade that I teach if work gets too hard. So I feel like in some ways it's slowed things down.

Likewise, T10CGE also noted concern about being hampered from referring students who need additional support:

> Normally what we could have done is held a support team meeting, and I understand that we still can do that if we need to, but we would hold a support team meeting where we could express our concerns to either the speech teacher for language issues or to our gifted teacher if there was a gifted incident or to [the school psychologist] if there was a learning disability possibility. And so, therefore, considering all those factors you felt comfortable. And now it's like, oh, my gosh, if they do well on the [CBM benchmark], then we're stuck. And we're having to do the extra intervention in our classrooms and not getting the necessary needed resources from either (a) a resource teacher or (b) from our reading specialist.

Both PCGE and APCGE expressed their concerns regarding the referral process as well. PCGE noted:

> Since we're a pilot school this year, it's almost like we're having a dual process in order. We're still modifying the support team process with the RTI process, but also those students from last year and those students that had a [more serious] concerns with, we're not waiting for nine weeks of progress monitoring in order to move forth with a concern as in a support team meeting. So this year we are really running a dual type of programs, and that's how we're covering it because I don't want teachers to feel that we have to wait nine weeks, we cannot address the needs of this student, and that's what's been a concern.

APCGE added, "I think teachers are feeling a little unsure. Do they refer for a support team meeting? They're not quite sure what to do about those students that they have some concerns about. So we're kind of in that little bit of a gray area right now, just beginning to work out of it a little bit." In reviewing the referral data for CGE for the 2007-2008 school year, I noticed that 26 students were referred to the support team for psychoeducational evaluation, and 13 of these referrals were certified as students with learning disabilities (District Referral Totals by School). Undoubtedly, the teachers are experiencing an adjustment in how struggling students receive "help" through the RTI process.

Another area teachers are feeling hampered in consists of their ability to communicate the RTI process with parents. Parent communication and involvement is an integral part of the CGE school culture. The CGE vision statement proclaims this belief:

> Our vision ensures an engaging and academically enriching environment designed to support the collaborative educational efforts of teachers, students, staff, and community. (CGES Vision Statement)

In addition, the website for CGE welcomes parental involvement by stating, "Ongoing parent-teacher communication is essential for your child's success." (CGES Website) This vital belief in communicating with parents regarding their children's lack of

progress is perceived as being hampered by the lack of understanding about RTI. T31CGE noted:

> I think that the lack of knowledge that we have given to the parents about the [RTI] program has been daunting for me as a teacher to try to tell them this is what it is and this how it's going to be used…. So I still feel like I have a lot of questions that are left unanswered, and I think that we have a large population of parents that don't really get what we're doing. And that's discouraging as a teacher because you want to try to give them information, and you want to make sure that it's the correct information and that you're not just feeding them a line to appease them for the moment to get them off your back.

In addition, I received two emails within one week pertaining to what to tell parents about the RTI process. In an email from APCGE, she stated that she needed to know what to tell parents because they were calling the school and asking what RTI is and why the school was doing it. She also noted the teachers were frustrated because they did not feel they had the understanding of RTI to be able to explain it to parents. In addition, a fourth grade teacher emailed with concerns regarding what to tell a parent who had heard the school was doing RTI and wanted to know what it was and how much instructional time was being spent on it (Personal Communication, 10-6-08). T31CGE stressed the importance of knowing what to say to parents regarding the RTI process by stating:

> I think that when a school is going to implement [RTI] there needs to be something from day one that is given to the parents to say this is what it is, this is how we're going to use it, this is how much our staff's been trained on it, this is what everybody's going to be doing, and that way you start the year off on a positive note to say this is how we're working with your kid, this is what we'll do with your struggling readers, this is what we'll do with those readers that need to be challenged.

In addition to feeling their duty to refer students for help and to communicate with parents regarding academic difficulties, the teachers at CGE also perceived their role as

teachers was being questioned. They perceived a lack of trust for their knowledge and competence as teachers as described by T15CGE:

> I feel like in this [RTI process] with the ninety minute block and feeling very closed in to that, it just feels like somebody somewhere doesn't trust us as teachers and that's frustrating because we -- at least here at this school – spend a lot more time on our job than we're paid for.

She was certainly not alone in her perception. At the grade level meeting for second grade to review the fall CBM data, other teachers expressed this same concern. One said, "What about my opinion as a teacher? Don't I count?" Another stated, "I know this student is struggling. It's a shame one score means more than my opinion," (Observation, 9-29-08).

Role of Principal: Supporting the Teachers

The principal and assistant principal viewed their role as supporting the teachers as they implemented RTI. APCGE stated, "Well, I've done a lot of AIMSweb reports and helping debunk some of the myths and so forth that are out there about it, trying to make it be as much of a positive experience for our teachers as possible." She also stated, ""We're trying to support the teachers through this process," (Observation, 9-12-08). PCGE added that as the staff learn about RTI practices, she is alongside of them learning as well. She said:

> I would say it's definitely something that is proving to be a collaborative experience, a schoolwide experience. We've introduced it slowly, slow to grow, so it can be done properly in accordance with the law and what we need to do. And as we introduce it, we are seeing how it actually fits into our practices, our best practices [that we're doing] already, but how to make that sound practical and work for the school as we move through the tiers… . But it's an interesting place to be because I don't have the answers and I've not said that I do. So I think in going through the process again, I go back to [it] being a collaborative

> experience, to say we're all learning this together. So, hopefully, with our wisdom together and the research, we'll be able to move through it.

APCGE has taken a direct supportive role in the RTI process by assisting the teachers in making sense of the AIMSweb reports and linking that to the provision of interventions in the classroom. She noted the main impact on her role as assistant principal as:

> Probably just pulling a lot of the reports and so forth of AIMSweb off line, looking at all that information, and then talking with teachers specifically about what is an intervention and how you document it and it's not the end of the world and so forth. But just probably more hands-on about interventions and how you read those reports and what they mean and what they don't mean… . Again, getting the training that the teachers need and then giving them the support as they begin to implement it with their students and making sure that they have the needed professional development into the different types of interventions that may be appropriate for different types of needs.

PCGE has also attempted to link RTI practices to what practices are already being done by the teachers. She stated:

> I think one point I did not mention was in addition to [being] supportive and collaborative in my role is I feel it's a key that I as leader and the assistant principal start off this process, which we have, and hopefully, it will be successful at our school, in validating what the teachers and the staff already have in place and how it all fits together. To say, really, "Folks you're doing this." It's another way to fit it all together…. But I think it's very important for teachers to feel validated and know that they will be successful with this because when it's something unknown and of this magnitude, people start maybe lacking some confidence, and I think it's very important to say, "You can do this."

The teachers at CGE also perceive the role of their principal and assistant principal to be supportive in nature. T15CGE said, "Our principal was incredible and gave us a substitute the day that we implemented the [CBM fall benchmark] probes, the three minute probes. Had she not done that, I do not know how we would have done it just because this class needs a lot of attention." During the CBM fall benchmark, another first grade teacher noted, "Our principal is very supportive and provided subs to help us

today." PCGE had hired substitutes to teach the classes while the teachers administered the CBM probes (Observation, 9-12-08). In addition, the reading specialist for CGE was putting together informational packets for the teachers to assist them with providing interventions for Tier 1. She noted that the principal had asked her to do so to help support the teachers (Observation, 9-12-08).

PCGE and APCGE had been very visible and involved in the RTI implementation process, thus contributing to the teachers' perception of their support. During a RTI Team meeting at the school, both principal and assistant principal were in attendance and took active roles in the discussion on planning the implementation of Tier 1 when the CBM fall benchmark process was completed. The words, *supporting teachers*, were used by them a total of seven times during that meeting (Observation, 9-12-08). In addition, PCGE and APCGE attended all of the grade-level meetings to discuss the results of the CBM fall benchmark and the assignment of students to Tier 1. When the teachers expressed their dismay and frustration that students about whom they had concerns did not score low enough on the CBM assessment to be considered at-risk under the RTI model, each administrator expressed encouragement to the teachers and urged them not to rush to judgment this early in the process, but rather to give the process a chance to work as the year went on (Observation, 9-29-08). This active involvement in the RTI process by both the principal and assistant principal very likely communicated administrative support to the teachers as they struggled to begin RTI implementation.

Research Question 1c: What factors facilitate RTI implementation?

In developing themes from the fall data, one theme in answer to the third subquestion was identified. Teachers and administrators at CGE perceive RTI as leading to sound instructional practices which positively impact student learning. This theme falls within Stage 4, Consequence, on the SoC. The implication is that, in theory if not in practice, teachers can see that RTI will have a positive impact on student learning through improving instructional practices, informing instruction, and showing student growth.

Creating Responsive Instructional Practices through RTI

Teachers and administrators perceive RTI as leading to better instructional practices. T31CGE stated:

> Well, on the positive side, I feel like this program, when we really fully understand it, will really help us with those struggling readers. And in the grade level that I'm in, the students are already past that [stage of] learning how to read, like in the younger grades they are learning how to read words. And so with the upper grades you're really struggling with comprehension and those deeper elements like inferencing and just being able to generalize and use context clues and just all those deeper things that you associated with reading at an older grade level.

PCGE noted that RTI has been a good fit with instructional goals set forth in the school's School Improvement Plan. She stated:

> Well, RTI, again, is best practices, and through its implementation we're addressing our school improvement plan, our goals in reading, writing and mathematics. So with the ninety minute uninterrupted literacy block and defining that, which took some time, uh, it's a shift in how and what we're teaching, but it's also what we have been doing. So with the components in literacy, this has been a tremendous help in having this gel together along with the curriculum in reading. I think it's brought it together.

The school has been focused on instructional practices and this idea is expressed in two of the school's belief statements as follows:

- Students learn best when provided developmentally appropriate practices that meet each child's unique intellectual, physical, emotional, and social needs.
- A variety of engaging, stimulating strategies are utilized to provide differentiation of instruction for all students. (CGES Belief Statements)

T31CGE noted that teaching practices for upper elementary grades had changed since implementing the literacy requirements of the RTI model. She noted:

> So the positive side of it, because it's not been all negative, is I guess surrounding my day teaching across the curriculum, and it's just learning how to do that because when I went to college it was, "This how you teach social studies, and this is how you teach science," but I've never, I guess, been in a situation where I'm forced to teach understanding of reading a social studies passage and doing that during reading time. So it is making me teach across the curriculum, which I think is a good thing. It's just a little daunting at this point.

The teachers and administrators also perceive that RTI practices serve to inform instruction in that their teaching styles and content can be responsive to student need. APCGE noted, "I think it certainly has a lot of goodness to it in that it causes teachers to be much more explicit in what they're doing and looking at teaching techniques, and being very discrete with that." Particularly, the AIMSweb progress monitoring was noted to be a good source of feedback for teachers in planning their instruction. T4CGE stated:

> Right now, just because we've only had it in place for a short amount of time, I perceive it to be a success based on that one student that I've been progress monitoring, and just holding me accountable to progress monitoring him once a week and for me to say, okay, this is working, this is not working so that I know how to plan for instruction for this one child. So, so far that's shown success… But that just shows me that what I'm doing is working, so I'll continue doing that, and, again, just give him a little more individual instruction in that area.

She went on to describe one of her students she has been progress monitoring:

> Well, so far it's given me some information. And as far as just the one student in particular, he had some other service. He was provided with other services during the summer, and when we got him we noticed some things right off the bat, and so we went ahead and had a support meeting, and we went ahead and set him up for progress monitoring. And I did the first one last week, and he's already come up so much, and it was so encouraging to me as a teacher. And so I guess if I didn't have this in place I might not progress monitor him every single week, but seeing that growth tells me that what I'm doing is working for him, which tells me I just need to continue that, and then I just need to make sure that I'm giving him a little more individual instruction so that he's able to go on.

Student growth is a vital part of the culture at CGE. As previously noted, the theme of growth is illustrated in the artwork throughout the building, as well as in student artwork, depicting trees and gardens. A total of eight examples of this growth theme was noted on a walk-through of the school (Observation, 10-6-08). Likewise, the school's mission statement reads:

> Our mission is to cultivate the ability, intellect and character of each student. CGE is a caring community in which all members share in the challenge to develop a lifelong love of learning, cultivate respect for others and themselves, and grow to their full potential as individuals. (Mission Statement, CGE website)

The theme of student growth continues in the school's belief statements which include the following statements:

- Student growth is the primary focus at [Camellia Garden Elementary].
- Students will be involved in the learning process and provided continuous opportunities for growth and success. (Belief Statements, CGE Website)

Statements on the school's website also discuss the emphasis the school has placed on student growth:

> Our teachers average 17 years of experience, and they are consistently involved in job embedded professional development in order to increase student growth. In

> addition, before and after school tutoring conducted by CGE teachers is available for all students in order to help students meet individual academic needs. (CGES Website)

Therefore, it is not surprising that the teachers and administrators at CGE have identified with the idea that RTI implementation can lead to increased student growth. APCGE stated:

> I certainly think it allows you to look at students in a very much more detailed way than, possibly, we have in the past. You can see if what you're doing is making a difference for them and change and see how they're responding. It really helps the teacher and then, of course, administrator focus in on specific individual children in looking at exactly where their strengths and weaknesses are, and then we can look at interventions to meet those.

T4CGE also noted that the RTI process allowed teachers to see student growth. She noted:

> And then the graphs and things kind of give you information, I guess, on where they are and how they're moving up, especially for kindergarten and doing letters sounds and letter knowledge. You see growth… . It's been encouraging and definitely positive. Just to see that growth has been great.

APCGE shared a recent experience she had had in using the AIMSweb progress monitoring charts to communicate growth to parents. She said:

> I was sitting in a meeting this morning where we actually pulled up the [AIMSweb] data on the laptop, and we have not printed it, but we were able to show four data points on the CBM. . .to the parent, which was very helpful and very clearly showed the growth or lack thereof for the interventions and the probes and so forth… . And so I think that was helpful, and I think in the long run teachers will like if it we can get everything bundled for them in a neat package… . The teacher this morning in the meeting is very computer savvy and she, I think, really liked that she had this information to share. It helped her.

Research Question 2: To what extent do the concerns expressed by teachers and principals vary from the beginning to the end of the first year of RTI Implementation?

To prepare to answer this quantitative question after the spring data collection, I averaged all of the raw scores for each of the scales on the SoCQ then converted the average scores to percentiles to obtain a profile for the school based on teacher responses in the fall. Figure 4 summarizes the profile for Camellia Garden Elementary.

SoCQ Scores for CGES

As can be seen, the highest score was for Stage 0, Awareness, with a score at the 97th percentile. High scores on Stage 0 typically indicate that the responder perceives other tasks or initiatives to be of more concern or that the respondent is concerned about more than the innovation (George et at., 2006). This interpretation appears to align with information collected through qualitative methods in which teachers expressed great concern regarding other initiatives the district was undertaking simultaneously with RTI implementation. Teachers at CGE expressed their frustration regarding having to implement Gradespeed, new report card formats, and new State curricular standards while also trying to keep up with the demands of RTI implementation.

The second-highest score on the SoCQ for CGE in the fall was on Stage 3, Management, with a score at the 90th percentile. High Stage 3 scores suggest intense levels of concern pertaining to management, time, and logistical issues involved in the implementation (George et al., 2006). In addition, high scores on Stage 3 also indicate the respondent is having difficulty meeting the management demands of the implementation (Hord et al., 2004). The teachers at CGE clearly expressed difficulty managing the scheduling of time for the 90 minute reading block, time for the interventions, time for conducting CBM assessments, along with how to manage the

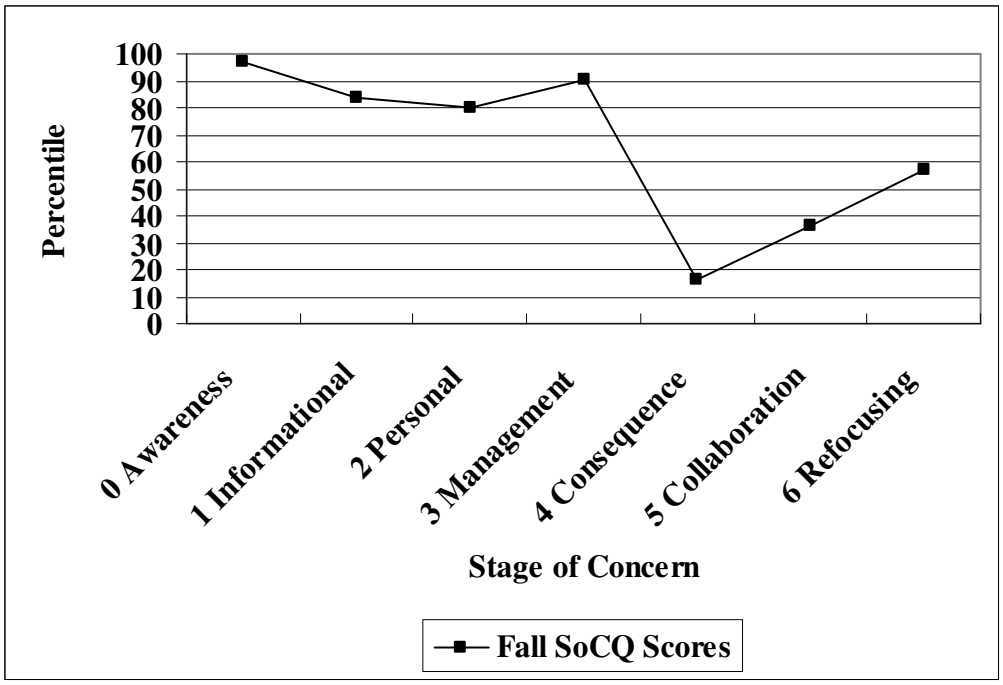


***Figure 4*. Fall SoCQ Percentiles for Camellia Garden Elementary.**

other students while doing all of these activities. These intense concerns could possibly have contributed to the high scores on Stage 3 as the teachers were struggling with these management aspects of RTI implementation.

The score at the 80th percentile on the Stage 2, Personal, and the score at the 84th percentile on the Stage 1, Information, stages were within 10 percentage points of the second-highest score on Stage 3, Management. As noted in George et al. (2006), scores within 3 or 4 percentage points of the highest or second-highest scores are very influential. While these scores were not within the close range specified by George et al., qualitative themes were noted that align with these stages. Personal concerns were noted throughout the qualitative data and centered around teachers' and administrators' uncertainty of the RTI process and of their roles within it. In addition, Personal concerns were evident in the teachers' and administrators' concerns regarding whether the process was accurately identifying at-risk students and whether the process was fair for their student population. While the qualitative theme regarding training insufficiency was grouped under the overall theme of uncertainty about the RTI process due to lack of sufficient data to stand alone, the need of the teachers and administrators to have more training or information regarding RTI also supports the high score on the Information stage.

Additional interpretive data from the Fall SoCQ data for CGES can be gained from examining the relationship between Stage 1, Information, and Stage 2, Personal. Hord et al. (2004) noted that when the Stage 2, Personal, score is equal to or higher than the Stage 1, Information, score, the individual has personal concerns which over-shadow

the desire to learn more information about the innovation. This negative one-two split is not seen in the fall SoCQ scores for CGES. The score on Stage 2 was 4 percentile points lower than the score on Stage 1. This pattern suggests that the teachers at CGES do not have such intense personal concerns that are interfering with their desire to learn more about RTI. In addition, intense, personal concerns can pose a threat to successful RTI implementation if they are not reduced (Hord et al., 2004).

A final interpretive note on the fall SoCQ data for CGES is in relation to the score on Stage 6, Refocusing. Hord et al. state that high scores on Stage 6, or a "tailing up", early in an implementation often indicate that individuals have ideas on how the innovation can be improved, and these ideas usually involve a return to previous practices. In examining the fall scores for CGES, this "tailing up" pattern can be seen. Based upon qualitative data collected, the desire to return to previous practices of identifying children with learning disabilities seems likely. Teachers expressed concerns with the low cut-off point for at-risk designation and noted that they felt barred from getting students help through the previous referral process for evaluation for special education services. They also felt the cut-off score was not applicable to their school and their students. A desire to return to their previous referral practices seems a reasonable assumption.

Frequency of SoCQ Scores by Participants

Table 28 provides a listing of the frequency of highest Stages of Concern for individual participants at CGE. The majority of participants scored highest on the

Table 28

Frequency of Highest Stage of Concern for Individual Participants at CGE

Highest Stage of Concern	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
Number of Participants	15	5	1	11	0	2	0	34
Percent of Participants	44	15	3	32	0	6	0	100

Stage 0, Awareness, concern. As previously noted, high scores on Stage 0 represent individuals who feel there are other initiatives which are more important than the one specified George et al. (2006). Since 44% of the teachers at CGE scored highest on Stage 0, Awareness, this area is clearly of concern in implementing RTI. Qualitative data suggest other district initiatives are being juggled along with RTI, and the teachers are having a hard time managing all of the district's initiatives. Other initiatives being implemented concurrently with RTI include Gradespeed, new State curriculum standards, and new report card formats.

Following Stage 0, Awareness, 32% of teachers scored highest on Stage 3, Management. This stage indicates that individuals have the most intense concerns pertaining to the processes and tasks involved with using the innovation in terms of organizing, scheduling, and managing the demands of the innovation. Concerns with scheduling and managing the demands of RTI implementation were clearly documented through the qualitative data analysis. Teachers and the administrators were concerned about scheduling time for interventions, time for progress monitoring of students, and scheduling 90 minutes for the reading block. In addition, they expressed concerns regarding how to manage the rest of their classes while doing interventions and progress monitoring. Among the remaining stages, 15% scored highest on Information (Stage 1), 3% scored highest on Personal (Stage 2), and 6% scored highest on Collaboration (Stage 5).

The frequency of second-highest scores for the fall SoCQ is provided in Table 29. The highest percentage of individuals scored highest on Stage 3, Management, with 25%

Table 29

Frequency of Second-Highest Stage of Concern for Individual Participants at CGE

Second-Highest Stage of Concern	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
Number of Participants	7	7	7	9	0	2	2	34
Percent of Participants	21	21	21	25	0	6	6	100

indicating this stage their second-greatest area of concern. As previously noted, qualitative data supports this finding through concerns expressed regarding scheduling of RTI activities, such as interventions, progress monitoring, and 90 minutes for reading instruction. Following Stage 3, the highest percentage of individuals scored second-highest on Stage 0, Awareness, Stage 1, Information, and Stage 2, Personal, with 21% of the participants scoring in this range for their second-highest score for each of these three stages. These are self-related areas of concern and suggest that a large number of the staff at GES are within these self-related areas of concern. Other percentages include 6% indicating Collaboration, Stage 5, and 6% indicated Refocusing, Stage 6, as their highest areas of concern.

SoCQ Scores for Interviewees

Each of the six participants who participated in the interviews also completed a SoCQ. I was interested to see how each individual interviewee compared to the profile of the school, overall. As a result, profiles for each of the six interviewees will be analyzed and discussed in this section. The interviewees are coded as PCGE, APCGE, T31CGE, T15CGE, T10CGE, and T4CGE. Each interviewee's profile on the SoCQ will be discussed individually below.

The SoCQ profile for the principal of CGES, coded PCGE, is summarized in Figure 5. PCGE scored highest on Information (Stage 1) and second-highest on Collaboration (Stage 5). The high score on Stage 1 is in line with 15% of the overall staff, and her second-highest score on Stage 5 is in line with 6% of the staff. In looking at the relationship between Stage 1 (Information) and Stage 2 (Personal), her score on

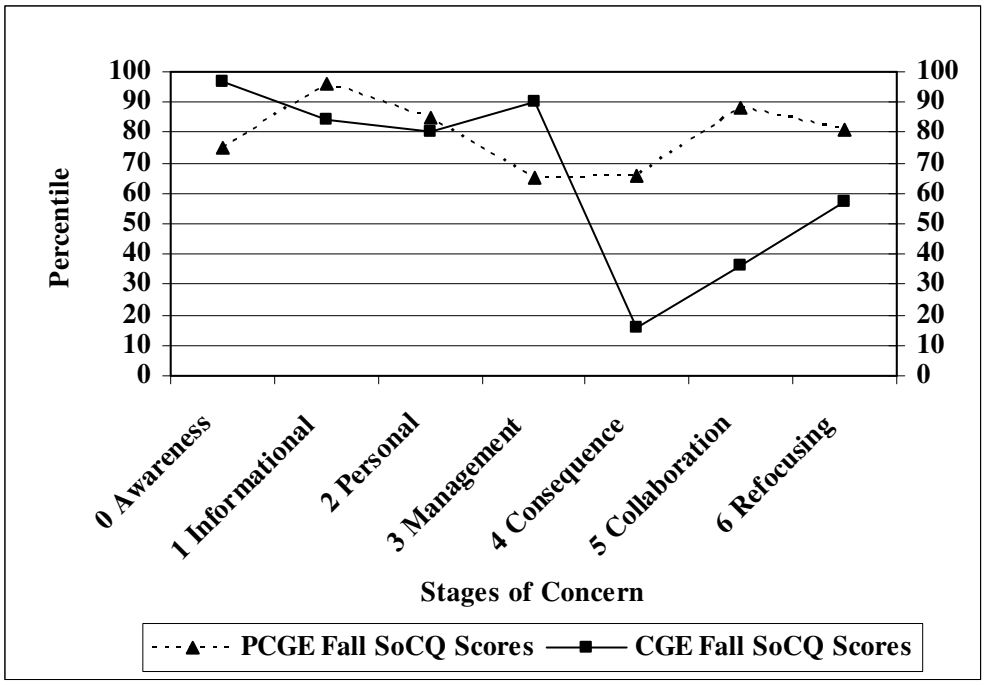


***Figure 5*. SoCQ Profile for PCGE.**

Stage 1 (Information) was 11 percentile points higher than her score on Stage 2 (Personal). This pattern resulted in what George et al. (2006) refer to as a positive one-two split and suggests that PCGE's personal concerns regarding implementing RTI do not outweigh her desire to gain more information about RTI. This positive split was also noted among the overall staff. PCGE scored higher than the school at large on Consequence (Stage 4), Collaboration (Stage 5), and Refocusing (Stage 6). The "tailing up" of Stage 6, which was noted among the overall SoCQ profile for CGES, was not noted on PCGE's profile. At the time the fall data were collected, CGE staff were in the process of administering the fall CBM benchmark for the first time, analyzing the CBM data, and scheduling the 90 minute reading block along with the intervention time. As principal, PCGE was in the process of determining how to best lead her staff through RTI implementation, as well as other initiatives the district had initiated simultaneously with RTI. Determining how she could lead and support her staff (Personal) was previously noted in the qualitative data analysis as a primary impact of RTI on her role as principal. Therefore, her profile on the SoCQ appears to reflect this focus in the positive one-two split between Stages 1 (Information) and 2 (Personal), along with her higher scores on Consequence (Stage 4) and Collaboration (Stage 5).

APCGE, the assistant principal of CGES, also completed a SoCQ in the fall. Her profile is summarized in Figure 6. She scored highest on Information (Stage 1) and second-highest on Collaboration (Stage 5). Her score on Stage 2 (Personal) was only 5 percentage points lower than her score on Stage 5 (Collaboration), and George et al. (2006) note that a score this close often adds a third area of intensity to the overall profile

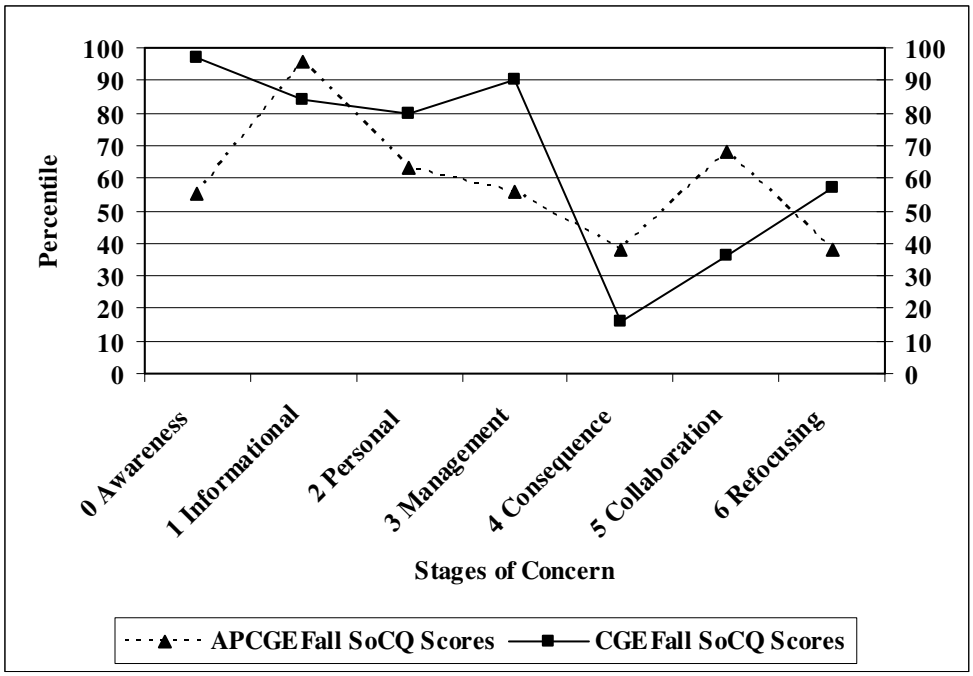


***Figure 6*. SoCQ Fall Profile for APCGE.**

and should be interpreted. Like PCGE, she indicated a large discrepancy between her scores on Information (Stage 1) and Personal (Stage 2), thus producing a positive one-two split of 33 percentile points. This pattern suggests APCGE desires more information on RTI implementation, and her personal concerns do not outweigh her desire to learn more about RTI. This pattern was also noted in the overall school SoCQ profile. Her score on Stage 6 (Refocusing) did not "tail up," which was directly opposite of the profile of the school. In the fall, APCGE appeared most concerned with learning more about RTI implementation, collaborating with others to implement RTI, as well as addressing her personal concerns regarding implementing RTI.

The SoCQ profile for T31CGE is summarized in Figure 7. T31CGE scored highest on Awareness (Stage 0) and second-highest on Management (Stage 3). Her scores on these two Stages are aligned with the overall school profile. However, her score on Information (Stage 1) was much lower than the school's profile, and this indicates she is not as interested in learning more about RTI implementation as the majority of the staff at CGES are. Her primary concerns center around dealing with the RTI implementation in addition to the other initiatives occurring simultaneously (Awareness, Stage 0) and managing/scheduling components required by RTI implementation (Mangement, Stage 3). The discrepancy of 22 percentile points between her scores on Information (Stage 1) and Personal (Stage 2) resulted in a negative one-two split (George et al., 2006). This pattern suggests her concerns about the demands RTI implementation place on her personally outweigh her desire to learn more about RTI at this time. While her score on Stage 6 (Refocusing) is not as high as that of the school

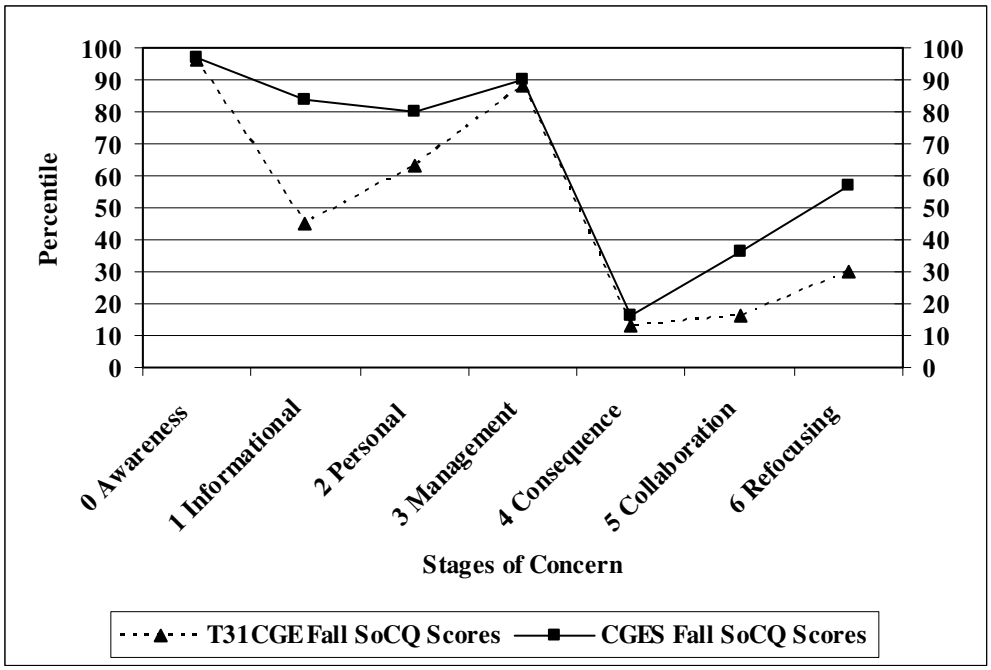


Figure 7. **SoCQ Profile for T31CGE.**

profile, her score nonetheless tails up which mirrors the overall trend of the school profile.

Figure 8 provides a summary of the fall SoCQ profile for T15CGE. Her scores resulted in what is referred to by George et al. (2006) as a multiple-peak profile. Her highest scores were on Awareness (Stage 1), Management (Stage 3), and Refocusing (Stage 6). While her scores were higher than the overall profile for CGES, her profile nonetheless is aligned with that of the school with the exception of her scores on Consequence (Stage 4) and Refocusing (Stage 6), both of which were higher than the profile of the school. Her scores on Information (Stage 1) and Personal (Stage 2) are one percentile point apart, indicating that the intensity of her personal concerns regarding RTI implementation are equally intense as her desire to learn more about implementing RTI. However, her high score on Refocusing (Stage 6) indicates the possibility that she has ideas about the referral process that she perceives to have more merit than RTI, and these types of concerns so early in an implementation usually indicate a desire to return to previous practices.

The profile for T10CGE is provided in Figure 9. Her highest score was on Awareness (Stage 0) with her second-highest score on Personal (Stage 2). Her score on Personal (Stage 2) was higher than her score on Information (Stage 1), indicating her personal concerns regarding RTI implementation are outweighing her desire to learn more about RTI. The Collaboration (Stage 5) score was lower than that of the overall profile for the school, suggesting her desire to collaborate with colleagues on the process is less intense than typical for the school. Like the overall profile for the school, her

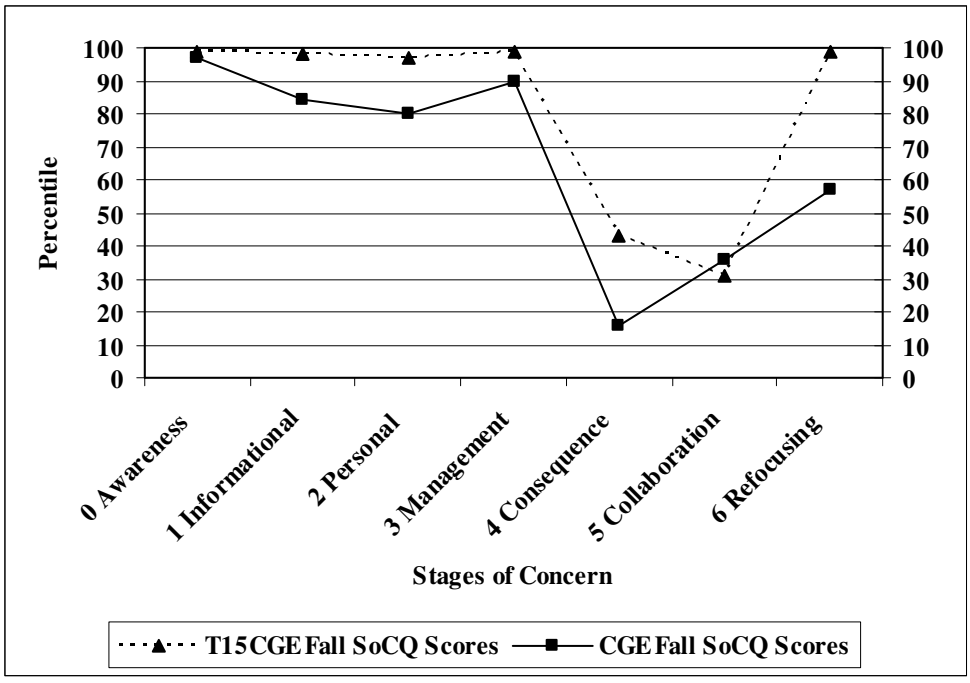


***Figure 8*. SoCQ Fall Profile for T15CGE.**

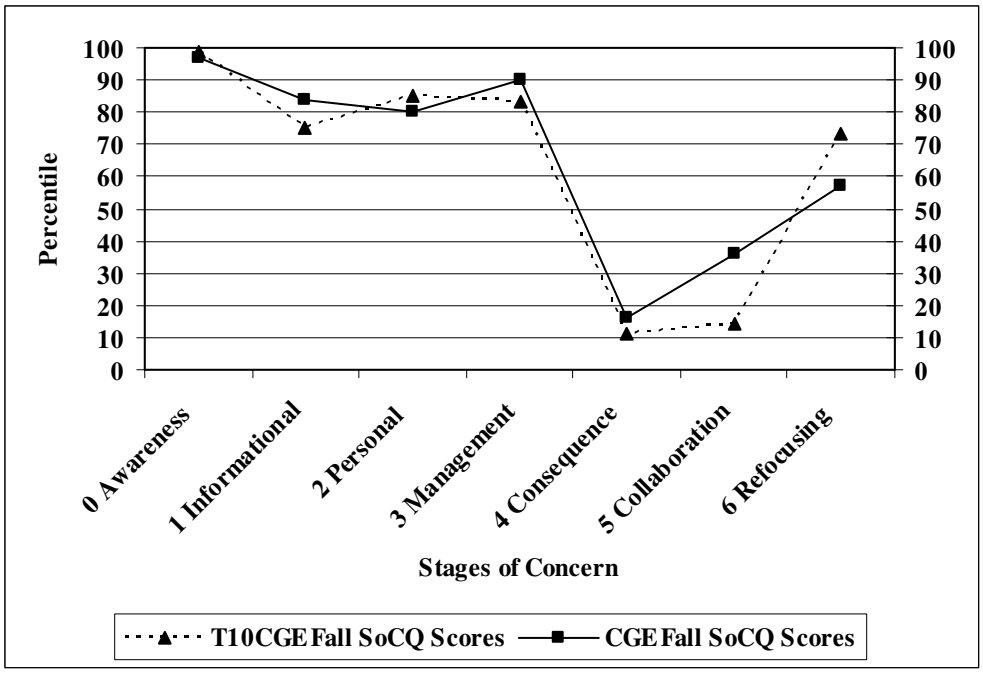


***Figure 9*. SoCQ Fall Profile for T10CGE.**

score on Refocusing (Stage 6) "tailed up," suggesting she is dealing with competing ideas about the best way to approach RTI. Other than her lower score on Collaboration (Stage 5), her profile on the SoCQ is similar to that of her colleagues.

Finally, the profile of T4CGE is summarized in Figure 10. Her highest score was on Collaboration (Stage 5), suggesting she desires to collaborate with others on improving RTI implementation. Her second-highest score was on Information (Stage 1). This suggests she is interested in learning more about RTI, and her higher score on Information (Stage 1) also indicates personal concerns are not interfering with her desire to learn more about RTI implementation. This positive one-two split suggests she is open to learning more about RTI and that her personal concerns about the implementation are not so intense so as to dominate her desire to learn more about the implementation. Her scores on most of the stages, except for Consequence (Stage 4), were much lower than the scores of her colleagues. This pattern suggests that her concerns regarding RTI are not as intense on other areas as those of her colleagues. Her score on Collaboration (Stage 5) was much higher than that of the school profile, indicating T4CGE has a higher than typical desire to collaborate with others in the implementation of RTI.

Summary

Fall data collected at CGES were reviewed in this chapter. Qualitative data suggested the two main concerns regarding RTI implementation were confusion about the RTI process and the ability to schedule the various components of RTI into the daily schedule. Barriers to RTI implementation were identified as dealing with one more activity for teachers to do along with managing other district initiatives occurring

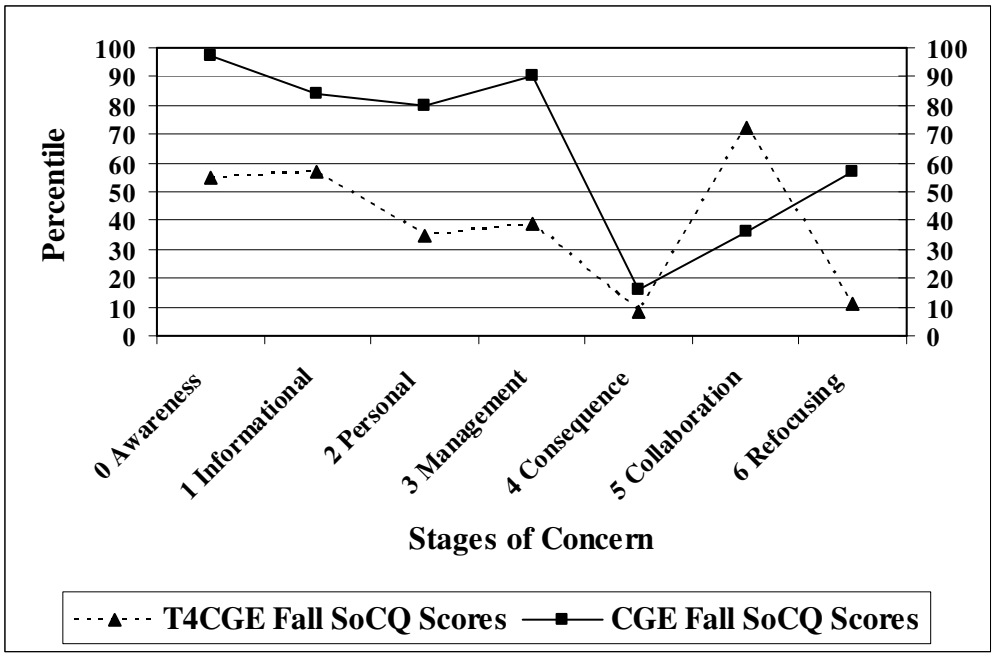


***Figure 10*. SoCQ Fall Profile for T4CGE.**

simultaneously. Teachers at CGES perceived RTI to be blocking them from their role of referring struggling students for additional assistance, which has meant special education services in the past. Other impacts of RTI on the role of the teachers were noted to be the difficulty in communicating with parents about RTI and a perceived lack of trust for teachers. The principal and assistant principal perceived their role to be that of support to the teachers as they struggled through the implementation. Although the administrators and staff were struggling with the first steps in implementing RTI, they nonetheless were able to see that RTI could lead to better instructional practices, and this perception will facilitate RTI implementation. Results of the SoCQ for CGES as a whole indicated the highest concerns were related to Awareness (Stage 0) with the second-highest scores on Management (Stage 3). Results of the school profile, as well as the individual participants who were interviewed, were discussed and are considered to be in alignment with qualitative theme development.

CHAPTER 6

ANALYSIS OF FALL DATA FOR GARDENIA ELEMENTARY

Chapter Introduction

Fall data were collected for Gardenia Elementary in September, October, and November 2008. Interviews were conducted on October 6, 2008, and the principal, assistant principal, and four teachers were interviewed. The Stages of Concern Questionnaire (SoCQ) was delivered to the school and placed in teachers' boxes on September 24, 2008, and completed questionnaires were collected on October 24, 2008. To increase the original return rate of 40%, a second attempt of soliciting responses on the SoCQ was made. The questionnaire was delivered to the school and placed in non-responding teachers' boxes on October 29, 2008, and picked up on November 14, 2008, for a final return rate of 65%.

At the time of the fall data collection, GES had just completed the AIMSweb fall benchmark process, or Universal Screening, and plans were underway to review the benchmark results with the teachers in order to identify at-risk students to begin Tier 1. The staff had participated in a half-day training on the administration and scoring of the AIMSweb probes, and the RTI model had been reviewed with the staff through faculty meetings. Based upon the Concerns Based Adoption Model (CBAM) used for my theoretical framework, the staff at GES were considered to be non-users of RTI at the time of the fall data collection. Each qualitative theme developed for GES was analyzed with the Stages of Concern as a lens through which to view the themes. Table 30

Table 30

Analysis of Qualitative Themes by Stage of Concern for GES

Research Question	Theme	Stage of Concern
1	Swimming in Mud: Lack of Clarity for the RTI Process	2 Personal
	Change to Referral Process	2 Personal
	Challenges in Scheduling RTI	3 Management
1(a)	One More Thing: Finding Time to Implement RTI	2 Personal
	Reluctance to Perceive RTI as Applicable to Their School	2 Personal
1(b)	Improved Teaching Through RTI	2 Personal
	Principals: Providing Guidance	2 Personal
1(c)	Following the Principal's Lead to Improved Instruction	2 Personal
	Using Data to Help Children	4 Consequence

provides an analysis of these themes which will be discussed below in light of each of my research questions.

Research Question 1: What are the concerns of teachers and principals as they experience RTI Implementation?

In answer to my first research question, I developed three themes that identified areas of concern for the teachers and administrators at GES. These concerns pertain to a lack of understanding about the global RTI process through the steps involved in RTI, the role of parties in doing those steps, the documentation of the RTI process, the lack of consistency in the process, and a lack of training on what the process encompasses. In addition, the staff noted a concern with the change to the referral process and the length of time involved in RTI. Finally, the staff noted concerns regarding scheduling of RTI-related activities. The first two themes, lack of clarity regarding the RTI process and changes to the referral process, clearly suggest a personal aspect in that the staff are attempting to see how they fit in to the RTI process, and these two themes are viewed as best described by Stage 2 (Personal) on the SoC. The third theme, however, addresses the difficulty the staff were facing in scheduling aspects of RTI implementation and is best described by Stage 3 (Management) on the SoC. Each of these themes will be discussed at length below.

Swimming in Mud: Lack of Clarity for the RTI Process

Teachers at GES were confused regarding how the RTI process worked at the beginning of the implementation. One teacher, T30GE, noted, "And then at the beginning of the year we got a lot more information [on RTI], which it's kind of

overwhelming because it's very, very gray. It feels very gray. Our favorite expression for RTI is clear as mud." When asked what her experience with RTI had been thus far, T30GE added, "Swimming in mud. I mean we're diving in head first and trying to keep our head above water because it is so new." She was not alone in her confusion. The assistant principal of GES, APGE, stated:

> I can honestly say, as in any new program, we have some clarification times where we need clarification on this, or you attend one meeting, then this is how they interpret a certain direction from the System or how something's worded or their interpretation of something. I think it's been a positive experience. It's just been more so, what exactly does this mean? Or, exactly who qualifies for this? Or how does this impact how we schedule throughout the day? Or those types of things. And then as far as RTI is concerned with the language block being ninety minutes as well with the new State mandate of that, what exactly is included in that [90-minute block]?. Is spelling included? Is reading included? Is writing included? What is under the language arts bracket?

In addition, T20GE expressed her concern regarding her confusion over the tiers used in the RTI model. She noted:

> I really don't get the tiers. I've got them in front of [me on] a paper and I read them but I couldn't explain it to you if I needed to. I just know right now I'm working on Tier 1. Everything else after that I am going to try to look at if I need it because trying to figure it out at this point is very confusing.

Other teachers expressed their confusion as well. One second grade teacher noted, "I'm really confused about what I'm supposed to be doing. I don't understand this process," (Observation, 9-25-08). During walk-throughs, two third-grade teachers also expressed their confusion. One said, "This is so confusing!" Another added, "I'm sure [PGE] will clarify this process for us eventually, but right now it is very overwhelming. I don't know what to do," (Observation, 10-3-08). T30GE added:

> I think teachers need time to kind of wade in instead of jumping in. I think the methods and the intent is wonderful, but with everything new, with every

> program, with everything in a school system or the education world, including the laws, it's just going to make everything become clear as mud even when it should be clear as water.

Adding to the confusion of the RTI process was confusion over who was doing what in terms of supporting the process. The principal of GES, PGE, had hired a part-time RTI Coach to assist the staff in managing the RTI process (Observation, 9-11-08). As GES was the only pilot school to have such a position, there was confusion regarding the roles of parties. In the other pilot schools, the reading specialist and school psychologist were jointly supporting teachers in the RTI process in terms of walking them through the process and assisting them in implementing interventions. PGE noted that he was having difficulties with his school psychologist alienating the staff by trying to "own" the process and further confusing the staff by giving conflicting information and directives (Observation, 9-11-08). With the hiring of the RTI Coach, the staff seemed to be confused regarding what, exactly, the RTI Coach would be doing as opposed to the reading specialist. One kindergarten teacher asked, "Who is going to help us with doing interventions, you or the reading specialist?" Another fourth grade teacher stated, "I can't keep up with all of this. Are you going to help us?" (Observation, 10-3-08). T20GE also noted her confusion over who to go to for help with the process by saying:

> But, again, the negativity of it is just not knowing how exactly it is to be done, what interventions we're supposed to try, who we're supposed to go to if they're not working, and how long we have to do each one. I think it has a lot of pros, but I've got a negative connotation with the stress and overwhelmingness of it at this point. But I do think it will be a good thing once we all know what we are doing.

The new RTI Coach was also confused about what her role in RTI was going to be and asked what her role in the AIMSweb process was to be and whether she was supposed to do the interventions or the reading specialist. In addition, she did not know whether she was supposed to work with teachers on understanding the process or whether the school psychologist was supposed to do that. She met with PGE, and he clarified that her role was to work directly with teachers in identifying at-risk students from the Benchmark and assisting them in beginning the Tier 1 process (Observation, 10-3-08).

The documentation of the RTI process was noted to be a cumbersome and difficult. T11GE stated:

> It's a lot of paperwork to keep up and just kind of a lot to remember who you're progress monitoring, who you're strategic monitoring, who's in your intervention group this day, how many times you've worked with this kid this week, making sure you're sticking to the protocol. So it's just kind of a lot of management on top of all the other management issues that teachers face.

Likewise, T10GE expressed her frustration with the documentation of the RTI process by noting:

> There are lots of pieces and lots of documentation. That is not my strong suit, and so making sure to keep all the right things that I need because it's not quite as black and white as the [Support Team] form was where I answer questions. I've got to keep data, which is good, and it's things I do, but keeping the documentation [is] a little stressful to me, remembering to write certain things down or keep certain pieces of information. And so that part's been stressful to me, but probably that's just because it's a weak area for me.

T20GE also noted difficulty with the documentation of RTI by stating:

> I worry about remembering that I've got to do this every week on the same day, and then having the time to sit down at the computer and enter in the data that I do find. I've got that time built in my schedule to sit down and actually intervene, but documenting this – that information and organizing it and writing down interventions that I did and the differentiation that I've been doing, I'm really

> worried about when I'm going to do that, because I don't have that time built in extra.

Other teachers expressed the same concern. The RTI Coach noted, "It's overwhelming. It's a lot to keep up with, but I feel like I'll get more familiar with it as I go," (Observation, 9-25-08). She later reported that there was great confusion among teachers regarding the paperwork to be used in documenting RTI and asked me to again review the forms with her (Observation, 11-10-08). At a fourth grade level meeting, the following comments were made by teachers:

- "I can't keep up with the progress monitoring. Where is the form for that?"
- "This is too much paperwork for one teacher to keep up with. I need an assistant just to do the paperwork!" (Observation, 11-10-08)

The importance in documenting the required components of RTI is crucial to the success of the model and vital to maintaining the fidelity of the process, and APGE noted her concern as an administrator about this process by adding:

> I think it impacts it in several ways as far as how we identify kids or how we, I don't want to use the word track, but it's the tracking as far as if they're going to qualify [for Learning Disabled]. And then making sure that teachers are doing everything they can but making sure that they're also being accountable because now it's not as simple as, "This child needs to be tested." We have to have data, and so we're hoping that we never reach those years where a teacher just chooses not to take the data. We're hoping that we always can hold and keep this, which is why we compile the list of all the children we've [identified as being at-risk]. We can always keep and touch base with those teachers [to make sure] we are keeping the data we need to know if they qualify or not.

Adding to the confusion over the RTI process was the perception that the process was continually changing. T10GE said, "The only problem is processes keep changing a little bit, and so that's been the cause of a lot of those extra trainings because we kind of

had it – thought we had it figured out one way – and now we're having to tweak it. They haven't completely changed but we're still having to tweak it." PGE also noted his frustration with these perceived changes to the RTI process by stating:

> We're seeing the positive parts. And I have teachers that are willing and see the value and really want to make this work for our school and for our students. Frustrating just because we're piloting a program for a district and that brings changes, and we're doing it one way and then we change a little bit and just evolving through it can cause its own frustration.

T10GE shared her frustration with these perceived changes by noting:

> I mean that it's new and we're having to learn it, and that things keep changing. That's been kind of the hardest thing because we do finally get it in our head, we're like, okay, this is how it works, we've got to do A, B, C, and then we find out that we've got to tweak it a little. And that's just the continuous kind of change and I'm ready for it just to be settled and say this is what we're going to try, and then let me actually get to try it for awhile before having to change it again.

Other teachers at GES also expressed their frustration about these ongoing changes to the RTI model. One second grade teacher stated, "I just can't keep up with this. It keeps changing every time I turn around," (Observation, 9-25-08). At a fourth grade level meeting, a teacher commented, "This is not what we were told at the beginning of the year. We are supposed to use the forms in the green folder and this form has been added," (Observation, 11-10-08). Part of the confusion regarding these perceived changes to the RTI model appear to have resulted from draft forms for documenting the RTI process being given out at the beginning of the year. These forms were not finalized at the beginning of the year, and several major changes were made to the forms in their

final draft. The older version placed in the "green folders" at the beginning of the year was incorrect and led to much of the teachers' frustrations (GES Green Folder).

A final area of concern regarding the lack of clarity of the RTI process was noted insufficient training. The staff at GES felt that they had not had sufficient training on the RTI process to be able to implement it with confidence. T20GE stated:

> I do not feel like when we were introduced to it the information was ready. I do not feel that we should have been exposed to it until the questions were [answered]. I know that every question can't be answered and as you're learning things are going to come up and people have to go find those answers, but I've got kind of a negative impression of how this is all going to go because I think it was mentioned to us and a little bit was told to us at a time instead of the answers being figured out, sitting down and really training us and teaching us how to do it, and I still feel like it's that way. I had a meeting that made me feel a little bit better this week, but not a whole lot. I still know that next week we're going to get a little bit more information, and then maybe the next week after that we should know enough to be able to actually start doing the probes with our students who have been flagged. But I feel like the whole thing has been very unclear. I feel like if somebody sits down and teaches me from the beginning how it's going to work, what the plan is, what you do if this happens, this happens, this happens that I could get it, because I remember what I hear or what I see, but it's just been little bits of unclear things since it started, and so I feel like the whole process has been really vague. I still really don't feel like I know what I'm doing, though. Even though I've been introduced it's really just an introduction.

T30GE echoed these thoughts by noting, "We've had a couple, two, maybe three, afternoons like hour long meetings as far as our staff meetings go talking about RTI. Personally it raised a lot more questions than it did get answers for me and my team. We've had a couple of in-service days over the summer, one or two. But, really, that's been about it." Likewise, PGE expressed his concerns regarding the lack of training to ready teachers for implementing RTI:

> It could have been more successful if we had backed the time line up of training. We did training earlier. I think any school jumping into this in the fall, the way we did, needs to complete – and complete's not the right word – needs to get the

> large portion of the training, and that's the basics of the framework, the basic of what it will be, the basics of all the requirements, done before summer. I think we shortchange teachers by saying, "Well, they'll just be off all summer." Teachers talk and work all summer long. Maybe they're not at the building, but they're thinking and processing all summer, and a lot of our training formally from the district didn't come until after summer. And when the first week of school comes teachers have a different mindset. They're not ready for hours of training. And now we have teachers ready for Tier 2 and they're not going to Tier 2 training for another three or four weeks. Training could have been better.

Others on staff clearly share these opinions. The RTI Coach noted that she and the staff need more training on both the RTI Model and on progress monitoring (Observation, 10-3-08). During a walk-through observation, a second grade teacher said, "We need more training on this process," (Observation, 9-25-08). PGE noted that he is providing training on RTI on a monthly basis through faculty meetings and that the teachers had already been trained on AIMSweb and progress monitoring before school started. He added that he has hired a RTI Coach to provide ongoing, embedded training for his staff (Observation, 10-3-08).

Change to Referral Process

The second concern noted by the teachers and administrators at GES pertains to how RTI has changed the referral process. As teachers are uncertain about the RTI process, they are also unsure of the referral process and how to proceed with making referrals to the Support Team for students who may need special education services. T20GE stated:

> I am not very comfortable with the change. When a parent asked me in a conference this morning what they need to do if their child's diagnosed with ADD or ADHD and how to handle that, I have no idea how that falls into play now with [the Support Team] being gone and this being in place. So I feel very uncomfortable in answering questions with parents.

Likewise, T10GE expressed her confusion regarding how to handle referrals in light of RTI implementation by stating:

> At the same time RTI does not incorporate all the referrals that we need. My biggest problem in my classroom this year is I have a behavioral child. RTI doesn't tell me or help me fix that. And so it doesn't fit into any of the RTI plan, so I have to figure out what plan can I do because we got rid of our old ones. It's been a lot of change, just how all the processes work. So I ask a lot of questions and then luckily I don't have a class that has big major concerns that I need taken care of right this second besides my behavior one. And so the whole [referral] process has changed, and I kind of have to take it day by day. And I'm kind of focusing more on taking it student by student and figuring out how I need to meet that student's needs, what system do I need to go through. If it's reading and math I kind of know where to go with RTI. If it's not, I have to go ask the right people the right questions to figure out what to do.

Other teachers had the same concern regarding the referral process. One second-grade teacher stated, "What am I supposed to do about kids I need to refer? Do we still refer them?" (Observation, 9-25-08). Another first grade teacher asked, "Are we ever going to be able to refer students again?" (Observation, 10-3-08). While PGE is aware of the teachers' concerns, he noted that the data tends to support the teachers' concerns about students. He stated:

> I think the referral process has changed quite a bit because we're honoring what teachers know and what teachers have known for years, to be honest with you. Very rewarding to me yesterday to go around, and I started my conversations and some teachers tried to stay a step ahead of me, and that's what I love about this group, but a lot of them I didn't bring the data out or ask them to bring the data out, I just asked them who are we concerned about, and then we validated those concerns with data.

While the teachers expressed concern about understanding how the referral process worked with RTI being implemented, other data suggests that the referral of initial evaluations for special education eligibility did not decrease with the implementation of RTI. In 2007-2008, 11 students were referred for initial evaluation for special education

eligibility. In contrast, at the end of the 2007-2008 school year, 14 students were referred to the Support Team for initial evaluation. Thus, the referral process continued to function despite the teachers' concerns over the confusion of making referrals in light of RTI implementation (District Referral Totals Spreadsheets).

Teachers and administrators at GES were also concerned about the length of time implementing RTI would take before finally getting to the referral process for special education eligibility. T11GE said, "My only concern is that it's time consuming, and sometimes I see that kid struggling and I'm like he needs help now, not in nine weeks. I can't stand by and watch him struggling and struggling and struggling and get nowhere for nine weeks." T20GE also noted her frustration with the length of time the RTI process takes by noting:

> There's one thing that stands out to me as a flaw, and that is if there are students that are already flagged as extreme cases needing severe intervention, I do think there should be some kind of exception clause where you can go ahead and start interventions immediately. And I understand the point about doing regular classroom things to see if they can handle that before giving them extra time, but it just seems like time wasted to me. If we've got a child that has a low DRA score, extremely low, and we've got a child that also on the AIMSweb is flagged as a red case on the color chart, extreme intervention needed and I think there ought to be a way with those things taken into consideration to go ahead and start the interventions to keep from wasting time.

Other teachers shared these perspectives on the length of time the RTI process takes. One first grade teacher noted, "If I understand this correctly, it's going to take a year or more to get kids help. That's just too long," (Observation, 9-11-08). A fourth grade teacher commented at the grade level meeting, "This process takes way too long!" (Observation, 11-10-08). PGE commented on the waiting process involved in RTI and said:

> The first year is frustrating in that you're waiting the nine weeks to do the differentiations, do all those things when you see problems, whereas next year in theory first grade should see the problems growing and identify them so when second grade goes into it, except for the few transfer students that come in, we should really know these kids and have good documentation on them, have folders going, the process in motion as opposed to the process starting. And when it starts it's kind of like let's get started but now we have to wait and that's frustrating for teachers.

While acknowledging the teachers' frustration with waiting for the RTI process to begin, he also noted he is trying to keep the teachers' attitudes as positive as he can. He stated:

> My concern that's always in front of me is that teachers are going to turn negative about the program, and that's born of two things. One, I believe in the program, and I know when teachers get negative, teachers won't do it. I can't be in every classroom every day. When you have forty-one classrooms, a teacher can shut their door and not do it. But now watching them starting it and, like I said, the hurry up and wait process, I'm worried about them getting frustrated to the point where they turn negative to the program. And I've seen and worked with teachers that have turned negative to a program. So it's a lot of good PR to keep them positive.

Challenges in Scheduling RTI

A third concern expressed by teachers and administrators at GES involved scheduling RTI-related practices, such as intervention blocks and progress monitoring. APGE stated:

> For me the biggest impacts have been teachers scheduling their day and what exactly is included in a certain block of time and who exactly qualifies if they're not at a certain benchmark. And so after we've gotten through the scheduling of those types of things, and then just teachers asking what is research based, what exactly falls into a research based intervention.

At the beginning of the implementation, PGE requested that his teachers develop a schedule allowing for a 90-minute, uninterrupted reading block and a 30-minute block for Tier 2 interventions (Observation, 9-11-08). He noted:

> And then for me my style of leadership was I turned it over to them and said make this work, how is this going to look in our school, and they came back and gave me their schedules. So typical day on average is they show me where they're Tier 1 reading. So they show me where their Tier 1 ninety minutes uninterrupted is. And then they told me as grade levels and teachers how that's supposed to work. And for me and my assistant principal, it's been going through classrooms doing drop-ins, formal observations. Second thing that they told me was, all right, when we get to Tier 2 and we've got students, here's the time block. Here's my thirty minutes I have now set aside in my schedule. And that's a grade level decision. So I know, for instance, the fourth grade yesterday asked for assistance from the RTI coach during intervention block.

The teachers have struggled to find the time to allot to a 90-minute reading block and to a 30-minute intervention block. APGE described the difficulties of aligning the RTI scheduling requirements with other core areas that have to be scheduled. She said:

> First and foremost, there's an intervention block in all of our daily schedules that's thirty minutes in length. We made sure to schedule around our reading blocks so there's no interruptions, and we try to make it no interruptions in our core subjects of reading and mathematics, mathematics being sixty minutes and reading being ninety minutes. As of right now most of our teachers have the choice of integrating English and spelling into the core subject of reading and make it one entity. But if they're going to teach it separately from a separate book then we have to find a separate block of time for it. That's how we have tackled what exactly that's included in those ninety minutes.

In addition, the following comments were made by second grade teachers at a grade level meeting:

- "It's been hard to keep that open when we have other areas to cover."
- "What do we do with this time when we don't have students in intervention?"
- Another teacher answers, "I've been using it to go on and do interventions with students I know are struggling. Is that ok?" (Observation, 9-25-08)

A review of the second grade master schedule indicated that reading instruction was scheduled for 8:35 to 10:35 with an intervention block from 1:15 to 1:45 (GES Master

Schedule). Other scheduling difficulties have arisen because the teachers have been utilizing the 30-minute intervention block for Tier 2 for other activities. T10GE stated:

> Since we are a RTI school, we were all asked to make a thirty minute intervention block, but we had to find that thirty minutes, and that's been the biggest variation. And then what's hard now is because at the beginning of the school year we didn't have the data, so we did not really have kids to put in an intervention block, so we've gotten to kind of do other things with that block, and so now I'm used to pulling my, oh, things we didn't finish, oh, I didn't have time for this, in that block. Well, now I've got a couple of students I need to start putting in the block to at least start working with even if they're not going to fit into Tier 2, and I'm used to having that time just to do other things. So I'm going to have to now go back and make myself give that thirty minute block to intervention like it had been dedicated to.

T20GE noted that she also had not been strictly adhering to using the allotted 30 minutes in the schedule for intervention time. She noted:

> Since I had it already built in I've got the space for it where I'm not providing whole group instruction. The problem is I haven't always been really strict about making sure it's the full thirty minutes and that I am with students that entire time every day of the week or the same students that entire time. Since it hasn't officially started yet, I haven't had to be really strict about it and make those shifts. But when I actually am finished with this nine week observation period and I see whether they're responding or not to the differentiation, then I'm really going to have to make sure that I have the full thirty minutes and that I have a plan for who I'm seeing when and what I'm doing with them. So at this point it's still really flexible, and I can just pull who I need and who I think needs work for the week, but I will have to make those shifts and make sure I follow that schedule when it happens.

For the upper grades, fourth and fifth, the change to the schedule to accommodate RTI involved changing the school's departmentalization of teaching, where one teacher taught reading for the whole grade level. APGE stated:

> It's just looking at the daily schedule when we tried to look at specials and lunch and we don't have any interruptions in the core subjects. But, no, other than just we've stopped some of our departmentalization. And we may be able to re-implement that later. It was just more so finding the time for everything that this year we went with the fluid grouping model… But it does impact the daily

> schedule. Some of our teachers used to do some departmentalization, and we don't do that as much anymore because it's hard to balance who teaches what, and the times don't balance as much anymore as far as if you had sixty minutes for reading versus ninety minutes for reading.

However, the students continue to be assigned to homerooms that do not align with their reading instruction, and there was confusion in determining who was going to progress monitor students who had one homeroom teacher and a different reading teacher. T30GE said, "Major scheduling, figuring out the logistics and who's going to monitor this kid when he's in someone else's reading but he's in my homeroom, and the organization along with everything else that we do every day."

Research Question 1a: What do teachers and principals perceive as barriers to implementing RTI?

Two potential barriers were identified from themes developed from the fall data collection at GES. The first pertains to the perception of teachers of having additional responsibilities added to their already full duties, and the second was a reluctance to perceive RTI practices as applicable to their school. Both of these themes are highly personal when viewed through the SoC and illustrate the teachers' uncertainty about how the RTI implementation affects them and their school. Both themes are discussed in detail below.

One More Thing for Teachers to Do

The staff at GES were feeling overwhelmed with their job responsibilities at the beginning of the RTI implementation. T20GE noted:

> I love it here, and I love my job, but it's very busy. I am very busy constantly. I feel like there are lots of expectations that are valid, but I find that there's not enough time in the day to meet those expectations. And for this year I'm feeling

> extremely overwhelmed because I have high expectations for myself. So my experience is good and positive, but I am constantly busy and feeling like I need to be learning about something new and doing something a little bit better and making sure that I'm meeting the expectations and meeting my expectations because I feel like the things we're expected to do are reasonable but just hard to manage in a day.

T11GE added that she was also feeling overwhelmed at the beginning of the implementation. She said:

> I think just making sure I'm able to manage it all and do it successfully and get to all those kids. We had a meeting yesterday, and we use green folders where we keep all of our notes, antidotal notes, and log all of our intervention times with all the kids that are below the tenth percentile, and I was told I need to get six of them, so I feel like I have a lot on my plate to work with this year and a lot of kids who have some needs. So at the beginning of the year I feel like I have so far to go with these kids, and I'm just hoping I can get them all there.

Likewise, T30GE stated:

> We've had a whole lot of new steps this year, and RTI is a very big deal, and it's something on our list of things that we've had to deal with this year, if that makes sense. We've got a new grade system, we've got the RTI, our team is going through the flexible grouping, which is new to us this year, so it's a lot of new stuff, a lot of external factors.

Other teachers expressed the same frustration and concern. The following comments were made by first grade teachers:

- "They keep giving us more and more to do. I don't see how I can do this."
- "It's just another thing on our plates – one more thing for teachers to do.

(Observation, 9-11-08)

APGE shared her concern regarding the additional responsibilities teachers faced at the beginning of the RTI implementation:

> I mean there's a lot that a teacher has to do, and we all know that they're underpaid for what they do, and then adding the keeping track of the interventions, and it's not a difficult process at all, it's just adding another item.

Reluctance to Perceive RTI as Applicable to Their School

Another potential barrier to successful RTI implementation involved the teachers' perception that the RTI process is not a fair or accurate method of identifying students with possible learning disabilities for the students at their school. APGE stated:

> Some of the things that we're struggling with in our building is the tenth percentile range, of falling beneath the tenth percentile. We're looking at all of our children underneath the twenty-five percentile, but just maybe if that tenth percentile may eventually need to be tweaked – and I don't want to say to include more kids but just to help more children be successful getting those interventions earlier because if the interventions are successful then we don't keep progressing. The interventions have worked. But then we have lots of teachers, "Well, they're in the fifteenth percentile so do I wait for them to get to the tenth percentile or do I intervene? But then I'm intervening and it's technically on paper because they're not underneath the tenth percentile, so am I hurting this kid next year if they were to move and then we have documentation to give them?" So maybe looking at where the range is currently.

T10GE questioned whether the current criteria, or cut-off, of the 10th percentile was accurately identifying students about whom she had concerns. She noted:

> At the same time one of the students I was most concerned about did really well on that (CBM) test. And that would be, I guess, where some of my anxiety or stress comes in of where now do they fit? They tested. Their benchmark came out well. Here's my tiers of what needs to happen, and where does she fit, or what can I do for her, and what kind of documentation do I need in case she does start to fall at some point below that ten percentile?

She later questioned whether the 10th percentile was a valid cut-off point for students at GES. She said:

> For our school the ten percentile [is a concern]. I know different schools are very different because of where they're located, but for our school ten percentile to me does not include enough students. On the benchmark that I just got back, none of my students would qualify to actually go ahead and start doing Tier 2 implementation. And so that would be one [concern], and I don't know if it may be something that can be per school. But that's the biggest one I see is that ten percentile being a challenge.

Her fellow teachers felt the same way. One fourth grade teacher stated, "These cut-offs are too low. We need to raise the score to the 25th percentile," (Observation, 11-10-08). Another fourth grade teacher stated, "I still have concerns about [a student], but he didn't score low enough to get the interventions. I think the cut-off is too low," (Observation, 11-10-08). A review of the fall benchmark scores, grades 1-5, for GES indicated a total of 18 students scored at or below the tenth percentile. Ten of these 18 students were already identified as special education students, which left eight students to be designated at-risk and in need of intervention (AIMSweb Fall Benchmark Chart).

Research Question 1b: How are the roles of teachers and principals affected by RTI?

Two themes were developed in answer to the second subquestion. Teachers at GES perceive RTI implementation to enhance or improve their role as teachers through better instructional practices. The two administrators perceive their roles in RTI implementation to be one of providing guidance to teachers as they struggle to implement practices associated with RTI. In light of the SoC framework, both of these themes fall under the Personal (Stage 2) category and illustrate how participants have analyzed their roles and relationships within the innovation. Each of these themes is discussed in detail below.

Improved Teaching Through RTI

The perception of the teachers at GES is that RTI implementation has led to improvements in their teaching by holding them accountable to better instructional

practices. The structure that the required intervention block provides to teachers was noted to be a positive effect on teaching. T20GE stated:

> I think it's a really positive thing that we're going to be expected to have that thirty minutes intervention block for the kids that we know need it, so I like that. Administration and other coworkers are going to be expecting that there's a thirty minute block of time that your other children are doing something that they can do, and you are sitting with children that need one on one or small group help with you in addition to the guiding reading stuff that we do, so I think that's a very positive thing… . I think it will be a success because it will guarantee me time that I am supposed to sit down with students that need extra help. I think it will be a success because for the students we're most concerned about we'll have weekly monitoring on fluency to see if there's improvement. So I think those are two very positive things that I think will be successful.

Likewise, the 90-minute reading block was also noted as a practice that led to more differentiation, which also improved teaching practices. T11GE said:

> I think just a lot of differentiation. Just constant differentiation because especially in first grade, you have kids who are still learning letter sounds, and then you have kids who are reading chapter books. I mean it's a huge, huge continuum of kids that you're trying to reach and keep moving forward… But it's [the 90-minute reading block] definitely just reminded me to differentiate and to really get back into what is best practice and what's good for all kids. And a lot of times what I would specifically think of to do for those kids that have the needs, it was beneficial for all the kids in my class, not just those kids in question.

Some of her second-grade colleagues echoed her thoughts regarding the 90-minute reading block. One stated, "Well, it's different, but I like it. I think it helps me to be more organized in teaching reading and makes sure I cover all the content I need to cover." Another teacher answered her by saying, "Yeah, I like it too. It does make a lot of sense to me to teach reading this way," (Observation, 9-25-08). PGE also noted that his teachers had embraced the 90-minute reading block with enthusiasm. He stated:

> One grade level went through the process, said do we have to give just ninety minutes to literacy or could we do two hours? And, you know, do a hundred and twenty if you have it. And by going through that process they were finding time

> and realizing where they were. They were, for lack of a better expression, they were finding they were wasting time in their day.

The culture of GES is very focused on continual improvement in instructional practices that will, in turn, lead to student growth, so it is no surprise that the teachers perceived RTI implementation to be an enhancement or improvement in their teaching practices. The school's mission statement reads:

> Understanding the diverse challenges of the future, it is the mission of [GES] to equip our learning community with the necessary learning tools that will inspire a strong desire for achievement through the implementation of innovative, diverse, and real world learning experiences. (GES Mission Statement)

In addition, the school staff listed the word, *innovation*, under their values statement, and defined the word as, "Using creative methods to meet diverse challenges" (Beliefs and Values, GES Website). This focus on using innovative teaching strategies continues in the school's belief statements, which read:

- Provide a safe and nurturing environment where children can grow academically, artistically, socially, physically, and emotionally.
- Provide varied instructional strategies to engage all students in learning.
- Continuously seek and implement new strategies and ideas to model life-long learning. (Beliefs and Values, GES Website)

Finally, PGE summarized his staff's commitment to teaching and student growth in the May 2009 parent newsletter by stating:

> Each time I walk through classrooms or admire the work posted in the halls, I learn something new about our students. They are so unique and each one is learning to soar with his/her own personal strengths while our teachers assist them in strengthening areas in need of growth. (May 2009 Parent Newsletter)

Another facet of RTI implementation that the teachers perceive as strengthening their roles as teachers is the CBM benchmarking and progress monitoring process. The information provided by these formative assessments is valued by the teachers who perceive the information as assisting them in their role as teachers. T11GE stated:

> I think it's successful in identifying those kids who are – you know, are definitely not going to ever qualify for student support services but that do need that little bit of extra intervention, you know, and this really kind of puts it out there saying, hey, these kids are in whatever percentile and you need to do a little extra with them. And that's just kind of all just built in right there for you.

T10GE agreed and added:

> So really it [the CBM Benchmark] gave me a lot more questions, but questions that now I can work to get answers toward so I can start doing the things that I need like with the three that didn't do as well I'm going to go ahead an start doing some intervention with them just to make sure, best practice, do some intervention with them and that way in January when they benchmark again, hopefully, I see those rise, and if not, then I've already started the process of where they need to be.

Another second-grade teacher commented, "It's nice to have the AIMSweb information. It helps me focus my teaching on those who aren't getting it," (Observation, 11-10-08). In addition, while I was at the school doing the fall interviews, I was approached by a teacher in the office who said, "Can you help me with my password? I've lost it and can't get on the site to see my charts. I love the AIMSweb charts – they give so much information to us teachers," (Observation, 10-9-08). The teachers at GES had begun to see the value in the information provided by the AIMSweb charts, and they had begun to modify their instruction with students based upon those results. T11GE stated:

> It's definitely opened my eyes a little bit. You know, last year I had a couple of kids that once we did some of the benchmark testing I was like, wow, he doesn't know his letter sounds. That's why he can't read. So it really taught me to back down and I'm embarrassed even having admitted that. You know, having a

> special ed background, that [letter-sound association] should have been the first place I started, especially with first graders.

T10GE also shared a recent experience she had had with using the CBM Benchmark data in her instruction with students. She said:

> There were two students on there that tested in an area that fell below the ten percentile in an area that I would not have assumed they would. And, actually, I think they were eleventh and twelfth percentile. I didn't have any below ten percentile, and so I want to make sure that what I thought about that student actually does match, and to make sure it's not something that I just missed or they covered up something well. And so those two students I have some plans to make sure I pull [them] over and either do a strategic monitoring or just make sure I touch base on the areas that they fell right above the tenth percentile on that AIMSweb test.

Principals: Providing Guidance

The principal and assistant principal at GES perceive their roles within the RTI implementation to be that of a support to teachers in providing guidance throughout the implementation. APGE noted that her role has been to support teachers through providing information. She stated:

> More so just trying to have the knowledge to give your educators, and like I said, the knowledge is out there, it's just some of the interpretation can be interpreted differently. But just making sure that I have the knowledge base to give them when they have questions… Right now, like I said, we're laying the tracks. As we have the tracks and we know which direction we're supposed to go exactly, then I think it will become more successful with time. Explaining the knowledge of what you have to your educators so they're not apprehensive about the program. I mean they're very busy.

Often, APGE noted, the teachers are already engaged in many of the RTI tasks, and her role is to help the teachers make those connections. She added:

> And with many teachers it's something they're already done, but it's helping explain to them that this is what you've done, we just have to make sure your interventions are research based and they do fit the criteria. It still gives them a nervous apprehensiveness. Like I said, many teachers are already doing these

> things but is what they're doing fit the mold of what RTI says it needs to be? So just helping get everyone on board.

PGE has taken an active role as an instructional leader in supporting the RTI process. He added:

> I've been going through classrooms doing drop-ins, formal observations. Second thing that they told me was, all right, when we get to Tier 2 and we've got students, here's the time block. Here's my thirty minutes I have now set aside in my schedule. And that's a grade level decision. So I know, for instance, the fourth grade yesterday asked for assistance from the RTI coach during intervention block.

His view on the importance of being a teacher can be seen in his personal biography which is available on the school's website:

> My personal mission is to teach with passion those who desire to learn, motivate those that do not, and demonstrate self-assurance, compassion, dedication, patience, integrity, loyalty, and love as a father, husband educator, and community leader. (Principal Biography, GES Website)

The teachers at GES have noticed their principal's and assistant principal's involvement with and support of the RTI process. T10GE stated:

> But the principals have been good about calling us together to explain those new transitions and those new ways of doing it [RTI], and then also giving us visual aids and things to help walk us through the process. We have a nice tier sheet that I can just walk through. I can take that child I'm concerned about, and I can figure out where they fit and walk through the steps that I need to do.

Other teachers concur with her statement. A second-grade teacher stated, "I'm sure [PGE] will explain it to us. He's been great about giving us guidance through this so far," (Observation, 9-25-08). A first-grade teacher also echoed these thoughts by saying, "Our principal and AP have been so supportive and have really helped us get this going. It's confusing, but I know they'll give us the help and support we need to get it right," (Observation, 10-3-08). The nature of learning together is a strong component of the

culture at GES. One of the school's belief statements reads, "[GES] should provide each other an environment where we, as a [GES] family, can instill trust and exemplify our values through each other" (Beliefs and Values, GES Website). This idea of learning together continues in the school's vision statement which reads:

> Listening with our hearts.
> Learning together.
> Leading the way to our future. (Vision Statement, GES Website)

Research Question 1c: What factors facilitate RTI Implementation?

In answer to the third subquestion, two themes were developed that addressed factors that facilitate RTI implementation. The first theme pertains to the teachers' perception that their principal is leading the RTI process, and this perception is viewed as a favorable aspect by the teachers. The second theme reflects the teacher and administrators' beliefs that the data generated through RTI implementation will help children. The first theme is best categorized as Stage 2 (Personal) as it reflects the teachers' attempts to understand how RTI fits within the organizational structure of their school. The second falls under Stage 4 (Consequence) which focuses on how RTI will impact students. Each theme is discussed in the following section.

Following the Principals' Lead to Improved Instruction

Teachers at GES see their principal and assistant principal as very invested in the RTI process and actively leading the implementation. T11GE noted:

> Last year our principal introduced it to the staff as a whole and talked about his vision and where he wanted to go with it, and that this would be the framework that we would be following for identifying kids with special needs and also for supporting kids who need additional help in the classroom.

Likewise, a fourth grade teacher said, "[PGE] says it will help students achieve, and I believe him. He wouldn't be leading us through this if it wasn't good for kids," (Observation, 11-10-08). Another teacher approached me in the office during fall interviews and asked, "Do you know our principal, [PGE]? He is really leading us in this process and helping us get it started," (Observation, 10-9-08). APGE noted the direct involvement in RTI implementation by PGE and stated:

> Well, we just received our AIMSweb data, so we're very new in identifying the different tiers. The teachers have an idea, and then our principal, who did our AIMSweb section, met with everyone, actually, yesterday to get a clear cut idea of who would start this process... .

T10GE noted the active role the principal and assistant principal were taking in the RTI implementation by stating:

> We started last year talking about it, and they [PGE and APGE] started explaining what Response to Intervention was so we could learn another acronym. And started just then slowly showing us how it was going to take the place of [the referral process] that we had done for many years… . They started giving us a few of the tools that went with it so we could start playing with it. We could start getting our feet wet before the beginning of the school year. And so I think trying to get us into it a little slowly, so it wasn't quite as much of a culture shock this year.

APGE discussed the active role she and PGE were taking in the implementation process. She said:

> My principal has gone to different trainings and then relayed information to me, and I have been to some as well through administrative meetings. But more of them have been what is RTI and how does it fit us as far as how will we implement these and make it feasible for our teachers, how are we going to implement the new laws and what do the tiers look like specifically, because our educators just want to know that they're doing things right and what do they look like specifically as we go into things.

Leadership is very important to the staff, as seen in one of the school's value statements which defines leadership as, "Guiding others through being a positive role model" (Beliefs and Values, GES Website). The teachers at GES perceive their administrators as actively leading them through RTI implementation, and this appeals to the staff in their desire to make RTI work.

Using Data to Help Children

The data generated from the RTI process was viewed by the teachers and administrators at GES as a positive factor that would lead to helping children achieve. T10GE stated:

> There's some good things there. I like the benchmarking that's available to us because it gives us a nice picture. I was able just yesterday even I looked at my class as a whole and how they benchmarked, and I got some very valuable information from it. There was a couple that I didn't have any red flags in my head about whereas that test pulled some… But it was some good information, and I think we're going to get some good information on students by using it.

Her thoughts on the data generated through the Universal Screening, or CBM Benchmarking, process was echoed by a fourth-grade teacher who noted, "I like the CBM charts. It helps me to see how the kids are doing. It gives me good data," (Observation, 11-10-08). PGE added that the fall benchmark was on target with teacher concerns in most cases. He said:

> It wasn't as low as ninety-five percent of the cases yesterday, they were on target. Teachers would say I'm concerned about Jimmy, and Jimmy was below the tenth percentile. Or they were I'm concerned about these, and they were just a little above. There was only school-wide [norms], and we're a school of eight hundred and fifty students. There was only, maybe, three students yesterday that teachers were concerned about that the data didn't support. But then as we had conversations about the students, the data shouldn't support because when I say, "Well, we don't see the data on that," they were like, "Oh, the child's is brilliant. We know that. They're just really disorganized or emotionally they're struggling,"

> those kinds of things. So we didn't have the data to support that because it was a different kind of situation.

PGE acknowledged that using the data generated from the Universal Screening process was new to the staff and a process that would take some getting used to. He stated:

> It makes us more – and I hate to say this because I think we are very data driven – but I think maybe we're looking more critically at data, and we're learning how to use it and how to look for good data and also how we can't rely on one piece. So I think it's growing us. It's growing us quite a bit.

The staff at GES also expressed their belief that using a RTI process would help more children than the previous method of solely relying on special education to intervene with at-risk students. T10GE stated:

> It's also been exciting because I know those students that I've not been able to get to qualify for things in the past I think at least this system can help them, whereas before I've had to look at parents and say, "Sorry, nothing I can really do besides what I'm doing."

Similarly, T30GE also said:

> Before RTI we were not allowed by law to change or accommodate children who needed help unless they have an IEP paperwork in place, and that lead a lot of children to falling through the cracks. This gives us the ability to do these interventions and not let a child fall through the cracks before having to go through and sort through all the red tape [in the special education eligibility process].

A fourth-grade teacher also expressed her belief that the RTI process allowed for intervening with more children. She said, "I think this process is going to help a lot of kids who are at-risk for reading problems. Before RTI, we couldn't help them until they qualified for special ed, but now we can," (Observation, 11-10-08). T10GE continued in her description of how she perceived RTI to allow more children to receive help sooner by noting:

> And I spent a lot of time on this student last year, and I could not get him to qualify [for special education]. I had some concerns but he didn't fit any mold correctly, and so we could not get him to qualify. Since I had some things started, and then the new teacher started some things, I think he's going to be able to get some services now that he was not going to get before. And part of that may have been because he finally, with advancing grades, fell to where he met the criteria better, but I think this [RTI] model would have let me help him more last year if we would have had it. My perception is I would have been able to help the child more last year if I would have been able to have this model. And that's where I hope it's going to catch some of those kids that are not true LD or a specific special ed problem, but they've got the things that they need help with – that we're going to be able to catch them with this in it.

Student learning is a major focus at GES, as seen in the staff's following belief statements:

> We believe that all [GES] students:
> - Are unique individuals with distinctive abilities and talents.
> - Have the right to learn and be challenged.
> - Will make positive, meaningful growth in a safe, nurturing, supportive environment. (Beliefs and Values, GES Website)

This focus on meeting the needs of all students plays a large role in the staff viewing RTI as helping more children than did the previous method of waiting for special education eligibility.

Finally, the teachers and administrators at GES view RTI as a preventive measure that will keep many children from ever needing to be in special education classes. APGE stated:

> I think for many children it will be successful when the documentation is obtained for them to receive testing for qualifications or to receive the services that they need. Because we all know we've had those kids as educators that they received the testing through the referral process and didn't qualify [for special education]. And you're like, "But they will, you know they will." And then we retest again the next year after they've become more behind, and they do qualify. So I think that, hopefully, it will help intervening with those children earlier and not waiting for them to fail.

PGE also commented on the benefits of not waiting for children to have to fail before receiving the help that they need. He said:

> Not waiting for kids to fail, catching them early. It's an early intervention process that tries to, best we can, identify weaknesses that are significant and then do our best to strengthen those and reach the kids early so that they don't need to qualify for student support.

At a grade level meeting for fourth grade, a teacher echoed these words by saying, "I think it will keep a lot of kids out of special education," (Observation, 11-10-08). Additionally, a third-grade teacher commented during a walk-through, "I see the benefits of this – it's not all negative. This will be enough to keep some students out of special education because we are intervening earlier and not letting them get so low as to need special education," (Observation, 10-3-08). Perhaps the belief of the staff that RTI would serve as a preventative measure is best summarized by PGE who stated:

> Yesterday I spent the whole day just meeting with grade level groups and talking about RTI, and they're really starting to get it. They're really looking at it and starting to understand, hey, if we do this right we're not going to have students coming into second, third, fourth, fifth grade really far behind and still trying to solve the puzzle of what they need help with. We're going to know this upfront. And also I love the fact of – and for me it's a feeling that goes with this very common phrase – it takes a village to raise children, and very much that's what RTI is.

Research Question 2: To what extent do the concerns expressed by teachers and Principals vary from the beginning to the end of the first year of RTI implementation?

In preparation for answering my second research question in the spring data analysis, I summed scores for each of the seven Stages of Concern and obtained an average. I then converted the average to a percentile to allow graphing of the profile for GES. Figure 11 provides a summary of these results.

SoCQ Scores for GES

As can be seen in Figure 11, the staff at GES scored highest on Awareness (Stage 0), with a percentile of 81. This suggests that the majority of the staff had the most intense concerns at the Awareness level. As noted in George et al. (2006), scores this high typically indicate that users of an innovation are concerned about initiatives other than RTI. As previously noted, the school district had begun other major initiatives simultaneously with RTI implementation, and the staff were dealing with learning Gradespeed, new report card formats, and new curriculum standards while also learning the RTI process. Staff participating in the interviews at GES reported feeling overwhelmed with "one more thing" they were having to do on top of other duties expected of them. This score appears to corroborate that qualitative finding.

The second-highest score for the staff was on Personal (Stage 2) with an overall percentile of 70 noted. According to George et al., this stage reflects individuals who are uncertain regarding specific demands of an innovation and whether the individuals feel they can adequately meet these demands. Also reflected in this stage is the struggle the individual is facing as he or she attempts to gauge his or her role within the innovation. Qualitative themes developed from the fall interviews, observations, and data collection support this score, as numerous Personal themes were previously discussed above.

George et al. note that the relationship between Information (Stage 1) and Personal (Stage 2) is often considered more important than any individual score on the SoCQ. When the Personal (Stage 2) score is higher than the Information (Stage 1) score, a negative one-two split results. This relationship is noted for the profile with GES. The

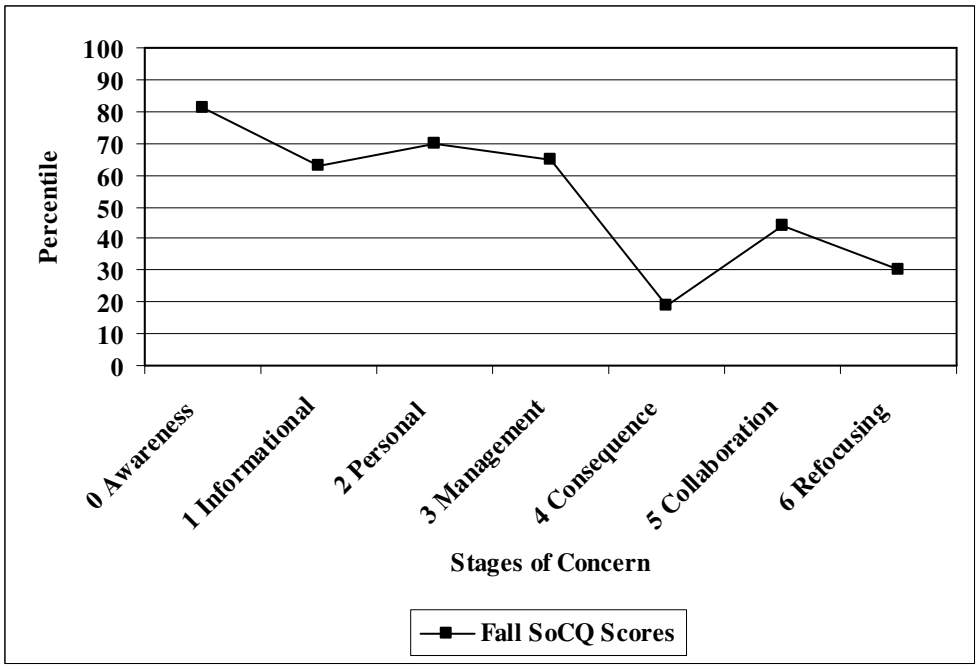


***Figure 11*. Fall SoCQ Percentiles for Gardenia Elementary.**

Personal (Stage 2) percentile of 70 is higher than the Information (Stage 1) percentile of 63. The implication, according to George et al., is that Personal concerns can override the desire of participants to learn more about the innovation or even to desire more information. Based upon the qualitative data discussed above, the interviewees clearly expressed personal concerns with RTI implementation, and according to the SoC framework, these personal concerns could potentially interfere with effective implementation of RTI.

On a final interpretive note, the score on Refocusing (Stage 6) does not "tail up" as described by George et al. This tailing up in the scores of new users of an innovation often indicates a desire to return to older and more familiar practices. Fall SoCQ scores for participants at GES do not indicate this pattern. While interviewees, as well as other teachers observed, questioned whether RTI practices were applicable to students at their school, and expressed concern regarding how RTI was affecting the referral process and the length of time in identifying students for special education, a desire to return to the previous referral method is not a likely assumption based on the results of the SoCQ.

Frequency of SoCQ Scores by Participants

Table 31 provides a frequency of number of participants who scored highest on each of the seven stages. As can be seen, most of the staff at Gardenia Elementary scored highest on the Awareness stage, Stage 0, with 46% falling into that category. High scores on Awareness, Stage 0, often indicate users of an innovation have concerns regarding other innovations than the one under study, and qualitative data tend to support this

Table 31

Frequency of Highest Stage of Concern for Individual Participants at GES

Highest Stage of Concern	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
Number of Participants	12	5	2	4	0	3	0	26
Percent of Participants	46	19	8	15	0	12	0	100

interpretation. Staff at GES noted that they felt overwhelmed with having to do "one more thing" on top of other initiatives being implemented simultaneously. The remaining staff scored highest on Information (Stage 1) and Management (Stage 3), with 19% and 15% indicating those stages as their highest scores, respectively. The Information stage, Stage 1, addresses the desire of individuals in learning more about an innovation, while Management (Stage 3) concerns pertain to managing the processes and tasks of the innovation. Qualitative data collected in the fall indicated strong concern regarding scheduling RTI-related activities, which is part of this stage. The remaining participants indicated Collaboration (Stage 5) and Personal (Stage 2) as their highest concerns, with 12% and 8% fall into these two categories.

Table 32 provides a summary of the frequency of second-highest scores for the staff at GES. The majority of participants scored second-highest on Personal, Stage 2, with 31% of the participants falling in this category. The remaining participants indicated Awareness (Stage 0), Informational (Stage 1), Management (Stage 3), and Collaboration (Stage 5) as their second-highest scores, with 19% scoring on Awareness, 23% scoring on Information, 23% scoring on Management, and 4% scoring on Collaboration. The majority of participants at GES indicated their second-highest score on the first four stages of the SoCQ. George et al. (2006) note that it is common for scores on the SoCQ to cluster together in consecutive stages, and this pattern appears to apply to the second-highest scores for GES with most participants clustering around Stages 1, 2, and 3. This pattern aligns well with the qualitative data collected in the fall for GES. Most of the themes developed were categorized as Personal themes and dealt

Table 32

Frequency of Second-Highest Stage of Concern for Individual Participants at GES

Second-Highest Stage of Concern	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
Number of Participants	5	6	8	6	0	1	0	26
Percent of Participants	19	23	31	23	0	4	0	100

with the participants' uncertainty about RTI implementation and how he or she fit in with the implementation. Characteristics of the high scores on Awareness were seen in the participants reporting feeling overwhelmed by dealing with the demands of RTI implementation in addition to the other implementations underway in the district. Thus, the highest and second-highest scores on the SoCQ appear to substantiate the categorization of qualitative themes.

SoCQ Scores for Interviewees

Each of the six participants who participated in the interviews was asked to complete a SoCQ. I was interested to see how each individual interviewee compared to the profile of the school, overall. As a result, profiles for five of the six interviewees were analyzed and discussed in this section. One interviewee, T30GE, did not return the fall SoCQ. The remaining interviewees are coded as PGE, APGE, T20GE, T11GE, and T10GE. Each interviewee's profile on the SoCQ will be discussed individually below.

PGE's SoCQ profile for the fall is shown in Figure 12. His highest score was on Stage 5, Collaboration, with his second-highest score on Stage 0, Awareness, with scores at the 93rd and 87th percentiles, respectively. In examining the relationship between Stage 1 (Information) and Stage 2 (Personal), his percentile of 59 on Personal is 19 percentile points higher than his percentile of 40 on Information. Using the interpretation of George et al. (2006) of a negative 1-2 split, this suggests that PGE's personal concerns regarding implementing RTI far outweigh his desire to learn more information at this time. In addition, PGE's score on Refocusing (Stage 6) does not "tail up" but is much lower than

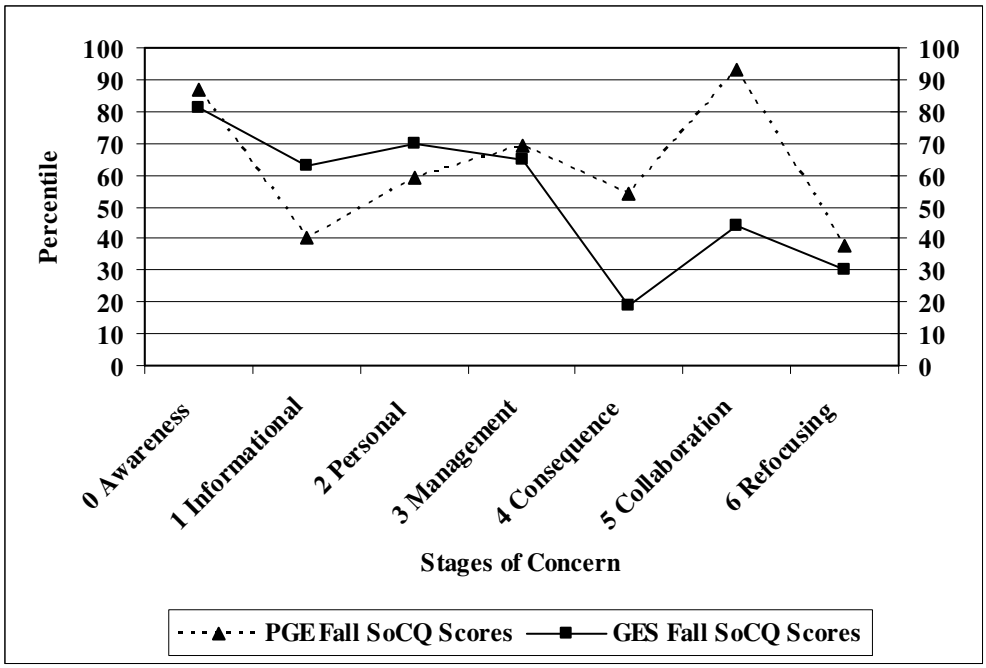


Figure 12. **SoCQ Fall Profile for PGE.**

his score on Collaboration. According to interpretation guidelines established by George et al. (2006), "tailing up" early in an implementation could suggest a desire to return to previously used procedures, or in this case, the more familiar referral process. This interpretation does not appear to be likely based on PGE's fall SoCQ profile. Looking at PGE's fall profile in Figure 12 in comparison to the school's fall profile, his scores on Information (Stage 1) and Personal (Stage 2) were lower than those for the school, while his scores on Consequence (Stage 4) and Collaboration (Stage 5) were much higher. This suggests PGE has a greater grasp of the impact RTI implementation will have on student learning and a greater desire to collaborate with others in implementing RTI.

Figure 13 provides a summary of the fall SoCQ profile for APGE. Her highest score was on Personal, Stage 2, with a score at the 76th percentile. Her second-highest score was on Information, Stage 1, with a score at the 54th percentile. This implies that she is very concerned about how she can meet the demands of RTI implementation personally, and she also would like to know more about RTI. In addition, her Personal (Stage 2) score at the 76th percentile is 22 percentile points higher than her Information (Stage 1) score at the 54th percentile. This suggests personal concerns regarding her adequacy to meet the demands of RTI implementation far outweigh her desire to learn more about RTI at this point in time. Her score on Refocusing (Stage 6) does not "tail up" from her score on Collaboration, suggesting there are no competing ideas on how to best implement RTI. APGE's fall SoCQ profile is similar to that of the school's fall profile with the exception that her score on Awareness (Stage 0) is much lower than the

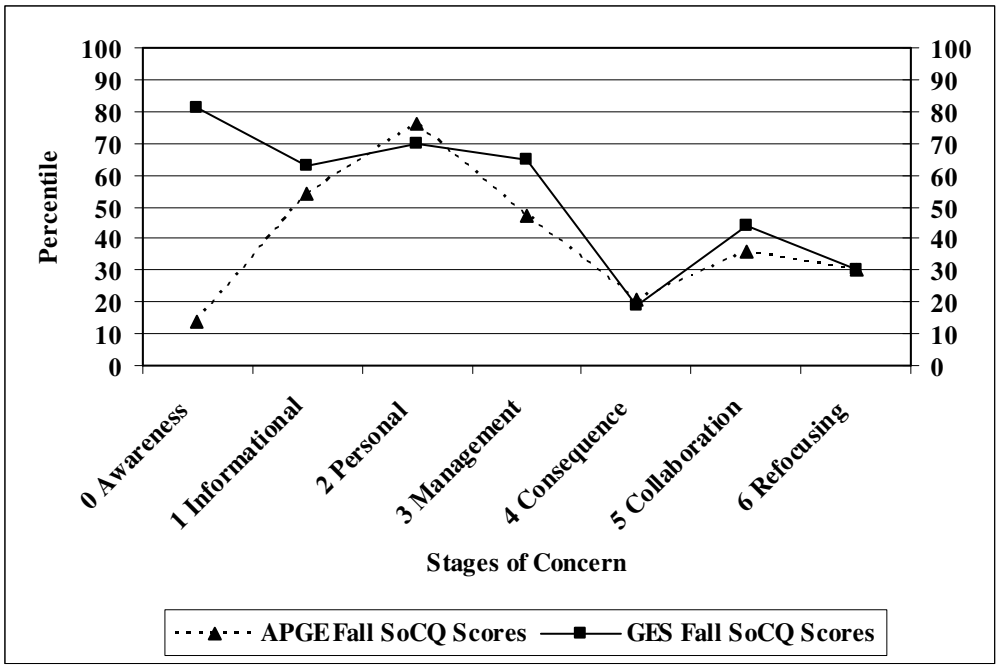


***Figure 13*. SoCQ Fall Profile for APGE.**

school average, and her scores on Information (Stage 1), Management (Stage 3), and Collaboration (Stage 5) are slightly lower than the school averages.

The fall SoCQ profile for T20GE is provided in Figure 14. Her highest score was on Awareness (Stage 0) with a percentile score of 96, and her second-highest score was on Information (Stage 1) with a percentile score of 48. Her percentile of 48 on Information (Stage 1) is higher than her percentile of 41 on Personal (Stage 2), indicating that she is not so overwhelmed by personal concerns with RTI implementation that she is reluctant to receive more information on RTI. The score on Refocusing does not "tail up" in comparison to the score on Collaboration (Stage 5), thus suggesting there are no competing ideas regarding RTI implementation. T20GE's fall SoCQ profile is different from the profile of the school in that her scores on all stages except Awareness (Stage 0) are lower than the school averages, suggesting that her levels of intensity are not as strong as the school average.

Figure 15 provides a summary of the fall SoCQ profile of T11GE. As can be readily seen, her highest score was on Awareness (Stage 0), with a percentile score of 91. Her second-highest score was on Collaboration (Stage 5) with a score at the 76th percentile. This profile suggests T11GE is intensely concerned with other initiatives being implemented in addition to RTI, and she also desires to collaborate with others in implementing RTI. Her score on Personal (Stage 2) is slightly lower than her score on Information (Stage 1), indicating that her personal concerns about RTI implementation do not outweigh her desire to learn more about RTI. In addition, there is no "tailing up" of Refocusing (Stage 6), suggesting she does not have ideas about improving RTI

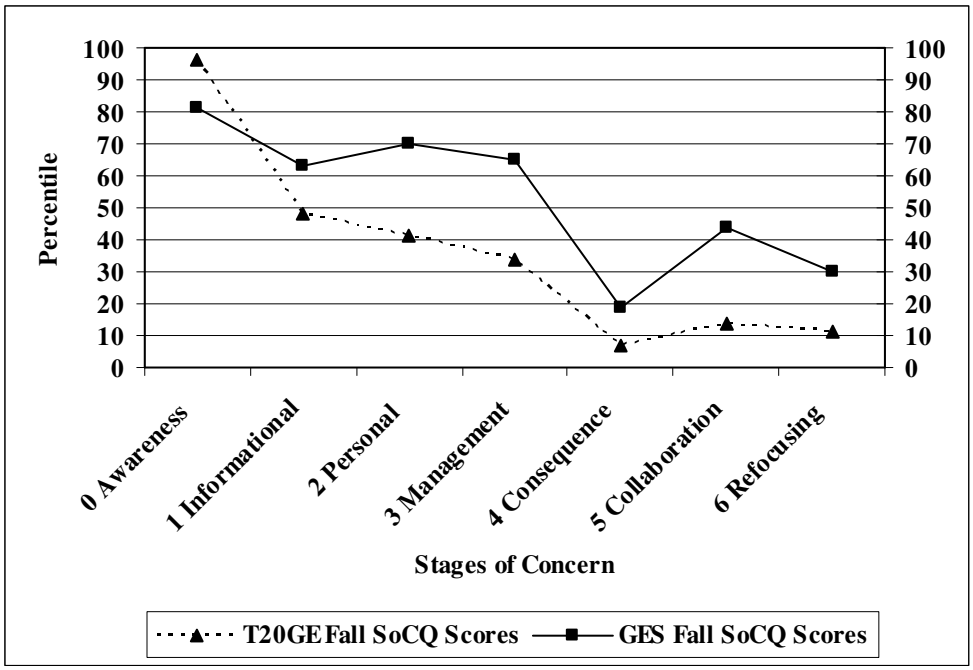


***Figure 14*. SoCQ Fall Profile for T20GE.**

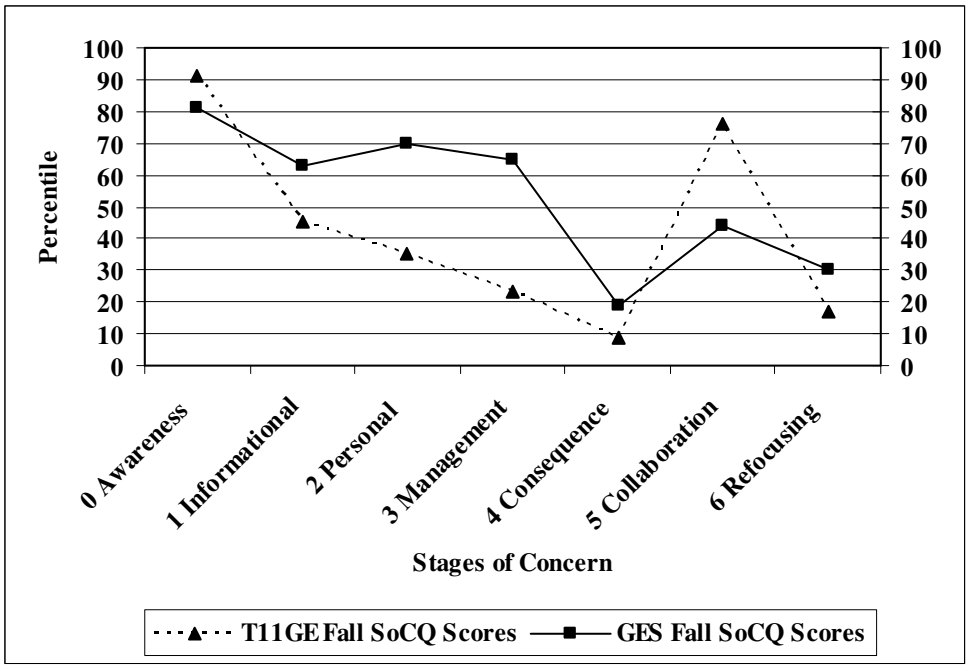


***Figure 15*. SoCQ Fall Profile for T11GE.**

implementation which most likely would be a return to old referral practices when such a pattern occurs early in an implementation. Her fall profile suggests she has much less intense concerns on all stages than was typical for the school averages, with the exception of Awareness and Collaboration, which were higher.

The SoCQ fall profile for T10GE is provided in Figure 16. Her highest score was on Awareness (Stage 0) with a score at the 69th percentile. Her second-highest score was on Management (Stage 3) with a score at the 56th percentile. This indicates T10GE was most intensely concerned with other initiatives besides RTI and that she also has has concerns regarding scheduling and managing RTI tasks. Her scores on Information (Stage 1) and Personal (Stage 2) suggest she is more intensely concerned with personal concerns than she is to learning more about RTI. A slight "tailing up" on Refocusing (Stage 6) indicates she has some ideas of how RTI implementation could be implemented, most often a desire to return to former practices when seen this early in an implementation. When compared to the school averages, T10GE's scores were noted to be slightly lower on all stages and much lower on Collaboration (Stage 5).

Summary

Fall data collected at Gardenia Elementary were summarized in this chapter. At the beginning of the first year of RTI implementation, three areas of concern were noted by the principals and teachers. The first was lack of clarity for the RTI process as a whole and included issues of how RTI works, who does what, how to document the process, how the process continually changed, and lack of training. A second concern addressed changes to the referral process in terms of lack of clarity for how referrals were

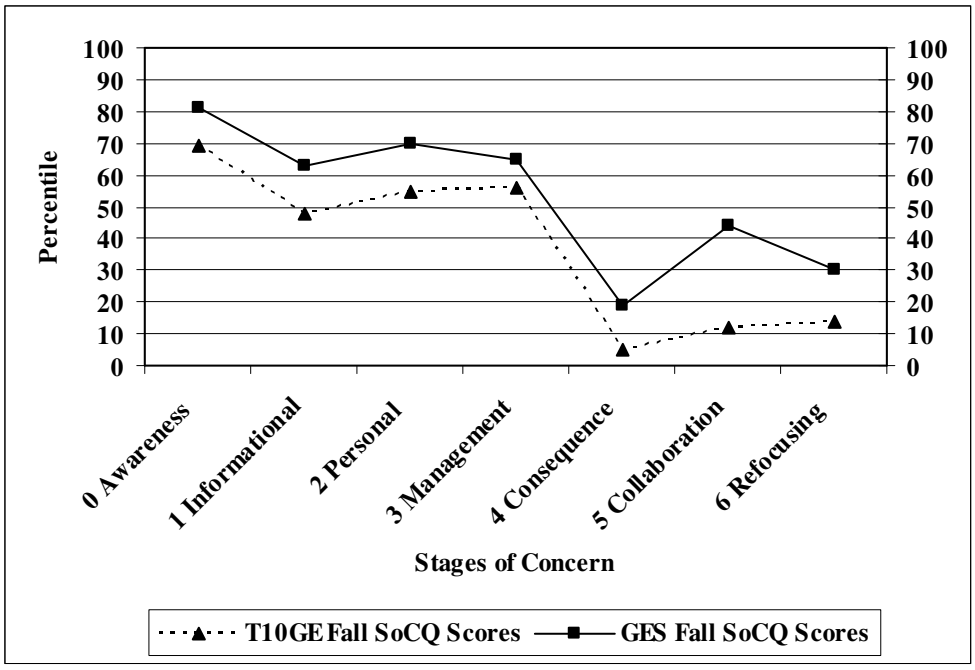


Figure 16. **Fall SoCQ Profile for T10GE.**

to be made, as well as the length of time between identifying at-risk students and getting help for those students. The third area of concern pertained to scheduling time for the RTI process. Barriers to RTI implementation were identified as adding another task for teachers to do and a reluctance to perceive RTI as applicable to their school. In looking at how the roles of teachers and principals are affected by RTI implementation, the teachers identified improved teaching practices through RTI implementation, while the principals identified providing guidance for the teachers as the effect on their role. Factors that facilitate RTI implementation included following the principal's lead to improved instruction and using data to help children. Results of the SoCQ for GES as a whole indicated the highest concerns were related to Awareness (Stage 0) with the second-highest scores on Personal (Stage 2). Results of the school profile, as well as the individual participants who were interviewed, were discussed and are considered to be in alignment with qualitative theme development.

CHAPER 7

ANALYSIS OF FALL DATA FOR MAGNOLIA ELEMENTARY

Chapter Introduction

Fall data were collected for Magnolia Elementary in September, October, and November 2008. Interviews were conducted on October 10, 2008, and the principal, assistant principal, and four teachers were interviewed. The Stages of Concern Questionnaire (SoCQ) was delivered to the school and placed in teachers' boxes on September 24, 2008, and completed questionnaires were collected on October 24, 2008. To increase the original return rate of 39%, a second attempt of soliciting responses on the SoCQ was made. The questionnaire was delivered to the school and placed in non-responding teachers' boxes on October 29, 2008, and picked up on November 14, 2008, for a final return rate of 47%.

At the time of the fall data collection, MES was in the process of completing the AIMSweb fall benchmark process, or Universal Screening, and plans were underway to review the benchmark results with the teachers through grade level meetings in order to identify at-risk students to begin Tier 1. The staff had participated in a half-day training on the administration and scoring of the AIMSweb probes, and the RTI model had been reviewed with the staff through monthly faculty meetings. Progress monitoring training was scheduled district wide for November 4, 2008, but the principal of MES was making plans to conduct trainings through grade level meetings so teachers could begin progress monitoring prior to November 4. Based upon the Concerns Based Adoption Model (CBAM) used for my theoretical framework, the staff at GES were considered to be non-

users of RTI at the time of the fall data collection. Each qualitative theme developed for GES was analyzed with the Stages of Concern as a lens through which to view the themes. Table 33 provides an analysis of these themes which will be discussed below in light of each of my research questions.

Research Question 1: What are the concerns of teachers and principals as they experience RTI implementation?

This first research question attempts to identify the main areas of concern teachers and principals experience with the first year of RTI implementation. Two themes were developed in answer of this question for the teachers and principals at MES. The first involved an inability to see the whole RTI process, or "the big picture," and the second pertained to difficulties scheduling RTI-related activities. The first theme represents the Personal (Stage 2) stage of the SoC as it addresses the participants attempts to determine how they, personally, fit within the RTI implementation and how that implementation affects them. The second theme falls within the Management (Stage 3) stage of the SoC as it pertains to how the participants are attempting to manage specific tasks associated with RTI implementation, which in this case involves the daily class schedule. Both themes are discussed thoroughly below.

Struggling to See "The Big Picture" of the RTI Process

At the beginning of the RTI implementation in the fall, the teachers at MES were struggling to comprehend what the RTI process would look like from the beginning to the end, and they were having difficulty seeing the whole process. PME described his staff's difficulty in this area by stating:

Table 33

Analysis of Qualitative Themes by Stage of Concern for MES

Research Question	Theme	Stage of Concern
1	Struggling to See "The Big Picture of the RTI Process	2 Personal
	Scheduling Difficulties: How to Manage RTI	3 Management
1(a)	Slowing Down the Referral Process	2 Personal
1(b)	Pressure to Get it Right: Increasing the Stress Level of Teachers	2 Personal
	Principals: Learning Alongside Teachers	2 Personal
1(c)	Improved Instructional Practices that Help Children	4 Consequence

> Well, teachers want to know how it's going to look up front, and that's what makes this more of a genuine way to approach real learning for kids. Because you can't. If you're really studying those children and then accommodating the instruction to fit those children's needs while you're learning to do that then you can't say what it's going to look like in the end. That's what makes it different from any other kind of program I've ever seen in public education, because it's really not a program, it's a process. And it's the process that I came to this position to implement in a school.

PME appears to have been well-attuned to his staff. They clearly articulated their concern that they could not see the "big picture." T16ME stated:

> I'm just hoping I've got the right picture in my head, and that I'm heading in the right direction with it. I think once we get a little farther into it it will help solidify it in our heads a lot more than it is right now.

The need to see the process from beginning to end was pervasive throughout data collection in the fall. A third grade teacher noted, "I think it would help us do this if we knew what it will look like in the end. Right now, I can't tell where it is going," (Observation, 9-15-08). T5ME said, "I need to see it implemented to know what to do." Likewise, a fourth grade teacher noted during a walk-through observation, "I still don't see the big picture. I'm very stressed out because I don't know what I'm supposed to be doing." A third grade teacher echoed these thoughts by noting, "I'm not sure how this will work. I don't really understand it," (Observation, 9-4-08). The confusion over the process and the struggle of the teachers to see the end product was succinctly summarized by a first grade teacher who stated, "I really don't understand this at all. What am I supposed to do?" (Observation, 9-15-08).

This inability to see "the big picture" also contributed to confusion over the role of the school psychologist and the reading specialist. At an observation of a training on RTI forms for the administrators, guidance counselor, and school psychologist, PME

asked for clarification regarding who was doing what in terms of guiding the teachers through the tier process and suggesting interventions. The school psychologist noted that she was confused over where she fit in the overall process and stated, "What am I supposed to do? Am I to help guide the teachers through the tiers or is the reading specialist?" (Observation, 9-15-08). Likewise, the reading specialist asked to speak with me between interviews regarding her role in the overall RTI process. She was confused over what her role in RTI was versus the role of the school psychologist. She also expressed her confusion over the end result of the tier process and whether she was supposed to continue pulling children for small-group intervention at Tier 1 or wait until Tier 2 (Observation, 10-10-08).

The teachers and principals attributed their inability to comprehend to totality of the RTI process to a lack of training prior to being asked to implement RTI. APME summarized this concern by stating:

> The thing I wish is that we had more knowledge of training upfront and that we went into it more knowledgeable as far as what the processes concern and more understanding of AIMSweb and what progress monitoring is because the biggest fear I think that everybody has is I'm going to do it wrong, and, therefore, I'm not going to help a child.

Similarly, T30ME expressed her belief that training had been insufficient in preparing her for implementing RTI. She said:

> Well, I feel like I needed a little more training on how to do this. I was kind of like thrown into it. I give this test. Once I gave it I felt comfortable. It wasn't as hard as I thought. But it was a little bit just kind of let's try it and see. I didn't feel like I had a lot of experience. You know, I had no experience, so I really don't know what I am getting into. It [CBM Benchmark] wasn't as bad as I thought, but I would have liked to been a little more prepared.

Other teachers expressed these same concerns. During a walk-through, a second grade teacher said, "I think it will be good in the long run. I just wish we had more training," (Observation, 9-4-08). Another second grade teacher echoed these thoughts in another walk-through by stating, "I just feel like I need more training on this before I do it. Are we going to get more training?" (Observation, 9-15-08). The reading specialist noted her concern over the lack of training by saying, "I don't feel I have enough knowledge of RTI, and I need more training," (Observation, 10-10-08).

A review of school records indicates that all teachers participated in a district-wide training for AIMSweb administration and scoring on August 5, 2008. In addition, the principal and school psychologist conducted grade level meetings to address progress monitoring basics at the school level. The RTI process was to be covered monthly through regularly scheduled faculty meetings. However, at the time of the fall data collection, the staff had only been in attendance at one faculty meeting, and the remainder were scheduled throughout the year (MES Faculty Meeting Schedule). This process of staggering information on the RTI process through monthly staff meetings may have contributed to the teachers' concerns that they were unable to comprehend the RTI process in its totality. T16ME noted:

> I think a lot of it's been left to us as teachers to know what to do to during Tier 1. It's been a case of if you've got a struggling student then you know things that you can do with them, but if you're not sure, then here are some resources that you can go to, special ed teachers and so on, and reading specialists that can give you some more information about things that you can do. Tier 2, when we get to that point, they said there will be training on how to use the Read Naturally program, which since we aren't to the Tier 2 level yet, we haven't had that training yet.

The difficulty in establishing time for training teachers was noted in the School Improvement Plan for MES. The plan stated that time needed to be allotted during the school day as opposed to making teachers attend trainings outside of the school day. A possible solution was noted as hiring substitutes for the day in order to give teachers more time to be trained on various initiatives the district was implementing (School Improvement Plan, MES). However, this option has budgetary implications, and the decision was made to provide ongoing and embedded RTI training through monthly faculty meetings.

Scheduling Difficulties: How to Manage RTI

The second theme developed in answer to the first research question dealt with difficulty incorporating RTI activities such as progress monitoring and tiered intervention into the school's daily schedule. The teachers were asked by PME to incorporate a 30-minute block of time into the daily schedule to be utilized for Tier 2 interventions. In addition, the district had mandated an uninterrupted 90-minute reading block which was an increase in the time that had previously been allotted in the daily schedule for reading instruction. At the beginning of the fall data collection, all grade levels had incorporated this schedule, although fourth and fifth grade had been unable to schedule 90 minutes of uninterrupted time for reading. Rather, they had two forty-five-minute blocks (MES Master Schedule).

During the fall data collection, teachers and the principals were concerned about the effect RTI implementation was having on the daily schedule. The schedule had actually been planned by the School Improvement Team the year prior to starting RTI

implementation as part of the school's 2008 School Improvement Plan (School Improvement Plan, MES). PME noted:

> There's a thirty minute block every day at every grade level that we've put there for Tier 2 intervention. And the way we came about that was we had an ad hoc committee made up of people from different grade levels and our school improvement team. Last spring we did a half day retreat off site and came up with the schedule knowing that we were going to implement RTI this year. … . And right now they're using it for other things. They're using it to extend some instruction in other subject areas, because they've had to really readjust the time they allot to especially social studies this year on all grade levels especially grades two through five because we've got that thirty-minute block there that they know eventually was going to have to be used for some of their students.

In order to meet this new schedule, some teachers must split their planning time rather than having an uninterrupted 55-minute planning time. APME shared her concerns:

> So they sat down as a school improvement team and also with the specials as part of that to say this is the way we need to do this, because the specials were really good in the fact that they split their planning time, because they have planning time in the morning and planning time in the evening, so they don't have their fifty-five minutes together. But they sacrificed in the fact of doing that so we could do this as a school.

The teachers were definitely feeling the pinch of incorporating the 90-minute reading block and the 30-minute intervention block into their daily schedules. To make matters worse, the district had mandated that the 90-minute, uninterrupted reading block was to address reading only, and not writing or spelling. This, in turn, created a need to accommodate those areas in what remained of the daily schedule. T16ME stated:

> It's definitely squeezed things. With the schedule set the way it is, we really don't have the time to do science, social studies the way we would like to because we have to have the thirty minutes. We had that time in block last year, but we didn't have the ninety minutes literacy mandate, or at least we were not aware of it if it was there, so that last year we incorporated language and spelling and other things in that ninety minute reading period, which we can't do. So we've had to find a time to put those in. Writing and all of that is totally separate from the reading block. So that has taken other time, and so, needless to say, science and social

> studies have gotten squeezed. They're the ones that are the least important at this point in the game.

Other teachers agreed. A fourth grade teacher noted during a walk-through:

> I think the hardest part about this is trying to get the schedule down. It has been extremely difficult to build in 90 minutes for reading and 30 minutes for interventions on top of our already full schedule. (Observation, 9-4-08)

A third grade teacher agreed with her and said, “The schedule has been a nightmare to implement. We are taking time away from the other areas to be able to do this,” (Observation, 9-4-08). These concerns were echoed by a second grade teacher during another walk-through. She said, “I’m struggling with the schedule. It is so hard to stick to it when I have so much to accomplish in a day,” (Observation, 9-15-08).

A related concern was noted by the teachers in how to manage the other students in the class during activities related to RTI. In describing her work with a Tier 1 student, T16ME noted:

> The catch to all of this is that the other students are getting to do center work while he's doing that [intervention]. And he's been very good about it because he likes working one on one, but he goes, "Do I get to do that too? Do I?" Yeah. So he's missing doing the centers. It's not so bad now because since I only do it three days a week he does get at least one day a week to do that [the centers].

T5ME also described difficulties she has experienced with incorporating RTI activities into her daily classroom schedule with other students:

> At the kindergarten level the biggest thing I see is when you're trying to do any kind of small group, pull-out instruction it's hard when you're the only teacher in the room because the kids are so small they have questions, and they want to interrupt, and they don't understand that you can't be interrupted during that time, and it takes a lot of repetitive, “Remember that I'm in a small group right now and that if it's an emergency I can help you but, otherwise, ask a friend,” type thing. And that's the biggest concern is being the only person in the room trying to make sure you're doing what's right for the child that needs the help.

T16ME continued describing her concerns regarding managing the classroom with RTI interventions:

> For me the biggest challenge is making sure the other students are occupied and not interrupting. I'm fortunate enough that I have a teacher aid that comes in during that time period to supervise them, and if they try to interrupt during when I'm working with a student I can just wave and direct them to the teacher aid. It does tend to get a little noisy in the room, and if it gets to the point where we can't work because of that we may have to move out to the hall so that we can hear each other.

These concerns were shared by other teachers at MES. T30ME stated, "And then what are you going to do with the other children while you're doing the RTI [interventions] with those that need it?" Likewise, a first grade teacher noted during a walk-through observation, "And what am I supposed to do with my other students while I'm working with the low group?" (Observation, 9-15-08). Her colleague who teaches third grade concurred and stated, "I also worry about what to do with my 18 other students while I'm progress monitoring and intervening with these three," (Observation, 9-15-08).

Research Question 1a: What do teachers and principals perceive as barriers to implementing RTI?

The second research subquestion addresses barriers that teachers and principals perceive in implementing RTI. One global theme was developed for the principals and teachers of MES. This theme addressed the referral process for special education evaluation and eligibility and the length of time RTI practices imposed on the process. Using the SoC framework to view this theme, the concern falls within the Personal (Stage 2) stage as it represents the participants' attempt to understand the demands of RTI implementation and to determine how their familiar practices fit within those demands. This theme is discussed in the section below.

Slowing Down the Referral Process

RTI practices require teachers to provide intervention and weekly progress monitoring prior to making a referral for special education evaluation for eligibility purposes, and this framework represents a major shift in how the referral process previously worked. PME expressed his ideas on why this shift was so difficult for teachers:

> I think it's more of a mindset than it is anything procedurally. I mean procedures are procedures, but the mindset of it is that I believe teachers had in their mind, well, I'm going to do all I can do and all I know how to do for this child, and then in the end I'm going to refer them for testing for special education, whereas they saw that as hope to help, and now it's different in that that they've got to prove now using the data that that child really needs to be referred.

The need to collect more information on children and how they respond to intervention prior to referral is a new concept for teachers to understand. APME noted:

> I would say that we're trying to gather more information about children before we get into the [referral] process versus in the past if a teacher was very concerned about a student we automatically had a meeting. So there was still that, you know, we got to gather a lot of information or my school psychologist had to do some screening, and sometimes it was helpful and sometimes it was that we got into it and everything was okay with the child. So I would say that it's changed the process in that I'm just not having a meeting on every child that a teacher even has an inkling of a concern about. Does that make sense? We're trying to go into the meetings with a lot more information, more specific information.

Changing to the RTI framework was difficult for the teachers at MES because it represented a change in how students are identified as needing help. PME provided his insight into his teachers' concerns in this area by stating:

> Well, we've always given lip service to the outcome being that we believe all kids can learn at high levels. That's been added in this district. And we've said that as teachers, one year's growth per one year's instruction. But we've always had in there – it's almost like a pop-off valve on a hot water heater – that when they get to that level and the teacher becomes overwhelmed, mainly because they don't

> have the skills. It's not because they don't care about the kid. They do care about the kid, sometimes too much, to where they wanted in the past to refer even earlier special ed. They wanted to fast track it because they wanted the kid to get help. But now they get to do more of a study of the child. And I mean that was a concern early on is they say, well, I'm afraid this child's going too long and not getting help. But, see, what help means has changed. Help was special ed support. Now help means something different.

The teachers at MES were struggling in the fall to grasp the changes RTI implementation forced on the referral process. Specifically, they stated that they were concerned about the length of time the RTI practices took before the child was referred for special education. T16ME said:

> The referral process now has changed in that now you wait. You probe for nine weeks, and they go through the Tier 1. If they are not making progress, they go to Tier 2, and you probe [for nine more weeks], and they're going to move. So it really is probably about eighteen weeks before a child will really get referred. I sometimes wonder whether that is really necessary because I feel like sometimes we're waiting. That's two nine week periods before the child's getting additional help if they really need it. But I also think that in some ways that we may be taking too long to do it [refer]. I don't know if there's a reason why the nine weeks was chosen, if there's a study that says we need this amount of time to prove it, or could we do it in seven weeks and still accomplish the same thing.

The concern for the amount of time that passed prior to making a referral was also of concern to other teachers at MES. T30ME reported:

> Well, we're not referring. Just from teaching, because I have taught for twenty years, sometimes I can spot one that I say, "Oh, there's something going on." So that's [RTI] going to slow that process down. And, hopefully, by the time they get to fifth grade we won't have that – they'll already be caught and monitored and worked with… . Some children, though, I think have reading disabilities that might need to have it looked at sooner than what's going to work with RTI.

The concerns with the referral process were shared during observations, as well. During grade level meetings to discuss the results of the Universal Screening fall benchmark results, one second grade teacher stated, "When do we refer these students for special ed?

I have some that need to be referred right now." When the kindergarten team met to discuss the benchmark results, one teacher stated, "But when do we refer these students? Do we have to wait until we've progressed monitored in all the tiers? That is such a long time to wait with young children," (Observation, 9-24-08). A second grade teacher also expressed her concerns about the referral process during a walk-through observation by noting, "I'm very concerned about the referral process. If I understand correctly, we will be putting off referrals for about 18 weeks or more. That's a whole semester! That is too long to wait!" (Observation, 10-10-08).

A review of the school's referral data suggests the teachers are dealing with a drastic change in how they have approached the referral process. During the 2007-2008 school year, the school had 72 School Support Team (S-Team) meetings. Out of these 72 meetings, 29 students were referred for evaluation for special education services. In the first year of RTI implementation in the 2008-2009 school year, a total of seven students were referred for special education evaluation (District Referral Totals Spreadsheet). At the beginning of the first year of RTI implementation, 11 students at MES were identified as at-risk and placed on progress monitoring at Tier 1 (AIMSweb Fall Benchmark Chart).

Research Question 1b: How are the roles of teachers and principals affected by RTI?

The second subquestion addresses how teachers and principals perceive RTI implementation to affect their roles. For the teachers at MES, RTI implementation increased their anxiety levels due to pressure they felt to "get it right." They associated this anxiety with pressure to perform their instructional duties as teachers. As such, this theme is characterized as Personal (Stage 2) on the SoC because it represents how the

teachers sought to identify their role within RTI implementation. For the principals, RTI implementation affected their roles as administrators by forcing them to learn a new process alongside their teachers. This theme is also considered to be at the Personal (Stage 2) stage in the SoC framework as it represents how the two administrators attempted to deal with RTI implementation within their roles as administrators. Each theme is discussed in the following sections.

Pressure to Get it Right: Increasing the Stress Level of Teachers

The teachers at MES experienced the beginning of RTI implementation with increased stress and anxiety for their performance as teachers. They were afraid they would not carry out the responsibilities of RTI correctly or do something wrong, and this fear caused them to feel stress in their roles as teachers. APME stated, "I think that's the biggest fear – making a mistake. So I wish we didn't have that factor in there." She attributes this fear to a desire on the teachers' parts to do the right thing for their students. She added:

> I would probably say just the initial concern by everybody and is this something additional – is this going to cause us to do workwise – am I doing it right? And I see that a lot with our staff. They're like me – they want to know everything because they want to make sure they get it right because they're very concerned about taking care of the kids. It's not really about them other than the fact that they want to make sure that they're doing it right.

She also noted the anxiety level that comes with change and stated, "I'd say probably some anxiety in the fact that I like to know about things and have a real good comfort factor, and this has kind of taken me out of that comfort factor, if that makes any sense." She added:

> That and I would just say just the anxiety of it being something new. Last year the school did DIBELS, and so it was another change [going to AIMSweb]. And the aspect that last year the educational assistants did a lot of the small groups, and this year it's the teacher's responsibility to do that. Right, and still not [having that] comfort zone factor of knowing everything. There are still a lot of unanswered questions or training. It's work in progress, and some people are like, "I know everything and now I can go in and do it." Because I'm like that. And I see some other people like that that are here.

PME concurs and added:

> Of course, as the instructional leader of the school there's some angst involved because, well, I feel my teachers' pain in change and in really looking at – for the first time really looking at – data that is going to really inform instruction. I mean on a micro level. We looked at formative assessment in the past and I have to just stand beside them and guide them through the process, and assure them that it's not to punish them, it's to help them learn.

He went on to say, "Because, see, that's the greatest fear. My teachers want to know what it's going to look like in the end because they want to know if it's worthy of their commitment and their time. And since we can't tell them what it is, there's a lot of fear involved. It's where the angst comes from."

This desire to "get it right" was certainly a concern to teachers as they sought to incorporate RTI into their job duties. T5ME said, "Because it's new, we've not seen it done. It can be scary because you want to do what's right." T16ME noted her stress:

> Stress. Just because you're never sure if you're doing exactly what you need to be doing. So it's kind of like this child is going to fail or succeed depending on what you're doing, so you want to make sure that you're trying, that you're doing your best to help them progress.

T5ME noted the nervousness of her colleagues in regard to RTI implementation by saying, "Just from discussing with other teachers I think they're nervous about it. They don't know what to expect." Other teachers at MES certainly expressed these same concerns during walk-through observations. One second grade teacher stated, "I just

want to make sure I'm doing it right. I feel so much pressure to get it right but at the same time, I don't know what it's supposed to look like," (Observation, 9-15-08). On another walk-through observation, a third grade teacher noted, "I'm still feeling uncomfortable with the process. I don't know if I'm doing it right." Another third grade teacher agreed with her and added, "Yeah, I feel so stressed out about it. Teachers are supposed to know what they're doing when they get in front of their class, and I don't feel like I do," (Observation, 10-10-08). In addition, the reading specialist shared her concerns by saying, "The teachers are really stressed out because they don't know what they're supposed to be doing. They're really starting to get frustrated with the whole process," (Observation, 10-10-08).

Principals: Learning Alongside Teachers

The two administrators at MES perceived RTI to be an opportunity to guide teachers as instructional leaders and to also learn a new process alongside of them. PME expressed this idea by saying:

> I think it's a success, number one, because it has already provided the opportunity for me to come alongside more with teachers and learn together. I mean pretty much all I've had to really do is say, "This is where we're going," and then when they say, "Well, how are we going to do that," and then I get to say, "Well, here's how, and let's do it together." … It's allowed me to alongside teachers more as an equal rather than as the traditional principal role of being an enforcer, or being the monitor. It's allowed me to come on beside them as we're all learning together.

APME also expressed the idea of learning with the staff when she said the following:

> That and just it's something else that I'm having to learn. So it's a aspect, especially the AIMSweb part of this, and just having, a good understanding of the process, what is a have-to versus what's best for children.

PME noted his enthusiasm for the principal-teacher role RTI implementation has allowed him to experience. He stated:

> It's been good for me in that I've been able to, through my studies and through my excitement about the process, become more of a principal-teacher. I believe that's what the word *principal* means – I'm the principal-teacher. And it's not so much with kids as it is with adults in that I've been able to become more of a hands-on instructional leader in guiding teachers through this process and helping them really focus in on doing a few things well and looking at what they need to learn in order to do those few things well for kids.

This idea of learning together is deeply embedded in the school culture at MES. For example, on the principal's webpage on the school website, PME states:

> I came to [Magnolia Elementary] as principal with one major focus – to create a school community where all stakeholders are engaged in caring for and learning from one another. I introduced the premise of what a school, where *everyone* learns, would look like at [Magnolia Elementary]. Using a continual process of self-examination and team learning, schools are best able to create a climate where maximum emotional, social, and academic growth takes place. (Principal's Greeting, MES Website)

In addition, a review of the school's 2008 School Improvement Plan indicates that PME has utilized a professional learning community to create an environment of collaboration and learning together (School Improvement Plan, MES). This idea of collaborative learning of all stakeholders is echoed in the school's vision statement which states, "The vision of [Magnolia Elementary School] is to create a positive, safe, and respectful school climate that supports an actively engaged learning community for all" (School Improvement Plan, MES). Likewise, this idea of learning together is echoed in one of the school's belief statements, which reads, "We believe that facilitation of learning requires a cooperative partnership including the student, the parent, the staff, and the community," (School Improvement Plan, MES).

Observational data also support the idea of the principals actively engaging in learning alongside teachers. PME and APME have taken a large role in leading meetings to prepare staff for implementing RTI and to ensure that the staff's questions are answered. At one observed meeting held to review the RTI process and the forms utilized to document it for the school psychologist and guidance counselor, PME and APME asked questions pertaining to Tier 1 and the roles of the psychologist and reading specialist. PME stated, "I want to make sure we're ready to go with this. I need to be able to serve my staff as a strong instructional leader, which means I need to be sure of the process myself. I'm learning alongside my staff," (Observation, 9-15-08). He also led the grade level meetings for each grade to review the Universal Screening fall benchmark results and to designate at-risk students as Tier 1 students. For each grade level, he encouraged his teachers to focus on the data by saying, "Let's look at our data. How does this compare to what you see in class?" After these meetings ended, PME noted, "This is the highlight of my career today. We've created a true professional learning community," (Observation, 9-24-08). Both PME and APME actively led a School Improvement Team meeting during which they discussed the RTI implementation and acknowledged that they did not have all the answers but were, rather, learning alongside the teachers (Observation, 10-7-08).

The teachers at MES were also aware of the role their principal had taken in learning about the RTI process with them. During a walk-through observation, a third grade teacher noted, "[PME] is leading us through this process and I trust him and his judgment so I know it will get better." Another third grade teacher added, "He [PME]

said we're all learning this together. He may not know all the answers, but he's walking beside us and learning with us." A third teacher agreed, saying, "That's right. I feel like I've got my principal beside me, learning with me, and that means a lot," (Observation, 10-10-08).

Research Question 1c: What factors facilitate RTI implementation?

The third subquestion addresses the factors teachers and principals felt would facilitate RTI implementation. At the beginning of the first year of RTI implementation, the principals and teachers at MES indicated that they believed the RTI process would lead to improved instructional practices which would benefit children. This theme falls within the Consequence (Stage 4) stage of the SoC framework because it indicates the participants' focus on how RTI will impact students in their immediate sphere of influence and the relevance of RTI practices on student learning. This theme is discussed in the following section.

Improved Instructional Practices that Help Children

The principals and teachers at MES indicated their belief that RTI implementation would lead to improved practices of instruction which, in turn, would lead to helping more children. PME stated that he believed RTI would lead to improvements in reading instructional practices by stating:

> I think it's given us a greater focus on our general education classroom reading instruction. It's helped us finally put a magnifying glass on that process so now it's literacy processing and on our skills in that process. … Sure, just a deep sense of satisfaction that we know more about students [from the RTI process] and that we can achieve the goal – it's always been my personal goal and substantiated through lots of research – that all children need to be reading at grade level by grade three. And I think this process is going to help us achieve that goal quicker than any other that we've used here.

The progress monitoring data generated through the RTI process was a factor noted by the principals and teachers that would lead to more responsive teaching. APME noted:

> And it gives us a lot of data to help those children out, and, again, it's a very good process that we're going to go through and give a lot of communication, I think, to parents. It gives the teachers a lot of information about the students and what we need to do to help them. And then we'll see, obviously, if something's not working, especially when we get into progress monitoring that we'll get information every week. So if we're not seeing any progress, it gives us a faster chance of making adjustments to it [instruction], I think, versus the way we've done things in the past.

T16ME stated her opinion on how the benchmark data from the Universal Screening was helping her adapt her instruction to meet the needs of her students. She said:

> I've also been able to use that [Universal Screening benchmark assessment] to also look at comprehension. Students that I thought were doing a lot better than they tested, I'm now looking at again, and is it the test that they didn't understand, or do I need to adjust more of my comprehension strategies that I'm teaching them? So I'm using those results to help figure out, do they need just to understand the test more clearly, or do I need to make some changes?

The data available to teachers through regular Universal Screening and weekly progress monitoring was a factor of RTI implementation that appealed to the teachers and the principals as it assisted in making instructional decisions about students. During the fifth grade level meeting to review the fall benchmark data, the teachers collaborated and discussed the results of who was at-risk and needed weekly progress monitoring. The consensus of the group was that the fall benchmark verified their observations of students in the classroom and also validated their concerns about specific students (Observation, 9-24-08). A second grade teacher also expressed her delight with the data available through the fall benchmark by saying, "I like this data. This really helps lay it out there when we have to make decisions about students," (Observation, 9-24-08). In addition, a

third grade teacher noted, “I feel like this data tells me if what I’m doing with students is working or not.” Her fourth grade colleagues agreed. One stated, “The data really proves what I’ve seen in class. It backs up my observations.” Another noted, “This data really helps me as a teacher. It guides me in knowing whether my students are getting it,” (Observation, 9-24-08).

The teachers also expressed their belief that the Universal Screening data generated through the fall benchmark process assisted in grouping children for reading. A second grade teacher noted in a meeting, “This data really aligns well with my reading groups. It validates my decisions on grouping.” A third grade teacher echoed these thoughts at that meeting by stating, “This chart [AIMSweb Fall Benchmark Chart by grade] backs up my reading groups. I really feel like it helps me know I’ve got students in the correct groups.” Likewise, a kindergarten teacher noted, “This data is so helpful in forming my reading groups. I love it!” (Observation, 9-14-08). T16ME noted in her interview that the data generated for her class on the Universal Screening fall benchmark assisted her in re-examining her reading groups. She said, “It has helped me regroup students in reading groups.”

The focus on instructional practices at MES is seen throughout their 2008 School Improvement Plan. The plan notes that MES would be participating as a pilot school for RTI implementation the following year and that the Universal Screening and progress monitoring components of RTI would offer a way to assist teachers in improving the school’s reading scores. In addition, the plan states that RTI is a framework that encompasses the values and beliefs held by the staff and community in regard to

instructional practices (School Improvement Plan, MES). Furthermore, the focus on improving instructional practices is seen in one of the school's belief statements which reads, "We believe that teachers must be committed to increasing their knowledge and proficiency in curriculum, teaching strategies, and technology in order to be facilitators of learning in our ever changing world" (School Improvement Plan, MES).

The teachers and principals at MES also perceived that the improved instructional practices brought about by RTI implementation would benefit children. APME stated:

> Well, I just see it as informational to help children, in finding out what issues they're having with the reading process, and it's just a process to help children that are struggling to grow.

T10ME also expressed her belief that RTI would lead to helping children. She said:

> I can see where it will be good because students who get that one on one or one to two instruction that is tailored to their particular needs by their teacher who works with them daily. I can see where that's going to be helpful to them if they're just a little bit behind or they're just a little bit struggling and they just need some additional instruction.

T5ME also noted this belief by saying, "I think it's a positive thing because I don't feel intimidated by it at this point, and I think that it will benefit the kids." T16ME added that she could see a benefit in RTI as opposed to the previous system of referral and how that would benefit students. She noted:

> I can also see where this process is going to be a help for students who have some other problem going along with it, because sometimes it was hard to get them, under the old system, identified whereas this way if they're not making progress and we're doing extra with them then we can say, look, we've tried all this, it's not working. We don't necessarily have to prove that they're X amount behind somebody else or whatever, because I know we've had that problem in the past where students we know needed help weren't qualifying and weren't getting the additional help they needed.

T30ME added to this by saying she felt the process would lead to earlier intervention which would be a benefit to children. She stated:

> Well, I do think it's going to target these children that fall through the cracks, and hopefully it's going to get these children earlier so by the time they are in fifth grade we're not going to see too many that are below the tenth percentile. … I think it's going to be good. I feel good about the program. I think it's going to help some children.

Other teachers at MES expressed similar beliefs about the benefit RTI would offer to children. A second grade teacher stated during a walk-through observation, "I think this is going to help a lot of kids. It's stuff we've always been doing but now it's more formalized," (Observation, 9-4-08). In addition, at the School Improvement Team meeting the focus was on how RTI would benefit students. One teacher stated, "This is going to be a good thing for kids. This will give many kids the help they've always needed but couldn't get unless they were in special ed," (Observation, 10-7-08). During another walk-through observation, a third grade teacher noted, "This process is about helping kids, so we'll learn it and we'll do it because that's what we're all about here at [Magnolia Elementary School]," (Observation, 10-10-08).

This student-centered focus on the benefits of RTI was emphasized from the inception of the school's pilot status by PME. In his August 2008 newsletter, he stated:

> This school year [Magnolia Elementary] is one of six schools in our district to pilot a new process for helping students that struggle with reading. The name of the process we will be using as a pilot school to those students who may eventually fall behind in reading skills is called Response to Intervention, or in other words, how do students respond when we give them extra time and support to help them become better readers? …RTI is a well developed, collaborative process involving regular, special education, and other support staff. RTI is a function of regular education that emphasizes preventing learning difficulties before they start and eliminating the need for a student to fail before getting extra time and support to achieve the desired learning. (Principal Newsletter)

During an observation of the School Improvement Team meeting during which RTI was introduced and explained, PME continued this focus on the student benefits of RTI. He stated, "Let's focus on the conversations we are having now. It's about kids," (Observation, 10-7-08). That PME and his staff are focused on the student benefits of RTI implementation is not surprising. This focus aligns well with the school's mission statement, which reads, "The mission of [Magnolia Elementary School] is to prepare all students to develop their full potential as educated, productive, and responsible citizens" (School Improvement Plan, MES).

Research Question 2: To what extent do the concerns expressed by teachers and principals vary from the beginning to the end of the first year of RTI Implementation?

To prepare to answer the second research question after the spring data were collected, I prepared a profile for the staff at MES using the Stages of Concern Questionnaire (SoCQ). I summed and averaged the scores on all seven scales to obtain a school profile showing where the school averages fell on the Stages of Concern. Figure 17 provides a summary of these scores.

SoCQ Scores for MES

As summarized in Figure 17, the participants at MES scored highest on Awareness (Stage 0) with a score at the 87th percentile. This high score suggests that they are aware of RTI implementation but are intensely aware of other innovations besides RTI. Given that several other initiatives were being implemented by the district simultaneously with RTI, this score is not surprising. Other initiatives being

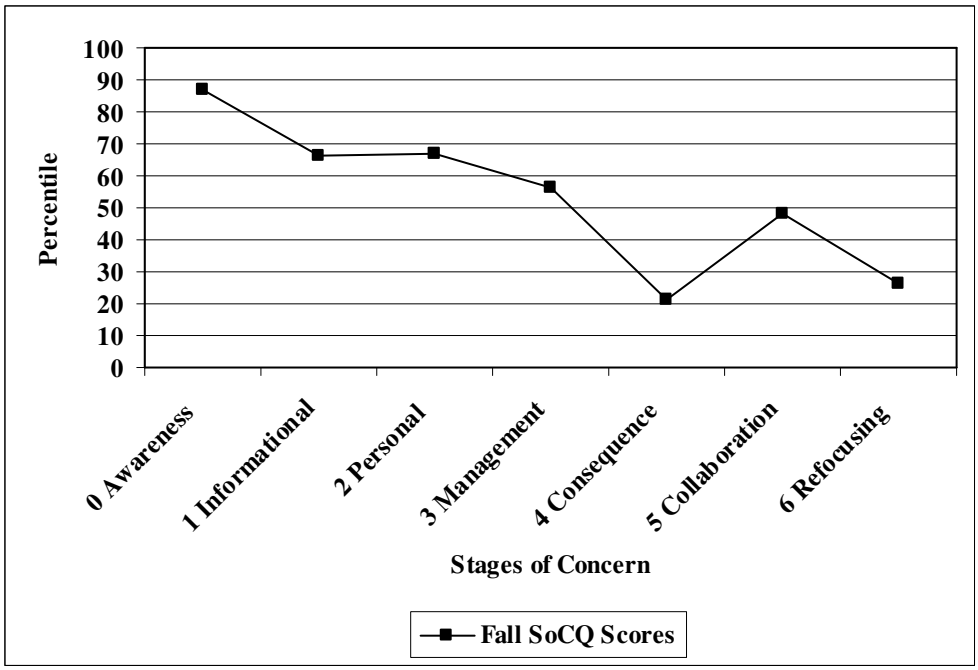


***Figure 16*. Fall SoCQ Profile for Magnolia Elementary.**

implemented by the district included Gradespeed, new report card formats, and new curriculum standards established by the State.

The second-highest score was noted on Personal (Stage 2) with a score at the 67th percentile. This score indicates the participants at MES have intense concerns for the demands of RTI implementation and how they fit into those demands. All of the qualitative themes developed from the fall data were within the Personal (Stage 2) category, with the exception of one that fell within Consequence (Stage 4) and one that fell within Management (Stage 3). Personal themes developed in the fall included concern about the inability to comprehend the RTI process from beginning to end, slowing down the referral process, increased anxiety in job performance by teachers, and the principals learning alongside the teachers. These qualitative themes are considered to be corroborated by the results of the SoCQ.

George et al. (2006) notes that the relationship between Information (Stage 1) and Personal (Stage 2) is vitally important in interpreting the results of the SoCQ. When Personal concerns are intensely felt by participants, they are often so enmeshed in those personal concerns that they have no desire to learn more about the innovation. This pattern of higher Personal concerns in relation to Information concerns is referred to by George et al. as a "negative one-two split." This pattern is noted with the fall SoCQ results for MES. The percentile score of 67 on Personal (Stage 2) is one point higher than the percentile score of 66 on Information (Stage 1), thus resulting in a negative one-two split. Though the scores for both stages are very close, this closeness implies intense concerns at both stages. The implications are that the participants at MES were so

intensely concerned with the demands of RTI implementation and how they were going to meet those demands that they do not have as much concern for obtaining more information on RTI although they may want more information. Until the personal concerns are reduced or decreased, the desire to obtain more information on RTI implementation will be overshadowed by the personal concerns (George et al., 2006).

A second vital area of interpretive importance according to George et al. concerns the relationship of Refocusing (Stage 6) to the Collaboration (Stage 5) stage. When the score on Refocusing "tails up" early in an implementation, it is generally an indication that the participants feel they know a better way to do the innovation. Early in an implementation, before they have had time to learn about and experience that implementation, this tailing up of Stage 6 often indicates a desire or preference to return to previous ways of operating. In this case, there is no "tailing up" of Refocusing (Stage 6), thus suggesting there are no competing ideas on how to best implement RTI.

Frequency of SoCQ Scores by Participants

Table 34 provides a frequency of number of participants who scored highest on each of the seven stages. As can be seen, most of the staff at Magnolia Elementary scored highest on the Awareness stage, Stage 0, with 55% falling in that category. High scores on Awareness, Stage 0, often indicate users of an innovation have concerns regarding other innovations than the one under study, and as previously noted, other initiatives were ongoing simultaneously with RTI implementation. The second-highest score was noted to be on Information (Stage 1) with 17% of participants indicating that stage as their highest category. The remaining participants indicated Personal (11%),

Table 34

Frequency of Highest Stage of Concern for Individual Participants at MES

Highest Stage of Concern	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
Number of Participants	10	3	2	1	0	2	0	18
Percent of Participants	55	17	11	6	0	11	0	100

Collaobration (11%), and Management (6%) as their highest scores. Qualitative themes developed for fall corroborate these concerns on the SoCQ.

Table 35 summarizes the frequency of participants' second-highest scores on the SoCQ. The majority of participants indicated Awareness (Stage 0) and Information (Stage 1) as their second-highest scores, with 38% and 22% falling in each category, respectively. Personal (Stage 2) was indicated as the second-highest score on the SoCQ by 17%, while Management (Stage 3) was indicated as the second-highest score by 11%. The clustering scores by participants for Awareness (Stage 0), Information (Stage 1), Personal (Stage 2), and Management (Stage 3) by a total of 88% of participants is noted as a typical profile for new users of an innovation by George et al. (2006). The remainder of participants fell in the Collaboration (Stage 5) and Refocusing (Stage 6) categories, with 6% indicating each of those stages as their second-highest score.

SoCQ Scores for Interviewees

Each of the six interviewees was also asked to complete a SoCQ during the fall data collection. Five of the interviewees returned their questionnaires, but T30ME did not return hers. Profiles for the five interviewees will be compared with the profile of the school and discussed below to provide information regarding how each interviewee compared to the averages of the school.

The profile of PME is provided in Figure 18. As can be seen, he scored highest on Collaboration (Stage 5) with a score at the 91st percentile. This suggests PME desires to collaborate with others in how to best implement RTI. His second-highest score was on Awareness (Stage 0) with a score at the 61st percentile. This score suggests PME is

Table 35

Frequency of Second-Highest Stage of Concern for Individual Participants at MES

Second-Highest Stage of Concern	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
Number of Participants	7	4	3	2	0	1	1	18
Percent of Participants	38	22	17	11	0	6	6	100

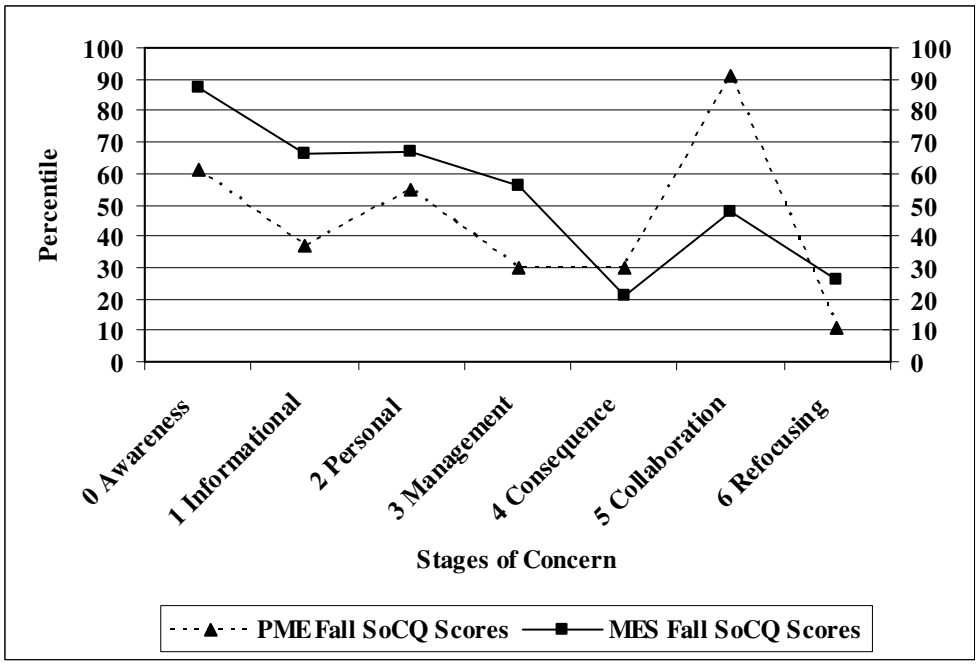


***Figure 17*. Fall SoCQ Profile for PME.**

very aware of RTI but is also very aware of other innovations being implemented simultaneously. In examining the relationship between his scores on Information (Stage 1) and Personal (Stage 2), I noted that his score on Information was lower than his score on Personal, resulting in what George et al. (2006) refer to as a negative one-two split. This indicates PME is more intensely concerned with his personal adequacy to meet RTI demands than he is interested in learning more about the RTI process. His score on Refocusing (Stage 6) does not tail up, which indicates there are no competing ideas for how RTI should be implemented. When comparing PME's SoCQ profile to that of the school, I noticed that his scores on most stages were lower than those of the school, suggesting he has less intense concerns than are typical for the school. His scores on Consequence (Stage 4) and Collaboration (Stage 5) are higher than those of the school, suggesting PME has more intense concern in these areas than is typical for the school.

Figure 19 summarizes the fall SoCQ profile of APME. She scored highest on Awareness (Stage 0) with a score at the 97th percentile. Her intense concerns at this stage suggest she is very aware of RTI and also concerned with other innovations besides RTI. Her second-highest score was on Information (Stage 1) with a score at the 88th percentile. This suggests she is intensely concerned about learning more about RTI.

In examining the relationship between Information (Stage 1) and Personal (Stage 2) scores, her Personal (Stage 2) score was slightly lower than her Information (Stage 1) score, thus indicating that personal concerns over the demands of RTI and her ability to meet those demands are not outweighing her desire to obtain more information about the RTI process. However, both scores are very high and suggest intense levels of concern.

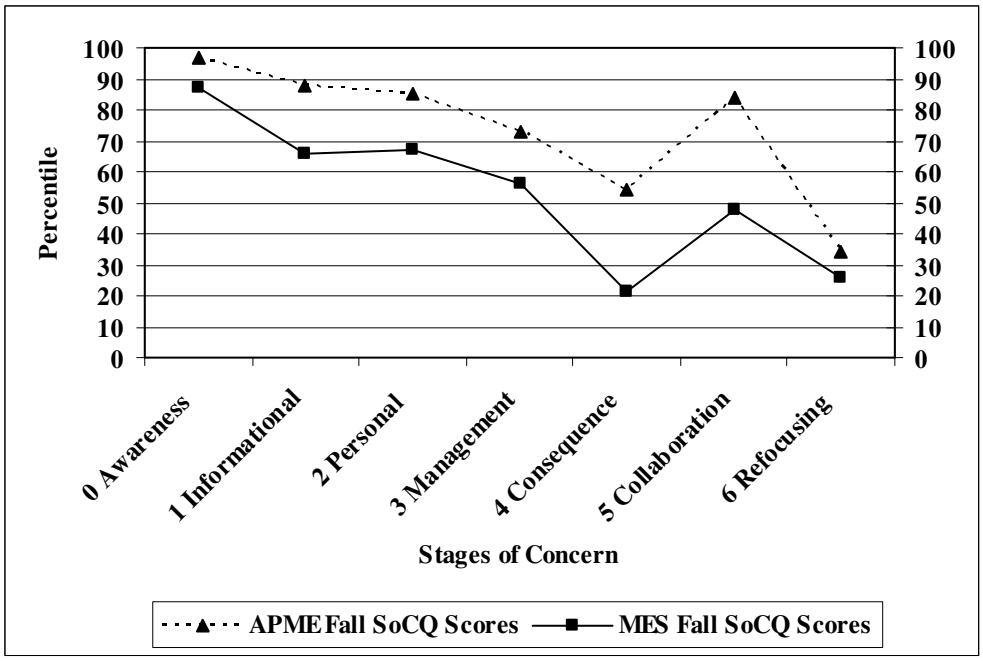


***Figure 19*. Fall SoCQ Profile for APME.**

Her score on Refocusing (Stage 6) does not "tail up" and do not indicate competing ideas for how to best implement RTI. When APME's profile is compared to that of the school, her profile aligns fairly well with the school's on the lower stages, but her scores are higher than typical for the school. Her scores on Consequence (Stage 4) and Collaboration (Stage 5) are much higher than those of the school profile.

T16ME's SoCQ profile is provided in Figure 20. She scored highest on Awareness (Stage 0) with a percentile score of 91, indicating she is very aware of RTI as an initiative but is also concerned about other initiatives implemented in the district. Her second-highest score was on Personal (Stage 2) with a score at the 76th percentile. This score indicates that she is uncertain about the demands inherent in RTI implementation, and she is unsure of her adequacy to meet those demands. Her score on the Personal (Stage 2) stage is slightly higher than her score on Information (Stage 1), thus indicating these personal concerns are so intense that they outweigh her desire to learn more about the RTI process at this time. In comparison to the school's profile on the fall SoCQ, T16ME's profile aligns fairly well with the exception of her score on Consequence (Stage 4), which was higher than that of the school's average.

Figure 21 summarizes the fall SoCQ profile for T10ME. Her highest score was on Awareness (Stage 0) with a score at the 96th percentile, suggesting a high level of awareness of RTI but also a high level of awareness of other initiatives being implemented simultaneously with RTI. Her second-highest score was on Information (Stage 1) with a score at the 40th percentile. This score reflects her desire to learn more about RTI implementation. In examining the relationship between Information (Stage 1)

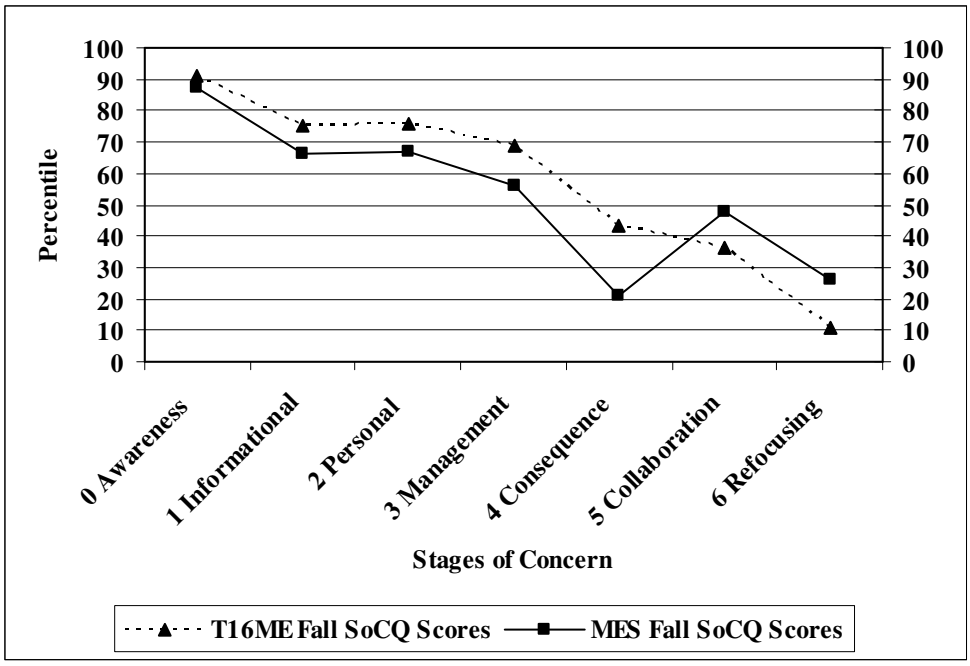


***Figure 18*. Fall SoCQ Profile for T16ME.**

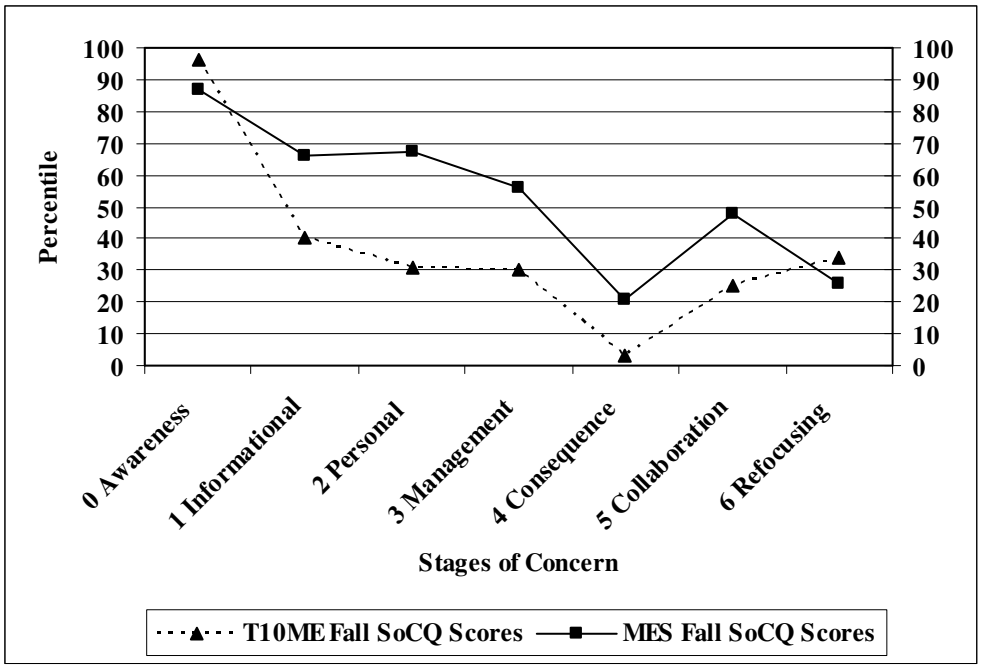


***Figure 19*. Fall SoCQ Profile for T10ME.**

and Personal (Stage 2), her score on Information was higher than her score on Personal, thus suggesting there are no over-riding personal concerns that may be interfering with her desire to learn more about RTI practices. Her score on Refocusing (Stage 6) slightly tails up and, therefore, could indicate the presence of competing ideas for RTI implementation. When compared to the overall profile for the school, T10ME scored much lower on Information (Stage 1), Personal (Stage 2), and Management (Stage 3), thus suggesting less intense concerns in these areas than were typical for the staff overall.

T5ME's fall SoCQ profile is provided in Figure 22. She scored highest on Awareness (Stage 0) with a score at the 75th percentile. This suggests she is very aware of RTI but also aware of other innovations being implemented besides RTI. Her second-highest score was on Management (Stage 3) with a score at the 65th percentile. This score indicates that she is focused on the processes and tasks of RTI implementation and how to manage those tasks. In examining the relationship between Information (Stage 1) and Personal (Stage 2), her score on Information was higher than her score on Personal, thus suggesting there are no over-riding personal concerns that may be interfering with her desire to learn more about RTI practices. Her score on Refocusing (Stage 6) does not tails up and, therefore, does not indicate the presence of competing ideas for RTI implementation. When her SoCQ profile is compared to that of the school, it aligns fairly well. However, her score on Personal (Stage 2) was slightly lower than that of her colleagues. Her score on Consequence (Stage 4) was noted to be much lower than the overall score for her colleagues.

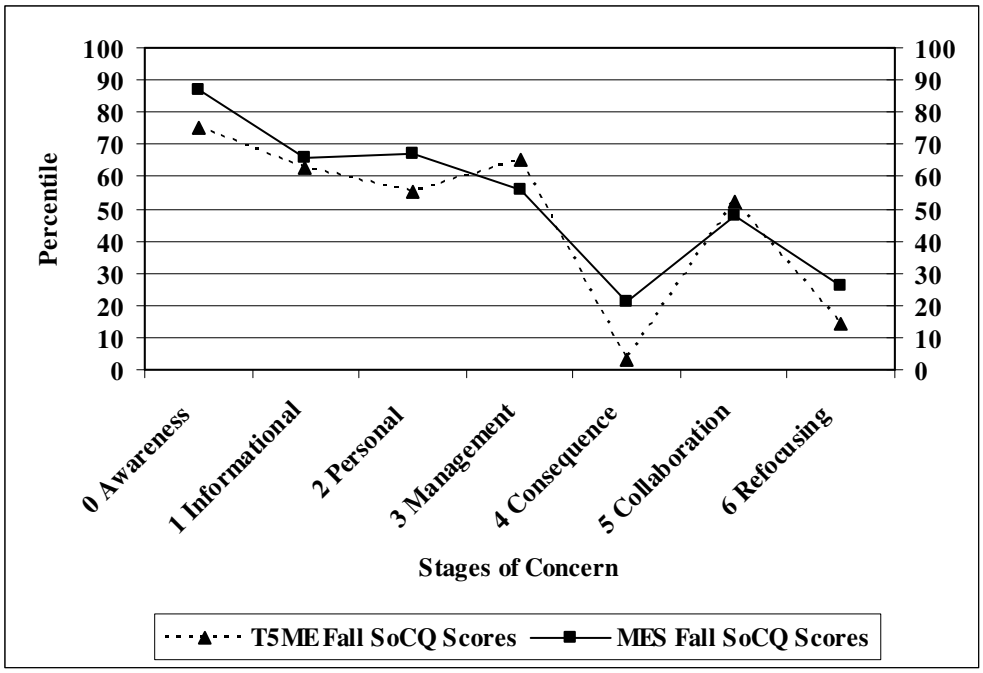


***Figure 20*. Fall SoCQ Profile for T5ME.**

Summary

Fall data collected at Magnolia Elementary were summarized in this chapter. Two areas of concern were noted by the principals and teachers at the beginning of the first year of RTI implementation. The first was an inability to perceive the RTI process in its entirety, or the ability to see how the whole process worked, a factor that was felt to be due to a lack of training prior to implementing RTI. A second concern addressed difficulty scheduling RTI-related activities and managing RTI processes within the classroom. A barrier to RTI implementation was identified as slowing down the referral process and thus delaying perceived help for students. In looking at how the roles of teachers and principals are affected by RTI implementation, the teachers indicated feeling more anxiety and being overwhelmed in their job duties as teachers due to fear of not performing RTI tasks correctly. The principals indicated the primary impact of RTI on their role was in functioning in a learning mode beside the teachers as they all sought to learn a new process. A factor that facilitates RTI implementation was identified as improved instructional practices through the RTI requirements that inform instruction and help more students. Results of the SoCQ for MES as a whole indicated the highest concerns were related to Awareness (Stage 0) with the second-highest scores on Personal (Stage 2). Results of the school profile, as well as the individual participants who were interviewed, were discussed and are considered to be in alignment with qualitative theme development.

CHAPTER 8

ACROSS CASE ANALYSIS OF FALL DATA

Chapter Introduction

Fall data were discussed for Camellia Garden Elementary, Gardenia Elementary, and Magnolia Elementary in Chapter 5, Chapter 6, and Chapter 7 for within-case analyses. Qualitative themes were developed and discussed, along with quantitative data, for each school in answer to the research questions I proposed for this study which are the following:

1. What are the concerns of teachers and principals as they experience RTI implementation?
    a. What do teachers and principals perceive as barriers to implementing RTI?
    b. How are the roles of teachers and principals affected by RTI?
    c. What factors facilitate RTI implementation?
2. To what extend to the concerns expressed by teachers and principals vary from the beginning to the end of the first year of RTI implementation?

The purpose of the present Chapter is to provide a comparison of the qualitative themes developed for each of the three schools and to analyze statistical data generated from the Stages of Concern Questionnaire (SoCQ) in order to obtain a global analysis of the three schools participating in this mixed-methods case study as they began their first year of RTI implementation. The Chapter will be structured based upon the research questions I sought to answer in this study through discussion of qualitative themes and quantitative

data developed during within-case analysis in order to answer these above-noted questions.

Research Question 1: What are the Concerns of Teachers and Principals as they Experience RTI Implementation?

The first qualitative research question sought to address the global concerns teachers and principals had regarding implementing RTI during the first year of implementation. Fall qualitative data were collected from September 2008 through November 2008 in the form of interviews which occurred October 6, 9, and 10, 2008, observations which occurred September through November 2008, and documents collected. Consequently, the participants at each of the three schools were in the process of beginning the RTI implementation during data collection, and the themes developed reflect their initial concerns in terms of thoughts and perceptions of RTI. Using the Stages of Concern (SoC) component of the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) as my theoretical framework, the themes developed were conceptualized in light of the six Stages of Concern (see Table 2) users of an innovation experience as they implement a new program or process. Based upon the CBAM framework, all participants in this study were considered to be non-users of RTI in the fall due to the fact they were in the process of beginning to use RTI for the first time. Two distinct themes were developed across the three schools in answer of the first research question which indicates the participants at all three schools had similar global concerns. These concerns pertained to difficulty understanding the RTI process and difficulty scheduling time to conduct RTI-related activities within the daily schedule. Table 36 provides a summary of these themes by

Table 36

Analysis of Themes for RQ1 by School and SoC

School	Theme	Stage of Concern
Cross-Cases	***Understanding RTI***	***2 Personal***
Camellia Garden Elementary	The Cart Before the Horse: Lack of Clarity About the RTI Process	2 Personal
Gardenia Elementary	Swimming in Mud: Lack of Clarity for the RTI Process	2 Personal
Magnolia Elementary	Struggling to See "The Big Picture" of the RTI Process	2 Personal
Cross-Cases	***Scheduling RTI***	***3 Management***
Camellia Garden Elementary	Scheduling RTI: How to Manage the Process	3 Management
Gardenia Elementary	Challenges in Scheduling RTI	3 Management
Magnolia Elementary	Scheduling Difficulties: How to Manage RTI	3 Management

school along with the corresponding SoC. Each of these themes is discussed thoroughly in the sections that follow.

Understanding RTI

Participants at all three sites indicated that they were having difficulty understanding the RTI process. Both teachers and principals expressed this concern, and this lack of clarity permeated throughout the fall data collection. The participants were struggling to see what RTI implementation would look like from beginning to end, and they were unable to make this connection. Viewing this theme within the SoC framework, this theme represents the Stage 2 (Personal) level or stage. The participants were trying to understand the demands of RTI implementation and to determine their adequacy to meet those demands, along with trying to understand how RTI implementation aligns with existing practices. At the time of the fall data collection, all three schools were in the process of conducting the AIMSweb fall benchmark for the Universal Screening component of RTI, identifying students who were at-risk on that assessment, and implementing Tier 1 with weekly progress monitoring using Curriculum Based Measurement (CBM) through AIMSweb. This lack of clarity about the RTI process was attributed to insufficient training for implementing RTI at all three schools. Both teachers and principals felt that the training component for implementing RTI was not present prior to implementation, and all participants felt that further training on how to implement RTI was needed.

Difficulties were noted by participants in several areas. First, teachers expressed concerns regarding Tier 1 and how that was to be implemented. In addition, there

seemed to be confusion in general among administrators and teachers about who specifically was to do the intervention at Tier 1 at Gardenia Elementary and Magnolia Elementary. The role of the reading specialist was confusing to these participants, and they expressed frustration regarding exactly when the reading specialist should become involved in the RTI process. This role confusion extended beyond the reading specialist to the school psychologist at both Gardenia Elementary and Magnolia Elementary. The principals at both schools sought clarification regarding what the reading specialist's role in RTI implementation was versus the school psychologist's role. However, this concern was not noted at Camellia Garden Elementary. As discussed in Chapter 5, the reading specialist and school psychologist were working together and collaborating with teachers through grade level meetings and trainings. Apparently, the role of each specialist was sufficiently clear to the teachers and administrators at the beginning of the implementation.

Other components of the RTI process noted by participants to have created confusion include documenting the RTI process on paper, the accuracy of CBM as a measure of student achievement, and grasping the continual changes to the RTI model. Teachers and administrators at Gardenia Elementary noted that documentation of fidelity of implementing interventions, of progress monitoring, and of referral paperwork were overwhelming and not clearly articulated. This theme was not noted at the other two schools. The teachers and administrators at Camellia Garden Elementary expressed concern regarding whether CBM provides a sufficient measure of student achievement to be used in the RTI process. As previously noted, this school only had one student who

scored in the at-risk range on the fall benchmark of the Universal Screening, and the participants were very concerned that CBM was not an accurate reflection of student achievement. This concern was not expressed at the other two elementary schools. Finally, the administrators and teachers at Gardenia Elementary expressed concern that the RTI process was continually changing and that they were unable to grasp the concept of RTI implementation due to all these changes. This concern was not noted in the other two schools.

Scheduling RTI

A second theme was developed addressing RTI implementation concerns across all three schools. This theme pertained to scheduling RTI-related components into the daily schedule. The district had mandated a 90-minute reading block, which was a State requirement for Tier 1 reading within the core curriculum. In addition, the RTI model adopted by the district required an additional 30 minutes be incorporated into the daily schedule to allow time for the thirty minutes of intervention above and beyond the Tier 1 core curriculum for Tiers 2A and 2B. At the time of fall data collection, the teachers had been asked to schedule an additional 30 minutes for reading instruction above the 60 minutes that had been in use by the district, as well as to schedule an additional 30 minutes for interventions. Their concern regarding how to incorporate an additional hour into their daily schedules represents Stage 3 (Management) in the SoC framework. In this stage, participants are focused on the processes and tasks required by RTI implementation, and issues relating to organization, management, and scheduling dominate.

Both teachers and principals were concerned about how this additional hour would be incorporated into a daily schedule that was already full with required instruction. Many participants questioned which activities and instruction would have to be given up in order to make RTI work. Allotting a 90-minute reading block on top of an additional 30 minutes for intervention was noted to be difficult across all three schools. In addition, teachers at Camellia Garden Elementary specifically mentioned the difficulty in incorporating time for CBM benchmarking and progress monitoring. This issue of weekly progress monitoring and the time it would take to incorporate that was also noted to be of concern at both Camellia Garden Elementary and Gardenia Elementary.

Participants at both Camellia Garden Elementary and Magnolia Elementary expressed concern regarding how to schedule for the other students in their classes while conducting interventions and progress monitoring with a few at-risk students. These participants were concerned with managing the rest of the class during the 30-minute intervention during which the teacher would be intervening with at-risk students. This concern was not specifically mentioned at Gardenia Elementary.

Another area of concern relating to the scheduling difficulties was noted in departmentalization within the upper elementary grades at Gardenia Elementary and Magnolia Elementary. Both administrators and teachers noted that the change in schedule affected grades where departmentalization was occurring due to an increase in reading instruction, which disturbed the balance for the other teachers who do not teach reading. In addition, to disband departmentalization would create situations where teachers who have historically taught math, science, or social studies now have to teach

reading to one class they have all day. A solution for this dilemma was ongoing at both of these schools.

Research Question 1a: What do Teachers and Principals Perceive as Barriers to Implementing RTI?

This subquestion tapped into what teachers and principals perceived to be barriers to implementing RTI at the beginning of their first year of implementation. This area involved concerns that elicited strong emotions in the participants in comparison to the other research questions. While any concern within the SoC framework can become a barrier to successful implementation if left unresolved, these concerns expressed by the participants in this study appeared to be potential deal-breakers in implementing RTI. Three themes dealing with increasing teacher responsibilities, the appropriateness of the RTI model for schools' population of students, and the slowing down of the referral process were developed across the three sites. These concerns are viewed through Stage 2, Personal, within the SoC framework as they deal with the attempt of the participants to determine how they fit within the RTI implementation and how RTI demands affect them and their colleagues. A summary of the themes by school and SoC is provided in Table 37.

Another Add-On

Participants at Camellia Garden Elementary and Gardenia Elementary clearly expressed their concern with having another responsibility added on to their already full metaphorical plates. Both teachers and administrators expressed concern that teachers already had a great deal of responsibilities placed on them with demands from increased

Table 37

Analysis of Themes for RQ1a by School and SoC

School	Theme	Stage of Concern
Cross-Cases	***Another Add-On***	***2 Personal***
Camellia Garden Elementary	Juggling One More Thing Amidst A Sea of Change	2 Personal
Gardenia Elementary	One More Thing: Finding Time to Implement RTI	2 Personal
Cross-Cases	***Not at Our School***	***2 Personal***
Camellia Garden Elementary	Paradigm Shift: What is a Student With a Disability?	2 Personal
Gardenia Elementary	Reluctance to Perceive RTI as Applicable to Our School	2 Personal
Cross-Cases	***Slowing Down Referrals***	***2 Personal***
Gardenia Elementary	Slowing Down the Referral Process	2 Personal
Magnolia Elementary	Change to Referral Process	2 Personal

accountability, changes in State curriculum standards, and the basic duties all teachers perform. Adding the increased responsibilities of RTI was perceived as another duty teachers were being asked to perform on top of these other responsibilities.

In addition, these participants expressed concern that the district had many other initiatives ongoing simultaneously with RTI implementation and that keeping up with all of these initiatives and the increased teacher responsibilities associated with them was simply overwhelming. As noted previously, Meadowlands School District had also implemented Gradespeed, new report card formats, and parallel teaching of existing State curriculum alongside new State curriculum to go into effect the following school year. Adding RTI to the mix of new initiatives was expressed by participants at these two schools as too much for teachers to be able to reasonably handle. This concern was not noted by participants at Magnolia Elementary.

Not at Our School

A second barrier was identified as a reluctance to perceive the criteria for movement through the RTI tiers as applicable to their schools by participants at Camellia Garden Elementary and Gardenia Elementary. For these participants, the criteria used to designate students as at-risk and thus to participate in intervention were too low and prohibited students from participating in needed interventions. The participants at these two schools felt that students who needed interventions in order to succeed in school were being denied the opportunity to participate. As previously noted, one student at Camellia Garden Elementary scored below the 10th percentile and was thus eligible for participation, while 8 students at Gardenia Elementary scored below the 10th percentile.

Due to these perceived low numbers, the participants felt that RTI, as the model was currently defined, would not be beneficial to their schools.

Additionally, there was concern that the score used as the cut-off, or the limit, for participation in RTI interventions and for movement through the tiers was too low to be beneficial to students who might score slightly above the 10th percentile and still need intervention to succeed in school. For teachers and administrators at these two schools, this issue raised the question whether RTI practices were too restrictive in identifying students with learning disabilities and whether students may be "slipping through the cracks" because of this restrictiveness. This concern was not shared by participants at Magnolia Elementary. Of the three sites, Magnolia Elementary had the highest number of students identified at or below the 10th percentile with 11 students beginning Tier 1 after the fall benchmark. In addition, the staff at Magnolia Elementary went above the 10th percentile and designated other students of concern to participate in intervention with progress monitoring once a month as opposed to once a week for students designated at-risk for a learning disability. Perhaps by including students above the 10th percentile in the interventions, although not within the at-risk designation, teachers at Magnolia Elementary felt that students they were worried about were nonetheless getting interventions.

Slowing Down Referrals

A third theme addressing perceived barriers to RTI implementation was identified as the effect RTI was having on the process for referring students for special education services. Participants at Gardenia Elementary and Magnolia Elementary were very

concerned regarding what they perceived to be a slowing down of the referral process. Both teachers and principals at these two sites expressed concern that the RTI process was taking an inordinate amount of time before students could be referred for special education. For some students, they perceived this waiting as potentially harmful and detrimental. The length of time in the RTI process was of concern, and the participants felt that waiting for the whole RTI process to play out before referring students for special education was not beneficial to students.

In addition, RTI implementation changed to way the referral process worked for students suspected of having a learning disability. Teachers were expected to follow the RTI process and only after Tier 2B would a student be referred for psychoeducational evaluation to rule out mental retardation before special education placement. The participants at Gardenia Elementary and Magnolia Elementary expressed confusion and frustration regarding how the referral process now worked for students with other possible disabilities besides learning disabilities. At the beginning of the implementation, there appeared to exist the idea that all referrals for special education services had to go through the RTI process, which was not the case. Teachers expressed their frustration that they had students with behavioral needs who they could not refer until after the RTI process had ended. Certainly, the participants at Magnolia Elementary were experiencing a change in the number of referrals made. As noted previously, there were 29 initial referrals for the 2007-2008 school year but only seven initial referrals for the 2008-2009 school year. This was a substantial decrease in the number of referrals made by the school. On the other hand, Gardenia Elementary had 11 initial referrals for the 2007-

2008 school year and 14 initial referrals for the 2008-2009 school year, so their number of initial referrals actually increased during the first year of RTI implementation.

While the participants at Camellia Garden Elementary did not indicate changes to the referral process as a barrier to RTI implementation, these participants did note the changes in the referral process to be another area of concern. This concern addresses another research question will therefore be discussed in the following section where appropriate.

Research Question 1b: How are the Roles of Teachers and Principals Affected by RTI?

The second subquestion sought to identify how teachers and principals perceived their roles to be affected by RTI implementation. Among the teachers, three distinct themes were developed at each school that were very different in terms of how they perceived RTI to affect their role as teachers. Each of these themes will be presented in this section. The administrators, principals and assistant principals, at each site indicated their role to be primarily affected through the need to walk alongside their staffs and guide and support them. All of these themes in this section are viewed through the Stage 2, Personal, stage of the SoC framework and reflect how the participants are attempting to analyze how their roles fit within the RTI model and how RTI impacts their current roles. The themes developed in answer to the second subquestion are summarized by school and by SoC in Table 38.

Three Perspectives

Teachers at the three sites had very different views regarding how RTI affected their roles. At Camellia Garden Elementary, the teachers perceived a crucial aspect of

Table 38

Analysis of Themes for RQ1b by School and SoC

School	Theme	Stage of Concern
Cross-Cases	***Three Perspectives***	***2 Personal***
Camellia Garden Elementary	Hampering the Referral Process: Teachers' Duty to Refer Students	2 Personal
Gardenia Elementary	Improved Teaching through RTI	2 Personal
Magnolia Elementary	Pressure to Get it Right: Increasing the Stress Level of Teachers	2 Personal
Cross-Cases	***Support, Guide, Learn***	***2 Personal***
Camellia Garden Elementary	Principals Supporting Teachers through RTI Implementation	2 Personal
Gardenia Elementary	Principals: Providing Guidance	2 Personal
Magnolia Elementary	Principals: Learning Alongside Teachers	2 Personal

their role as teachers to be that of responsibility to refer struggling students for evaluation for special education services. For these teachers, their role was being negatively impacted by RTI mandates for intervening prior to referral. They felt blocked, or hampered, from carrying out their responsibility for referring these students by the RTI process. In addition, these teachers perceived great difficulty communicating with arents regarding the RTI process and felt that difficulty further blocked them from assisting struggling students. Even more disturbing, the teachers at Camellia Garden Elementary expressed their perception that they felt the RTI implementation was the result of their not being trusted in their role as teachers. This theme was distinct from the concerns expressed at the other two sites about the referral process being a barrier to RTI implementation because the teachers at Camellia Garden attached their concerns regarding the referral process to their roles as teachers.

The teachers at Gardenia Elementary indicated their role as teachers was affected by RTI through improved instructional practices that made them better teachers. These teachers felt that the increased accountability of RTI would ensure they took the time to group students and differentiate instruction better to meet those students' needs. In addition, the teachers at Gardenia Elementary noted that the data provided by AIMSweb gives them more information as teachers so that they can adjust their teaching to match students' needs. Being able to see the results of the Universal Screening through the benchmarking process allowed these teachers to determine which students were making progress and which students were not. For this site, these aspects of RTI implementation enhanced their role as teachers in a positive manner.

For teachers at Magnolia Elementary, the RTI process affected their role as teachers by inducing stress over their uncertainty of what they were supposed to be doing with RTI requirements. These teachers expressed their desire to teach well and to know exactly what they were doing when they stood in front of their classes. For them, they felt that their lack of clarity about implementing the requirements of RTI resulted in a loss of competence as teachers, and this caused them anxiety and stress. Teachers at Magnolia Elementary also noted that they were afraid they would perform some requirement of RTI incorrectly, thus resulting in a child not being correctly identified. They perceived this outcome to be harmful to children, and this fear increased their anxiety level regarding their ability to correctly implement RTI.

Support, Guide, Learn

The principals and assistant principals at the three sites perceived RTI implementation to affect their role as principals through an increased need to support and guide the teachers through the RTI process. Because RTI is a new process and because so many questions about the process are unanswered, the principals and assistant principals felt that the teachers require a great deal of support. This support has taken the form of obtaining more information, and validating their concerns, providing necessary time and resources to implement RTI.

The principals also feel an increased need to provide guidance for their staffs in the RTI process. This guidance has required the administrators to answer questions teachers have about the RTI process, and the administrators do not feel they have the answers needed. Consequently, they have had to learn about RTI and how RTI works so

that they give their staffs the guidance they need in implementing RTI. The principals and assistant principals have attempted to learn about RTI alongside their staffs, and they see that learning component as an affect on their roles as principals. Based upon their learning, they are attempting to provide hands-on guidance and support through discussions about RTI at faculty meetings, visiting classrooms directly, and designing visual aids to assist the teachers in understanding RTI.

Research Question 1c: What Factors Facilitate RTI Implementation?

The purpose of the third subquestion was to identify factors teachers and principals perceived to facilitate implementing RTI. Across the three sites, participants identified improved instructional practices as a factor they felt would facilitate the process. Viewing this theme within the lens of the SoC framework, the theme falls within Stage 4, Consequence. This stage in the SoC framework focuses on how RTI implementation will affect students within the participants' immediate sphere of influence and on how relevant the implementation will be for students. This theme suggests that the teachers and principals clearly perceive that the long-term benefits of RTI implementation have a positive effect on the lives of their students. Table 39 provides a summary of this theme by school and by SoC.

Improved Instruction

Teachers and principals in the three sites indicated that RTI implementation would lead to improved instructional practices that would help students. Participants indicated that they believed the RTI process improves instructional practices through the focus on Universal Screening of all students and progress monitoring of those students

Table 39

Analysis of Themes for RQ1c by School and SoC

School	Theme	Stage of Concern
Cross-Cases	***Improved Instruction***	***4 Consequence***
Camellia Garden Elementary	Creating Responsive Instructional Practices through RTI	4 Consequence
Gardenia Elementary	Following the Principal's Lead to Improved Instruction	4 Consequence
Magnolia Elementary	Improved Instructional Practices That Help Children	4 Consequence

who are at-risk. By being able to closely monitor whether students show growth nor not, the teachers can adjust their teaching. In this way, the participants felt that RTI informs their instruction and makes them more responsive teachers. The teachers and principals also felt that the data generated from the Universal Screening and progress monitoring component of RTI implementation assisted the teachers not only in informing their instruction, but also in assisting in grouping children more effectively and providing data upon which to make better decisions regarding students.

In addition, the participants at Gardenia Elementary and Magnolia Elementary distinctly noted that the RTI process would lead to practices that would help children. For these participants, the RTI process offered a way to provide help to struggling students who would likely not qualify for special education services and who in the past would have received no help at all. They also perceived RTI to be a way to further identify areas of reading children may be struggling with and providing help for those students earlier than they had previously been able to do. Furthermore, teachers and principals at Gardenia Elementary went one step further and noted that they perceived RTI implementation would lead to prevention of special education disabilities by intervening earlier.

Participants at Gardenia Elementary also perceived the fact that their principal was so directly involved in RTI implementation to be an indicator that RTI was a process that would benefit them as teachers, as well as their students. The teachers clearly saw their principal as leading the process, and they took his leadership in this area to be indicative of the positive effect RTI would have on the school. Participants at the other

two schools did not express this perception. One intriguing possibility for this discrepancy could be the effect that experience in teaching has on how teachers view their principals. At Camellia Garden Elementary, the average teacher experience is 19 years which indicates a very experienced veteran staff who are confident in their capabilities as teachers. The average teacher experience at Magnolia Elementary was 13 years which also indicates an experienced staff. However, at Gardenia Elementary the average teaching experience is 8 years which indicates a much less experienced staff who very likely look to their principal for guidance as they cultivate their teaching skills. While this is an intriguing possibility, this area was not further addressed because it is beyond the scope of the present study.

Research Question 2: To What Extent do the Concerns Expressed by Teachers and Principals Vary from the Beginning to End of The First Year of RTI Implementation?

The second research question sought to address whether teacher and principal concerns expressed on the Stages of Concern Questionnaire (SoCQ) vary significantly from the beginning of the first year of RTI implementation to the end of the first year of RTI implementation. While this question cannot be answered until after the spring data collection, I first needed to describe the SoCQ profiles for the sites. This description was discussed in the within-case analysis for each school in Chapter 5, Chapter 6, and Chapter 7. To further prepare to answer this quantitative research question after the spring data collection, a cross-case comparison of the sites was made. In addition, a one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was performed on each of the seven SoC in order to determine if the three schools differed significantly in their concerns at the beginning of

the RTI implementation in the fall. The following sections contain a description of these comparisons.

SoC Profiles for Sites

Figure 23 provides a comparison of the fall profiles on the SoCQ for Camellia Garden Elementary, Gardenia Elementary, and Magnolia Elementary. Comparing the three sites, all scored highest on Stage 0, Awareness. In addition, all of the percentile scores were high, with percentiles of 97, 81, and 87, respectively for each school. These scores suggest the participants were very aware of RTI but were also aware of other initiatives besides RTI. Participants at Gardenia Elementary and Magnolia Elementary scored second-highest on Stage 2, Personal, with percentile scores of 70 and 67. The participants at Camellia Garden Elementary scored second-highest on Stage 3, Management, with a percentile score of 90. In examining the site profiles on the SoCQ in Figure 23, the similarity in the profiles can be seen. The participants at Camellia Garden scored slightly higher on all stages except for Consequence, Stage 4, and Collaboration, Stage 5, which were highly compatible with the scores indicated by the participants at Gardenia Elementary and Magnolia Elementary. Among the three sites, participants at GES and MES scored higher on Stage 2, Personal, than they scored on Stage 1, Informational, thus indicating that their Personal concerns are so prevalent that they are not open to more information on RTI at this time. However, participants at CGES scored higher on Stage 1, Information, than Stage 2, Personal, which suggests they are open to learning more about RTI. In addition, the scores on the CGES profile for Stage 6, Refocusing, "tailed up" which early on in an implementation usually indicates a desire to

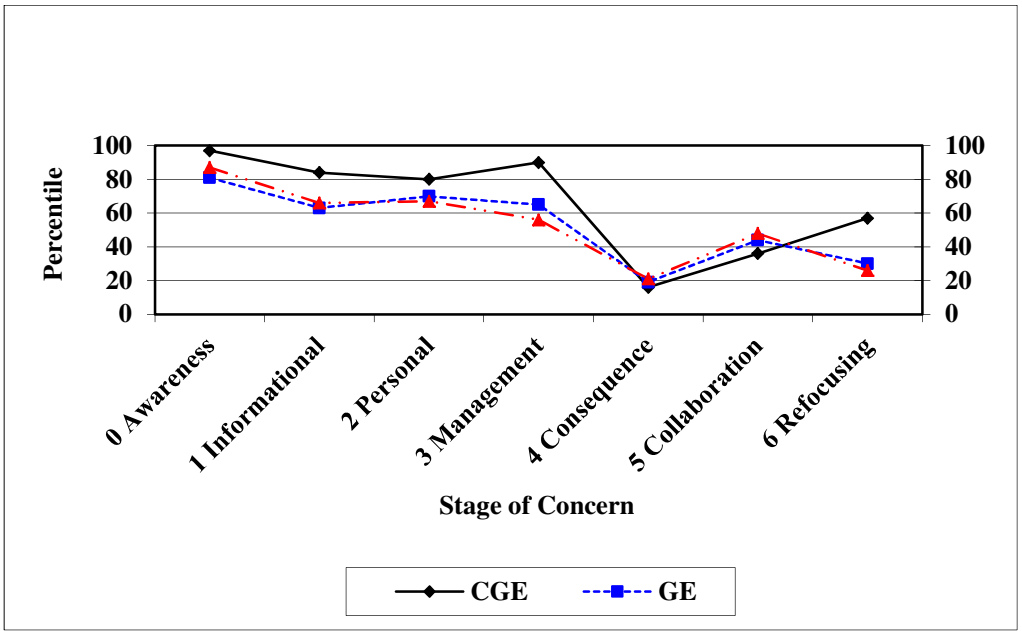


Figure 21. **Fall SoCQ Profile for Sites.**

return to more familiar and comfortable practices. In this case, those familiar and comfortable practices are previous methods of referring students for special education services. The scores on Refocusing did not "tail up" on the profiles of GES and MES.

Frequency of SoCQ Scores by Participants

Table 40 provides a summary of the frequency of scores in each of the seven Stages of Concern by participant. As can be seen, the majority of participants scored highest on Stage 0, Awareness, with 47 percent falling within this category. The next highest score was noted on Stage 3, Management, with 21 percent of participants indicating that stage as their highest score. A close third was noted on Stage 1, Information, with 17 percent of participants falling in that category. The frequency of participants' second-highest score is summarized in Table 41. The highest number of participants indicated Stage 0, Awareness, as their second-highest score followed very closely by Stage 2, Personal, with 24 percent and 23 percent of participants falling within those categories. Second-highest scores on Stage 1, Information, and Stage 3, Management, were very close to these highest two with 22 percent of participants falling in each category.

Variance Among Sites

To prepare to answer my second research question of whether the concerns expressed by teachers and principals on the SoCQ varied significantly from the beginning to the end of the first year of RTI implementation, I first wanted to know whether there were significant differences between the three schools on the SoCQ at the beginning of the implementation. Consequently, I performed a one-way analysis of variance

Table 40

Frequency of Highest Stage of Concern for Individual Participants

School	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
CGE	15	5	1	11	0	2	0	34
GE	12	5	2	4	0	3	0	26
ME	10	3	2	1	0	2	0	18
Total	37	13	5	16	0	7	0	78
Percentage	47	17	6	21	0	9	0	

Table 41

Frequency of Second-Highest Stage of Concern for Individual Participants

School	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
CGE	7	7	7	9	0	2	2	34
GE	5	6	8	6	0	1	0	26
ME	7	4	3	2	0	1	1	18
Total	19	17	18	17	0	4	3	78
Percentage	24	22	23	22	0	5	4	

(ANOVA) on each of the seven Stages of Concern to determine whether the differences between schools varied significantly for each of the SoCQ scales. Table 42 summarizes the mean responses to each of the seven Stages of Concern in relation to each of the three sites. The total highest means occurred on Stage 2, Personal (20.71), and Stage 3, Management (20.14). This suggests that most of the teachers indicated the highest scores on the Personal stage, followed by the Refocusing stage. Qualitative themes developed in the fall were by far mostly Personal concerns when viewed through the SoC framework, as well. Results of the ANOVA are provided in Table 43. Prior to analyzing whether differences between sites on the Stages of Concern were significant or not, I performed Levene's Test of Homogeneity of Variance on each of the seven ANOVAs to determine whether the dependent variable, the scores for each Stage of Concern, met the assumption of equal variance. In all seven instances, the Levene's statistic was not significant ($p > 0.05$) which suggests the assumption of equal variance between sites can be made. An analysis of the results suggests there were no significant differences between the schools on Stage 4, Consequence ($F = 0.63$; df = 2, 75; $p > 0.05$) and Stage 5, Collaboration ($F = 1.13$; df = 2, 75; $p > 0.05$). This finding suggests that the participants at the three schools were fairly similar in their scores on these two stages. However, significant differences were noted between the three schools on Stage 0, Awareness ($F = 7.26$; df = 2, 75; $p < 0.05$), Stage 1, Information ($F = 8.18$; df = 2, 75; $p < 0.05$), Stage 2, Personal ($F = 3.88$; df = 2, 75; $p < 0.05$), Stage 3, Management ($F = 11.58$; df = 2, 75; $p < 0.05$), and Stage 6, Refocusing ($F = 7.89$; df = 2, 75; $p < 0.05$).

Table 42

Means for Stages of Concern by Site

Site	N		Self			Task	Impact		
			Awareness 0	Information 1	Personal 2	Management 3	Consequence 4	Collaboration 5	Refocusing 6
CGE	34	Mean	19.09	22.94	23.18	24.88	15.12	16.94	18.03
		S.D.	6.24	5.80	6.00	8.16	5.39	6.52	7.67
GE	26	Mean	14.12	16.73	19.42	17.31	16.27	18.88	12.15
		S.D.	4.55	6.68	7.79	7.66	6.05	7.65	6.68
ME	18	Mean	15.33	17.61	17.89	15.28	16.94	19.78	11.11
		S.D.	3.96	6.96	8.01	7.13	6.57	6.93	6.03
All	78	Mean	16.56	19.64	20.71	20.14	15.92	18.24	14.47
		S.D.	5.66	6.94	7.38	8.78	5.87	7.02	7.60

Table 43

ANOVA Results for Between Groups Analysis of Stages of Concern

Stage of Concern	Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	*F*	*p*
0 Awareness	Between Groups	399.79	2	199.90	7.26	**.001**
	Within Groups	2065.39	75	27.54		
	Total	2465.18	77			
1 Information	Between Groups	664.67	2	332.34	8.18	**.001**
	Within Groups	3047.28	75	40.63		
	Total	3711.95	77			
2 Personal	Between Groups	393.15	2	196.58	3.88	**.025**
	Within Groups	3799.06	75	50.65		
	Total	4192.22	77			
3 Management	Between Groups	1398.88	2	699.38	11.57	**.000**
	Within Groups	4530.68	75	60.41		
	Total	5929.45	77			
4 Consequence	Between Groups	43.95	2	21.98	.63	.534
	Within Groups	2605.59	75	34.74		
	Total	2649.54	77			
5 Collaboration	Between Groups	110.72	2	55.36	1.13	.329
	Within Groups	3683.65	75	49.12		
	Total	3794.37	77			
6 Refocusing	Between Groups	773.32	2	386.66	7.89	**.001**
	Within Groups	3674.13	75	48.99		
	Total	4447.45	77			

To determine where the significant differences between sites existed, I next performed post hoc Scheffe tests for Stage 0, Stage 1, Stage 2, Stage 3, and Stage 6. Results are summarized in Table 44. When the results were analyzed, participants at Camellia Garden Elementary scored significantly higher ($p < 0.05$) than participants at Gardenia Elementary and Magnolia Elementary on Stage 1, Information, Stage 3, Management, and Stage 6, Refocusing. In addition, participants at CGES scored significantly higher ($p < 0.05$) than participants at GES on Awareness, Stage 0, and significantly higher ($p < 0.05$) than participants at MES on Personal, Stage 2. Results of the ANOVA performed on SoCQ data in the fall suggest that the participants at Camellia Garden began the first year of RTI implementation with concerns that were significantly higher on these scales than did the participants at the other two sites.

Summary

A comparative cross-case analysis was conducted for the three participating sites in this chapter. Participants at all three sites identified difficulty understanding the RTI process and difficulty incorporating RTI processes into the daily schedule as global concerns regarding RTI implementation at the beginning of the year. Barriers to RTI implementation were identified adding another responsibility to teachers' already full metaphorical plates (Camellia Garden Elementary and Gardenia Elementary participants), an unwillingness to perceive RTI practices as applicable to their school populations (Camellia Garden Elementary and Gardenia Elementary), and slowing down the referral process for special education eligibility evaluation (Gardenia Elementary and Magnolia Elementary participants). Among the teachers across the three schools, three

Table 44

Results of Scheffe Post-Hoc Comparison for Significant SoC

SoC	School	School	Mean Difference	Standard Error	*p*
0 Awareness	CGE	GE	4.97	1.37	**.002**
		ME	3.76	1.53	.055
	GE	CGE	-4.97	1.37	**.002**
		ME	-1.22	1.61	.752
	ME	CGE	-3.76	1.53	.055
		GE	1.22	1.61	.752
1 Information	CGE	GE	6.21	1.66	**.002**
		ME	5.33	1.86	**.020**
	GE	CGE	- 6.21	1.66	**.002**
		ME	- 0.88	1.95	.904
	ME	CGE	- 5.33	1.86	**.020**
		GE	0.88	1.96	.904
2 Personal	CGE	GE	- 3.75	1.85	.136
		ME	5.29	2.08	**.044**
	GE	CGE	- 3.75	1.85	.136
		ME	1.53	2.18	.782
	ME	CGE	- 5.29	2.08	**.044**
		GE	- 1.53	2.18	.782
3 Management	CGE	GE	7.58	2.02	**.002**
		ME	9.60	2.27	**.000**
	GE	CGE	- 7.58	2.02	**.002**
		ME	2.03	2.38	.697
	ME	CGE	- 9.60	2.27	**.000**
		GE	- 2.03	2.38	.697
6 Refocusing	CGE	GE	5.88	1.82	**.008**
		ME	6.92	2.04	**.005**
	GE	CGE	- 5.88	1.82	**.008**
		ME	1.04	2.15	.889
	ME	CGE	- 6.92	2.04	**.005**
		GE	- 1.04	2.15	.889

Note. Bolded *p* levels indicate significant levels of variance.

distinct effects on job duties were noted which include blocking teachers from their duty to refer struggling students for special education evaluation (Camellia Garden Elementary), improved teaching through RTI practices (Gardenia Elementary), and increased stress and anxiety regarding job performance (Magnolia Elementary). Principals and assistant principals perceived their roles to be impacted by RTI implementation through the need to provide guidance and support for teachers as they implement RTI and by learning alongside of their staffs. Participants across all three sites identified improved instructional practices that will help students as the factor that facilitates RTI implementation. Data from the SoCQ were analyzed through ANOVA to determine whether significant differences existed between sites on each of the Stages of Concern at the beginning of the first year of implementation. Results suggest significant differences ($p < 0.05$) exist between the participants of Camellia Garden Elementary and the participants of Gardenia Elementary and Magnolia Elementary on Stage 1, Information, Stage 3, Management, and Stage 6, Refocusing. In addition, participants at CGES scored significantly higher ($p < 0.05$) than participants at GES on Stage 0, Awareness, and significantly higher ($p < 0.05$) than participants at MES on Stage 2, Personal. This finding suggests that the participants at Camellia Garden Elementary began the first year of implementation of RTI with higher concerns as measured on the SoCQ than did participants at the other two sites.

CHAPTER 9

ANALYSIS OF SPRING DATA FOR CAMELLIA GARDEN ELEMENTARY

Chapter Introduction

Spring data were collected at Camellia Garden Elementary (CGE) from February 2009 through May 2009. Four teachers and the two administrators were interviewed on March 25, 2009. Observations occurred from February 2009 through April 2009. The Stages of Concern Questionnaire (SocQ) was delivered to participants' on March 16, 2009 and retrieved on April 1, 2009. Because the response rate was less than desirable, a second attempt was made to increase the return rate from April 27, 2009 through May 8, 2009. The SoCQ return rate was 81% for CGE for the spring data collection period. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the qualitative and quantitative results obtained for CGE during the end of the first year of Response to Intervention (RTI) implementation. Qualitative themes were developed from interviews, observations, and documents. These themes are discussed below in view of the Stages of Concern framework in answer to the research question the themes answered. Table 45 provides a summary of both fall and spring themes at CGE, along with the corresponding Stage of Concern.

Research Question 1: What are the Concerns of Teachers and Principals As They Experience RTI Implementation?

In the fall, participants at CGE identified two global areas of concern regarding RTI implementation. These concerns pertained to difficulty understanding the RTI process in terms of how the process worked, accuracy of Curriculum Based Measurement (CBM) as a Universal Screening tool, and lack of training prior to beginning the implementation, along with difficulty managing RTI tasks within the daily schedule

Table 45

Analysis of Qualitative Themes by Stage of Concern

Research Question	Theme		Stage of Concern
	Fall	Spring	
1	The Cart Before the Horse: Lack of Clarity About the RTI Process	Accuracy of CBM for Universal Screening	2 Personal
		Insufficient Training to Implement RTI	2 Personal
	Scheduling RTI: How to Manage the Process	Effect of RTI on Scheduling	3 Management
1(a)	Juggling One More Thing Amidst a Sea of Change	Blocked from Accessing the Reading Specialist	2 Personal
	Paradigm Shift: What is a Student With a Disability?	Does Not Align with Our School or Our Students	2 Personal
1(b)	Hampering the Referral Process: Teachers' Duty to Refer Struggling Students	Learning a New Way of Teaching	2 Personal
		Teacher Judgment Questioned	2 Personal
	Principals Supporting Teachers Through the Implementation of RTI	Principals Leading and Learning Through Conflict	2 Personal
1(c)	Creating Responsive Instructional Practices through RTI	Improved Instructional Practices	4 Consequence

which included scheduling 90 minutes of uninterrupted reading instruction, scheduling 30 minutes for interventions, scheduling time to administer CBM, and managing other students in the class while working with the struggling students. The concerns the participants expressed in terms of difficulty understanding how the RTI process worked were viewed as Personal, Stage 2, concerns on the Stages of Concern framework, while the scheduling difficulties were viewed as Management, Stage 3, concerns on the Stages of Concern framework. When the spring qualitative data were analyzed, three distinct themes regarding participant concerns were developed. These themes addressed the accuracy of utilizing CBM as the Universal Screening measure and insufficient training to prepare them for RTI implementation, both of which are considered to be Personal, Stage 2, on the Stages of Concern model as these concerns illustrate how the participants attempt to view how they fit within the RTI model and the consequences RTI poses to them. The third theme developed addressed concern regarding scheduling RTI activities within the daily schedule and is viewed as a Management, Stage 3, concern in that this theme reflects how the participants seek to organize and manage RTI activities. While accuracy of CBM and lack of training were noted in the fall data, these areas did not rise to a level of a theme in and of themselves but were rather categorized under the broader theme of difficulty understanding the RTI process. By spring, however, these two themes were distinct among the forms of qualitative data and were categorized as separate themes accordingly. The concern regarding scheduling RTI tasks and activities was also present in the fall analysis and continues to be an area of concern in the spring data. Each of these three themes are discussed thoroughly in the section that follows.

Accuracy of CBM for Universal Screening

Participants at CGE expressed concern regarding the accuracy of CBM as a Universal Screening measure to identify at-risk students. While this area was noted in the fall, it did not rise to the level of a distinct theme at that time. By spring, however, this concern was sufficiently noted to be an area of concern in and of itself. Using reading fluency as a predictor of reading difficulties was deemed insufficient by participants. T15CGE stated:

> Well, I think that the test is very fluency driven. I know that there's the Maze, but I don't see a comprehension component in it very well. I know they're having to insert the word into sentences and that that involves some comprehension, but that also can include their prior background knowledge.

Her concern was echoed by T31CGE who also expressed her concern regarding whether reading fluency was an accurate measure of reading skills. She noted:

> The fluency part of it, I think, will take time for the student to learn how to be a faster reader. My main concern is I don't care how fast they read. I want them to understand what they read. I don't want it to take them three hours to read two paragraphs, but I don't want them to read two paragraphs in two minutes and not have a clue what they read. So there's certain elements that I don't see why there's a focus on it. I think when they're younger and they're learning how to read, fluency is big, but in fifth grade I just feel like we're timing them on how fast they read something and how fast they're able to choose between three words to a sentence. And they – the ones that were identified as needing help – were ones that I would have identified anyway. So I know that there's some validation in the test results, but I guess I wish that there was a way to teach them how to comprehend better, and we can work on the fluency issues. Comprehension is a lot more important.

Along these same lines, a first-grade teacher stated during a walk-through observation, "I also disagree totally with the AIMSweb testing results. I don't think fluency is a good measure to use in identifying students who are poor readers," (Observation, 2-9-09).

Likewise, a second-grade teacher remarked at a grade level meeting, “It just feels like a bunch of numbers to me,” (Observation, 2-9-09).

In addition to concern regarding using reading fluency for the Universal Screening measure, participants also noted concern that the CBM measures are timed. Each reading probe is one minute in duration, and the student reads aloud for that one minute while the teacher or other test administrator marks his or her errors. For the comprehension component, Maze, students have three minutes to silently read a passage and provide the correct word out of three choices for every seventh word in the passage. T31CGE stated, “But when they’re held accountable to a three minute time frame to circle as many words as you can and read as fast as you can or read as many words as you can in one minute, some kids just flip out for that, and what do you do for those kids?” T15CGE also noted this concern and said, “And I have students that get extremely stressed out when they see a timer in front of them, and I think they probably could have done better had it not been such a time driven piece of work.” T15CGE continued to voice her concern:

> My only other concern is on the first test I had a couple of students who kind of zone out when I hit the timer on the Maze, and about halfway through the time said, “What are we supposed to do,” and so it reflected in their scores. And at that point, I was so unfamiliar with it that I did not go back and retest them. I probably should have, but, just knowing all of that kind of thing, I don’t want it to hurt a student or make them look like they don’t know what they do know because they weren’t listening or something at that point.

This concern regarding timed tests in the Universal Screening was also expressed by second grade teachers at a grade level meeting. They noted that they felt timed tests were

detrimental to students and should not be used as a measure to identify at-risk students (Observation, 2-9-09).

Participants at CGE expressed their belief that there are better ways of assessing student's reading skills than CBM. T15CGE noted:

> I think there's other resources that are better, a better assessment of my students. I don't base my reading groups off of RTI. I don't. I use the DRA and some other testing within my own classroom, and just my own teacher assessment.

She certainly is not alone in her perception. T10CGE voiced her concern by stating:

> Naturally, we looked at the data when we first got it, and we printed off the graphs and I looked at my bottom kids. To tell you the truth, it wasn't really a surprise to me. A couple of kids fell down below in a lower level, not at a at risk level, but a lower level than I anticipated, and I really just think it was a fluke, because on DRAs and other assessments that I've done with them they've been fine, and in my reading group work that I see they've been fine, so I think sometimes you get a child that falls a little bit lower than you anticipated.

One first-grade teacher said during a walk-through observation, "There are other tests like DRA that are more comprehensive in addressing reading as a whole, and that is what we should be going on," (Observation, 2-9-09). Inconsistency in scoring the CBM probes was noted to be a concern by T4CGE who stated, "I actually ended up doing our whole grade level, but it was really hard to score for all of us. Every time we tried to do it, we all got different scores. There's no consistency here."

Insufficient Training to Implement RTI

The second theme addressed participants' concern that they had received insufficient training to prepare them for implementing RTI. This concern was noted to a much lesser extent in the fall and was categorized within the broader theme of difficulty understanding the RTI process. By spring, however, the participants at CGE were

concerned about their perceived lack of training that this concern was a fully developed theme. Some teachers felt that training should have been done by grade level. T31CGE stated:

> Well, as I said in the previous interview, more training, probably grade-level training so that you're not thrown in the mix with all the other grade levels, to have someone come in and say this is how you can [do it]. And it would require several days, not just one day here, one day there. But almost like a class, to say this is how you can use the program effectively instead of using a classroom group of kids as guinea pigs.

She elaborated by saying:

> Specific grade-level training because the content is maybe fourth and fifth grade together, second and third together, kindergarten and first together, and just have several days of this is how we're going to do it and bring in success stories from other schools that have been using this program for several years to say this is how a fifth grade classroom was run using the RTI program, and this is what the results were. The training was just across the board, and for me I need concrete, visual, hands-on this is how it's going to work.

Others shared concerns about the insufficiency of the training. A third-grade teacher noted during a walk-through observation, "I just need more training to be able to understand all this," (Observation, 2-9-09). Furthermore, two fifth-grade teachers expressed their concern regarding the perceived lack of training during another walk-through observation. One stated, "I don't really get what this process is about, really. We were not trained before being thrown out there to do this, and I feel like I'm expected to be doing something I don't understand or really get," (Observation, 2-11-09). Her colleague agreed, saying, "Yeah, and it's really terrifying that we're supposed to be doing this when we haven't been trained on it," (Observation, 2-11-09). T31CGE echoed this concern by noting, "I can honestly look at it and say I don't feel like I've used the program effectively because I just don't feel like I've had enough training for it."

This concern was shared by the administration, as well. APCGE shared her concern regarding the lack of adequate training by stating:

> I think there could have been a lot more frontloading, thinking through, and planning professional development. One example, we got an e-mail from one of the pilot schools with the principal saying, "What interventions are you all doing in Tier 2?" Well, we had spent, and I mean hours, in our group and with teachers and so forth talking about interventions. We've had faculty meetings, we've done walk-throughs in different teachers' classrooms talking about interventions in tier II. Now, this was a pilot school, and then they're sending email out asking, "Well, what are you all doing for interventions in Tier 2," which to me is real telling that there's not a global coordination among the pilot schools of professional development and an understanding of what roles are.

She offered specific suggestions for the type of training she felt would be beneficial to teachers and administrators in implementing RTI effectively. She said:

> I would have loved to have all the pilot schools come together so that a number of people are heard, explain the process as best as they can, the history, why we're doing it, this is what we expect for the outcome to be. Then to say in Tier 1 you'll be doing, blah, blah, blah, blah, and have your curriculum specialist go back over what our county expects to happen in reading in Tier 1, do some refresher in-services on that to make sure that those pilot schools' faculties are real clear with the county expectations in just a good solid reading program. Then talk about Tier 2, the next step. You could then began to have some professional development in what are some specific interventions that are research based that you might use with a student in Tier 2. The reading specialist could do that, Curriculum could do that. I would almost see Curriculum taking the Tier 1, really making sure that we're solid on that, and reading specialists looking at Tier 2, doing professional development with that. And then, of course, it moves into Tier 3, which is special ed for us. And I would have expected that. I really thought that's what we would be having all year long. That truly, really truly, was my expectation.

As APCGE alluded to, the training for RTI was largely left to the individual schools to address with their staffs. The district allotted three days to professional development, and RTI training had to be incorporated into training for other district initiatives on those district-wide training days (District-Wide Professional Development Days handout).

CGE conducted trainings monthly through faculty meetings, as well as through grade level meetings (PCGE Calendar). However, participants at CGE felt that these trainings were insufficient and that better coordinated training at the district level across all pilot schools was needed. APCGE stated:

> I think there's going to have to be a lot of professional development and explanations of the process. I'm thinking here we are going to spend two years piloting then it's just going to be thrown out to all the other schools. I just think you better start next year with the concept, the explanation, required professional development that explains what this is, a real revisiting of our expectations of our reading program, our curriculum for reading grades K through 5, then moving into some very specific interventions for Tier 2.

Effect of RTI on Scheduling

The third theme developed in answer to the first research question pertained to the difficulty participants at CGE were having incorporating RTI-related tasks into the daily schedule. This concern was also reflected in the themes developed for the fall data, and this area remained a strong area of concern in the spring. When viewed through the Stages of Concern framework, this theme reflects Management, Stage 3, concerns of using the innovation efficiently and managing the tasks relating to the innovation. The teachers and principals believed RTI tasks and activities were very time consuming. T31CGE noted:

> Time consuming. I try to tailor reading to fit that, and that's where I feel that the time restrictions have come in, and I need more time to perfect it so that I can incorporate the other subjects into the program so that I don't feel like I'm scurrying to get all the subject content.

PCGE also noted the challenges of incorporating the 30 minutes of intervention into the daily schedule. She stated:

> The thirty minutes, we had advised in the beginning of the year and agreed to block out the thirty minute time period so that when it comes time to utilize it it would be there. That has been a bit more of a challenge, especially in certain grade levels, to have an actual thirty minute period in the afternoon, if you will, where students weren't being pulled out for one reason or another.

Likewise, a fourth-grade teacher noted during a walk-through observation, "This is really time consuming, and I don't feel like I have enough time in the day," (Observation, 2-11-09). PCGE noted that even with resources in place to implement RTI effectively, the time and management aspects of RTI implementation remain a challenge for the school. She said:

> We are fortunate to have our proper resources. I think it's putting the whole ball of wax together. Time, which is the huge factor in any endeavor. But I think it's – in the whole movement – it's creating that time and time management.

In addition, the teachers were concerned about managing the rest of their classes while working with students for intervention. T15CGE noted:

> And so it's trying to figure out what to do with the other nineteen students when you're doing [interventions with one or two students]. And so honestly, it's just been more of an inconvenience as far as the timeframe and what do you do with the rest of the class.

Likewise, T31CGE added her concerns regarding managing the class while doing interventions:

> How to better do group work, because when you are pulling those students out to work with them what are you doing with the rest of the class? And just learning how to manage twenty-three other students while you work with two students. It's a learning thing that by the time they get to fifth grade, centers and things like that aren't used as much as they are in the lower grades. So creating a system where the kids are self-reliant and they know what they're supposed to do. It's just going to take some time to fashion out a way for them to be independent while we work with two or three students at a time.

A fourth-grade teacher also expressed this concern during a walk-through observation. She said:

> RTI. What can I say? I'm having a hard time figuring out what to do with the rest of my class while I'm supposed to be doing RTI. It's really hard to manage this and it feels like we are disrupting the schedule for the sake of a few students, a very few students. (Observation, 2-11-09)

Managing the class while conducting CBM assessment was also noted to be challenging. T15CGE noted:

> Well, we gave the second set of RTI tests [CBM] in January, and at this point we didn't have a substitute, so we were having to monitor our class at the same time, which makes it more difficult because, obviously, you have interruptions.

In observing a Tier 2 intervention, I noticed that the reading specialist worked directly with the student during the intervention time, while the teacher worked with the remainder of the class so I am not sure why the teachers feel that they are having difficulty managing the 30-minute intervention time (Observation, 2-11-09). However, the teachers clearly indicated concern in this area.

Another scheduling issue for the teachers involved the effect creating the 30-minute intervention block was having on social studies, science, and to an extent, math. The teachers and principals reported that the content of these areas was affected by incorporating intervention time into the schedule. T31CGE stated:

> I have been pretty much self-contained, and I feel like my science and social studies has gone to the back burner because I'm trying to do the hour and a half [reading instruction] plus an extra thirty minutes now that it's the times where we have to do probes with the students. I only had two that I had to do that with, and I did not do a good job with that at all.

T15CGE also noted her concern regarding this scheduling issue and added:

> I think scheduling as a school, as a whole, and then as a teacher there's so many standards we have to meet, and within social studies, science, math, all of that, and mandating that ninety-minute block just for reading requires some extra thought and time into how do you pull the other subjects into that so that you're covering all the different standards. And I've noticed that I've had to incorporate a lot of social studies and science into my regular reading time in order to cover those subjects. And I do feel like even with math that I've had to change that as well.

During a walk-through observation, two fourth-grade teachers expressed their concerns regarding the effect of implementing RTI tasks was having social studies and science. The first teacher noted, "The thing is, how are we supposed to cover science and social studies with this intervention schedule? I find I'm having to skip over content in these areas, even to some extent in math, just to fit it all in." Her colleague agreed, adding, "Me, too. You mark my words, one day someone from the Central Office is going to question us about why [the State achievement test] has fallen in those areas," (Observation, 2-9-09). PCGE acknowledged this issue and stated:

> That has been brought up as an issue, and we continually emphasize integration of subject matter, and I know there are limitations. For instance, in our science program it involves kits, experimental hands-on kits. Yes, you're teaching reading along with that, but that's also a science block that's needed. So those are the types of situations that we have to creatively adjust to. But I do hear that in science and social studies specifically. And then you get into the whole area of mathematics as to where that is with the double standards, the two sets of standards you're working with and how we're teaching mathematics. Yes, there are word problems but there's a lot of computation and skills that the students need to get. So that has been a challenge, but I think it's how we can best integrate and say, yes, we're teaching, especially, reading in social studies. But the science has been difficult.

Research Question 1a: What do Teachers and Principals Perceive as Barriers to Implementing RTI?

Two themes were developed in answer to the first research subquestion for teachers and principals at CGE. The first theme addressed the teachers' and principals'

perception that the RTI model used by the district blocked teacher access of the reading specialist in assisting with struggling readers. This theme was not noted in the fall data and appears to have developed over the course of the first year of implementation as teachers and principals became more aware of the role the reading specialist would play in RTI implementation. This concern is a Personal, Stage 2, concern as it addresses how participants are analyzing how the innovation affects them personally. The second theme addresses the perception of the teachers at CGE that the RTI model used by the district does not apply to their school or their students. This theme was also noted in the fall and continues to be an area of intense concern for the teachers of CGE. Within the Stages of Concern framework, this concern is also categorized as Personal, Stage 2, and reflects the teachers' analysis of how the demands of RTI implementation affect them. Each of these themes is discussed in detail in the sections that follow.

Blocked from Accessing the Reading Specialist

Teachers at CGE expressed their concern that the RTI process utilized by the school district had created a situation where the services and support of the reading specialist were denied to them. Part of this change resulted from a restructuring of the role of the reading specialist within Meadowlands School District. Fifty percent of the reading specialists' time was to be devoted to coaching activities which consisted of going into classrooms and assisting teachers in differentiation of instruction for reading and incorporating standards-based instruction into the reading lesson. The remaining fifty percent of time for reading specialists was to be spent working with students. In schools implementing RTI, that fifty percent of direct work with students was to occur in

Tier 2A and Tier 2B (Observation, 2-11-09). Because the reading specialist did not work with students until Tier 2A, teachers at CGE perceived a delay in students receiving assistance from the reading specialist. T10CGE expressed her frustration with this delay by noting:

> Several of our first grade teachers are tutoring kids after school free, just keeping them after school because we don't have time during the day to meet their needs. And that's not kids that fell [below the 10th percentile]. That's because we're not getting the support from our reading specialist otherwise. Because if they don't qualify for that RTI they're not supposed to get services from the reading specialist.

APCGE also noted her concern for the teachers' perception of a delay in receiving services from the reading specialist. She stated:

> This is a very high achieving school, and we've had a number of first grade teachers who've been very disappointed and they have done some outside tutoring. Their students have not gotten the type of intervention that they had gotten in the past [from the reading specialist], and they feel that their students are not being served in a way that they would like for them to be.

This concern was evident in grade level meetings to discuss the results of the winter benchmark and assign students to either Tier 1 or Tier 2 based upon those results. When the kindergarten team met, no kindergarten students scored below the 10th percentile to go into Tier 1 or Tier 2. The teachers were frustrated because this situation meant that they could not have access to the reading specialist to work with their students, and they expressed their belief that the reading specialist should have already been working with some of these students. One teacher stated, "They're already so far behind, we won't have them ready for 1st grade," (Observation, 2-9-09). Likewise, the second grade teachers were very upset that only one student in the whole school continued to fall below the tenth percentile. Other students of whom they were

concerned could not access the reading specialists' services. One teacher asked, "How far do they have to sink before we throw them a lifeline?" (Observation, 2-9-09). The teachers appeared to be struggling with the restructuring of the reading specialist's role, and especially her role within the RTI model. The reading specialist regularly offered to come into the classroom and assist the teachers with classroom-embedded professional development through whole group modeling, structuring framework, classroom organization, training for alternative assessments, diagnostic assessment, and use of resources/materials (Observation, 2-9-09). In addition, she has designed monthly professional development activities to be delivered after school to assist teachers with organizing, differentiating instruction, and using appropriate pedagogy in teaching reading (Reading Specialist's Notes).

Although teachers have access to support from the reading specialist for coaching activities, they appear to be frustrated by a perceived loss of classroom support they had previously received from her. T10CGE stated:

> I think the frustration level as to what exactly the RTI entails is we've had something previously that was taken away from us. Our reading specialist would work with, say, the three or four kids in our room that we felt like needed just a little extra intervention. They may not have qualified for RTI, but they needed the extra. So there's a frustration level there because we're not receiving the help because they're not "RTI kids." I don't think that it uses our reading specialist to reach the most kids possible which could benefit from her intervention.

Likewise, T15CGE noted her frustration:

> Well, in order for them to get help from this reading specialist they have to be in that Tier 2 level, at least that was in the beginning of the year our understanding. Even students that we knew coming in were below grade level, well below grade level, we had to go through that first set of testing. And we had to do a lot of monitoring to see if they could even enter into the reading specialist's schedule, and that just seems like a step backwards to me… .

Other teachers at CGE also expressed their frustration of this perceived loss of support from the reading specialist. During a walk-through observation, one first-grade teacher stated:

> But I don't like the way RTI has blocked us from our Reading Specialist. She used to come in our rooms and help us in our reading instruction so we could help our low students. Now she won't do that anymore. She will only work with students who are in Tier 2 and none of mine are. (Observation, 2-9-09)

This frustration was also evident at the second-grade grade level meeting where the winter benchmark results were being discussed. The teachers were very frustrated by the loss of the reading specialist during Tier 1 to assist them with their struggling students. Concern was expressed regarding how the reading specialist was spending her time and exactly what she was doing during the day. The teachers wanted to know why she could not see their students during Tier 1 (Observation, 2-9-09). In fact, the reading specialist later noted that some of the teachers were counting the number of students she was currently serving and asking for an accounting of her time (Observation, 2-11-09). A document had been created succinctly outlining how the reading specialist functioned. She would co-teach with the teacher during Tier 2 on two of the four required sessions per week, and the classroom teacher was expected to continue the intervention the other two days. The expectation was that the teachers would arrange to plan for co-taught instruction with her for 15 minutes per week. After four and half weeks of Tier 2, diagnostic tests would be administered to further pinpoint the area of need in reading, and the reading specialist would then pull students for targeted small-group instruction the second four and a half weeks of Tier 2 (Role of the Reading Specialist Handout). In an observation of Tier 2A intervention which occurs for 30 minutes, four times a week, the

reading specialist worked directly with a student within the classroom setting while the teacher worked with the rest of the class for that 30-minute period of time (Observation 2-11-09).

Both PCGE and APCGE were concerned about the teacher's frustration regarding the perceived loss of support from the reading specialist. APCGE stated:

> And in actuality we have got such strong teachers here and such high expectations from the community that we just have met so many diverse needs for so long in a variety of ways and in Tier I. Even though that classroom teacher may have been doing it for years, it really looks like it's just you, and it's just been difficult. And maybe they feel a little put upon.

PCGE concurred and noted that this frustration of the teachers was very tangible. She added:

> There's been great frustration, great challenges, and the fact that mainly because the role of the reading specialist, which is now reading coach, has changed dramatically. And rather than fifty percent professional development and fifty percent serving students directly it's been generally a switch to coaching and teaming and serving students only in the RTI model. So, therefore, the support that teachers felt previously had been available through the reading specialist is no longer available with the RTI model, and that has caused great adjustments with the teachers, specifically grades K, 1 and 2.

APCGE continued explaining this concern and elaborated by saying:

> It's also a process of teachers understanding that the role of the reading specialist has really changed and even though she in the past has pulled students she does not pull students into groups out of Tier 1, possibly in Tier 2A will go into the classroom and work with the teacher and see the student and maybe even do a little pulling in a 2B, do some pulling… . But even without diagnosing them with a learning disability, it's just that that reading specialist is no longer available in Tier 1 to work with those kids that just need that extra help. And, actually, we've had three to four of our first grade teachers tutoring before and after school.

Both administrators believe that the loss of support from the reading specialist in Tier 1 has resulted in teachers feeling they are solely responsible for providing instruction and

interventions to struggling readers, and this is a huge adjustment for them. PCGE stated:

> Again, and I said before, it has centered and focused in the classroom teacher as the primary focus and primary person delivering the instruction and the intervention with the assistance. Again, as students move into Tier 2 with the reading specialist, she is involved in many classes in intervention and providing interventions in the classroom and in professional development. So it's all evolving.

APCGE noted that as the process evolves and teachers experience the whole gamut of RTI through the various tier levels, she believes teachers will understand the role of the reading specialist in a better way. She said:

> I think it's a process. I think that when we move into Tier 2 our teachers will see more of that intervention help from the reading specialist. And in Tier 1 when they open up their classrooms more, and she is in a number of classrooms already, but when they even open up their classrooms more for her to come in, they will see the professional development that she can offer within the classroom. And she is in a number of classrooms at this time. But I think it was just a hard shift in the paradigm, and I think it's been a hard one, especially for the lower grades, especially for first grade to make where there's so much emphasis on development of reading skills.

Does Not Align with Our School or Our Students

A second barrier to RTI implementation was identified as the perception that RTI practices as defined by Meadowlands School District do not align well with Camellia Garden Elementary or the students who attend school there. T10CGE stated, "I think it's ineffective, and I'm frustrated. I think we're trying to make something work, being a pilot school, that doesn't fit into our particular school." Likewise, a third-grade teacher noted during a walk-through observation, "I don't think RTI is appropriate for our school," (Observation, 2-9-09). Part of this concern seems to have resulted from the idea that teachers were already doing interventions with students before RTI was implemented. T15CGE stated:

> Well, I think at our school our teachers are exceptional, and I think we already differentiate within our classroom according to need, and I think we try to meet the needs of the kids where they are, incorporate so many different types of text from different places like the library, the reading room, all that. But I can see in a school where they didn't have that much support how it might be a way to allow teachers to, assess their students, and it also might be a way for those teachers that might not do that often enough to have resources or be mandated to check in with their students. But, honestly, for our school I don't feel like it has been some big, earth-shattering, changing, you know, movement. I think we were doing all this stuff before it began.

This thought was also expressed by a fifth grade teacher during a walk-through observation:

> I don't see that there's anything about this process that fits in with our school. We are excellent teachers here at [CGES] and we are already going above and beyond to meet the needs of our students. (Observation, 2-11-09)

The teachers at CGES do not believe that RTI is a practice that benefits their school, as summarized by T10CGE:

> I think that we don't need to be doing RTI at our school. I think that there are other forms of evaluation that we could do. I think it's sort of a waste of money and time… .

The teachers also expressed concern that the RTI process was not appropriate for the students at CGES. The perception of the teachers appears to be that the students at CGES are too high achieving to benefit from RTI as defined by the school district. T10CGE said:

> I'm not saying that the RTI is a negative thing for some schools, I just don't think it's appropriate for our – to meet the needs of our kids at our school. I'm negative about the program. Uh, I think it's not particularly age appropriate for our children.

One third-grade teacher stated during a walk-through observation, "Our students are too high achieving to benefit from this process," (Observation, 2-9-09). A second-grade teacher echoed this concern by noting:

> I don't think the RTI process is fair to our students. Because they don't score below the 10th percentile, they don't get the benefit of going through the interventions. It's like they're being penalized for being at a high achieving school. (Field Notes, 3-25-09)

Likewise, T4CGE shared her concern regarding the appropriateness of RTI for the students at CGES:

> And I think a lot of the times that's because our kids typically score higher than the average norms, and I know that next year that will change when it's [Meadowlands School District's] norms, but some of our kids are really struggling in comparison to their peers, but they didn't show up [as below the 10th percentile on the Universal Screening], and so they are not receiving any extra support which means they're going to be even further behind next year.

T10CGE also noted her concerns regarding whether the RTI model implemented in Meadowlands School District was appropriate for the students at CGES:

> Well, I'm seeing a school like our particular school with the type of children that we get with lots of parent involvement and children that have been exposed to a lot of things in their lives already. They're not as delayed as, say, an inner city child would be. And I do not see that the time and the money is worth it for our particular school. I think at the beginning we only had one child in our entire school, and I think it's a waste of money and time for one child when his or her needs could be met in other ways. … I think in order for it to be a success it has to be in only the schools that really need it, the kids that are really low either with language barriers or just not the experiences that our children have had. And I'm not saying just because our kids come from a wealthy area that they don't need services. I'm just saying that they've been more exposed, and we don't see a lot of children. I know probably a lot of your schools will have a huge group of children and we just have a small percentage are falling in that range here at this school. So my general perception is we don't need it. It's ineffective in that it's not used. It's not for us at our school.

T15CGE reflected on whether RTI was appropriate for the students at CGES by stating:

> And somehow there has to be some sort of perimeters for that, and it's just like each child is different. I don't do the same thing for every single child in my class, so I would think that they would come up with a [RTI] program that's more comprehensive regarding social situations, location, socioeconomic [status]. And I just don't feel like that this is just something that's just laid out there, so it would make a difference.

In reviewing the AIMSweb data for the winter benchmark for Universal Screening, there was only one child in the school who scored below the 10th percentile. All others below the 10th percentile were children already receiving special education services (AIMSweb Winter Benchmark Chart).

Research Question 1b: How Are the Roles of Teachers and Principals Affected by RTI?

In answer to the second research subquestion, two themes were developed for the teachers at CGES and one for the principals at CGES at the end of the first year of RTI implementation. Among the teachers at CGES, their role as teachers was being affected through learning a new process to add to their teaching repertoire and through the perception that their judgment and expertise as teachers was being questioned. Both of these themes fall within the Personal, Stage 2, category of the Stages of Concern and indicate how the teachers were attempting to determine how RTI affected them in their roles as teachers. Among the administrators, a theme was developed pertaining to how increased learning about RTI collaboratively and leading their staff through conflict from RTI implementation had affected their roles as administrators at CGES. This theme is also categorized as Personal, Stage 2, as it reflects how the administrators at CGES were identifying how their role as administrators was impacted by implementing RTI at their school. These themes are discussed in detail in the following sections.

Learning a New Way of Teaching

The teachers at CGES expressed that in implementing RTI, they had incorporated a new way of teaching into their repertoire of skills and were still in the process of

learning this new strategy. This theme was not noted during the fall and was a new theme for the spring data analysis. T31CGE noted:

> I feel like I'm looking at this like this is the first year we've done it and there is a learning process that we have to take in and adjust. I think here at the end of the school year I can say how I can do this differently next year?

Likewise, other teachers were reflecting on the RTI process by the spring and gauging where they were in the learning process and how they could move forward next year. In a conversation during an observation, a kindergarten teacher stated, "Well, RTI is a new process for us and we're having to learn new ways of teaching. This year has been all about figuring out what to do and how to do it." Her colleague, a first-grade teacher, concurred and added, "Yes, that's very true. It causes us to change the way we've approached teaching struggling students and to learn new ways of teaching them," (Observation, 2-9-09). Perhaps the teachers in fifth grade had the most to adjust to. Prior to implementing RTI, teachers in fifth grade had been departmentalized and some were not accustomed to teaching reading as it had been 10 years or more since they had taught reading. Their comfort level was low, according to the reading specialist. She said, "So this was a real eye opener for teachers in grades three through five. They were used to teaching the curriculum, not the child," (Observation, 2-11-09). PCGE added her thoughts on how the staff had processed the first year of RTI implementation:

> I think with everyone being on the same team and, hopefully, understanding and being on the same page, and that takes awhile because it's all a process which is, unfortunately or fortunately, is really not clearly defined. So when you're dealing with something not clearly defined it can cause concern and raise issues as to what are we doing, why are doing it, and where is it coming from. So to kind of discover that together has made the process more understandable.

As the teachers have learned about RTI and how to incorporate RTI practices into their teaching, they have experienced fear that they will make a mistake in implementing it. T15CGE said, "We're so new at it that I don't want to make a mistake, and I don't want to be so letter-of-the-law either that I don't consider the students." In addition, the desire to implement RTI correctly was shared by T31CGE who stated, "Because we want to do it right. But, I don't feel like I have done it right this year." Likewise, a fifth-grade teacher said during an observation, "I'm so afraid that I'll make a mistake and do something wrong. I want to do it the right way, but I don't really know how to do it the right way," (Observation, 2-11-09).

Teacher Judgment Questioned

A second theme was developed addressing how teachers at CGES perceived their role to have been affected by RTI. This theme pertains to the perception of the teachers that their professional judgment as teachers was being questioned through RTI practices. This theme was present in the fall data as a subtheme but did not rise to the level of a theme sufficient to stand alone until spring. By the end of the first year of RTI implementation, however, this theme had become a distinct theme. The teachers appeared to feel that their judgment was being questioned by requiring what they perceived to be a long process of proving students were having difficulty in reading when they, as teachers, knew of these difficulties right off. T4CGE stated:

> I think that's been the biggest concern that I've heard throughout the school this year, and it's because the kids who we knew from the very beginning were going to need some extra support were not even looked at until after the first test.

T15CGE elaborated on this idea of having to wait despite knowing from the beginning of the year that some of her students were struggling with reading. She said:

> Because last year we knew after the first few weeks. I mean as a teacher you know who's struggling, unless you're just clueless. You know who's struggling. And we have such high students already here at [CGES]. Those students that may be struggling in some other place may be at the average level, but here they feel like they're not meeting up to standard. And it would have been great to go ahead and get them in there to get some extra help. … I think as teachers we know. We can be around a child for a week and realize if they're struggling.

Likewise, a third-grade teacher expressed her frustration with feeling her judgment questioned during an observation. She noted, "I think it's a shame that our judgment as teachers and professionals does not count in this process. Kids we know need help can't get help because of this process. I don't like it," (Observation, 2-9-09).

Another area the teachers felt frustrated by and their judgment questioned had to do with the results of AIMSweb benchmarks for the Universal Screening process for RTI. Many students with whom teachers were concerned did not score below the 10th percentile, and the teachers felt their judgment as professionals did not matter. At a second grade level meeting to discuss the results of the AIMSweb winter benchmark, one of the teachers became very upset that none of the students she was concerned about fell below the 10th percentile. Consequently, none of the students she had been working with in Tier 1 qualified to go into Tier 2A interventions. She asked, "What about my professional judgment as a teacher?" (Observation, 2-9-09). T10CGE noted as well:

> The only thing is towards the end of the year is one of the children who I have expected needed help, we did go ahead and give her one of the tests just to see how she did with that. And she seemed to do okay with that, so, therefore, even though I felt as a teacher she needs extra intervention and could possibly even need another year in first grade, then it's not showing up there [on AIMSweb].

T10CGE continued to express her perception that her judgment as a teacher and as a professional was being questioned. She stated:

> It was just kind of all put on the teacher, which was very frustrating to me as a veteran teacher because I – and I could speak for our school staff – we go above and beyond at all times what is expected of us, and we stay after school, keep kids after if we need to, and it's almost like a slap in our face just to tell us to give thirty more minutes, just say, you know, you're going to give thirty more minutes because I feel like we're already giving 24/7 all of our time and energy to be the best teachers we can be for these kids. And particularly if we have a kid who is delayed we're really going to work with them for them to meet their goals and that's the point of differentiation. If you've got a child, you can pinpoint it, you know as a teacher. We are experienced enough as teachers to know which children need our help and which don't, and we don't need a RTI test to tell us that.

Principals Leading and Learning through Conflict

The principal and assistant principal at CGES indicated that RTI had impacted their role as administrators through an increased need to learn about the RTI process and to guide their staff through the implementation, including addressing conflict among the staff resulting from teacher frustration with RTI. In the fall, the administrators at CGES indicated a need to support their staff, but by spring they had articulated more clearly that they needed to learn about RTI themselves, along with their staff, and to address conflict among the staff. PCGE noted that she had to learn more about RTI herself. She said:

> I've learned along with everyone else. It's been a team process. I think I'm continuing the form of leadership that we have through collaboration. That's the only way that we've been able to accomplish what we have… . Huge learning opportunity. Learning how the process is handled, how it goes, the bumps along the way, figuring it out together with the data that we have. We're being data driven and figuring out how that process goes.

APCGE also noted the importance of her learning about various aspects of RTI implementation for herself. She emailed me to ask for a meeting to review the AIMSweb

charts so that she could better understand the Universal Screening and progress monitoring components of RTI (Personal Communication, 1-26-09). During the meeting, she stated, "If I can learn this and get it down for myself, I can then help the staff make more sense of it," (Observation, 2-11-09). PCGE has formed a RTI team comprised of teachers, the reading specialist, and the school psychologist to assist in decision-making regarding RTI. She noted:

> We continue meeting in committee as well, but so far as leadership, guidance and direction it's pretty much been doing our research and moving forth with the information that we have with our team, which is the most important part to include classroom teachers, administration, psychologists and consultants on that team.

In addition to forming a RTI team at her school, PCGE has also attended all district-level meetings on RTI to make sure she is getting the most accurate information from the district to take to her team at the school (Personal RTI District Meetings Notes). She also attends meetings among the six pilot schools who meet monthly to discuss implementation issues of RTI. PCGE noted:

> Well, being that our focus has been centered around RTI, we have done a lot of creative scheduling our teams. It's very important to keep meeting in teams. So before and after school, our teams brainstorm, research, go to other meetings. And then being involved as a pilot, monthly meetings with the pilot schools… . That's been through the AIMSweb model as well as data-driven with the process and how it's been divided through tiers, what's involved in each tier, and that's been a collaborative process with the pilot schools. We're teaching learning assessment and special ed together.

To facilitate the learning process for the administrators and for the staff, PCGE has devoted her monthly faculty meeting time to addressing RTI-related issues and providing information on RTI to her staff. She has provided detailed emails documenting topics of discussion, including assessment in the tiers, implementing differentiated instruction for

reading, and accessing intervention in all tiers (Personal Communication, 10-27-08, 1-26-09, & 2-5-09).

PCGE and APCGE have also had to address teacher conflict and frustration with RTI implementation as part of this learning process. PCGE noted:

> The greatest challenge has been not only creative scheduling, but also the frustration on the part of the classroom teacher everywhere from a notion that they feel now I'm a special ed teacher to the notion of they have always assumed the responsibility and accountability for teaching their students.

Much of this frustration on the teachers' parts was described as a loss of support that they previously had in providing interventions and working with struggling students within their classrooms. PCGE noted:

> I think that they're looking now at various support levels that once were available that are not there through RTI. When I say not there, I mean they are there, but through the tier process. So I would say that it's a shift in thinking for some teachers. I think our teachers are excellent staff here and a mature staff, but it's been quite a shift, and I think that this has been the year where there's been some additional frustrations which I'm sure you've heard about.

APCGE elaborated on the teachers' frustrations with the RTI process and stated that she believed the loss of support the teachers felt was due to the change in how the reading specialist functioned and how the referral process worked within the RTI framework. She stated:

> I guess one of the disappointments is that the teachers have had, initially, a hard time understanding that we were not making a concerted effort to not serve their kids. They felt like the school psychologist, maybe, was not doing her part, that the reading specialist was not doing her part, trying to schedule the ninety minutes plus thirty minutes, and are we supposed to be special ed teachers?

To address teachers' concerns and frustrations, PCGE and APCGE have taken an active and direct role. PCGE reported:

> The RTI team or an abbreviated part of the team ongoing throughout the whole year has met with each grade level, and things come up on a monthly basis as well as individual teachers with needs and concerns.

APCGE noted that she had also been involved in addressing the conflicts arising from RTI implementation. She said:

> I have spent, actually, a good bit of time with our reading specialist talking through, just listening, and brain storming, talking to a couple of teachers individually, listening. I guess what assistant principals do is go to meetings and solve conflicts, so that's kind of what I've done with RTI too… . I think I have spent a lot more time with the reading specialist, some with the psychologist, and some in grade level meetings initially and then talking individually with a few teachers. But a lot with the reading specialist just to listen to ideas, try and work through things, be a sounding board for her. I think it's difficult for the reading specialist in that they are one person on the faculty. They don't have a grade level… . I think the reading specialists look different from school to school in their expectations and what they do, whereas, I truly believe, that we have tried to stay as close to the [RTI]process as it was understood by us and explained to us. But that makes it very difficult when you have teachers saying, well, at X, Y and Z school, the reading specialist is pulling blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah and why aren't we doing that? So that has created a little bit of a concern.

Both PCGE and APCGE participate in all grade level meetings to discuss the results of Universal Screening results and to discuss designation of students to the tiers. At these grade level meetings, both take an active role in the discussions of students (Observation, 2-11-09). At the second grade level meeting, teachers were very frustrated and expressed their frustration that only one student in the whole school scored low enough on the winter benchmark to access Tier 2A interventions. PCGE stepped into the discussion and noted that perhaps the school should consider the gap between the 25th percentile and the 10th percentile on the winter benchmark as an entry point for receiving intervention in Tier 2A, not as potential students with learning disabilities, but as students needing additional support (Observation, 2-9-09). In a later meeting to discuss how to

address their teachers' concerns about RTI, particularly the role of the reading specialist within it, PCGE and APCGE proposed amending the RTI model to allow students falling within the 10th to 25th percentiles to access interventions within Tier 2A even though they would not be considered as at-risk for possible learning disabilities. The administrators noted that they believed all students who are below average on the Universal Screening should have access to intervention. They proposed having the reading specialist provide more in-class support at Tier 1, particularly for kindergarten through second grade with monthly progress monitoring rather than weekly progress monitoring. PCGE and APCGE noted that they believed such an amendment would go a long way in addressing teacher frustration (Observation, 3-16-09).

PCGE and APCGE were also looking down the road to fostering teacher buy-in of the RTI process and stated they felt encouraging teachers to stay the course was vital. PCGE stated:

> We know that in a pilot situation it's exactly what it is, a pilot, and now that we've requested to continue the pilot status next year I think that's given everyone a breath there to say we're doing it again next year, we want to follow and do what we're supposed to be doing, and it's coming down the pike, and this is how we're all doing it. But, yet, we need to kind of feel our way through it and just take a breath with it because it can be overwhelming.

APCGE also noted that she believed continuing the process next year would be a good thing for the staff. She noted:

> I think when the year's over and they look back they will feel very good about what they have done for their students and what they've been able to accomplish. I think when you're in the midst of it and you're so worried am I getting this child what they need and I'm not getting the support that I had gotten before with the reading specialist taking them some, and they really, I think, just are so immersed in that that they don't realize what a good job they're doing. And I think when it's all over and they look back, they're going to be amazed at the progress

> because those kids are growing because we have the DRAs from the beginning of the year to now. They are growing, they're doing well, and so I think the teachers will be very, very pleased with that.

While the first year of implementation was confusing and frustrating, PCGE noted that she believes the second year will go more smoothly. She said:

> I think [RTI's] still evolving. I don't know that we actually know what the current model is. We have a particular schematic of how the tiers work and now that it's been deliberated and discussed like for Tier 1, Tier 2A, 2B are each nine weeks. Before that it was four and a half each. So as questions become answered and more definitive as to what we're working with, that helps tremendously. So I think we just need to keep going on the route we're going.

To continue going the route they are going, PCGE noted her belief that addressing teacher concerns in the RTI process was crucial. She stated that she was trying to foster buy-in from her staff by being proactive and addressing their concerns. She noted:

> We want to stay the course and to lead our staff to a place where they can buy-in to RTI practices. To do that, we need to address their concerns so that they feel they've been heard.

She would also like to see the district address the cut-off scores used in the RTI model next year as she feels this issue will become a stumbling block for other high achieving schools within the district if they feel their students cannot get intervention through the RTI process (Observation, 3-16-09).

Research Question 1c: What Factors Facilitate RTI Implementation?

One theme was developed in answer to the third research subquestion by the participants at CGES. The teachers and administrators believe that RTI implementation leads to better instructional practices through incorporating a 90-minute reading block and informing instruction. This theme was also present in the analysis of the fall data and continued through the year into the spring data analysis. When viewed within the Stages

of Concern framework, this theme is considered to be Consequence, Stage 4, as it reflects the teachers' and administrators' perception that RTI implementation has an effect on teaching practices that benefit their students.

Improved Instructional Practices

While struggling with many aspects of RTI implementation, the teachers and administrators at CGE could nonetheless see the benefits RTI practices would lead to in the future and how those benefits would impact the lives of their students. One of these improved instructional practices pertained to the mandated 90 minutes of uninterrupted reading instruction which was a State requirement for all school districts implementing RTI in the area of reading. T10CGE noted:

> Well, I love the 90-minute block, but within that 90-minute block I'm doing all reading, but I'm doing growing readers. So there's been some confusion as to what is really RTI and what is reading intervention that we're doing at our school like the growing readers or that we're trying to implement reading. I still believe that that's effective. So I do like having that 90-minute block of uninterrupted time. That's been very effective.

Likewise, a third-grade teacher stated during an observation:

> Having the 90-minute uninterrupted reading block has given me the time to really zoom in and focus on teaching my students the reading lesson without having to rush through it or deal with interruptions. (Observation, 2-11-09)

The effect of the 90-minute, uninterrupted reading block was generally noted to be a positive outcome of implementing RTI. T4CGE said:

> I went through the reading initiative a couple of years back, and that was the big thing then, 90 minutes of reading instruction, so I tried to get it in. I tried to make it as continuous as possible without any breaks, but it just worked out this year, and I think that was from our administration making sure that we had that 90 minutes. It has been better this year without having any interruptions as far as people calling on the intercoms and stuff.

The fact that the reading instruction is uninterrupted was noted by T10CGE to be very beneficial. She elaborated by stating:

> I think having that 90-minute block is effective for teaching regardless of whether you have RTI kids or not. Having that block of uninterrupted time to actually teach reading, particularly in a first grade program, has been extremely valuable.

PCGE also noted that she believed the implementation of a 90-minute, uninterrupted reading block was beneficial to instruction. She said:

> The 90 minutes uninterrupted has been fabulous for our reading instruction as we carry literacy throughout the day. But that uninterrupted 90 minutes has been beneficial. It has really caused teachers to focus and refocus on true differentiation and best practices. So it's had us hone in on that, and that's been our focus, which has been excellent… The 90-minute block has worked out beautifully with all the teachers.

In addition, APCGE added:

> I think the 90 minutes has just become very routine, and, in fact, I actually heard one of our upper grade level teachers saying it's great, they like it. They really love the 90 minutes. I think the lower grades have probably been doing that for quite some time. But to actually hear an upper grade teacher say that's great.

Besides the 90-minute, uninterrupted reading block, teachers and administrators at CGES also perceive how RTI practices inform instruction and lead to better teaching. One way RTI practices inform instruction was described as assisting in grouping by T31CGE who stated, "When I placed students in groups for reading, those results helped me greatly to put them in groups appropriately." For T4CGE, RTI practices such as progress monitoring weekly helped keep her organized and structured. She noted:

> I would say maybe because I had to individualize for [a student] so much and then each week I was going through and assessing and checking, it kind of kept me on my toes as far as where exactly is he, what do we need to do next. So that was beneficial. It just kind of held me accountable, I guess, because I knew I had to enter the information in the computer every week… I think teacher accountability is huge, knowing that you have to enter the scores in as soon as you progress

> monitor, and then just keeping it in the back of your mind that this is coming up, we really need to focus on blending, or segmenting, or letter names, or letter sounds and just reviewing those basic skills, I guess.

Having the Universal Screening and progress monitoring data was noted by T31CGE to greatly assist in knowing which students are struggling. She said, "It definitely identifies those students who are struggling readers, and it gives a piece of information that is helpful to the teachers to say where they are struggling." In addition, T4CGE noted that RTI validates her knowledge of her students:

> Well, actually, it was kind of a crosscheck of what I already knew about my child. I knew that he was having a hard time associating letters with sounds and letter names with the symbol, so it was just kind of a crosscheck for me.

RTI was also noted to guide instruction. For APCGE, data from the RTI process assisted in identifying teachers who may need assistance teaching reading. She noted:

> Also, the other thing that I think is really good is that it's spotlighted third, fourth and fifth [grades] and how they teach reading, and it's given us an opportunity to work with those teachers and maybe looking at different approaches to teaching reading or the way they teach reading.

Likewise, a third-grade teacher noted during a walk-through observation that she found RTI practices to be very beneficial to her as a teacher. She stated:

> I will say this about RTI. The probes have really helped me as a teacher to track how my students are doing in reading. I know who gets it and who doesn't. I think the focus on reading has been a good thing for me as a teacher. (Observation, 2-11-09)

Research Question 2: To What Extent do the Concerns Expressed by Teachers and Principals Vary from the Beginning to the End of the First Year of RTI Implementation?

The second research question was quantitative in nature and addressed whether concerns expressed by participants at CGES on the Stages of Concern Questionnaire

(SoCQ) varied significantly from the beginning to the end of the first year of RTI implementation. To determine whether these concerns expressed by teachers and principals at CGES vary significantly from the fall to the spring of the first year of implementing RTI, a paired samples *t*-test was performed to compare the fall and spring scores for participants. The SoCQ was collected in the fall with a return rate of 92% and in the spring with a return rate of 81%. Descriptive data from the SoCQ is reviewed in the sections below, along with results of the paired samples *t*-test.

SoCQ Scores for CGES

Figure 24 provides a summary of the profile of SoCQ scores for CGES for the spring data collection, along with the fall profile for comparative purposes. As can be seen, the highest score occurred on Awareness, Stage 0, with a score at the 96th percentile. High scores on Stage 0 early in an implementation suggest that participants are very aware of the innovation being implemented and are also very aware of other innovations be implemented besides the innovation under consideration (George et al., 2006). In this case, other areas of implementation included Gradespeed, new State curricular standards, and new report card formats, all of which were being implemented simultaneously with RTI. In the fall qualitative data analysis, participants at CGES were very concerned about another add-on on top of other initiatives being implemented by the school district, and this concern was reflected as a potential barrier to RTI implementation. By spring, participants' concerns had refocused on areas specific to RTI concerns, although comments pertaining to other initiatives besides RTI were still

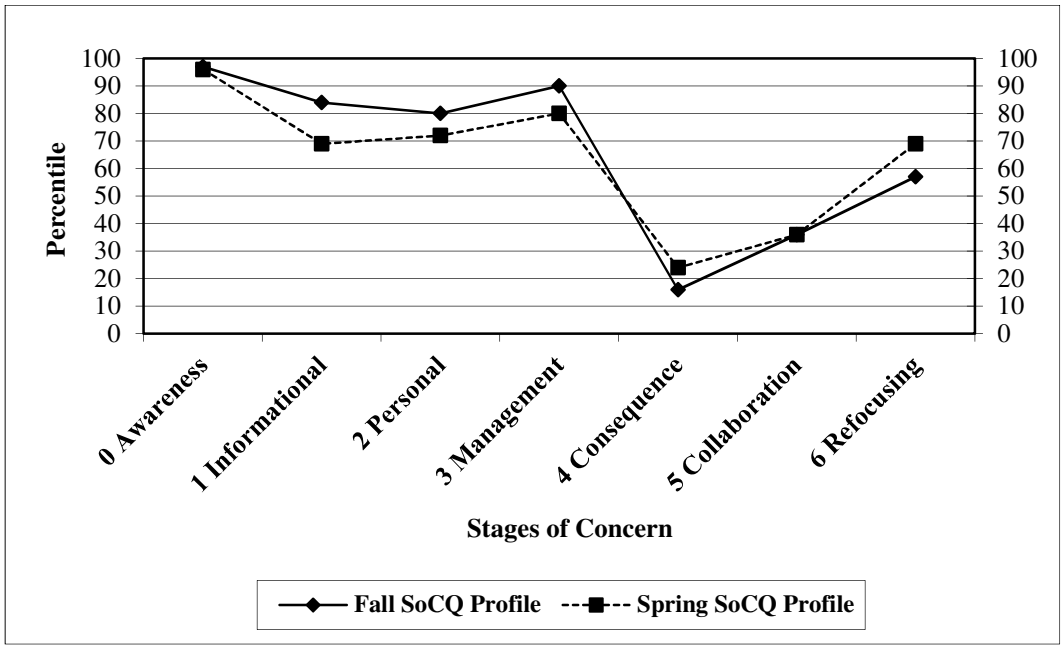


Figure 22. **SoCQ Spring and Fall Profiles for CGES.**

present. However, the concerns regarding other initiatives did not rise to the level of being an independent theme.

The second-highest score occurred on Management, Stage 3, with a score at the 80th percentile. As noted by George et al. (2006), high scores on Stage 3 reflect participants' concerns about the managing the demands of the innovation. Qualitative data for fall and spring resulted in management themes that reflected concerns regarding how participants perceived difficulty scheduling the demands of RTI implementation and how they were attempting to meet those demands. This high score on Stage 3 appears to corroborate the categorization of these scheduling themes as Management concerns when viewed through the lens of the Stages of Concern framework.

The score at the 72nd percentile on Personal, Stage 2, is also of importance from an interpretive standpoint. George et al. (2006) noted that when scores are very close, the intensity of concern is equal among the two areas measured. In this case, the scores are only eight percentile points in difference, and the interpretation is that Personal concerns are exerting strong influence along with the highest and second-highest scores. Personal concerns during an implementation suggest the participants are concerned with the requirements and demands an implementation require and their ability to meet those demands. Qualitative data during the fall and spring support the intense level of concern at this stage. Most of the themes developed in the fall and spring were categorized as Personal because these themes centered around the participants' view of how they as individuals fit within the RTI framework and how they as individuals were able to understand and implement RTI.

In examining the relationship between Information, Stage 1, and Personal, Stage 2, the profile for CGES indicates a slightly higher score on Stage 2 than Stage 1. This pattern suggests that participants at CGES have higher intensity regarding personal concerns with RTI than the desire to learn more about implementing RTI. This pattern was not noted in the fall data and represents a change from fall to spring. As the first year of RTI implementation progressed, the participants focused their concern on more personal or self-requirements of RTI and less on wanting more information about RTI. As seen in the fall SoCQ data, the "tailing up" of Refocusing, Stage 6, continued into the spring thus suggesting a desire to return to previous referral practices that are more familiar and comfortable (George et al., 2006).

When comparing the fall and spring profiles for CGES (see Figure 24), the profiles appear to be very similar. Scores on Information (Stage 1), Personal (Stage 2), and Management (Stage 3) decreased from fall to spring, while the scores on Consequence (Stage 4) and Refocusing (Stage 6) increased. The scores on Awareness (Stage 0) and Collaboration (Stage 5) remained very consistent from fall to spring.

Frequency of SoCQ by Participants

Table 46 summarizes the frequency of highest SoCQ scores by participant. A total of 63% of participants indicated Awareness, Stage 0, as their highest score on the SoCQ. Fourteen percent of participants indicated Information, Stage 1, as their highest score. Ten percent indicated Collaborative, Stage 5, as their highest score, and 7% indicated Management, Stage 3, as their highest score. The remaining participants

Table 46

Frequency of Highest Stage of Concern for Individual Participants at CGE

Highest Stage of Concern	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
Number of Participants	19	4	1	2	0	3	1	30
Percent of Participants	63	14	3	7	0	10	3	100

indicated Personal, Stage 2, and Refocusing, Stage 6, as their highest scores with 3% falling in each category.

The frequency of second-highest scores for participants at CGES is summarized in Table 47. The highest number of participants indicated Management, Stage 3, as their second-highest score on the SoCQ with 30% falling in that category, followed by Personal, Stage 2, and Refocusing, Stage 6, with 23% falling in each category. Another 14% indicated Awareness, Stage 0, as their second-highest score. The remainder indicated Information, Stage 1, and Collaboration, Stage 5, as their second-highest score, with 7% and 3% falling in those categories, respectively.

SoCQ Scores for Interviewees

Figure 25 provides a summary of PCGE's spring and fall profiles, along with the school's profile for comparison. PCGE's highest score was on Information, Stage 1, with a score at the 95th percentile. This score suggests she is interested in learning more about RTI implementation. Her second-highest score occurred on Personal, Stage 2, with a score at the 85th percentile. These scores suggest she has concerns regarding how RTI implementation affects her personally and how well she is able to implement RTI. Information from the qualitative themes developed for the spring data suggests there is evidence that PCGE may in fact be looking at ways RTI implementation could be improved. For example, she took the initiative to look at how more students could benefit from Tier 2A intervention by raising the cut-off to the 25th percentile. However, her stated motivation in doing so was to address teacher frustration which remains more of a personal-level concern than a desire to improve implementation of RTI. The Stages

Table 47

Frequency of Second-Highest Stage of Concern for Individual Participants at CGE

Second-Highest Stage of Concern	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
Number of Participants	4	2	7	9	0	1	7	30
Percent of Participants	14	7	23	30	0	3	23	100

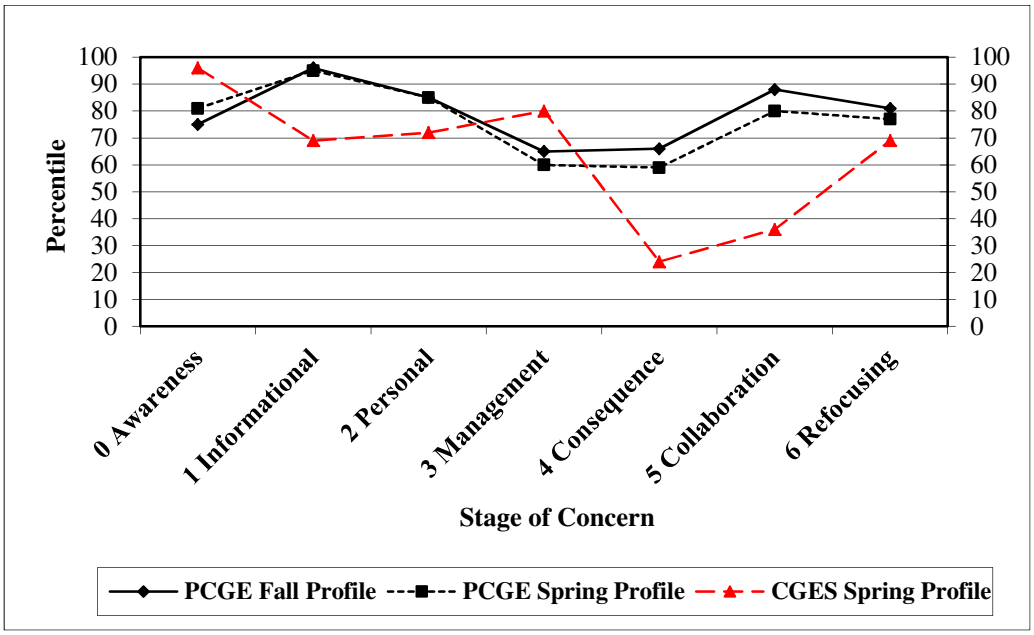


Figure 23. **SoCQ Fall and Spring Profile for PCGE.**

of Concern framework holds that as the intensity of her concerns decrease on the lower scales, she will then be free to focus more on the higher level scales.

In examining the relationship of her scores on Information, Stage 1, and Personal, Stage 2, it appears that her Personal concerns are not higher than her desire to learn more about RTI. Her score on Information, Stage 1, was higher than her score on Personal, Stage 2. While she is actively and directly involved in gaining information for implementing RTI at her school and while this is where her highest level of concern lies, PCGE is also concerned with how she is meeting the demands of RTI implementation on a personal level. Her score on Stage 6, Refocusing, has been previously discussed. When comparing PCGE's spring SoCQ profile to her fall SoCQ profile, there are few differences in her scores. She scored slightly lower on Awareness, Stage 0, Management, Stage 3, Consequence, Stage 4, and Collaboration, Stage 5. However, her profile is higher than the spring profile for CGES on Information, (Stage 1), Personal (Stage 2), Consequence (Stage 4), Collaboration (Stage 5), and Refocusing (Stage 6). PCGE scored lower than the school average on Awareness (Stage 0) and Management (Stage 3).

The spring and fall SoCQ profiles and the CGES spring profile are provided for APCGE in Figure 26. APCGE scored highest on Collaboration, Stage 5, with a score at the 72nd percentile. Her second-highest score was on Awareness, Stage 0, with a score at the 48th percentile. This pattern suggests that while APCGE wants to collaborate with others in understanding and implementing RTI, she is also very aware of RTI as an

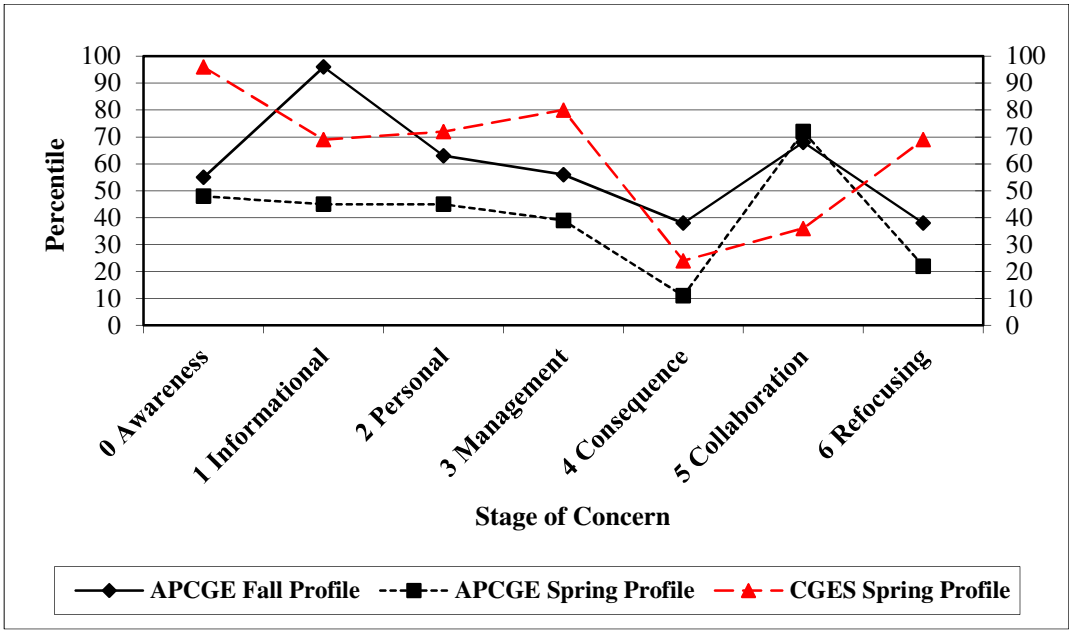


Figure 24. **SoCQ Fall and Spring Profiles for APCGE.**

innovation that is being implemented by the school district, as well as of other initiatives being implemented concurrently with RTI.

Her scores on Information, Stage 1, and Personal, Stage 2, did not result in a "negative one-two split" as defined by George et al. (2006), suggesting her personal concerns do not override her desire to learn more about RTI implementation at this time. Her score on Refocusing, Stage 6, does not "tail up," as noted by George et al. and does not suggest a desire to return to previous methods and practices when this pattern is seen early in an implementation.

When APCGE's spring SoCQ profile is compared to her fall SoCQ profile, a decrease in intensity is noted on Information (Stage 1), Personal (Stage 2), Management (Stage 3), Consequence (Stage 4), and Refocusing (Stage 6). In addition, APCGE's spring profile is well below the overall spring profile for CGES on all scales except Information (Stage 1) and Collaboration (Stage 5). This pattern appears to suggest that some of APCGE's concerns, particularly on the lower scales of Awareness (Stage 0), Personal (Stage 2), and Management (Stage 3) appear to be decreasing in intensity.

The spring and fall SoCQ profiles, along with the spring SoCQ profile, are summarized for T31CGE in Figure 27. T31CGE scored highest on Awareness, Stage 0, with a score at the 99th percentile, suggesting she is very aware of RTI but also very aware of other initiatives being implemented simultaneously in the district. Her second-highest score occurred on Management, Stage 3, with a score at the 94th percentile. This indicates T31CGE is concerned regarding her perceived ability to implement RTI and how RTI implementation affects her personally.

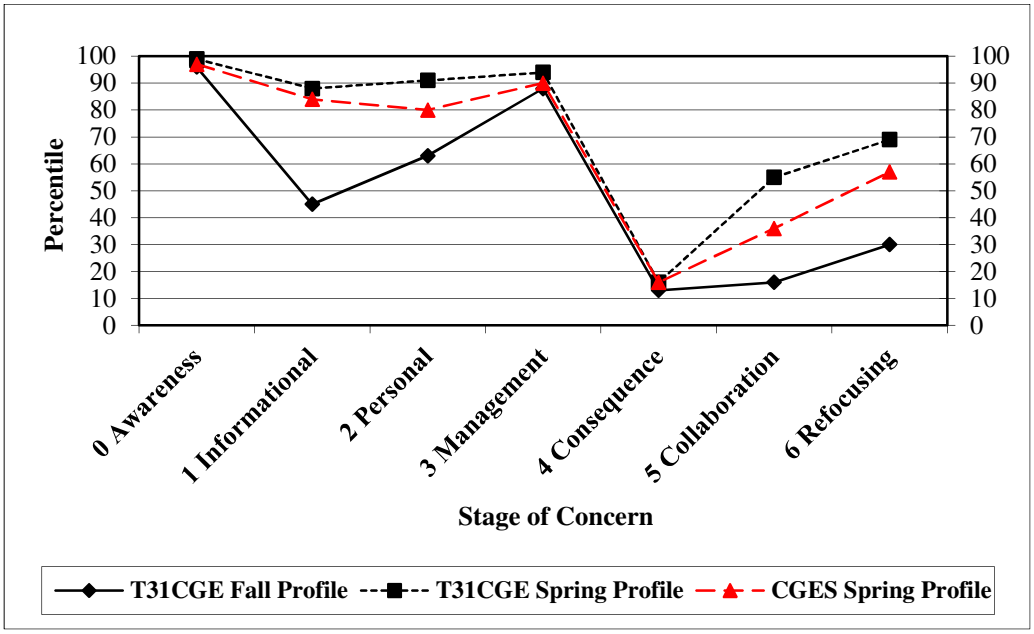


***Figure 25*. SoCQ Spring and Fall Profile for T311CGE.**

In examining the relationship between T31CGE's scores on Information (Stage 1) and Personal (Stage 2), there is very little difference between her scores which suggests she is not so intensely concerned with Personal concerns that she is unwilling to learn more about RTI. Rather, T31CGE appears open to learning more about how to implement RTI.

When comparing T31CGE's fall and spring SoCQ profiles, her scores are much higher on her spring SoCQ profile than they were in the fall on Information, Stage 1, Personal, Stage 2, Collaboration, Stage 5, and Refocusing, Stage 6. This indicates she is more intensely concerned in these areas at the end of the year than she was at the beginning. When compared to the spring SoCQ profile for CGES, T31CGE's scores are fairly closely aligned with the school profile with the exception of Personal, Stage 2, Collaboration, Stage 5, and Refocusing, Stage 6, which is much higher than the school average.

Figure 28 provides a summary of the fall and spring SoCQ scores for T15CGE, along with the spring SoCQ profile for CGES for comparison. T15CGE scored highest on Awareness, Stage 0, with a score at the 99th percentile. This high score indicates that she is aware of RTI but is also very concerned with other initiatives being implemented in the school district. Her second-highest score occurred on Management, Stage 3, with a score at the 98th percentile. Her score suggests she is intensely concerned with how to manage RTI tasks. A very close third-highest score was noted on Refocusing, Stage 6, with a score at the 97th percentile. As noted by George et al. (2006), high scores on Stage 6 early in an implementation generally indicate a desire to return to previous practices.

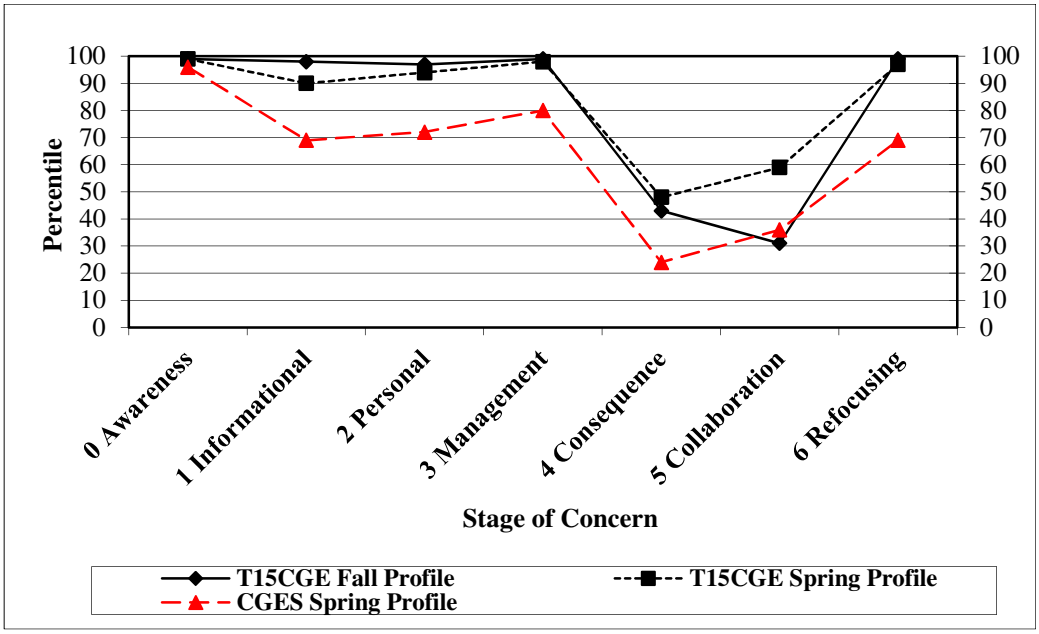


***Figure 26*. SoCQ Spring and Fall Profiles for T15CGE.**

T15CGE's score on Personal, Stage 2, was not much higher than her score on Information, Stage 1, indicating that her personal concerns regarding RTI implementation do not override her desire to learn more about implementing RTI. Her high score on Refocusing, Stage 6, has been previously discussed above.

When comparing T15CGE's fall and spring SoCQ scores, there is very little difference noted between the two profiles. Her scores are fairly well aligned with each other, although her spring score on Collaboration, Stage 5, was higher than her fall score. This indicates she has more desire to collaborate with others in implementing RTI than she did in the fall. T15CGE scored higher than the spring school average on all stages except for Awareness, Stage 0.

Spring and fall SoCQ profiles are summarized for T10CGE in Figure 29. T10CGE scored highest on Awareness, Stage 0, with a score at the 91st percentile. This suggests she is aware of RTI as an innovation but is also aware of other innovations being implemented in her school district. Her second-highest score occurred on Refocusing, Stage 6, with a score at the 92nd percentile, suggesting the possibility that she has competing ideas for how students should be referred for special education evaluation and thus possibly desiring a return to previous referral practices, as noted by George et al., 2006.

In examining the relationship between her scores on Information (Stage 1) and Personal (Stage 2), her score on Stage 2 is much higher than her score on Stage 1. This pattern suggests that her Personal concerns are so intense that they override her desire to learn more about RTI at this time. Her score on Refocusing, Stage 6, does not "tail up"

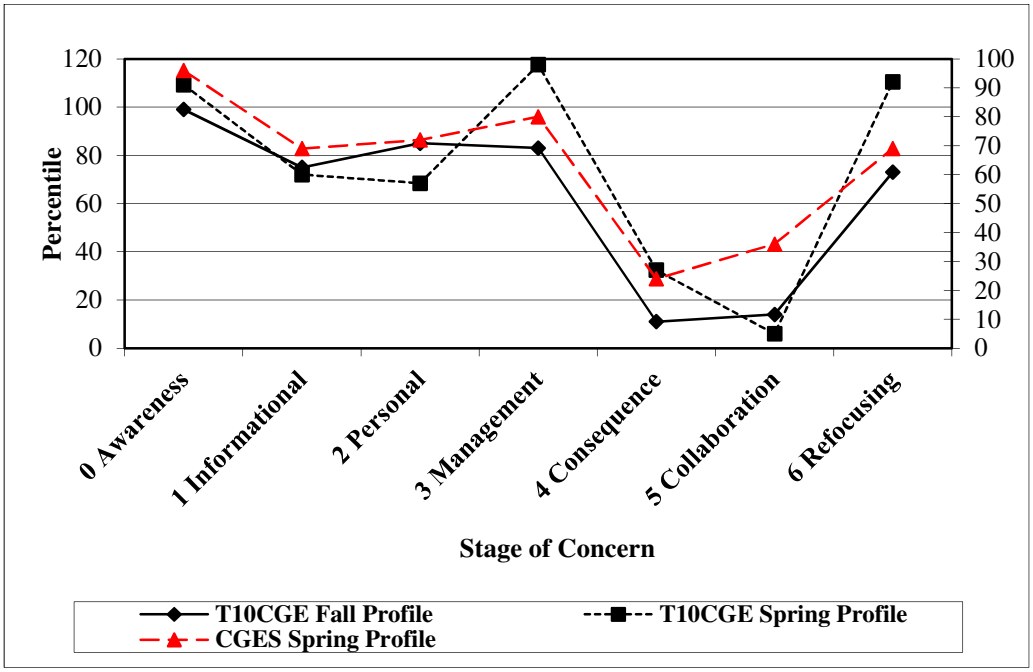


***Figure 29*. SoCQ Spring and Fall Profiles for T10CGE.**

as defined by George et al. (2006) and does not indicate a desire to return to previous practices.

When the fall and spring SoCQ profiles are compared, T10CGE scored higher in the spring on Management, Stage 3, Consequence, Stage 4, and Refocusing, Stage 6, than she did in the fall. She scored lower on Personal, Stage 2. Her spring SoCQ profile is fairly well aligned with the school's profile with the exception of Management, Stage 3, and Refocusing, Stage 6, both of which were higher than the average of the school as a whole. Collaboration, Stage 5, was much lower than the school's average.

Figure 30 provides the fall and spring SoCQ profiles for T4CGE, along with the spring SoCQ profile for CGES for comparison. T4CGE scored highest on Awareness, Stage 0, with a score at the 91st percentile. This score suggests she is aware of RTI but is also aware of other initiatives being implemented simultaneously with RTI. Her second-highest score occurred on Collaboration, Stage 5, with a score at the 80th percentile. This score indicates T4CGE is very concerned regarding the possibility of collaborating with others in the implementation of RTI.

When her scores on Information (Stage 1) and Personal (Stage 2) are compared, her score on Personal is higher than her score on Information. This pattern indicates that her Personal concerns outweigh her desire to learn more about RTI at this time. A "tailing up" of Stage 6, Refocusing, was not noted. When compared to her fall SoCQ profile, T4CGE scores lower on Information, Stage 1, Personal, Stage 2, and Management, Stage 3 and higher on Awareness, Stage 0, and Refocusing, Stage 6.

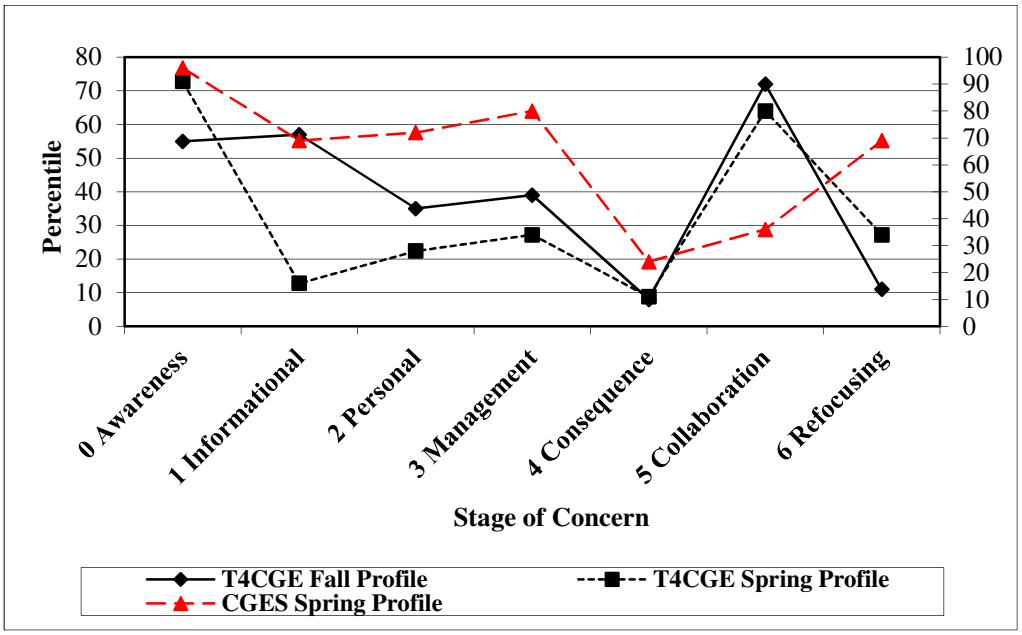


Figure 27. **SoCQ Spring and Fall Profiles for T4CGE.**

T4CGE's spring SoCQ profile is lower than the spring profile for CGES on Information, Stage 1, Personal, Stage 2, and Management, Stage 3. Refocusing, Stage 6, was higher than the average for the school.

***Paired Samples t*-test**

In order to determine if the concerns expressed on the SoCQ by the participants at CGES varied significantly from the beginning to the end of the first year of RTI implementation, I performed a paired samples *t*-test to compare the scores for fall and spring for participants who completed the SoCQ for both data collection periods. A total of 30 teachers completed both assessments. Descriptive statistics from the paired samples *t*-test are summarized in Table 48. In the fall, the highest mean score occurred on Management, Stage 3, with a mean score of 24.60. This indicates participants at CGES were most intensely focused on managing tasks associated with RTI. For the spring, the highest mean score occurred on Stage 6, Refocusing, indicating participants indicated high raw scores on that particular stage. Results of the paired samples *t*-test are provided in Table 49. The paired *t*-test was run on each of the seven Stages of Concern to determine whether the concerns expressed by participants in the fall significantly decreased or increased by the spring. To determine statistical significance, I used the 0.05 alpha level. When looking at the stages, there were no significant differences noted on Awareness ($t = .44$, df = 29, $p > 0.05$) or Collaboration ($t = .66$, df = 29, $p > 0.05$). However, significant differences were noted in score differences between fall and spring on Information ($t = 2.81$, df = 29, $p < 0.05$), Personal ($t = 2.64$, df = 29, $p < 0.05$), Management ($t = 2.39$, df = 29, $p < 0.05$), Consequence ($t = -2.32$, df = 29, $p < 0.05$), and

Table 48

Descriptive Statistics for Paired Samples *t*-test for CGE

Stage		Mean	N	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean
0 Awareness	F	18.43	30	6.40	1.17
	S	18.30	30	6.10	1.11
1 Information	F	22.97	30	6.10	1.12
	S	19.27	30	6.37	1.16
2 Personal	F	22.73	30	6.15	1.12
	S	20.00	30	7.44	1.36
3 Management	F	24.60	30	8.51	1.55
	S	21.00	30	7.50	1.37
4.Consequence	F	15.13	30	5.54	1.01
	S	17.80	30	5.96	1.09
5 Collaboration	F	17.27	30	6.73	1.23
	S	16.67	30	8.01	1.46
6 Refocusing	F	18.53	30	7.27	1.33
	S	21.03	30	7.82	1.43

Table 49

Results of Paired Samples *t*-test for CGE

Stage	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean	*t*	df	Significance
0 Awareness	.43	5.37	.98	.44	29	.662
1 Information	3.70	7.22	1.32	2.81	29	**.009**
2 Personal	2.73	5.67	1.04	2.64	29	**.013**
3 Management	3.60	8.24	1.50	2.39	29	**.023**
4 Consequence	-2.32	6.30	1.15	-2.32	29	**.028**
5 Collaboration	.60	4.99	.91	.66	29	.516
6 Refocusing	-2.50	5.86	1.07	-2.34	29	**.027**

Note. Bold *p* levels denote significance.

Refocusing (t = -2.34, df = 29, $p < 0.05$). This finding implies that the intensity of concerns had decreased to an extent that was statistically significant at the .05 alpha level on Information, Stage 1, Personal, Stage 2, and Management, Stage 3. In addition, this finding indicates the intensity of concerns had significantly increased in scores on Consequence, Stage 4, and Refocusing, Stage 6. Therefore, I reject the null hypothesis that holds there is no statistically significant difference between SoCQ scores in the fall and spring.

Summary

Spring data analysis for CGES was summarized according to research questions. Three themes were developed identifying overall concerns expressed by participants at CGES in the spring which included concern regarding the accuracy of CBM as a Universal Screening measurement, insufficient training on RTI, and difficulty scheduling RTI into the daily schedule of events. Concerns regarding the accuracy of CBM and insufficiency of training were also noted in the fall, but these concerns were subsumed under the global concern of lack of clarity regarding the RTI process. By spring, these concerns had become identifiable as standalone themes. Both are considered Personal, Stage 2, themes when viewed through the Stages of Concern framework. The concern regarding scheduling was also present during the fall and is viewed as a Management, Stage 3, concern. Barriers to RTI implementation were identified as the belief on the participants' parts that RTI, as defined in Meadowlands School District, does not align with their school or their students, along with the perception that the teachers were blocked from accessing the services of the reading specialist. Both concerns were noted

in the fall but did not rise to independent themes until spring. These concerns are considered to be Personal, Stage 2, concerns within the Stages of Concern framework. The effect of RTI on teachers' roles was noted to be that of learning a new teaching strategy and a perception of having their professional judgment questioned. Both of these themes were new for spring, although the perception of having their judgment questioned was noted to a lesser extent in the fall. Both themes are viewed as Personal, Stage 2, on the Stages of Concern framework. The principals identified the primary impact on their role as that of learning collaboratively and leading their staff through conflict. Supporting the staff through RTI implementation was noted in the fall, and the administrators elaborated on that theme to include learning alongside their staff and the need to steer their staff through conflict arising from RTI implementation. Factors facilitating RTI implementation were noted to be improved instructional practices, a theme that was also noted in the fall. This theme is considered to be Consequence, Stage 4, on the Stages of Concern. The spring SoCQ profile for CGES was reviewed, along with the individual profiles of the participants who were interviewed. Participants at CGES scored highest on Awareness, Stage 0, and second-highest on Management, Stage 3. When the results of each stage were analyzed through a paired samples *t*-test, the spring scores on Information, Stage 1, Personal, Stage 2, and Management, Stage 3, were significantly lower than the scores in the fall. Scores on Consequence, Stage 4, and Refocusing, Stage 6, were significantly higher in the spring than in the fall. Results of the paired samples *t*-test appear to corroborate the theory of the Stages of Concern that

suggests as scores on the lower end (Stages 0-3) decrease, scores on the upper end (Stages 4-6) increase.

CHAPTER 10

ANALYSIS OF SPRING DATA FOR GARDENIA ELEMENTARY

Chapter Introduction

Spring data were collected at Gardenia Elementary (GES) from February 2009 through May 2009. Four teachers and the two administrators were interviewed on March 13, 2009 and March 18, 2009. Observations occurred from February 2009 through March 2009. The Stages of Concern Questionnaire (SocQ) was delivered to participants' on March 16, 2009 and retrieved on April 1, 2009. Because the response rate was less than desirable, a second attempt was made to increase the return rate from April 27, 2009 through May 8, 2009. After the second attempt, the SoCQ return rate was 94% for GES for the spring data collection period. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the qualitative and quantitative results obtained for GES during the end of the first year of Response to Intervention (RTI) implementation. Qualitative themes were developed from interviews, observations, and documents. These themes are discussed below in answer to research questions for this study, along with the Stages of Concern framework that guided theme development and analysis. Table 50 provides a summary of both fall and spring themes at GES along with the corresponding Stage of Concern.

Research Question 1: What are the Concerns of Teachers and Principals as They Experience RTI Implementation?

In the fall, the teachers and administrators at GES expressed concern that RTI was a confusing process that was difficult to implement into the school's daily schedule. These two themes continued in the spring with both teachers and administrators at GES

Table 50

Analysis of Qualitative Themes by Stage of Concern for GES

Research Question	Theme		Stage of Concern
	Fall	Spring	
1	Swimming in Mud: Lack of Clarity for the RTI Process	Confusing Process	2 Personal
	Challenges in Scheduling RTI	Time Management	3 Management
		Need for Additional Resources	3 Management
1(a)	One More Thing: Finding Time to Implement RTI	Movement Through the Tiers	2 Personal
	Reluctance to Perceive RTI as Applicable to Their School		2 Personal
	Slowing Down the Referral Process		2 Personal
1(b)	Improved Teaching Through RTI	Improved Teaching	2 Personal
	Principals: Providing Guidance	Principals: Changes in Leadership Style	2 Personal
1(c)	Following the Principal's Lead to Improved Instructional Practices	Improved Outcomes for Students	4 Consequence

noting that they were still confused about the RTI process and were still having management difficulties with required components involved in the implementation. The concerns regarding confusion with the RTI process are considered Stage 2, Personal, concerns in view of the Stages of Concern framework, while the time management concerns are considered Stage 3, Management, concerns. In addition to these two ongoing concerns, a third area of concern was noted in the spring. The teachers and administrators at GES expressed concern that they needed additional resources in terms of interventions and personnel in order to be able to sustain RTI implementation. This concern is also a Stage 3, Management, concern within the Stages of Concern framework as it addresses specific needs to manage implementation requirements. These three themes are discussed in detail below.

Confusing Process

The teachers and administrators at GES continued to express concern in the spring regarding the confusion with which they perceived the RTI process. The participants continued in the spring to struggle with understanding how the whole RTI process functioned in its entirety, how the progress monitoring data should be interpreted or analyzed, and how the tiers worked. As T10GE stated:

> It's still a little confusing. Yeah, it just still seems like things keep changing, and I think because we're a pilot school – and that's to be expected – and we're kind of just having to roll with the punches, but it's been still kind of confusing. We think we know what to do, and then there'll be a little change. So it's still been a little frustrating. I think it works like overall. Like the big picture looks good. It's just getting all these little steps in.

Likewise, a kindergarten teacher noted during a grade level meeting, "I still can't figure all this out. I can't see the whole process from start to finish and that makes it hard,"

(Observation, 2-9-09). The teachers were really struggling to understand how the whole process would look at the end, and they were unable to determine that in a step-by-step fashion. The various steps involved in the RTI process were elusive and confusing to many teachers. T11GE stated:

> I feel like we have a lot of [referral] committees at this school, and so sometimes some of that can be a little fuzzy about take four data points and then go see this committee, then don't do anything for nine weeks and then go see this [committee]. So some of that can be a little overwhelming… . It just not as clear cut, which I understand it can't be, necessarily, all the time because you're dealing with kids, but it can be frustrating sometimes.

T10GE echoed this thought by stating her confusion:

> It's just I still feel lost. I met with the RTI coach and the reading specialist yesterday about some different things I was trying and I just still feel a little lost. I feel like I'm either always five steps behind or really don't know where to go… . We need more time to get used to it and get familiar with it for it to run smoothly. That first year, you're always kind of just treading water trying to figure it out.

The difficulty teachers were having understanding the RTI process was noted by T30GE, who stated, "I need to understand it frontwards and backwards, and I'm still trying to understand it right now… . And that's where a lot of teachers probably are."

One of the most confusing aspects of RTI implementation appeared to be understanding the Curriculum Based Measurement (CBM) data interpretation and analysis resulting from progress monitoring. The teachers remained confused in the spring regarding what the scores on CBM mean. T11GE noted:

> You know, on paper it looks very cut and dry and very if X then Y, but I feel like when I see the test scores or I compare those test scores to classroom performance, that's where things kind of get into that gray area, and I'm not really sure how to move forward.

In addition, a teacher stated during a walk-through observation, "I think the whole thing is too complicated to ever understand. All the data is confusing to me and I don't fully understand how to interpret it much less explain it to a parent," (Observation, 3-13-09). Teachers at GES were struggling to understand how to apply the CBM data to the next step in the process. T10GE noted:

> I'm still just confused on it, and then I've got spreadsheets and stuff telling me where to go but each child is just so different. It's not just like this is cut and dry. No one seems to fit, or my kids this year, anyway, because I don't have a super low class. They don't seem to just walk those tiers well.

T20GE expressed her frustration in regard to a recent meeting she had been at during which she learned that her student had made significant progress on the progress monitoring goal, thus indicating movement into the next tier was not appropriate. She stated:

> I thought the AIMSweb data was enough. So, now, yes, I'm still feeling like I don't have a full understanding of the process… . Confusing and frustrating, overwhelming, and I feel like it doesn't have to be that way. I think it could be a very good thing. I think it's excellent to know how someone is responding to interventions, and that's very good information to know. I just think we should all be on the same page on how we're going to do that and what's going to happen if step one doesn't work. I had no idea there was more that I was going to need to do after I had done everything that I thought I was supposed to do. So confusing and frustrating, but I don't feel it would have to be that way if we had all the kinks worked out.

There was a great deal of confusion regarding how to interpret how students were making progress on the CBM progress monitoring goal, as well as how to set the goal. In an email to me from the RTI Coach, she asked whether a new goal was written if the Winter Universal Screening benchmark assessment occurred prior to the completion of the goal. I explained to her that once a goal was written for a period of nine weeks, the goal should

be followed to its completion. At the end of the goal, the student's final performance would be examined and analyzed in light of the new norms resulting from the Winter assessment, and any new goal would then utilize the benchmark score from that assessment (Personal Communication, 10-21-08).

Another area of confusion regarded understanding how each tier of the RTI process worked. The teachers were especially confused about what Tier 1 was and how that tier worked. As previously described, the purpose of Tier 1 was to give the teacher an opportunity to examine and focus on how he or she was delivering the core content of the curriculum to the student through differentiated instruction and grouping practices within the 90-minute reading block prior to adding supplemental intervention in Tier 2A. In a meeting with the RTI Coach and school psychologist, both expressed concern that teachers were still struggling to understand the RTI process, especially the purpose of Tier 1. Rather than following the district's procedures for Tier 1, the teachers were soliciting the assistance of the reading specialist, who pulled the students for supplemental intervention prior to Tier 1 being conducted (Observation, 2-9-09). PGE noted his frustration upon learning of this:

> What we've been through is a mess and has been difficult to learn because it's been identifying different pieces. And we realize what we need to do this nine weeks coming up, the last quarter of the year, and what we need to do going into next year. And it's been messy. Things that we thought were Tier 2 were actually Tier 1, things that we thought we were frustrated with we really shouldn't be frustrated with. We can work this through. It's been a mess. It's been a mess all year.

The teachers at GES were clearly confused about the Tiers and expressed that confusion during the data collection. T10GE stated:

> The time frame, and then just all the different levels, I think, make it a little stressful or frustrating, a little, just knowing where students fall and what actually different [interventions] happens in each group. Like it looks good on paper, but then once each kid does that, their needs are different, and so it's like it changes the whole dynamic of your Tiers. So I think it's just hard being used to cut and dry – okay, yes, they qualify for special ed – and now there's just so much more to it.

Likewise, a third-grade teacher noted during a walk-through observation, "I'm still confused about the tiers. I get the progress monitoring, but I still don't understand the tiers," (Observation, 2-9-09).

Time Management

The teachers and administrators at GES continued to express concern regarding managing aspects of RTI implementation in the spring of their first year of implementation. The time requirements needed for administering weekly progress monitoring CBM probes to students receiving intervention was noted to still be problematic in the spring. T11GE stated:

> I think finding a time. I mean the probes can be consuming, especially when you have six and seven kids. And I know they're only a minute to three minutes each, but just trying to stay organized is a big piece, and there's a lot of different components, and every child you're doing a different probe with and, you know, just trying to organize it all and make it all flow and to get that in during the course of the week.

A second-grade teacher expressed the same concern during a grade level meeting by saying, "Finding the time to manage all these requirements for RTI is hard. The progress monitoring for two students takes away time from my other students," (Observation, 2-9-09). Likewise, a fifth-grade teacher noted during a walk-through observation, "I guess the main problem I have with RTI is the amount of time it takes to progress monitor all these kids. When am I supposed to teach?" (Observation, 2-23-09). T20GE added, "So

that's not as difficult as I thought it was going to be, but it's just that it still take the time to go and print the probes and the Maze and the CBMs." It should be noted that GES, like the other pilot schools, had moved the criteria for receiving interventions from the 10th percentile, as stipulated in the district's RTI plan, to the 25th percentile. This change resulted in more students receiving interventions, but it also resulted in more progress monitoring for the teachers to do. A review of AIMSweb data indicates that 5 students were below the 10th percentile in the fall and began Tier 1. By the end of the school year, 80 students were being progress monitored, although not necessarily for consideration of learning disabilities but for intervention support alone (AIMSweb Spring Benchmark Chart).

Another area the teachers have struggled to manage is the time allotted for intervention to occur. At the beginning of the year, all grades were asked by PGE to schedule a 30-minute intervention block to be utilized for interventions required by RTI implementation. The scheduling difficulties this created were noted in the themes developed for fall. By spring, the teachers continued to express concern regarding finding the time to implement the interventions. T30GE stated:

> Honestly, we just need more time, and that's one thing that teachers say all the time in general is there's just not enough time in the day. We've got so much we've got to teach to these kids and get it in, and there's just not enough time in the day to be able to teach them all that they need.

A second-grade teacher also expressed this concern during a walk-through observation by saying, "I'm overwhelmed by all this. This takes up a lot of time—time I don't have. I can't cover the standards adequately and do this. There's just not enough time in the school day," (Observation, 2-9-09). Despite having a set block of time allocated to do

interventions, the teachers continued to feel pressure in getting the interventions incorporated into their daily schedules. T10GE noted:

> I mean I set up a time for intervention. My kids that do not need to [have intervention] go to centers, and I pull the kids that I need to work with. But I have had to make sure that I have a time either there or some other time to do their progress monitoring because that takes a little extra that I can't be direct instructing during that time. I need kind of a quiet time. So I've restructured a little bit to be able to fit that in correctly.

The time constraints involved with RTI implementation have also been felt by the administrators at GES. PGE noted:

> It's consumed some time I didn't already have, so I've had to kind of reallocate a little bit and look at what can I delegate where, and to some extent maybe I've had to delegate some things I wouldn't have necessarily thrown to my assistant principal.

Need for Additional Resources

A third, distinct, theme was developed in the spring for GES pertaining to the need for additional resources in order to successfully implement RTI requirements. The teachers and administrators expressed their concern that in order to fully implement RTI, they needed additional resources in the form of specific interventions to use for Tier 2A and Tier 2B, along with continued personnel support through their RTI Coach. This theme pertains to locating resources with which to manage the required components of RTI implementation and is viewed as Stage 3, Management, within the Stages of Concern framework.

The teachers and administrators indicated that they needed specific reading interventions to implement with their students. Currently, the reading specialist pulls students for small group intervention in Tier 2A, and the RTI Coach pulls students for

individual intervention in Tier 2B (Intervention Schedule Document). In a meeting with the RTI Coach, she noted ongoing concerns from teachers regarding the need for specific intervention material they could use with their at-risk students. Specifically, the teachers were asking for reading interventions that were research-based and added that the school psychologist had questioned whether the instructional interventions they had done were research-based (Observation, 2-23-09). Along these lines, T20GE stated:

> Knowing what to try for those students as an intervention. Because I've got a little bit of experience – well, this is my third year in second grade – I know how to help a student that is having trouble with comprehension. I know how to help them become a little bit more fluent. But as far as diagnosing specific problems that are causing them to score so low, I'm not an expert in [that]. I have a limited repertoire of what I know to try during intervention time. So a challenge would be knowing what to do for them to make sure that I'm doing the right interventions to get growth, which I understand is what the support team is supposed to help with.

T11GE echoed this concern by noting:

> I think overall I think it's been good for teachers to have to do those interventions. Now, with that being said, I feel like we definitely are all still grasping for straws when it comes to what interventions we should be using. We do have an RTI Coach but she's one person, and I alone have a lot of kids that could benefit from interventions. And I wish we had some of those tools to use, just pick up and use, or a list that we can draw from [that's] research based – that's different from what we do.

At a kindergarten grade level meeting, a teacher also expressed this concern by saying, "I just wish we had more options for interventions. I don't feel we have enough choice in intervening with struggling students," (Observation, 2-9-09). Similarly, at a second grade level meeting, a second-grade teacher noted, "The only thing I would like to see next year is to have more options for interventions. I don't mind doing interventions with my students, that's my job as a teacher, but just give me something to use for those

interventions," (Observation, 2-9-09). A first-grade teacher also expressed this concern during a walk-through observation of Tier 1 instruction by saying, "I do think we need more options for specific interventions to use in the next phase. We don't have enough options," (Observation, 2-9-09). Fourth-grade teachers had the same concern at their grade level meeting and asked whether the district would provide intervention materials for the next year (Observation, 2-23-09). T11GE added:

> I think if we had more interventions, I think would be my biggest push right now, something to pull from that that would be the most beneficial thing for our students. We currently have an RTI Coach that does pull kids to do Tier 2 interventions, and she's been wonderful. I don't know how she keeps all that she has to do straight in her mind, but she's been very helpful, whether it's helping us get things set up on AIMSweb or getting our probes organized – she does it all. I think we have that support from her, so I think my biggest need right now is the intervention piece.

PGE also expressed concern regarding the need for more intervention materials for his staff to use. He stated:

> Where we're struggling, and I use that term rather loosely, is what we use in Tier 2. You need to be prepared with, "This is what it looks like," or "This is what it is." And what we have found – and we've just come to this realization in the last few weeks – is Tier 2A, as we defined it, we really already have that. That's really more people and small group and initial contact of maybe you just need a second dose of the curriculum in a small group, or you just need a little more time exploring it. But when it gets past that you have to be ready with materials. Whether it's materials for skill and drill or it's the neat little kits that you can go out and buy now, you need to be ready to say this is it, here's the thing, here's what we use. And that's been extremely painful for us because we don't have it.

In addition to concerns about needing intervention materials, the administrators at GES also expressed concern regarding the need for additional personnel to manage the RTI process. As previously discussed, the district RTI plan allocated management of

RTI implementation to the building principals of the pilot sites. Regarding this, PGE noted:

> I can't be the person that's the main RTI support because I've got to do bus [duty], I've got to do suspensions, I've got to do [teacher] evaluations. There are too many other things. Plus a teacher struggling does not want to come to the principal and admit they're struggling. I have a handful that will do it. Every principal gets those people that will do it, but every principal has those ones that won't come to them because they're afraid. It's naturally threatening to go admit your weaknesses to your boss that's in charge of hiring and firing. Maybe I'll learn eventually how to get around that, but I don't see any way around that. It's just natural human nature. But I think [you need] building level people that are dedicated to [RTI].

PGE indicated that he believes that a full-time person is needed at the building level to assist the teachers in implementing RTI. He continued:

> But I need someone that can get in there with the teachers and meet [with them] and see what we do with the kids, are they really there, how are we going to prove they're not really functioning there, and if they are really functioning there what are we doing? It's a full-time position… I think if you have a full-time RTI person, someone who's dedicated to making sure it's going well, and their job is a combination of helping teachers, and when I don't need to help teachers I can intervene with students, that's a full-time job right there. I don't think you need a full-time psychologist or anything like that. I think you're okay if you have that full-time point person.

GES is the only school to have hired a part-time RTI Coach to assist with implementing RTI. A review of the RTI Coach's schedule indicates she spends her time assisting teachers with AIMSweb data interpretation and pulling students for one-on-one intervention in Tier 2B after the reading specialist works with them in small group intervention for Tier 2A (RTI Coach's Schedule). PGE hopes to be able to create a full-time job for the RTI Coach for next year to sustain RTI implementation. He said:

> I mean she has been extremely valuable to the point of I don't know how to approach it with central office, but I know a teacher assistant on paper is the value of half a teacher on paper, and I'd like to make her full-time. So I'm working with

> that point of can I trade it. Can I swap one and get the other? Because she's putting in way more hours than she should, and teachers always do anyway, so I understand that, but she could easily be busy full-time here. But could we do it without her? Yes. Could we do it without her and the reading specialist? Probably, but it's really getting hard now. You know, do it properly, or [just] do it? I mean that's the two things. We could still do it but doing it well? No, not doing it well.

APGE concurs with his view of the need for a position dedicated solely to RTI management. She stated:

> If we didn't have her [RTI Coach], it'd be much more difficult. Our reading specialist helps some, so she kind of goes above and beyond her regular duties of what her job entails to help us implement this. She helps our teachers implement it. We have our general education teaching assistants that help this. We pull our teaching assistants in the building to do some of the benchmarking just to keep it impartial as far as we don't want any teacher encouraging, maybe you do know that sound. We have to keep the data as fluid as we can. So in the building that did not have assistance [from the RTI Coach], it would be a huge, and I don't want to use the word burden, but it would be a huge responsibility for a general ed teacher.

The RTI Coach at GES certainly plays a large role in implementing RTI. At a support team meeting for a first-grade student who had completed Tier 2A and was still below the 10th percentile in performance but his growth rate had exceeded the 25th percentile, thus indicating he was on an upward trajectory in improving his reading skills, the RTI Coach assisted the teacher in writing the next goal for progress monitoring in another round of Tier 2A. In addition, she noted she would begin working with the student individually for one-on-one intervention (Observation, 2-9-09). At the kindergarten grade level meeting, the RTI Coach reviewed the CBM benchmark scores of each of the students the teachers were concerned about and assisted the teachers in making sense of the AIMSweb data and navigating the web-based interface of the program (Observation, 2-9-09). On the same day at a support team meeting for a second-

grade student who had not made adequate growth or performance on his progress monitoring goal, the RTI Coach noted that she would begin pulling the student for one-on-one intervention for Tier 2B (Observation, 2-9-09). When providing individual intervention for students, the RTI Coach conducted review for high frequency sight words, had the student use tiles to spell the word, then had the student manipulate the word tiles to create different words in the same word family (Observation, 2-23-09). The RTI Coach, therefore, is heavily and directly involved with RTI implementation through assisting teachers in interpreting CBM data from the Universal Screening for benchmarking and weekly progress monitoring, developing progress monitoring goals for students who are at-risk and in need of intervention, and providing direct intervention to students in Tier 2B.

Research Question 1a: What Do Teachers and Principals Perceive As Barriers to Implementing RTI?

In the fall, the teachers and administrators perceived several barriers to implementing RTI. These barriers included finding time to implement RTI amid other district initiatives, reluctance to perceive RTI practices as applicable to their school, and the perception that implementing RTI substantially slowed the referral process for special education eligibility. All of these themes were noted to be Stage 2, Personal, in nature when viewed through the lens of the Stages of Concern framework. By spring, the teachers primary perceived barrier to implementing RTI addressed how students move through the tiers within the RTI framework utilized by the district. The concern regarding the amount of time the process took and the slowing down of the referral process remained in the spring, but the teachers and administrators perceived these delays

as issues within the tier framework. This theme is considered to be a Stage 2, Personal, concern due to the focus on the individual within the implementation and how that individual meets the demands of the implementation. This theme is thoroughly discussed below.

Movement Through the Tiers

As previously discussed above, the teachers at GES had difficulty understanding the purpose of Tier 1 instruction within the 90-minute reading block prior to moving on to supplemental intervention at the Tier 2 levels. Consequently, they formed the perception that Tier 1 instruction and its progress monitoring was an unnecessary delay in the overall RTI process. More specifically, the teachers perceived Tier 1 to cause a delay in students receiving much-needed intervention. The RTI Coach and school psychologist noted during a meeting with me that the teachers were unwilling and resistant to doing Tier 1 with progress monitoring and had not been collecting data at that point of the process. The RTI Coach noted, "They feel they are being forced to wait nine weeks before a child can receive help through interventions," (Observation, 2-9-09). T20GE noted her frustration:

> I think there needs to be a plan for what to do at the beginning of school for students that are extremely low, falling below the tenth percentile, other than let's monitor them for nine weeks and see if they should go to the reading specialist. I think there needs to be some kind of clause that says, okay, if you're in this shape you're going straight to Tier 2, and you're going to the reading specialist from the beginning, and we're not going to have a problem towards the middle or end of the year when we realize, oh, you were never in Tier 2 even though you really were. So I think there needs to be a clause for that.

T10GE also noted her concern regarding the delay in students receiving intervention in Tier 2. She stated:

> At the same time, waiting nine weeks on some of the things to actually give a kid that extra, extra help, it's hard for me to sit there and just go, no, for nine weeks I've just got to see how you do, and that's been hard. And then it's been hard knowing what's the difference, really, for just differentiating for them or actually giving them that extra instruction time like a different way. Intervention, there's my word. It's been hard knowing what's differentiating for them and what's an actual intervention for them, because that intervention we can't do till after that nine weeks.

Likewise, another teacher stated during a walk-through observation, "I think we are waiting too long to help kids. They should start getting help in Tier 1 and not delay it nine weeks. That feels like a stalling tactic to me," (Observation, 3-13-09). T11GE shared her thoughts on the perceived delay Tier 1 was causing by saying:

> I feel like it does take a lot of time, and I feel like sometimes you can just waste a lot of time because I know I want to help this child, and I want to do some interventions with so and so right off the bat, but I know you're supposed to wait and collect that data. So that's the biggest frustration for me. I would also love to see something where we don't have to wait quite as long to begin some of those interventions. I mean after you've taught a few years you can pretty much the first couple of weeks of school pick out those kids that you know are going to need a something a little extra – a little extra support in the classroom – and sometimes it's frustrating to just kind of hang back and say, oh, I don't have my nine weeks data in yet.

T30GE also expressed her concern regarding the delay by stating:

> Now there's nine weeks of intervention. There's nine weeks of, well, if that didn't work let's try some more intervention and it could take up to an entire school year to see that we need to put this child in an IEP. And I think some of the problems that some people may have is that on one hand it is really good to exhaust all your options. But on the other hand people worry about, well, all that time you're using you could have this child on an IEP. So I think it's kind of a balance.

In addition, a first-grade teacher asked me in the teacher's lounge, "Here's my question for you. Why are we being made to wait so long before our students can get help through interventions?" When I asked her for clarification, she said:

> We have to progress monitor them for nine whole weeks during our reading class. We already know they have a problem with reading or we wouldn't be concerned. It makes no sense to me that we have to wait nine weeks before they start receiving interventions from the reading specialist. That's just stalling in my opinion and in the opinion of other teachers I know. (Observation, 2-9-09)

Both administrators at GES were aware of the teachers' concerns. PGE stated:

> We really kind of waited for a long time of getting our account started with AIMSweb and all that kind of stuff. It was a lot of are we going RTI so let's wait a little while, and then we're going to intervene but we've got to wait nine weeks. You know, the teachers always felt like it was probably a solid twelve weeks of waiting before we could help them [students] officially. And that leads teachers to want to just go ahead and do it, then that messes up Tier 1 data and it's part of our own mess.

APGE expressed her concern regarding the teachers' perceived delay in students being able to receive intervention. She noted:

> I think in the beginning of the year, you do have some resentment from the teachers. I don't mean resentment as far as they don't want to help kids. They want to help them, and to have to help them according to a time table is difficult because to a certain extent, you don't want to put intervention too early because it's a Tier 2 intervention. You want to see how they're doing. And so with a lot being said, the teachers sometimes have the idea that we're waiting for them [students] to fail. And so that's been very difficult for them, because especially teachers that have taught for a very long time they have a very good eye for this child needs help.

PGE noted his belief that much of the teachers' dissatisfaction with the Tier 1 process involves difficulty understanding the difference between differentiating instruction and providing interventions. He noted:

> …teachers naturally want to start intervening. It's what they naturally do. And again, they didn't realize they were doing it until they were told they couldn't, and that's been, probably, the hardest part, to learn how to differentiate without intervening. I've had a lot of teachers say, well, can't I just start pulling Timmy and just giving him a little something during intervention block because it's what it's there for, for me to just pull and do it. And by the way I still understand RTI the answer is no until proven he needs to be pulled. And, first, try some things in Tier 1. And try some differentiation, and that's been the hardest part of learning

> and feeling like you're waiting. You're not really waiting, you're just learning how to differentiate before intervening. And I think teachers were intervening a lot quicker than they realized.

The key to movement through the tiers of the RTI model was the results of the weekly progress monitoring. Goals were set based on the desired growth rate, and at the end of each tier, a decision was made whether or not the student had achieved the desired growth rate. If not, the student then moved into the next tier. The teachers at GES expressed concerns regarding how the goal was determined and what it meant if the child achieved that goal. T20GE stated:

> Well, the goals seem to be so easy to be met even for somebody that was that low that if they meet that goal then, oh, they're above target and we're good. But we're really not good when they are that far behind, still in the tenth percentile and a DRA ten at this point of second grade… . Even though that's growth, and that's wonderful, and I've seen so much growth for them, obviously, that's not enough… . And it does when you just look at that percentile, but when you look at the target it doesn't because it says above target like they're just doing fabulously. If you just look at the percentile then, obviously, it's a big, red flag, but once you're progress monitoring and what it shows you for how they're working towards their goal, it seems like everything's fine.

T10GE also expressed the same concern by saying, "It's just sometimes my kid that struggles the most, she makes little progresses on those benchmarks, but she's still not where she needs to be." In addition, a second-grade teacher noted during a walk-through observation, "I understand he met the goal, but he is still well below where he needs to be on reading skills. I'm not sure this RTI thing is measuring appropriate skills on these goals," (Observation, 2-9-09). The concern that making progress on the CBM progress monitoring goals does not equate with progress in the classroom was shared by several teachers. T20GE stated:

> But like we said, there's a problem with above target [on the CBM progress

> monitoring goals]. If it's showing above target and this child is still DRA ten, below tenth percentile, still has to have their hand held to do all these things in class and is getting all these other things, then there's a problem with that model if it's showing me they're above target.

The teachers especially had a difficult time understanding decisions not to move into the next tier when the student remained below the tenth percentile in their performance on the CBM, but their rate of improvement was such that it was above the growth rate expected of a student at that grade level. At a fourth grade level meeting, a teacher questioned how a student could even be making progress if that student remained below the tenth percentile on the CBM progress monitoring scores (Observation, 2-23-09). The same situation occurred at a kindergarten grade level meeting where a student was making huge growth gains that would very shortly take the student above the tenth percentile. The kindergarten teacher of this student expressed her concern in sending a child to first grade who was still very weak in reading and early literacy skills and was, in fact, still scoring below the tenth percentile (Observation 2-9-09). T20GE noted her concern by stating:

> I also think there need to be changes in the goal setting because I think they are too low to show what's really going on because they're showing above target, which seems like a wonderful thing, and it is good if they're making those small goals, but when there are students that are that far below grade level it's not. If this is what we're using to move into the next tier, then the goals need to be different. If we can use DRA or something else without having to chart and graph things that I don't know how to do to move them into the next level that's fine. But if we're using AIMSweb to do it, then those goals needs to be realistic goals.

Her thoughts were echoed by a second-grade teacher during a walk-through observation. This teacher noted, "I think the way we are measuring these goals is inappropriate. How

can looking at how many words a child reads a minute compare to the standards we teach in reading? I don't think there's a fit here," (Observation, 2-9-09).

Research Question 1b: How are the Roles of Teachers and Principals Affected by RTI?

Teachers at GES indicated in the fall that their role as teachers was improved by RTI implementation through better instructional practices, and this was their perception in the spring as well. This theme falls within the Stage 2, Personal, stage of the Stages of Concern framework as it deals with how teachers perceive RTI implementation in light of their role as teachers. In the spring, the teachers reiterated that they perceived their role to be strengthened through RTI practices that led to better instructional practices, as well as to teaching with more data to guide them. In the fall, the administrators at GES indicated their role was affected by RTI implementation through the need to provide guidance to their staff as they began implementing RTI. By spring, both administrators perceived a need to change their leadership style to address the need to lead their staff through conflict regarding RTI implementation and to provide more direct leadership in ensuring RTI practices were being followed. Within the Stages of Concern framework, this theme is considered to be Stage 2, Personal, as it reflects the administrators considering their role within the RTI implementation. Each of these themes is discussed in detail in the following section.

Improved Teaching

The teachers at GES perceive RTI implementation to have created more focus on their teaching skills through emphasis on student growth and intervention. The teachers have concentrated more on their teaching methodology and how that methodology affects

their students. T11GE noted:

> It definitely has made me slow down a bit and just really focus on those basic concepts, because I've seen how many of my kiddos this year are needing just those foundational pieces before we can progress. So it's really made me take a look at my own teaching and definitely start where my kids are, to come meet my kids at their level and then try to bring them up as much as possible.

The use of AIMSweb CBM for the Universal Screening three times a year and the weekly progress monitoring of at-risk students was noted to be very beneficial by the teachers. By analyzing how students perform on the Universal Screening, the teachers have been able to better group their students for reading. One second-grade teacher noted at grade level meeting that she had been using the AIMSweb data to better differentiate instruction for her class and to form flexible groups (Observation, 2-9-09). T10GE noted, "But I think it [AIMSweb data] helps the teacher to know more who to work with, at least just for me. It's just helped me know more who to work with and what to work on." T11GE noted how her grouping of students has been improved by AIMSweb. She stated:

> We've done a lot of small group stuff, which I always like doing anyway. I think it's very effective, more so than whole group sometimes so we've done a lot of small group. I've done a lot of learning centers too. There's definitely certain ones I try to hang around more. A lot of the kids are in the AIMSweb [at-risk range] so it's more about classroom management, I guess, and teaching styles. We've done a lot of partner activities where I'm specifically pairing certain kids with other kids.

T10GE has also utilized the AIMSweb data to assist her in forming her groups for reading, as well as to identify which students need more assistance. She noted:

> I mean I guess it still kind of showed me my high to low kids, but the fall one [benchmark] did catch a few more I knew that I really need to work with more, and so I pull their group more often like during my guided reading time and make sure to get them in once or twice a week. Several of those meet with the reading specialist just for extra reading time. I make sure they're getting that really integrated with as much reading as I can.

In addition, the progress monitoring component of RTI implementation has added a level of accountability and organization that has been helpful for some teachers. T30GE noted:

> I think it's very beneficial for the kids, and it helps teachers with their organization, using all the data and entering it in on the web site and that kind of thing. It helps as far as organization and management and getting it done, because that's been a problem, with me particularly. I have a hard time managing those particular students that need that extra intervention.

The teachers at GES also perceive that the CBM component of RTI implementation has given them more data to teach with, and they have incorporated that data into their instruction. T10GE said, "I probably have more data than I've ever had. I'm great with records, and I just know my kids, but as far as actually having some concrete data, this is great." During a walk-through observation of Tier 1, a first-grade teacher said, "I like having the data from AIMSweb. It gives me data to use in my instruction. I feel like I'm teaching with more data," (Observation, 2-9-09). The data generated from AIMSweb for progress monitoring provided a clear indication to a kindergarten teacher that her concern for two of her at-risk students was justified. She said, "Well, of the two I'm most concerned about, these charts are definitely showing they're weak," (Observation, 2-9-09). PGE noted that his staff had become much more conscious of using data to drive decisions about students after beginning RTI implementation. He stated:

> It's definitely making teachers understand what it is to be data driven. You've had that buzzword for awhile, but RTI forces it. It's like anything else, you think you are something until you're forced to be it, then you find out if you really are or not. I know RTI forces you to be data driven because you've got to either show progress or not. You've got to have the initial benchmark. There is so much data driven to it that I think it's helped teachers really understand. I have

> heard teachers say this year, "Oh, that's what it means, yeah, that's what it means to be data driven."

Principals: Changes in Leadership Style

The principal and assistant principal at GES perceived RTI implementation to have impacted their leadership style through an increased need to guide staff through the conflict that arose in the first year of implementing RTI, as well as through a need to provide more direct supervision to ensure the RTI process was being followed as stipulated in the district's plan. PGE reflected on the first year of RTI implementation:

> I've looked back and almost thought should we have not volunteered because I could have kept doing what I was doing last year and still be more ready for when we had to be onboard because I think we've had more fights over [RTI] than I really [think we should have]. There's been a lot of negative experiences and feelings that I just didn't need in the second year of developing the school. I mean if we were more established, maybe it wouldn't have been so hard. But it was more of a negative impact than I foresaw – the not knowing. We didn't have a solid plan. We muddled over and through. It was messy. We're still just finalizing things. So I think that built frustration. Frustration, you take it out on the ones you love and the ones that are closest. And we're all in this together, and we all care about what we do.

APGE also noted the frustration the staff has felt over not fully knowing or understanding how the whole RTI process works. She stated:

> I guess the teachers haven't seen the fruits of their labor yet. Like I really want this child to have some help, and they haven't experienced that yet to see that the growth or regression, depending on the data, of what they're doing in the classroom. But they've not seen them receive some of the more specialized help from special education that they may need.

The administrators have had to adapt their leadership styles to lead their staff through this frustration and conflict. PGE noted:

> The frustration has been how am I going to lead people through it? It's kind of like identifying I know I've got to get here, and I know I've got to bring all these people with me. I just don't know how to give them proper directions to get there

> because they're not coming with me in my car – they've got to come in their own car, so I've got to really give them good directions. And that's been a frustration for me of giving the good directions and then making sure they all understand the directions. The successful feelings will come when we all get there and go, "Oh, see, we're here." So it's been frustrating success to go through it.

The administrators have had to guide their staff through the conflict of dealing with a complicated implementation such as RTI and comfort and encourage them as much as possible. APGE stated:

> …but this year, it was more so that we're getting our feet, we're seeing where we're going with it and comforting – trying to just comfort the teachers, to help them feel comfortable with a process that is new to me. So giving them that comfort and then me doing the research behind closed doors to make sure that we're giving them the right advice. There's been some trial and error. We went through some things but we'll make it work within our building… .

PGE took action to assist his staff in better understanding the RTI process. He sent his reading specialist, RTI Coach, school psychologist, and a first-grade teacher to a conference on RTI in February 2009. A review of the brochure indicated the conference was titled, "Implementing Response to Intervention Workshop," and was led by Susan Hall, Ed.D. of the 95 Percent Group Inc. Topics addressed included scheduling intervention in the master school calendar, establishing Universal Screening, utilizing interventions, organizing problem-solving teams, monitoring data, and keeping intervention logs (Implementing Response to Intervention Workshop Handout). In a meeting with the RTI Coach and school psychologist, the school psychologist noted that after attending, they were all "on the same page" for the first time since beginning the RTI implementation in the fall. She added, "The light came on," (Observation, 2-9-09). At least two teachers at GES believed that PGE was providing guidance through the RTI process. During a conversation in the hall, one teacher said, "It's getting better. Our

principal keeps working with us and hearing us out. He acknowledges our concerns and addresses them." The other agreed and added, "Yes, [PGE] is doing a great job steering us through these murky waters," (Observation, 2-9-09).

In addition to providing guidance through conflict, the administrators at GES have had to take on a more direct leadership style to ensure compliance with the district's RTI plan. PGE noted:

> It's much more that at this stage, and this could be part of just our school developing or part of the swing of the pendulum of styles in elementary education, but I've had to do more telling what to do, and that's not my style. I prefer we grow together, but I don't know if it's that staff would just rather be told or if it's RTI that demands that, or it it's going through this pilot type thing that demands that. But it definitely has changed my [leadership] style. I've had to dictate a little bit more than I like. I'm not much on doing that stylewise.

The need to shift to a more direct style of leadership arose from difficulties the staff at GES had with understanding and implementing Tier 1 and how students were assigned to Tier 2A status. As previously discussed, the teachers did not fully comprehend the necessity of providing focused instruction during the 90-minute reading block prior to adding supplemental intervention through the reading specialist's pull-out intervention. PGE stated:

> I've got to be a little more of the, I'm going to just say, teaching police. I've got to make sure Tier 1 looks better because it's not where it needs to be. And I am a little more of the gatekeeper than I thought I would be. But what we call Tier 2A meetings have been labeled as optional, and our process of going in Tier 2A has been left a little gray. So for me, I feel someone needs to go be the one that steps in and says yes or no. So I'm delegating that to myself, and that's been my role that I'll take – AIMSweb and I'll take RTI, and my assistant took another big push in the district. So I took RTI – I felt like it had to be me… Ultimately it's going to fall back to me anyway, so then I will take it. And you will – yes, you'll prove to our committees that the child needs to move on, but what I've found is a lot of the teachers [at the support team meetings] don't want any friction, and that's part of the relationship piece is when teachers [at the support team

> meetings] don't want to tell you that you haven't done it well enough. "That's not my job," is the way a lot of teachers feel because it brings bad blood between teachers. So that's going to be me that has the final yes to go to Tier 2A. Tier 2B will be another whole process. That really is the [referral] process. Getting the parents involved, that's mandated at that point. But Tier 2A, the first initial official interventions, will be my decision.

APGE also shared how her role as assistant principal had become more direct by necessity after she had to call several teachers in for meetings to find out why they were not progress monitoring their at-risk students weekly as requested. She noted:

> Of course, we tried to encourage it for our teachers and put a very positive spin on it for them. But as far as personal feelings towards it, I mean I think it can be a good program if it's monitored correctly, that being the key. The administration has to have meetings like we had the other day of why certain students weren't being monitored. So I think the monitoring on the teachers' part and the administration in any building keeping up with that, and then with communication from year to year, we have teachers not starting over from year to year and continuing into the next.

The lack of Tier 1 instruction with progress monitoring was clearly noted in a review of three students' files. All three had received supplemental services from both the RTI Coach and the reading specialist during what should have been a concentrated focus on the delivery of the reading curriculum in Tier 1 (Student Green Folders). Once the administrators had become aware of this lack of adherence to the district RTI plan, changes were immediately implemented by the two leaders. In a meeting with the RTI Coach, she noted that PGE was having to be very strict about who goes into Tier 2A because some of the teachers had skipped over Tier 1 and were having their students pulled out of the 90-minute reading block by the reading specialist rather than focusing on instruction for nine weeks during Tier 1. She added that PGE had stepped in to stop this practice (Observation, 2-23-09). Likewise, at a support team meeting on a student

who had been through Tier 2A and had made significant growth, APGE was in attendance and actively led the meeting. Her role in the meeting was very direct, and she asked numerous questions of the teacher to ensure that the RTI process was being followed as stipulated in the district's RTI plan. The effects of the administrators' close monitoring of the Tier 1 practices was soon felt by teachers. T20GE arrived for her interview very frustrated and upset after attending a support team meeting during which she was told she would have to re-do Tier 1 because the student had been pulled by the reading specialist for supplemental intervention with no documented Tier 1 instruction occurring with weekly progress monitoring. She thought her student would be going into Tier 2B, and she was very confused and angry. She brought another teacher into her interview to "witness" what she said during her interview (Observation, 3-18-09).

Research Question 1c: What Factors Facilitate RTI Implementation?

In the fall, the teachers and administrators at GES indicated the emphasis of their principal's lead in RTI would result in improved instruction as the factor that facilitated RTI implementation. By spring, the teachers and administrators expressed their belief that RTI implementation would lead to improved outcomes for students through student growth and the support RTI practices provide for students. This theme is highly similar to the theme from fall with the exception that the teachers at GES perceived this outcome independently of the influence of their principal. This theme falls within Stage 4, Consequence, on the Stages of Concern framework and is discussed in detail below.

Improved Outcomes for Students

Teachers and administrators at GES expressed their belief that practices associated with RTI would ultimately lead to student growth. This belief was a factor that facilitated RTI implementation for the staff at GES. T11GE stated:

> I think it's really interesting too to see those kids that are really struggling at the beginning of the year, and you do those weekly data plans, and you do see that progress being made, so I think that's a good pat on the back that what you are doing is working.

Likewise, T10GE noted that she had seen growth in some of her students who had participated in the RTI interventions. She said:

> A couple of the ones that I progress monitor, they didn't fall low enough to [go to the next tier]. They're not in a neat Tier 2, even Tier 2A. But it's been enough so that I can see that progress, but, yes, they are progressing. They may be a little slower than the majority of the class, but I can see those [improvements], and that's nice.

Students were certainly making progress at GES. A review of the AIMSweb progress monitoring data for second grade students revealed that four students who had been progress monitored throughout the late fall and early winter had made significant progress which had resulted in them rising above the tenth percentile (Individual Student Progress Monitoring Charts). At a second grade level meeting, the teacher of two of these students expressed her pleasure that two of her at-risk students who had begun the year below the tenth percentile were now within the average range. She said, "I've really seen two of my students grow in reading by using this process. They've gone from below the tenth percentile in fall to average now. This program has a lot of promise," (Observation, 2-9-09). Parents of students at GES were also beginning to see tremendous improvement in their children's reading skills after participating in the RTI process. At a

support team meeting to discuss a student's progress after participation in Tier 2A, the team noted that although he was still slightly below average on the Winter Universal Screening benchmark, his growth was so great that he had achieved his goal on progress monitoring. The team decided to keep him on another round of Tier 2A intervention to see if he sustains his progress. His parent noted, "This program is so nice to have here at [GES]. Our son is receiving tremendous benefit from it," (Observation, 2-23-09).

In addition to the student growth noted by the staff at GES, they also expressed the belief that RTI practices provide support for struggling students. T10GE stated, "I think it will be beneficial to those kids that would not have a specific learning disability or something, and it's going to help things [for them]." T30GE also echoed the beneficial aspects of RTI implementation for students by saying, "It's more work, to be honest with you, but it's worth it because it benefits the children. I mean it's good for the kids." In discussing a student who did not qualify for special education services last year but is currently participating in the RTI process, T11GE noted:

> I feel like now she's getting that support that she needs in the classroom through those interventions, whether it's from me or the RTI coach or the reading specialist. You know, it's become a catalyst to put some supports in place for her.

APGE stressed that RTI provides support to students and helps them become successful. She stated:

> I think it is one way that we can help students as far as helping teachers identify that this is what this child needs to be successful. It may not ever be a child that would qualify, maybe a child the stays in Tier 1 or stay in Tier 2, but this is what we need to do to make the child successful because that's the goal, the kids being successful and the teachers being able to implement it. And I think success as far as some students need help and then pass the test [for special education eligibility], and so they don't receive that help. So this can give us enough data points to, hopefully, help identify those students and get them some help.

Her thoughts were shared by a first-grade teacher during a walk-through observation of Tier 1. She said, "This RTI process supports students who are struggling in reading. By providing them with intervention now, we are giving them the supports they need to make gains," (Observation, 2-9-09). The positive benefits of RTI to students was summarized by PGE, who said:

> When I think it really starts to work, I think we'll see success in two ways. One, we will truly get help to those kids that just need a little more, and they will find success and just keep moving forward. And I think we will identify earlier, kids that really need the help earlier, as opposed to waiting for them to fall far enough behind to qualify. I think that's the point that we're looking forward to.

Research Question 2: To What Extent Do the Concerns Expressed by Teachers And Principals Vary from the Beginning to the End of the First Year of RTI Implementation?

The second research question was quantitative in nature and addressed whether concerns expressed by participants at GES on the Stages of Concern Questionnaire (SoCQ) varied significantly from the beginning to the end of the first year of RTI implementation. To determine whether these concerns expressed by teachers and principals at GES vary significantly from the fall to the spring of the first year of implementing RTI, a paired samples *t*-test was performed to compare the fall and spring scores for participants. The SoCQ was collected in the fall with a return rate of 65% and in the spring with a return rate of 94%. Descriptive data from the SoCQ is reviewed in the sections below, along with results of the paired samples *t*-test.

SoCQ Scores for GES

The spring scores for GES on the SoCQ, along with the fall scores, are summarized in Figure 31. As can be seen, the highest score occurred on Stage 0,

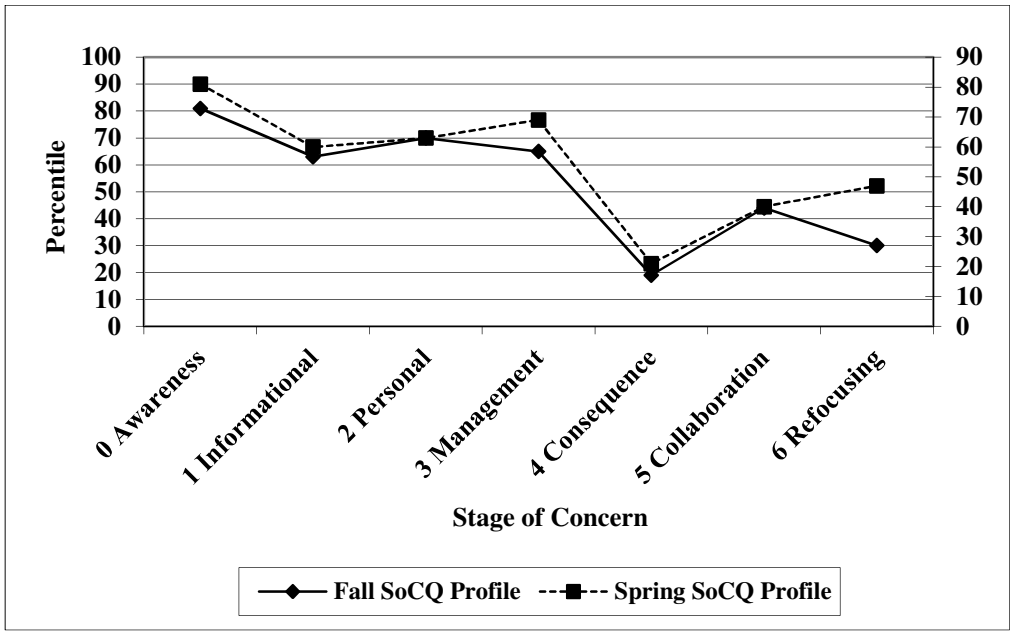


***Figure 28*. SoCQ Spring and Fall Profiles for GES.**

Awareness, with a score at the 81st percentile. This score indicates the staff at GES were very much aware of RTI as an innovation but were also aware of other initiatives being implemented within the district at the same time as RTI. As previously discussed, several other major initiatives, including Gradespeed and new State standards, were being implemented simultaneously with RTI. In the fall qualitative data analysis, participants at GES expressed concern regarding another add-on on top of the other initiatives they were implementing, and this concern was noted to be a perceived barrier to implementing RTI. By spring, participants at GES remained concerned about the time requirements to manage aspects of RTI implementation, but no concerns regarding other initiatives were noted.

The second-highest score on the SoCQ occurred on Stage 3, Management, with a percentile at the 69th percentile. This score suggests participants at GES were highly focused on how the demands of implementing RTI could be managed or scheduled. Two themes were developed in the spring which were classified as Stage 3, Management. One addressed concerns regarding time management demands and one addressed the need for more resources to sustain RTI implementation. This score on the SoCQ corroborates the classification of these two themes as Stage 3, Management, and supports the idea that participants had concerns regarding management of RTI.

A third area was noted to be very close to the score on the second-highest score. As noted by George et al. (2006) scores within 10 points between scales on the SoCQ bear equal influence on participants. Thus, the score on Stage 2, Personal, was so close to the score on Stage 3, Management, that interpretively those scores indicate equal

influence. The score on Stage 2, Personal, at the 63rd percentile indicates participants at GES were concerned regarding how implementing RTI affected them personally. As discussed above, the majority of themes developed for both fall and spring for GES were classified Stage 2, Personal, within the Stages of Concern Framework. This high score on the SoCQ appears to corroborate the findings of the qualitative data analysis and supports the classification of these themes as Personal within the Stages of Concern framework.

In examining the relationship between Stage 1, Information, and Stage 2, Personal, the score for Stage 2, Personal is higher than the score for Stage 1, Information. This pattern of scores suggests that participants at GES are so focused on Personal concerns that they do not have much desire to learn more about RTI implementation (George et al., 2006). This was also the case in the fall, and no change in this pattern had occurred by spring. The Stages of Concern framework holds that until these intense Personal level concerns are addressed and alleviated, the teachers at GES will not desire to gain information regarding RTI or how to improve RTI implementation (George et al.).

Another important interpretive relationship exists in the relationship of Stage 6, Refocusing, with the other stages. By spring, the score on Stage 6, Refocusing, "tailed up" or was a higher percentile than the last two scores. When this pattern occurs very early in an implementation, the implication, according to interpretive guidelines established by George et al. (2006), is that the staff at GES desire a return to previous and more familiar methods of practice. In this case, the innovation under study is RTI

implementation, and a desire to return to previous methods of practice would involve a return to previous referral practices. This pattern suggests that the staff at GES continue to desire a return to previous referral practices rather than RTI implementation.

In comparing the SoCQ profile of GES in the fall with the profile in the spring, the profiles are highly similar with little variation. Scores on Stage 0, Awareness, Stage 3, Management, and Stage 6, Refocusing, were higher in the spring than in the fall. This suggests that concerns expressed by participants at GES in the spring were slightly more intense for these areas than those expressed in the fall. The significance of these higher scores will be discussed below with the results of the paired samples *t*-test. Regarding highest and second-highest scores, participants at GES indicated their highest concern for Stage 0, Awareness, and second-highest concern as Stage 3, Management, with a close third-highest score on Stage 2, Personal. Qualitative data analysis supports the awareness of other district initiatives in addition to RTI implementation, along with high levels of Management and Personal concerns. Most qualitative themes developed for GES in the fall and spring were categorized as Personal concerns due to their focus on how the participants perceived the demands of RTI and how they perceived their ability to meet those demands. For both fall and spring, participants at GES indicated Management concerns pertaining to managing the demands of RTI implementation. This concern on the SoCQ was also corroborated through qualitative themes developed in the fall and spring pertaining to managing, or scheduling, RTI related activities and having the available resources to continue implementing RTI.

Frequency of SoCQ by Participants

Table 51 provides a summary of the frequency of the highest SoCQ scores for each stage by participant. A total of 49% of participants at GES indicated Awareness, Stage 0, as their highest stage of concern. Another 26% indicated Stage 3, Management, as their highest score. Three percent of participants indicated Information, Stage 1,Consequence, Stage 4, and Refocusing, Stage 6 as their highest stage of concern, and 8% indicated Personal, Stage 2, and Collaboration, Stage 5, as their highest stage of concern.

The frequency of second-highest scores for participants at GES is summarized in Table 52. A total of 23% of the participants at GES indicated Awareness, Stage 0, as their second-highest stage of concern, while 20% indicated Personal, Stage 2, and Refocusing, Stage 6, as their second-highest stage of concern. The remaining participants indicated Information (14%), Stage 1, Management (14%), Stage 3, and Collaboration (8%), Stage 5,as their second-highest stages of concern.

SoCQ Scores for Interviewees

Figure 32 provides a summary of PGE's fall and spring profiles on the SoCQ, along with the spring profile of the school for comparison. PGE indicated Refocusing, Stage 6, as his highest score in the spring. This score suggests PGE is aware of ways to better improve RTI implementation, but it also can indicate a desire to return to previous ways of practice which in this case would involve a return to previous referral methods. However, as noted above in the section on qualitative data analysis, PGE had concerns regarding time management and resource management and had spent time looking at

Table 51

Frequency of Highest Stage of Concern for Individual Participants at GES

Highest Stage of Concern	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
Number of Participants	17	1	3	9	1	3	1	35
Percent of Participants	49	3	8	26	3	8	3	100

Table 52

Frequency of Second-Highest Stage of Concern for Individual Participants at GES

Second-Highest Stage of Concern	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
Number of Participants	8	5	7	5	0	3	7	35
Percent of Participants	23	14	20	14	0	8	20	100

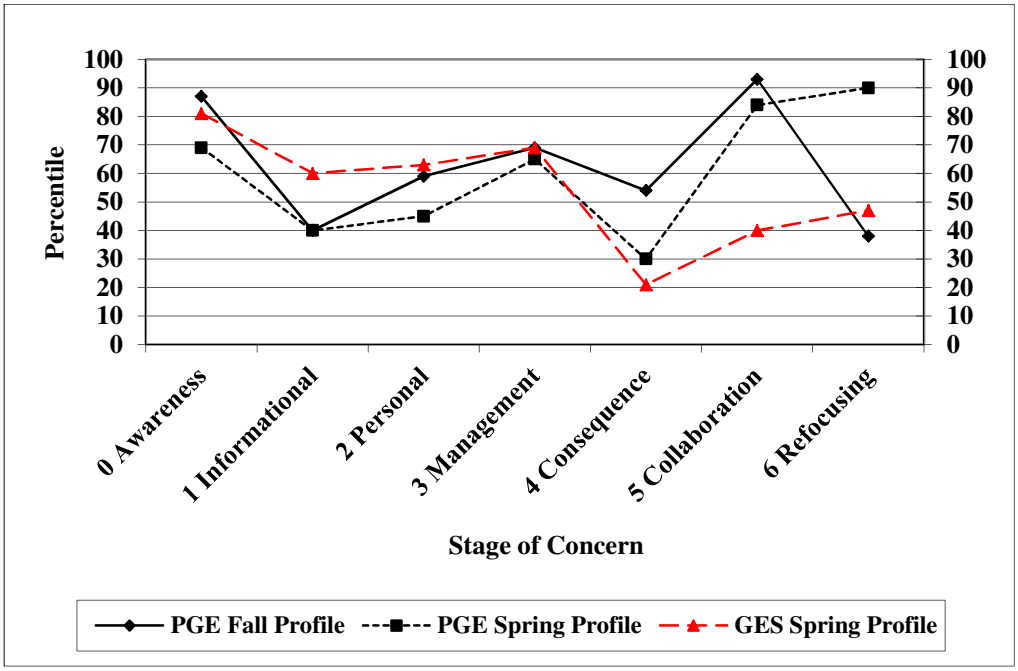


Figure 29. **SoCQ Spring and Fall Profiles for PGE.**

ways to improve RTI implementation in his school. He had also collaborated with other RTI principals to look for ways to better implement RTI. His score on Refocusing, Stage 6, may be an accurate indication of his desire to improve RTI implementation based on his experience with it. His second-highest score was indicated as Collaboration, Stage 5. This score suggests PGE is very concerned about how best to collaborate with others in implementing RTI and in improving that implementation through working together.

In examining the relationship between Information, Stage 1, and Personal, Stage 2, PGE scored higher on Personal, Stage 2, than he did on Information. This pattern suggests that PGE is focused more on personal issues pertaining to RTI implementation, and these personal issues are more intense than the desire for more information on RTI implementation. While his score on Refocusing, Stage 6, "tails up," this pattern could indicate PGE has ideas about how to improve RTI implementation. While George et al. (2006) caution that "tailing up" on Refocusing can indicate a desire to return to previous practices when this occurs early in an implementation, there is evidence that PGE may be attempting to refocus his efforts at RTI implementation. As discussed in the qualitative themes, PGE is involved in meeting with the other principals in the RTI pilot schools, and these leaders are working on collaboration and finding better ways to implement RTI within their schools. In addition, his scores on the lower stages decreased from fall to spring. As noted by George et al., as scores decrease on the lower stages, participants begin focusing on the higher stages more and less on the lower stages.

When comparing PGE's fall and spring SoCQ profiles, a decrease was noted on Awareness, Stage 0, Personal, Stage 2, Consequence, Stage 4, and Collaboration, Stage 5.

His score increased on Refocusing, Stage 6. When viewed through the Stages of Concern framework, it appears that PGE is in the process of moving from the lower levels of concern regarding RTI implementation to higher levels of concerns. In comparison to the spring SoCQ profile for GES, PGE scored lower on all of the first 3 stages and higher on the last 3 stages. His score on Management, Stage 3, was comparable with the average for the school and indicates PGE shares the concerns of his staff in managing the demands of RTI implementation

APGE's fall and spring SoCQ profiles, along with the spring SoCQ profile for GES, are summarized in Figure 33. APGE indicated Collaboration, Stage 5, as her highest score in the spring. This score indicates she has intense concern regarding ways to collaborate with others in implementing RTI. Her second-highest score occurred on Personal, Stage 2, suggesting that at the end of the first year of RTI implementation, she continued trying to determine how RTI implementation affected her within her capacity as assistant principal.

Her scores on Information, Stage 1, and Personal, Stage 2, did not result in a "negative one-two split" as noted by George et al. (2006). This indicates the intensity of APGE's concerns are not so high in the Personal realm that her desire to learn more about RTI is thus overshadowed. However, by spring her scores on these two stages were not as high as they were in the fall. In fact, APGE's score on Personal, Stage 2, decreased markedly from fall the spring. This suggests her concerns were not as intense in the spring as they were in the fall for this area. Her score on Refocusing, Stage 6, did not "tail up" in the spring.

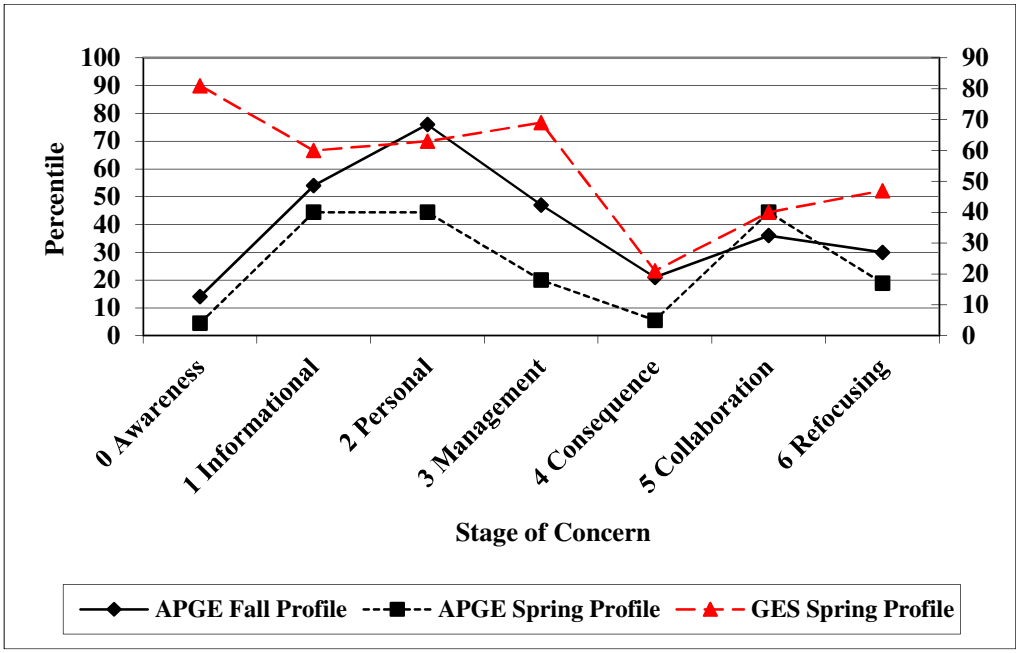


Figure 30. **SoCQ Spring and Fall Profiles for APGE.**

When comparing APGE's fall and spring SoCQ profiles, a marked decrease was noted on the following scales: Personal, Stage 2, Management, Stage 3, and Consequence, Stage 4. Her scores on Awareness, Stage 0, Information, Stage 1, and Refocusing, Stage 6, were slightly lower, while her score increased on Collaboration, Stage 5.

APGE's spring SoCQ profile suggests scores that were much lower than the profile of the school for spring. Her scores were much lower on the following scales: Awareness, Stage 0, Information, Stage 1, Personal, Stage 2, Management, Stage 3, Consequence, Stage 4, and Refocusing, Stage 6. Her score on Collaboration, Stage 5, was comparable to the school profile.

The spring SoCQ profile of T30GE, along with the spring SoCQ profile of the school, is summarized in Figure 34. The SoCQ was not returned in the fall for T30GE, so there are no fall-spring comparisons available for this participant. In the spring, T30GE indicated her highest score on Personal, Stage 1, suggesting she was most concerned with how RTI implementation affected her personally. Her second-highest score occurred on Management, Stage 3, which suggests she was concerned with managing the demands of RTI implementation.

T30GE scored higher on Personal, Stage 2, than she did on Information, Stage 1. This suggests the intensity of her concerns lie in the personal domain of RTI implementation and that her desire for more information on RTI is hampered as a result. Her score on Refocusing, Stage 6, "tails up," suggesting a desire to return to previous

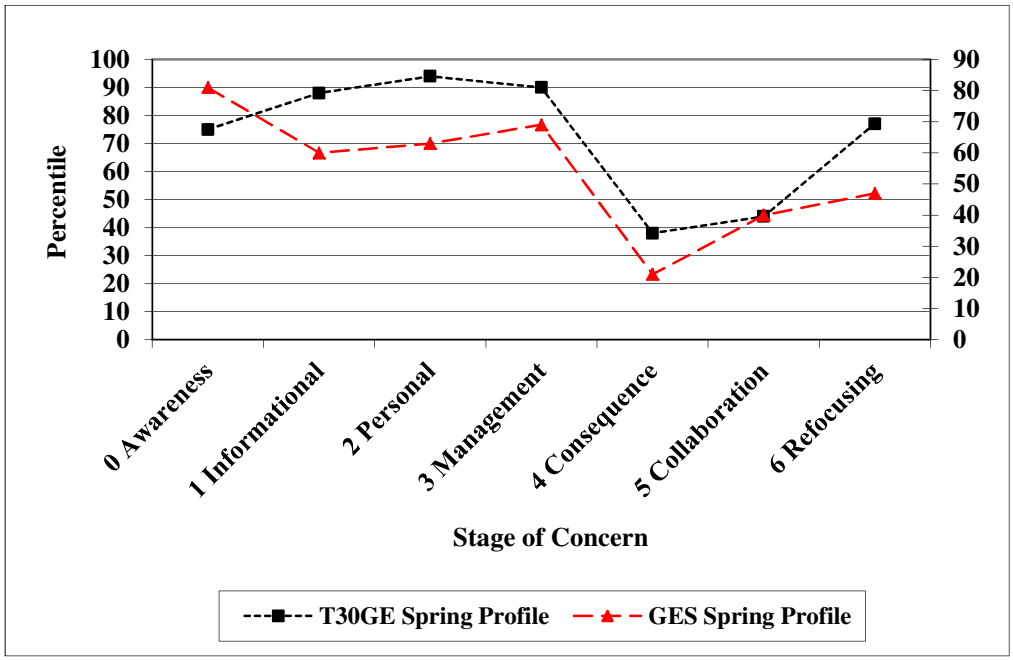


Figure 31. **SoCQ Spring Profile for T30GE**

practices which, in this case, would indicate a desire to return to previous methods of LD identification (George et al., 2006).

When compared to the overall SoCQ profile for GES in the spring, T30GE scored higher on Information, Stage 1, Personal, Stage 2, Management, Stage 3, Consequence, Stage 4, and Refocusing, Stage 6. Her score on Awareness, Stage 0, was lower than the school profile, while her score on Collaboration, Stage 5, was comparable with that of the school profile.

Figure 35 provides a summary of the fall and spring SoCQ profiles for T20GE, along with the spring SoCQ profile for GES for comparison. In the spring, T20GE indicated her highest scores on Awareness, Stage 0, suggesting the highest intensity of concern was focused on awareness of RTI and other district initiatives. Her second-highest score was on Management, Stage 3, indicating intense concerns regarding managing the demands of RTI implementation.

The relationship of T20GE's scores on Informational, Stage 1, and Personal, Stage 2, suggest that her personal level concerns were lower than her need for more information, which indicates she is not so overwhelmed by personal concerns that she does not want to know more about RTI. Likewise, her score on Refocusing, Stage 6, does not "tail up" which according to George et al. (2006) can indicate a desire to return to previous practices when such a pattern occurs early in an intervention.

The spring SoCQ profile for T20GE is much higher on all stages than her fall profile with the exception of Awareness, Stage 0, which remained fairly much the same from fall to spring. In comparison to the spring SoCQ profile for GES, T20GE indicated

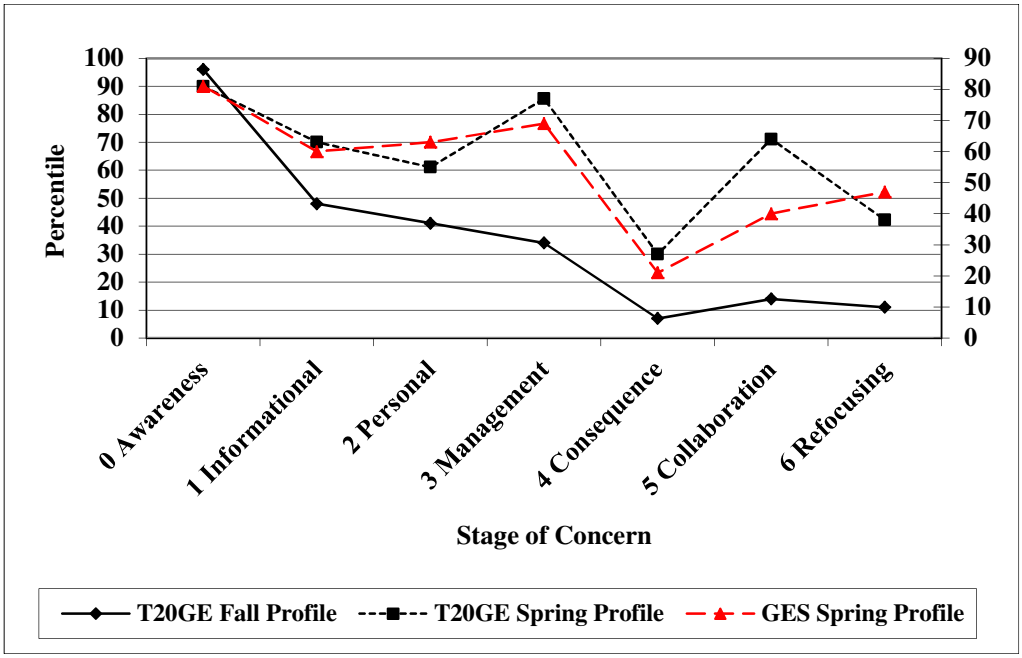


Figure 35. **SoCQ Spring and Fall Profiles for T20GE.**

a very similar profile to that of the school. Her scores were higher on Management, Stage 3, Consequence, Stage 4, and Collaboration, Stage 5, and lower on Personal, Stage 2, and Refocusing, Stage 6.

The fall and spring SoCQ profiles for T11GE, along with the spring SoCQ profile for GES are provided in Figure 36. T11GE indicated her highest level of concern on Collaboration, Stage 5. This indicates she is most concerned with finding ways to collaborate with other professionals in implementing RTI. Her second-highest score was on Awareness, Stage 0, suggesting T11GE is very aware of RTI implementation and that she is also aware of other district initiatives being implemented simultaneously.

The relationship of T11GE's scores on Information, Stage 1, and Personal, Stage 2, suggest a "positive one-two split" as noted by George et al. (2006). This profile indicates her concerns are not so intense at the Personal stage that she is focused at that stage with little desire to learn more about RTI implementation at this time. T11GE's scores suggest she is open to learning more about how to implement RTI. Her score on Refocusing, Stage 6, did not "tail up." Using the interpretive guidelines from George et al., she does not appear to have competing desires to return to previous practices.

When comparing T11GE's fall and spring profiles, similar scores were noted on Information, Stage 1, and Management, Stage 3. Her spring scores were higher on Personal, Stage 2, Consequence, Stage 4, Collaboration, Stage 5, and Refocusing, Stage 6. In comparing T11GE's spring profile to the spring SoCQ profile for GES, she scored much higher on Collaboration, Stage 5. Her scores were lower on Awareness, Stage 0, Information, Stage 1, Personal, Stage 2, and Management, Stage 3. The scores on

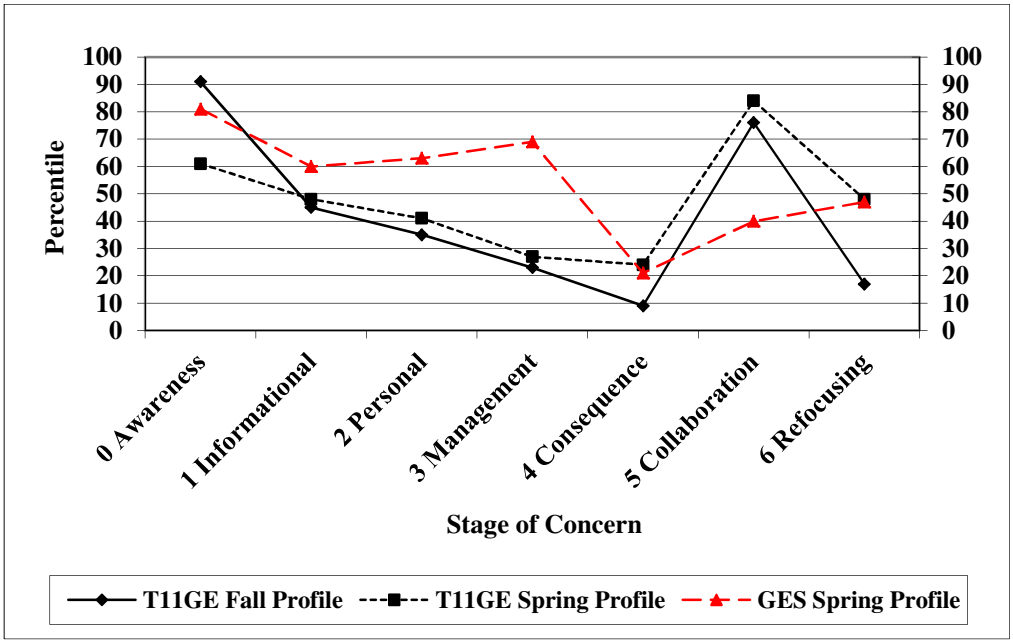


Figure 32. **SoCQ Spring and Fall Profiles for T11GE.**

Consequence, Stage 4, and Refocusing, Stage 6, were highly similar to those of the overall school profile.

Figure 37 provides a summary of the fall and spring SoCQ profiles for T10GE, along with the spring SoCQ profile for GES for comparison. T10GE indicated her highest score in the spring as Management, Stage 3. This suggests she is most intensely concerned with managing or scheduling the demands of RTI implementation. Her second-highest score occurred on Refocusing, Stage 6. This reflects her desire to improve upon RTI implementation or, as George et al. (2006) note, a desire to return to previous ways of referring students for evaluation for special education.

In examining the relationship between Information, Stage 1, and Personal, Stage 2, a higher score on the Personal stage suggests her personal concerns are so intense that they outweigh her desire to learn more about RTI. A sharp "tailing up" of Refocusing, Stage 6, is most often interpreted to indicate a desire to return to more familiar practices that preceded the implementation (George et al., 2006).

From fall to spring, T10GE's scores increased on Management, Stage 3, Consequence, Stage 4, and Refocusing, Stage 6. Her scores on Awareness, Stage 0, and Information, Stage 1, were lower from fall to spring. Her scores on Personal, Stage 2, and Collaboration, Stage 5, remained the same. When comparing the spring profile of T10GE to that of the school, her scores were highly comparable with the school's on Personal, Stage 2, and Collaboration, Stage 5. Her scores were lower on Awareness, Stage 0, Information, Stage 1, and Collaboration, Stage 5, and higher on Management, Stage 3, Consequence, Stage 4, and Refocusing, Stage 6.

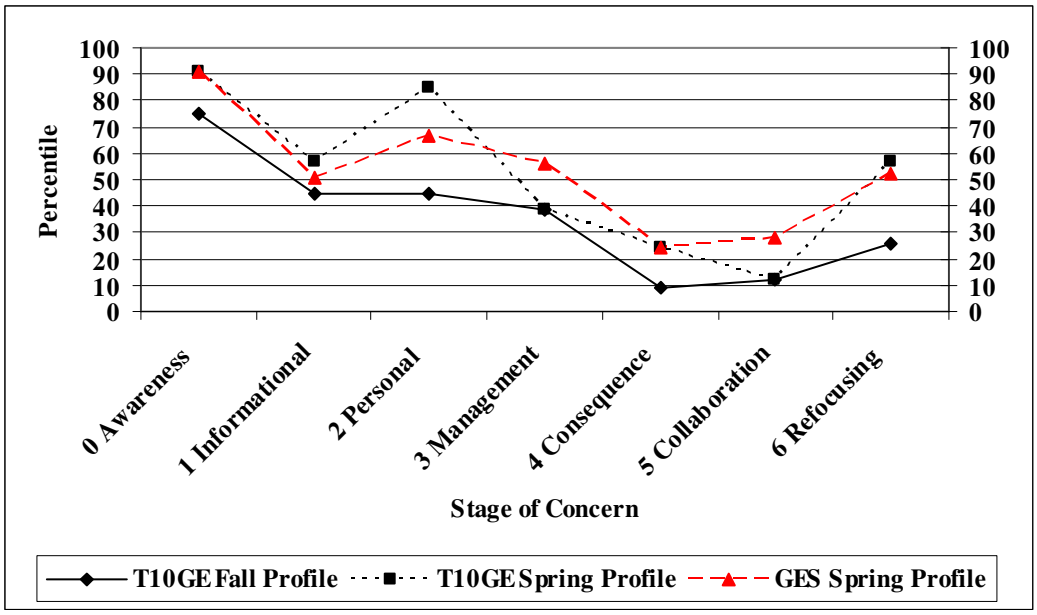


Figure 37. **SoCQ Spring and Fall Profiles for T10GE.**

***Paired Samples t*-test**

In order to determine if the concerns expressed on the SoCQ by the participants at GES varied significantly from the beginning to the end of the first year of RTI implementation, I performed a paired samples *t*-test to compare the scores for fall and spring for participants who completed the SoCQ for both data collection periods. A total of 24 participants completed both assessments. Descriptive statistics from the paired samples *t*-test are summarized in Table 53. For fall, participants at GES indicated the highest mean score on Personal, with a mean of 19.16. By spring, their highest mean was split between Consequence, Stage 4, and Collaboration, Stage 5, with a mean of 18.42 on both stages. These mean scores indicate participants at GES rated items on these scales highest on the raw scores.

Results of the paired samples *t*-test are provided in Table 54. The paired samples *t*-test was performed on each of the seven Stages of Concern to determine whether the concerns expressed by participants at GES significantly decreased or increased from fall to spring. When looking at the stage scores, there were no significant differences noted on Awareness ($t = .59$, df = 24, $p > 0.05$), Information ($t = 1.33$, df = 24, $p > 0.05$), Management ($t = .62$, df = 24, $p > 0.05$), Consequence ($t = -1.09$, df = 24, $p > 0.05$), or Collaboration ($t = .00$, df = 24, $p > 0.05$). However, there was a significant decrease in the intensity of concerns on Personal ($t = 2.41$, df = 24, $p < 0.05$) level, and a significant increase in the scores from fall to spring on Refocusing ($t = -2.19$, df = 24, $p < 0.05$).

These findings suggest that the intensity of concerns expressed by the participants at GES varied significantly from the fall to the spring of the first year of RTI

Table 53

Descriptive Statistics for Paired Samples *t*-test for GES

Stage		Mean	N	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean
0 Awareness	F	14.33	24	4.67	.95
	S	13.83	24	4.42	.90
1 Information	F	16.08	24	6.34	1.29
	S	14.21	24	6.23	1.27
2 Personal	F	19.46	24	7.77	1.59
	S	15.88	24	6.13	1.25
3 Management	F	18.04	24	7.34	1.50
	S	17.17	24	7.15	1.46
4.Consequence	F	16.71	24	6.03	1.23
	S	18.42	24	6.53	1.33
5 Collaboration	F	18.42	24	7.26	1.48
	S	18.42	24	6.21	1.27
6 Refocusing	F	12.54	24	6.74	1.37
	S	16.13	24	6.81	1.39

Table 54

Results of Paired Samples *t*-test for GES

Stage	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean	*t*	df	Significance
0 Awareness	.50	4.17	.85	.59	24	.563
1 Information	1.88	6.89	1.41	1.33	24	.195
2 Personal	3.58	7.30	1.49	2.41	24	**.025**
3 Management	.88	6.93	1.42	.62	24	.542
4 Consequence	-1.71	7.69	1.57	-1.09	24	.288
5 Collaboration	.00	6.22	1.27	0.00	24	1.000
6 Refocusing	-3.58	8.02	1.64	-2.19	24	**.039**

Note. Bold *p* levels indicate significance.

implementation on these two stages. As a result, I reject the null hypothesis that holds there are no statistically significant differences between SoCQ scores in the fall and spring for participants at GES.

Summary

Spring data analysis for GES was summarized according to research questions. Three themes were developed identifying overall concerns expressed by participants at GES in the spring which included concern regarding understanding the RTI process, managing the components involved in RTI implementation, and needing additional resources to fully implement RTI. Concerns regarding understanding the RTI process and managing the required components of RTI implementation were also noted in the fall. By spring, these concerns remained among the participants at GES. The concern regarding the need for additional resources to fully implement RTI was a new concern noted during the spring. The concern regarding difficulty understanding the RTI process is considered to be a Personal, Stage 2, concern when viewed through the Stages of Concern framework. The concerns regarding managing the components of RTI implementation and needing additional resources to implement RTI were viewed as a Management, Stage 3, concerns. Barriers to RTI implementation were identified as the belief on the participants' parts that RTI, as defined in Meadowlands School District, resulted in restrictive movement of students through the tiers. This was a new concern noted in the spring, and the concerns expressed in the fall regarding another add-on for teachers and a slowing down of the referral process were not noted in the spring. This concern was considered to be Personal, Stage 2, within the Stages of Concern framework.

The effect of RTI on teachers' roles was noted to be that of improved teaching practices for the teachers and a change in leadership style for the administrators. The teachers at GES also indicated in the fall their belief that RTI practices had led to improved teaching. The need for the administrators at GES to change their leadership style was a new theme that was noted in the spring. Both themes are viewed as Personal, Stage 2, on the Stages of Concern framework. Factors facilitating RTI implementation were noted to be improved outcomes for students, a theme that was also noted in the fall. This theme is considered to be Consequence, Stage 4, on the Stages of Concern.

The spring SoCQ profile for GES was reviewed, along with the individual profiles of the participants who were interviewed. Participants at GES scored highest on Awareness, Stage 0, and second-highest on Personal, Stage 2. When the results of each stage were analyzed through a paired samples *t*-test performed on each of the Stages of Concern, the scores on the SoCQ differed significantly on Personal ($t = 2.41$, df = 24, $p < 0.05$) and Refocusing ($t = -2.19$, df = 24, $p < 0.05$). These findings suggest participants at GES scored significantly lower on Personal, Stage 2, concerns and significantly higher on Refocusing, Stage 6, concerns. As a result, I reject the null hypothesis that holds there are no statistically significant differences between SoCQ scores in the fall and spring for participants at GES.

CHAPTER 11

ANALYSIS OF SPRING DATA FOR MAGNOLIA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Chapter Introduction

Spring data were collected at Magnolia Elementary School (MES) from late January 2009 through May 2009. Four teachers and the two administrators were interviewed on March 12, 2009. Observations occurred from late January 2009 through March 2009. The Stages of Concern Questionnaire (SocQ) was delivered to participants' on March 16, 2009 and retrieved on April 1, 2009. Because the response rate was less than desirable, a second attempt was made to increase the return rate from April 27, 2009 through May 8, 2009. After the second attempt, the SoCQ return rate was 66% for MES for the spring data collection period. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the qualitative and quantitative results obtained for MES during the end of the first year of Response to Intervention (RTI) implementation. Qualitative themes were developed from interviews, observations, and document reviews. These themes are discussed below in answer to research questions for this study, along with the Stages of Concern framework that guided theme development and analysis. Table 55 provides a summary of both fall and spring themes at GES along with the corresponding Stage of Concern.

Research Question 1: What are the Concerns of Teachers and Principals As They Experience RTI Implementation?

In answer to the first qualitative research question, three themes were developed outlining general concerns noted by the participants at MES. The first theme pertained to the perception that a lack of training prior to implementing RTI had led to a lack of

Table 55

Analysis of Qualitative Themes by Stage of Concern for MES

Research Question	Theme		Stage of Concern
	Fall	Spring	
1	Struggling to See "The Big Picture" of the RTI Process	Lack of Training	2 Personal
	Scheduling Difficulties: How To Manage RTI	Scheduling Difficulties	3 Management
		Principals: Need for More Resources	3 Management
1(a)	Change to Referral Process	Process is Cumbersome and Lengthy	2 Personal
1(b)	Pressure to Get it Right: Increasing the Stress Level for Teachers	A Positive Process Leading to Improved Instruction	2 Personal
1(c)	Improved Instructional Practices That Help Children	Improved Outcomes for Students	4 Consequence

understanding of the RTI process. This was an area of concern in the fall, as well, but the training need was a part of the larger theme of not understanding the RTI process. By spring, however, the participants at MES had focused their concern on the lack of training as a strong theme in and of itself. When viewed through the Stages of Concern framework, this theme is considered to be a Personal, Stage 2, concern as it reflects a personal concern with how participants perceive their readiness to implement RTI. A second theme regarding difficulty incorporating RTI-related activities into the daily schedule was continued from the fall data collection period to the spring data collection period. This theme is considered to be a Management, Stage 3, concern within the Stages of Concern framework as it addresses participants' concerns in managing, or scheduling, activities associated with the implementation. A new theme was developed in the spring for the two administrators at MES. This theme pertained to the need for additional resources in order to be able to sustain the RTI implementation. This theme is best described within the Stages of Concern framework as a Stage 3, Management, theme because it pertains to resources necessary to continue implementing RTI. Each of these themes is discussed in detail in the following sections.

Lack of Training

The participants at MES indicated their perception that they had not been sufficiently trained in RTI implementation prior to being asked to implement it. They felt their training experiences had not adequately prepared them to understand and implement the procedures associated with implementing RTI. T10ME noted her concern:

> We did have one in-service day where they went over how to get on the computer and stuff, and we got to do it on our own. However, that didn't really help me that much because I wasn't monitoring any kids at that point.

Likewise, a fourth-grade teacher noted during an observation, "I still don't understand this process and don't believe we had enough training to be able to do it," (Observation, 2-2-09). Another fourth-grade teacher stated, "It would help if we had more training on how to do Tier 1 interventions. I feel like I need more guidance on what to do for my Tier 1 students," (Observation, 1-26-09). T10ME expressed her belief that the training should have been done closer in time to the actual implementing of various components of RTI. She said:

> I do think that, uh, there have been a few occasions when it would have been more useful to have the training closer to actual implementation because by the time we actually implemented we'd forgotten some of the stuff and needed to have a refresher on it.

APME also expressed concern regarding the preparation of the staff to implement RTI through sufficient training opportunities. She noted:

> I'm still thinking maybe the biggest thing is do our teachers know enough? Is there something that we need to be doing to help teachers understand the process better? Do they need more time for training? Because I still think that they don't go back and think about the way things used to be and what that really looked like and the fact that when you got through all the testing and everything if the child didn't qualify, then everybody kind of walked away. And this doesn't give you that chance to walk away.

A review of the district calendar indicated there were three days allocated to professional development. Of these three days, one day was used for training on AIMSweb administration and scoring, and one day was used to train staff on progress monitoring with AIMSweb (District Professional Development Days Document). The RTI plan submitted by the district allocated specific training of staff on the RTI procedures to the

principal of each building in order to embed RTI training into the daily life of the school (District RTI Plan Document). PME has attempted to embed RTI training into the culture of the school. He said:

> The training has been ongoing. We had an introduction at the beginning of the school year by our school psychologist about how to use AIMSweb. Of course, it was a big overview and a lot for the teachers to digest, but after we finished our first benchmark, then we had training by grade level group to look at those benchmark scores with myself and my assistant principal and our school psychologist and our reading specialist. We all four lead those with different teams. As an administrative team for RTI, myself, the assistant principal, the school psychologist and the reading specialist, we're pretty much the resource team. And we did that training with them and then helped the teachers use the benchmark scores to do some decision making about the kids that they wanted to progress monitor – which would be weekly progress monitoring or strategically monitor, which would be every other week which ends up twice a month. Since then we've had our second benchmark in January, and we've been through the same process.

The staff at MES also indicated that the trainings they had participated in had left many unanswered questions regarding RTI implementation and issues that arise during the process. T10ME expressed her confusion regarding how the intervention time should best be used. She stated:

> Just some miscommunication and a lot of questions on what exactly we're supposed to do and when and what's the best way to use the intervention time. There hasn't been, you know, like this is what you have to do for the intervention time, so we've just kind of had to figure out.

T30ME noted her confusion regarding the movement through tiers with the required progress monitoring component. She said:

> The other challenges I know is how to enter the data into the computer, and if you're not testing them every week, how long do you have to take data before they can move on to the next tier? And what do we do with them if we're at the end of the year and they only have six weeks and need another three? Do we begin again in the fall with another three weeks, or do they have to start all over? That kind of thing.

Other participants, like T30ME, had questions about procedural issues involving students who would not be able to complete the whole RTI process by the end of the year. A third-grade teacher noted during a walk-through observation, "There are so many unanswered questions about this process. Like what do we do with all these students who can't complete the whole process this year? Do we have to start over next year?" (Observation, 3-26-09). APME noted her perception that while there were many unanswered questions regarding RTI implementation, the whole RTI process remained a work in progress. She stated:

> You know, I think a lot at the beginning, you and I talked about it, was there were so many unanswered questions? And I still think there are some unanswered questions, but I think we are working through it, still, a work in progress. We're still working through things and getting good understandings and everything.

Another area of training needs involved the training of itinerant staff who support RTI in the schools and the need for more clarity between these groups. The perception was that the reading specialist and school psychologist were not operating under the same set of guidelines, thus leading to confusion among the staff. PME noted:

> It was a concern in the fact that we had expected more clarity on a framework for us to use. And there's been a lot of – I wouldn't call it, necessarily, controversy – but there's been a lot of work having to be done with philosophy. I mean, we're piloting this thing with reading only, and the psychologist and the reading specialist have had most of the trouble coming together on having kind of a common vision about what it's supposed to be, and that's where the conflict in philosophies has occurred. I mean such things as accepting whether a strategy is research based or not. You know, when a psychologist has a whole bevy of research based strategies that they must use if a child goes through the process and then they're going to be eligible for services after all the assessment is done. The reading specialists are not on the same boat, on the same train with the psychologists. And, of course, everybody can come up with their own research, but when you look at federal guidelines, you just don't have a choice.

The district's RTI plan clearly stated that Tier 1 would consist of delivering the curriculum to the struggling student in a more deliberate way through differentiation and grouping, and Tiers 2A and 2B would consist of instructional strategies delivered through small group instruction by the reading specialist (District RTI Plan Document). Nonetheless, conflict arose between the reading specialist and the school psychologist regarding what constituted a research-based intervention for Tiers 2A and 2B. The reading specialist noted that she had been told to use "programs" for intervention rather than instructional strategies because the school psychologist said what she was doing with instructional strategies was not intervention and did not work. In addition, the school psychologist told the staff the instructional strategies used by the reading specialist would not fulfill requirements of the federal law. She had been told she was to use a purchased intervention program during her Tier 2A intervention groups (Observation, 1-26-2009). Prior to an observation of the reading specialist providing a Tier 2A intervention using a purchased reading program that was highly scripted, the reading specialist expressed her concern about using boxed programs. She noted:

> Programs do not allow the flexibility to stop and work with student before moving on to the next lesson. In addition, the programs do not always match the AIMSweb assessment area. This student is very weak on letter naming and letter sounds, but this program addresses phonological awareness, which she is not ready for yet. (Observation, 3-12-09)

During the intervention with one kindergarten student, the student clearly struggled on letter recognition and letter-sound association. However, the scripted lesson of the program was on phonological awareness, which was well beyond the child's current levels of reading skills, thus bringing into question whether that particular intervention

program was an effective intervention for that child (Observation, 3-12-09). PME expressed his frustration with the conflicting philosophies of his itinerant support staff regarding the ongoing debate with instructional strategies versus boxed programs with scripted lessons. He noted:

> There's not been any clear, strong leadership in bringing those two groups together. And there's supervisors for both of those groups, but whether they talk or not is not real evident to me when we have committee meetings because we just keep coming back to the same issue again and again, and we just need someone to say this is the way it has to be. And to give people the input, they need to be heard, but then you have to come together and say, "This we can't play with." It's taken all year for the district RTI committee, which I'm a part of with the other principals that pilot, plus the reading specialists and psychologists [to come together]. Our last meeting was, like, a week and a half ago. That was the first meeting where we were all at the same table, at the same time. It's taken this long to get that done, and that's been where the communication breakdown was and the lack of the leadership being there.

Scheduling Difficulties

A second theme addressing the concerns of the participants at MES pertained to the continued difficulties the participants were experiencing with scheduling components of RTI into the daily schedule. This concern was noted in the fall and continued into the spring of the first year of RTI implementation. The first area of difficulty in scheduling concerned the 30-minute intervention block. T10ME said, "Thirty minutes is a long time for first graders to sit, so my intervention time usually isn't quite that long because they can't sit that long." Of particular concern was the fact that incorporating a 30-minute intervention block had cut into the science and social studies schedule for upper grades. T16ME noted:

> It still takes time out of the day that we have. It's nice that students are now getting the individualized help that they need during that time, but, there again, it's science and social studies that are still getting squeezed and are not getting

> taught. I guess one of the big challenges for me is making sure I keep that thirty minutes at the end of the day for RTI time and that we don't run over with science and social studies and lose that time.

Likewise, a fifth-grade teacher noted during a walk-through observation, "We're having to cut science and social studies short to incorporate the intervention period. This is a mess," (Observation, 2-2-09). A review of the master daily schedule indicates that each grade level has built in a 30-minute block of time designated for interventions, and all required content areas are accounted for in this schedule. In addition, teachers at each grade level have a 55-minute planning period on top of a 30-minute lunch (MES Master Schedule).

A second area of concern regarding scheduling the components of RTI implementation addresses how to plan for other students in the class when working with intervention groups in Tier 1. T5ME noted:

> It's funny because if you're working with some of our kids that need the extra help the other kids are going when's my turn, and they want to come over and work one-on-one too. And so it's kind of a struggle because you're going I'm working with this one right now, sit down please, go finish what you're doing.

T30ME also noted her difficulties in this area. She stated:

> But the hardest part is what to do with the other children. What do the other children do while you're working with these four on intervention? I mean, that's probably the biggest difficulty. They come up, they want to bother you, they want to ask questions with whatever you're giving them to do. It's really hard to deal with having uninterrupted instruction with these children who are really struggling in Tier 1.

Likewise, T10ME expressed her frustration with the time selected by her grade level for the intervention block because she does not have the support in the class she needs during that time. She said:

> I think our time is supposed to be 8:45 – 9:15, and that doesn't work for me. So I do it in the morning, but I just can't do it right then because I have kids with other needs in my room that don't have support in the room at that time. So I have to wait till I have an assistant in the room with me so that she can be with them or he can be with those kids so I can work with the intervention group.

During a grade level meeting, a third-grade teacher also expressed her frustration with managing the rest of the class while intervening with a small group of students. She said, "I'm having a hard time keeping my other students occupied while I work with this one student," (Observation, 1-26-09). APME also shared her concern about managing the intervention block during Tier 1 instruction. She stated:

> I went to a Reading First meeting a couple of years ago [specific locations omitted] and just talked to some teachers there before we ever really got into this. There were some teachers from [other districts using Reading First], and the teachers were talking about how they were really struggling with this extra thirty minutes of time that they're spending with a small group of kids and what they were doing with the rest of their children. And it was just interesting hearing these teachers talk about it, and they were just beside themselves and upset with the fact that sometimes they would have the kids doing work and stuff like that while they were working with the small group of kids. So they were worried that they were hurting the other kids. I was very interested in just listening to them talk. And I was just the only one there, I think, from [Meadowlands School District], but just listening I came out of it like, oh, my gosh. What's about to happen?

The difficulties the teachers were experiencing with managing the rest of the class while they were working with students in small groups were seen during observations, as well. During an observation of Tier 1 intervention with 3 students working on phonemic awareness, the second-grade teacher had a total of 5 interruptions during her small group work. Other students left their groups and approached her asking for assistance despite having an educational assistant in the room (Observation, 2-2-09). In addition, a first-grade teacher who was conducting Tier 1 interventions with a small group working on

vocabulary had three interruptions during her small group work. She later noted that her educational assistant had gone home sick earlier that day (Observation, 3-12-09).

Principals: Need for More Resources

A third theme was developed for the first time during the spring data collection pertaining to the administrators' concern regarding the need for more resources in order to sustain RTI implementation in their building. The first area of need centered around professional development. PME stated:

> The budget situation the way it is, there may not be as many resources available for professional development, so we're going to have to kind of cultivate our own. We've already started talking about it – some kind of in-house academy for teachers. Well, we just have to be doing our own professional development. You can't really depend on the district now with the way the budget is. They do have some summer offerings, but as far as what we particularly need now, in specific to our school and our teachers, we're going to have to build that.

In looking at the specific needs of his staff, PME noted that the primary resource he needed from the district was time to do the professional development. As previously noted, the district had allotted three days to be devoted to professional development for the 2008-2009 school year, and one of those days was a pre-determined day devoted to another district initiative (District Professional Development Days Document). PME noted that he needed to be able to free his teachers from teaching duty in order to provide professional development and training for RTI. He stated:

> And I don't think that's going to need a whole heck of a lot of money. We're going to need time. That's where the money comes in is because the only way I can buy more time [to release teachers from teaching] is to buy subs for teachers and give them time, release time. And I think that's going to be okay, but it's a concern.

In the meantime, PME and APME have embedded RTI training into grade-level meetings during which they review the RTI process and data analysis from AIMSweb with the teachers in small group settings. He has scheduled these grade level meetings after each benchmark period and at the end of each nine-week tier (PME Calendar).

A second area of need was noted by the administrators as resources for purchasing interventions for Tier 2A and Tier 2B. PME noted:

> We used some of our site-based money this year to purchase the Read Naturally program, and we do have some other boxed programs, scripted programs that are on loan to us from [a local University] because of our partnership with them in positive behavior support. But we need a software piece, and, of course, that's going to cost money. That's the main thing that we need right now. That's the piece we're lacking.

A third-grade teacher echoed this thought during a conversation prior to an observation. She said:

> My only concern is I wish we had some specific interventions to use like other districts. Some are using things like Read Naturally and Destination Reading and I wish we had things like that. It would be very helpful. (Observation, 2-2-09)

The need for additional intervention materials was noted by APME, who stated:

> I mean I know we're pulling in things like Read Naturally, but my understanding is we don't want to do things like Wilson because then we're taking tools away from use in special education. So is there something else besides Read Naturally available? And [the reading specialist] says it doesn't have to be a program, but then my understanding from [PME] is it has to be something that the State would recognize as some kind of intervention that's been approved as an intervention.

The third area noted by the administrators at MES as an area of needed resources is the need for additional support positions to fully support the RTI process. PME expressed his concern by stating:

> It'd be great to have another reading specialist here, not holding my breath at all on that one because there's going to be no new staff added, only replaced. We know that. But if we had two reading specialists here, that would serve the

> purpose not only of Tier II intervention which they help deliver, but also for the professional development piece. It would just give us more – we could have greater coverage for professional development if we had someone else doing that.

APME echoed this need when she was discussing the difficulty of incorporating the reading specialist into the 30-minute intervention block for each grade level. She noted:

> I think [the reading specialist] is limited in times that she can [be in the various classes' intervention blocks]. We ran into some issues, and certain people had that block of time at the same time as other grade levels, so then we had to relook at when we have it planned in the original schedule that we had because everybody had a different time. So then some people had to go back and make some adjustments to their schedules because in order for [the reading specialist] to be able to meet the needs of certain kids, she couldn't do two grade levels, obviously, at the same time. So that made people have to go back and look at, okay, when did you originally plan on having that extra amount of time. So yeah, we had to go back and revisit. We made adjustments to the original schedule based on what teachers needed and then we had to go back and go, okay, now we've really got to go back to what we originally scheduled your time for because if [the reading specialist] is going to pick up these kids, then she can't do first grade and fifth grade at the same time.

APME continued to discuss the instructional needs the teachers had and how the reading specialist could meet those needs if she had more time. APME added:

> Because one of the things …we talked about [was] if our reading specialist works with the small groups, she can only help a limited amount of children. But the more she can spend modeling and working with the classroom teachers, the more children was can affect because she can teach them strategies that they can do. So that's one of the things that we are working towards is giving [the reading specialist] more time where she can model more for teachers and plan with teachers and pull other teachers out of the classroom so they can come and observe her co-teaching or modeling for a classroom so those teachers have more skills and tools that they can work with children better with.

In addition, PME noted he needed more time from his school psychologist to better implement RTI in his building. He stated:

> Another human resource I need is a full-time school psychologist. I have a .5 psychologist that's very, very good and came from a district that had already

> implemented RTI. She was in that for three years. Very, very knowledge, need her here full-time, though.

A review of the district's itinerant assignment list indicates MES has a full-time reading specialist assigned to the building and a part-time school psychologist, which indicates the school psychologist is assigned to the building two and a half days a week (Itinerant Assignments 2008-2009).

Research Question 1a: What do Teachers and Principals Perceive as Barriers to implementing RTI?

One theme was developed in answer to the second research question in the spring of the first year of RTI implementation at MES. In the fall, the participants at MES identified the change to the referral process as a barrier in that the RTI process took too long to identify students who needed special education services. This theme continued into the spring in that the participants remained concerned about how long the identification process took for learning disabilities using the RTI model. In addition, the participants indicated that the amount of assessments they had to do with RTI in order to identify students as learning disabled was cumbersome and difficult. Thus, the concern moved from the referral process for evaluating for special education to a concern regarding the RTI identification process itself. This theme falls under the Personal, Stage 2, level of concern in the Stages of Concern framework as it deals with the participants' uncertainty of the demands of RTI and their ability to meet those demands. This theme is discussed below.

Process is Cumbersome and Lengthy

The participants at MES indicated a possible barrier to successful RTI implementation as the amount of work and length of time involved in identifying students with a learning disability. Specifically, the participants indicated that the number of assessments they were responsible for was cumbersome and a burden on them. T10ME noted:

> Well, we give lots and lots of assessments. This second time we had to give the [AIMSweb benchmark] assessments to all of the kids, it was difficult because there was a lot of confusion on which ones first graders were supposed to get, and that ended up being a lot. There was letter naming, letter sound, phonemic segmentation, sight words, and the three reading passages, so it was just kind of playing around with that too to see what [was] the best way [to administer them] because I could not give it to a kid all at once, all of those. It was just too much to give the kids at once, so it was difficult. I was the first one of the first grade teachers giving it, so at the very end of the day they said, oh, yeah, and sight words again too, so I had to run and make copies real quick, and so that was frustrating.

Likewise, a fourth-grade teacher noted during a walk-through observation, "The intention of RTI is good, but having to give all those CBM assessments three times a year to everyone then to do it weekly for the at-risk students is really hard to do and to manage," (Observation, 2-2-09). In addition to questioning the number of CBM assessments given, a first-grade teacher questioned the appropriateness of CBM in identifying reading problems. She said, "After all the testing we do, [CBM] still doesn't provide diagnostic information," (Observation, 3-12-09). T30ME also questioned the appropriateness of CBM as an assessment for benchmarking during the Universal Screening because the same set of three reading passages are used each time. She said:

> Well, is there a reason why the story is the same every time? In the actual test, they're given the same beginning, middle, and end story the same every time. I would think they need to be given a different test each time.

APME also questioned the amount of assessment the teachers were being asked to do by the requirements of RTI implementation. She stated:

> I think that they're being required to do a lot more, and they're being required to be these data collectors and these people that are implementing some of these things. So I guess [I'm just wondering] what the reading specialist can do, or how do we use her, and are there other people that we need to use as resources to help teachers do more things or have better tools for children.

T30ME also questioned whether there were other options for assistance with all of the assessments. She asked, "Well, I'm wondering if the classroom teacher has to test every child? I mean, do we do this every year? Test every child every year? And can an assistant ever test them?" PME is aware of this concern and has been exploring possible options to alleviate the perceived burden the CBM assessment has placed on his teachers. He stated:

> We've talked some about how we use our educational assistants with the proper training. Next year if we go to looking at all kids that fall in the twenty-fifth percentile or below, we're going to have to employ the educational assistants to do some assessments and intervention, but it will be a very off the shelf, structured, and scripted program that we'll have to use.

When the school began using the 25th percentile to identify students as at-risk and in need of intervention, along with the other RTI pilot schools, the number of students participating in the progress monitoring and interventions rose. A review of the schools spreadsheet containing the students in Tier 1 indicates a total of 52 students have been designated as students in Tier 1. This includes students above the 10th percentile, which

was the cut-off score written in the district's RTI plan (MES Tier 1 Students Spreadsheet).

In addition to the cumbersome burden the participants at MES perceived the RTI process to be, they also felt that the process was overly long and the process delayed identification of students with learning disabilities. T16ME noted:

> I wonder a little bit whether or not we're taking too long with all the data points that we have to collect and all the different things we have to try before we get them identified. To me, sometimes it seems obvious that there's a child that really needs some extra help, and I think sometimes it's delaying getting that help.

T30ME shared her concerns regarding the length of time the process took and how that delay could affect students going to middle school next year. She said:

> This year, we really haven't had to refer. We're just working with the children we've identified. There's still the thought, "I think this child really has a reading disability. This child is in Tier 2 and I think he really has a reading disability." There are about 2 I would have liked to see tested, and now they're going to go on to middle school [without being tested]. That's scary.

Likewise, a third-grade teacher and a fifth-grade teacher were having a conversation during a walk-through observation. The third-grade teacher said, "The problem I have with RTI is that it takes too long to identify them. I have two students who I know are LD [Learning Disabled], and they just started Tier 1 in January. They won't even be identified by the end of the year. That's a problem for me." The fifth-grade teacher agreed and said, "That's right. I have a couple of students who need to be tested for LD before they go to middle school. But they just started Tier 1 in January, so that means we won't have an answer by the end of school," (Observation, 2-2-09). T16ME elaborated on the length of time the RTI process took and noted:

> So we're talking almost an entire school year before a child gets identified. And I may be misinformed, in which case I may be misunderstanding the process and we're getting to them sooner. But, as I said, I originally thought that after eighteen weeks the child would get identified. And it's my understanding now that it's not that soon, that you have to go longer than that.

A first-grade teacher also echoed this fear that the process took too long when she said, "I'm not a fan of RTI. The process is too big of a burden on teachers and takes too long," (Observation, 3-12-09). APME shared her thoughts and concerns on the length of time the RTI process was taking. She noted:

> The negative I hear is that teachers are still thinking that we're not reacting fast enough sometimes, and they don't really see the way that I see it, that we're really gathering more information and to me it appears like we're doing more than we did in the past. But teachers are still really struggling because I think they think that they're fighting more through the process, if that makes any sense.

PME also expressed his concern regarding the slowing down of identifying learning disabilities. He stated:

> Well, with regard to reading LD, it has really slowed down the process. And the change is all for the good, I think, because we know more about kids when they come to us. When they get through those tiers, I mean we pretty much know which way it's going to fall with regard to eligibility if the assessments play out. But the other piece is that by having something very systematic and time-based with regard to, for instance, twenty-seven weeks of progress monitoring before you get to make a decision about whether they're going to get special ed services, it's allowed teachers the time to pick up on other things like, hey, there may be some attention issues here or we've got some behavior issues that are getting in the way. So it's allowed them to look at all the different challenges that are present in the student.

Examining the previous referral information for MES also helps shed light on the participants' concerns regarding the length of time the process was taking. During the 2007-2008 school year, MES had 29 initial referrals for evaluation for special education services. In the spring of the first year of RTI implementation, they only had seven initial

referrals. Thus, the participants at MES had seen a 76% decrease in the number of initial referrals for special education services during the first year of RTI implementation (District Referral Information Spreadsheet). APME summarized her view of the fear underlying the teachers' concerns regarding the length of time of the RTI process by noting:

> That sometimes teachers feel like that they're coming in these meetings and fighting for their kids, that the process is taking too long and that these children need more help now than what RTI or the process allows for. They're afraid the kids are going to fall through the cracks. That's probably the biggest thing I've heard. People are afraid that they're not doing enough for children.

Research Question 1b: How are the Roles of Teachers and Principals Affected by RTI?

In answer to the third qualitative research question, one theme was developed for the teachers at MES, and one theme was developed for the administrators. In the fall, the teachers indicated they were feeling pressure to perform RTI-related tasks correctly and because they were not clear on the process, they felt stress in the performance of their job duties. By spring, however, the teachers indicated an increased comfort level with the RTI process and also indicated their belief that the process was a good process and had led to improved instructional practices. This theme is reflected under the Personal, Stage 2, level of the Stages of Concern framework because it addresses the teachers' perception of how RTI impacts their roles as teachers. In the fall, the administrators indicated the primary way RTI had affected their role was in creating a need to learn about RTI alongside their staff. By spring, the administrators indicated they had moved into more of a role of supporting their staff through the RTI process. Within the Stages of Concern framework, this theme is characterized as Personal, Stage 2, because it pertains to how

the administrators perceive their role as principal and assistant principal in light of the demands of the RTI implementation. Each of these themes will be discussed in detail in the following sections.

A Positive Process Leading to Improved Instruction

The teachers at MES indicated an increased comfort with the RTI process at the end of the first year of implementation. This increased comfort is a change from the stress the teachers reported in the fall of the first year of RTI implementation. T16ME stated:

> Now I'm feeling okay, you know, more comfortable with it, still occasionally frustrated, but not as much as at the beginning of the year. We're trying to accomplish so much at one time.

Other interviewees made similar comments regarding the adjustment to RTI. The following comments were made during interviews:

- I think people are adjusting well to it. I think it's coming along. (T5ME)
- I guess I've been accepting of it. I think it's a good process. (T5ME)
- I'm feeling more positive about it. I think it will be good once we work out the kinks. (T10ME)
- I think for the most part I feel like I've had a good experience. (T16ME)

Likewise, a second-grade teacher noted during a Tier 1 observation, "I think RTI has been very positive for me. It's a good process that may be a little hard at first, but it's a better way to look at learning disabilities than discrepancy," (Observation, 2-2-09). T30ME also expressed her increased comfort with RTI procedures by stating:

> My experience has been fine with it. I can't say I do as much with it as some of the other teachers because I'm not the reading teacher but my experiences have

> been fine. The second time around it was easier for me to test the children. I felt more comfortable and I got it done quicker.

PME noted his satisfaction with his staff and how they were adjusting to the RTI process. He stated:

> I think it's going well. I think it's right on track. I mean it's never easy when you bring a new system into a school, and especially in public education. This system, in a way, forces teachers to really look at their professional practice in the classroom. [I feel] excitement, angst, but now a pretty deep sense of joy about what it's done, because I see what it's doing for the kids, and I see what it's doing for some of our teachers. I mean I've seen teachers have those ah-ha moments of, you know, wow, I thought I was getting through to a kid and I've been using the same strategy for a long time, and it's not working, so I need to do something different. And there's been a sense of joy on that part because I knew that any time you try to re-culture a school and make any kind of systemic change, and I mean the system I'm talking about is just the school here, that it's three to five years. And three years ago I started seeing the changes that I envisioned that we needed in order to have best practice in place and to be sure to intervene for all kids. And this is year five, and we're really starting to kind of break out into what I envisioned.

In addition to expressing increased comfort with the RTI process, the teachers at MES also expressed the belief that RTI procedures led to improved instructional practices in the classroom. T5ME noted:

> It's helped me to be aware of what the children can do and where they're struggling. It just informs your instruction and kind of helps you pinpoint areas that the teacher needs to work on to help reach these kids.

In addition, a second-grade teacher noted during a Tier 1 observation, "It's made me more aware of my instructional practices and how I group children," (Observation, 2-2-09). The teachers noted that having the AIMSweb data for Universal Screening and progress monitoring has helped them in their classroom instruction. T16ME expressed:

> I look at the reports I get and determine which students need a little more individualized attention and in what area. I also use it in conjunction with other data points to determine is this child really falling behind, did he have a bad day

> on test day and such to let me know if there's a student that I need to [work with]. Currently there's a student that I need to just keep a general eye on and work with a little bit individually because with other test data I know he's a bright child but for some reason or another instead of showing progress between fall and winter, he dropped behind.

T10ME also described how she had utilized the AIMSweb results to assist her in determining which areas her students needed more instructional assistance. She said:

> I looked at the results and saw the kids that might need that extra support or intervention and used that, then, to figure out what they needed. I looked at, you know, they seemed to be doing well in letter naming and letter sounds. That's why too easy for them now, so that's why I picked the reading fluency to work on them with because that seemed to be where they needed the most help.

A kindergarten teacher indicated her appreciation of the AIMSweb CBM results by saying, "It has really helped me see where my students are lacking skills. Having the AIMSweb reports clearly shows me where I need to fill gaps in skills," (Observation, 3-26-09). T30ME echoed this thought by saying, "You can see what skills you need to work on with the lower kids. It gives you more data. It's another piece of data to look at." Responsive instructional practices were noted by APME to be a benefit of the RTI process. She noted:

> Just through the fact that, I guess, teachers are really learning about being data driven, and I think looking more closely at children and what they're doing and is it being effective or not. You know, you might do something and think it's being effective, but then if you're taking data on it you might realize this really isn't working or, wow, this is working great, but it's not working for Johnny over here. It might be working for Suzy but I've got to figure out something different [for Johnny].

PME added that in addition to improving instructional practices in the classroom, the RTI process had also led to aligning the State curricular standards to areas of need in reading, based upon the results of RTI assessment. He stated:

> So as they've unpacked those [State curricular] standards with this framework of RTI, it's really helped them focus in on, okay, what's most important in these grade level standards in reading. And other than that, another challenge in this whole thing is us creating vertical teams. For instance, we've got kindergarten, first and second grade teams meeting together to look at [State curricular] standards. And , of course, they're doing that within this framework of keeping in mind that we've got to put interventions in place. We've got to intervene.

Principals Supporting, Sharing Leadership, and Collaborating

The administrators at MES indicated the primary impact of RTI on their roles as principal and assistant principal involved the need to support their staff, share leadership, and collaborate with principals of other RTI pilot schools. In terms of supporting teachers, PME noted a need to support teachers in responding in their instruction to the needs of the students. He said, "And that's been the most difficult part in supporting those teachers with what they found about [AIMSweb results] with their instruction." He elaborated on this need by stating:

> Mainly give them time to process the information because it does strike at, for instance, our tier I instructional practices and the need to differentiate. That's the biggest piece – to differentiate more than they ever have before and to just be there pretty much beside them to support them. I just kind of stand beside them and sometimes hold their hand and guide them in the right direction about what resources or professional development they need in order to differentiate better.

This level of support by PME was directly observed during a grade level meeting during which a third-grade teacher expressed difficulty keeping the rest of her class occupied while she was engaged in Tier 1 instruction with a small group of struggling students. PME discussed with her the need to differentiate instruction through her lesson planning, and he added that she needed to plan instructional activities for the rest of the class ahead of time. He also offered to come to her class and model differentiated instruction for her

(Observation, 1-26-09). Both PME and APME have been focused on the needs of their staff throughout the first year of RTI implementation. APME stated:

> I just want to make sure that we're taking care of kids and that we're taking care of teachers and what it is that they need. Sometimes if they're so quiet, they might be talking amongst themselves and aren't really telling us the struggles that they're having in what they're doing, working with small groups of children and doing this data collection and entering that data and how it's affecting them.

PME concurred and added:

> The main thing has been just paying closer attention to what teachers need as they go through the process because this is a real change for a lot of them because it is so data driven and student centered. And in addition to that, it's really come at a perfect time for us here at this school because we're also in the process of unpacking the new standards that kick in next fall.

The support of the two administrators has been noted by the staff. For example, a third-grade teacher noted during a walk-through observation, "PME has been very supportive of me through this process. He meets with us regularly and walks us through the whole process. He really knows this RTI stuff and shares that knowledge with us," (Observation, 2-2-09).

In addition to supporting their staff through RTI implementation, the administrators at MES also indicated they had begun to share leadership in the RTI process with their staff so as to further ownership of the process. PME noted:

> And it's what I've always wanted to do, but I've been allowed to do it this year because of where we've come in the last two or three years as a school with regard to looking at intervention. But the RTI process has given me the opportunity to finally share the power, to allow teachers to have more access to data and to make the decisions about the kids. I feel like this year has been the first year where real effective shared leadership has happened here at our school.

After grade level meetings to look at the winter benchmark scores for Universal Screening, PME further explained his idea of shared leadership by saying, "We are

meeting in grade level groups to discuss movement through the tiers. I see this as shared leadership. We are all taking a leadership role in owning the RTI process," (Observation, 1-26-09). APME also shared her perceptions of the shared leadership created by the RTI process by noting:

> I've seen more meetings instead of with individual teachers, more of team meetings, which I really like because everybody can talk and kind of share ideas and talk about things that they are doing, who they're working with, their concerns, and everything. So versus the other way we used to do things where we had individual meetings on individual students… . So I think it's impacted the school in that it's caused a lot of conversation and a lot of people really taking responsibility and really looking at kids in a different aspect, in a different way.

The dynamic of shared leadership was directly observed in the grade-level meetings led by PME and APME. Results of the benchmarking for winter were projected onto a large-screen television hung on the wall of the conference room. PME then led the teachers into discussing the results of each student and discussing the needs of the students one-by-one. Each grade level decided together as a group which students needed to enter Tier 1 or Tier 2 (Observation, 1-26-09).

PME also noted his role as principal had been affected by the need to collaborate with the other principals of the RTI pilot schools to obtain information on how they were addressing issues relating to RTI implementation. He stated:

> Well, it's a resource to call, especially the e-mail group, just to be able to send that and say, hey, we're in this part of the process, where are you with it, what are you doing, what problems are you encountering, what successes, or what things have you found out that works as far as, not necessarily the RTI process – the nuts and bolts, but with the staff relations.

The six principals of the RTI pilot schools began to email each other and to meet occasionally as a group to support each other and to collaborate in leading the RTI implementation in their schools. He noted:

> Some of the pilot schools and principals, we've not had some of the district support that we had expected, monetarily as well as just support personnel. But as far as collaborating with other principals, that's really been a plus. It's really been stepped up and especially with the other principals that are piloting the program. And it's just helped build our professional practice, take our professional practice to a new level with regard to collaboration and sharing resources. But it's the whole process pretty much that is giving me what I wanted out of it.

This group of principals communicates primarily through email correspondence to support each other as principals of schools that are piloting the district's RTI model. PME added:

> Not as a group meeting on a regular basis, but mainly through e-mail. We've got an e-mail group, and we'll e-mail back and forth when we have different questions or call each other on the phone. And then every time we have a leadership meeting, once a month with all the other principals in the district, then we always get together and try to have lunch and talk about what's going on.

The collaborative nature of PME has been observed during district level meetings. He has been in attendance at every meeting the district RTI team has held (Personal Notes from District RTI Meetings).

Research Question 1c: What Factors Facilitate RTI Implementation?

The participants at MES identified one theme in answer to the fourth research question. This theme pertains to the idea that implementing RTI leads to improved outcomes for students. This theme moved from the idea in the fall that implementing RTI led to improved instructional practices which, in turn, led to helping children to one in the spring that focused on student outcomes. The idea of improved instructional

practices was noted by the teachers at MES to be more directly related to their roles as teachers in the spring than to helping students, which was seen in the fall. This theme reflects the Consequence, Stage 4, level of the Stages of Concern framework because it focuses on how RTI implementation impacts students within the participants' immediate sphere of influence and improves educational outcomes for those students. This theme is discussed thoroughly below.

Improved Outcomes for Students

The participants viewed improved educational outcomes for students as a factor that facilitated RTI implementation. In their perspective, educational outcomes were improved for students through prevention of the need for special education services and student growth in reading skills. One of the ways the participants at MES viewed RTI implementation as leading to prevention was through the allowance of more time for instruction prior to considering special education services. T5ME stated:

> I think it's been beneficial to see students that just need a little bit extra help, a little bit more time, as opposed to having to go into special education – that type thing. I think it's been beneficial because it's made people aware that some people just need a little more time.

In addition, the participants at MES also felt that by providing intervention earlier, the need for special education services would be reduced. T5ME noted, "And now maybe teachers are seeing there are kids out there that we may have prematurely sent to special education that, really, all they needed was a little extra help." Likewise, a second-grade teacher noted during a Tier 1 observation, "In time, this process will lead to fewer students needing special education because they will have received the help sooner,"

(Observation, 2-2-09). Receiving help sooner was noted to be a real benefit of RTI implementation. PME stated:

> Well, like I mentioned earlier, the fact that I feel very comforted to know that there are no kids out there that are in the cracks that we don't know about. And by being in the cracks I mean that they're just sitting in a classroom invisible and not learning with reading, you know.

T30ME noted the benefit to early intervention for teachers of fourth and fifth grade students. She said:

> What we're hoping is, as it's implemented year after year, these children in fifth grade will already be identified, will already have gotten intervention, so we should not see so many problems with reading in fifth grade unless they've never been through the RTI model. So hopefully it will catch them earlier so you're not like, "My gosh, this kid is in fifth grade and reading on a second grade level. How did they get here with five years of school?"

The participants at MES felt that implementing RTI would lead to a reduction of the need to refer for special education services. T5ME noted, "I think it's cut down on the number of children that are being identified [for special education services]." Indeed, the referral rate for initial evaluations for special education services at MES had decreased 76% after one year of RTI implementation (District Referral Information Spreadsheet).

Another factor that facilitated RTI implementation for the participants at MES was the fact that the teachers had been able to see growth in their students reading skills through intervention and progress monitoring. T10ME stated:

> Now that I've started doing it I'm seeing I like it because I can see exactly where their growth is and can see the chart summarized, to be able to see the graphs and to see their growth, how it's steadily going up or down or staying the same. It's just nice to have that, to be able to see that.

Similarly, a first-grade teacher noted during a walk-through observation, "I feel very good about RTI. It's helping students improve their reading skills. I've seen tremendous

growth in some of my lowest students," (Observation, 2-2-09). Another first-grade teacher echoed this thought by saying, "I have watched as some of my weakest students made gains in their fluency skills. RTI is positive in that it allows teachers to see growth in their students' reading skills," (Observation, 3-26-09). The growth of students' reading skills was noted in several observations of grade level meetings. For example, of 10 first grade students designated as at-risk in the fall, seven had made significant progress by the end of Tier 1 and did not move into Tier 2 because of that progress (Observation, 1-26-09). T16ME also added:

> Where I see it to be a big success is the students that don't have true learning difficulties but are just delayed a little. This is where they're getting the extra help each day that they need to help bring them up to speed, uh, and I think it's been a great success in that sense.

Research Question 2: To What Extent Do the Concerns Expressed by Teachers And Principals Vary from the Beginning to the End of the First Year of RTI Implementation

The second research question was quantitative in nature and addressed whether concerns expressed by participants at MES on the Stages of Concern Questionnaire (SoCQ) varied significantly from the beginning to the end of the first year of RTI implementation. To determine whether these concerns expressed by teachers and principals at MES varied significantly from the fall to the spring of the first year of implementing RTI, a paired samples *t*-test was performed to compare the fall and spring scores for participants on each of the seven scales. The SoCQ was collected in the fall with a return rate of 47% and in the spring with a return rate of 66%. Descriptive data from the SoCQ is reviewed in the sections below, along with results of the paired samples *t*-test.

SoCQ Scores for MES

Spring SoCQ scores for MES are summarized in Figure 38, along with the Fall SoCQ scores for the school. The highest score occurred on Awareness, Stage 0, with a score at the 87th percentile. This score indicates the participants at MES were aware of the RTI implementation, but they were also highly aware of other district initiatives being implemented simultaneously alongside RTI, such as Gradespeed, new report card formats, and new State curricular standards. The second-highest score was noted on Personal, Stage 2, with a score at the 67th percentile. This score indicates participants were highly concerned with how they fit within the demands required by RTI implementation, and analysis of qualitative themes for the spring supported this finding. Most qualitative themes developed for MES in the spring were noted to be Personal, Stage 2, themes.

In examining the relationship between Information, Stage 1, and Personal, Stage 2, a result described by George et al. (2006) as a "negative one-two split" was noted. This pattern suggests a higher score on Personal, Stage 2, than on Information, Stage 1,and indicates personal concerns are so pervasive among participants that the desire to obtain more information or to learn more about RTI is overshadowed by the personal needs of the participants. This was also the case in the fall, but by spring there was more of a difference between the two scores. The Stages of Concern framework holds that until these intense Personal level concerns are addressed and alleviated, the teachers at MES will not desire to gain information regarding RTI or how to improve RTI implementation (George et al.).

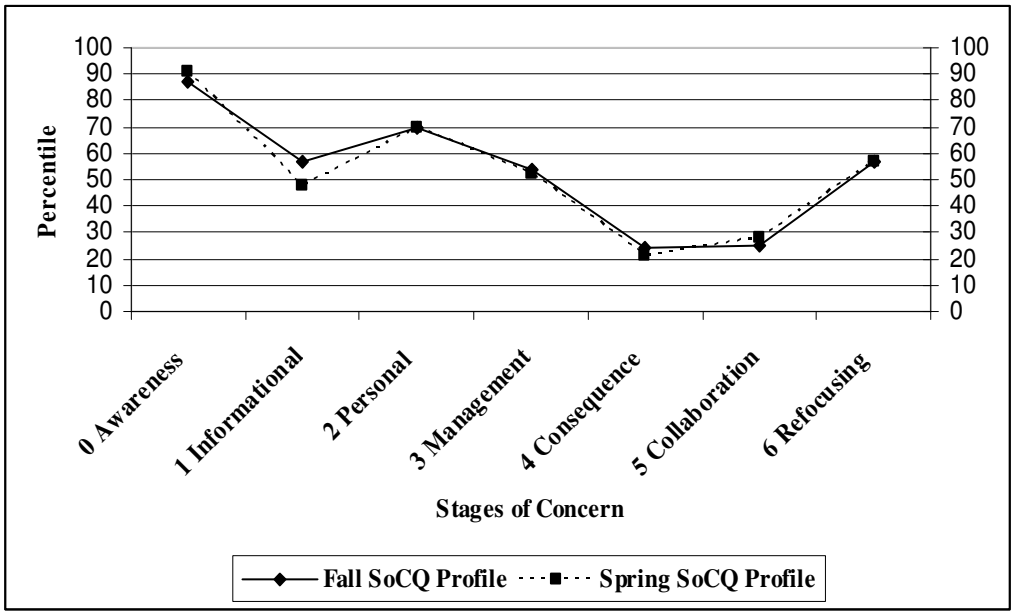


Figure 38. **SoCQ Spring and Fall Profiles for MES.**

A second area of interpretive importance on the SoCQ concerns the relationship of Refocusing, Stage 6, with the other stages. The spring SoCQ profile for MES indicates a slight "tailing up" or an elevation of Stage 6. This pattern was not noted in the fall. According to George et al., this pattern of high scores on Stage 6 early in an implementation usually denotes a desire to return to previously held practices. In this case, the desire would be to return to previous methods of identifying learning disabilities for students.

In comparing the fall and spring SoCQ profiles for MES, the scores are nearly identical. This pattern suggests very little change in the levels of concern for the participants at MES from fall to spring of the first year of RTI implementation. The score on Refocusing, Stage 6, was higher than the fall score, but the other areas were highly commensurate. Differences between fall and spring SoCQ scores will be further addressed below when the quantitative results of the paired samples *t*-test are discussed.

Frequency of SoCQ Scores by Participant

Table 56 summarizes the frequency of highest SoCQ scores by participants. The largest number of participants indicated their highest score as Awareness, Stage 0, with 60% of the participants falling within that category. An additional 16% of the participants indicated Personal, Stage 2, as their highest score on the SoCQ. Among the remainder of participants, 8% indicated Information, Stage 1, and Refocusing, Stage 6, as the highest score and 4% indicated Management, Stage 3,and Collaboration, Stage 5, as their highest score.

Table 56

Frequency of Highest Stage of Concern for Individual Participants at MES

Highest Stage of Concern	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
Number of Participants	15	2	4	1	0	1	2	25
Percent of Participants	60	8	16	4	0	4	8	100

The frequency of second-highest scores on the SoCQ for participants at MES is summarized in Table 57. The largest number of participants indicated Personal, Stage 2, as their second highest score, with 32% falling into that category. Another 16% of participants indicated Awareness, Stage 0, as their second-highest score, while a total of 12% of participants indicated their second-highest scores as Management, Stage 3, or Collaboration, Stage 5, and the final 4% of participants indicated Refocusing, Stage 6, as their second-highest score.

SoCQ Scores for Interviewees

Figure 39 provides a summary of PME's spring SoCQ profile scores and his fall SoCQ profile scores, along with the spring SoCQ profile scores of the school for comparison. PME's highest score was on Collaboration, Stage 5, with a score at the 88th percentile. This suggests PME is most concerned with finding ways to collaborate with others in implementing RTI. This desire to collaborate with others was also seen in the qualitative data analysis. Qualitative data collected in the spring clearly supported this collaborative nature as a theme that addressed how the administrators' role was affected by RTI implementation. PME had been part of a group of other RTI principals who met on a regular basis to work together in collaboration to find better ways to support RTI implementation. His second-highest score was on Information, Stage 1, with a score at the 51st percentile. This score indicates PME is interested in continuing to learn more about RTI implementation.

The relationship of PME's scores on Information, Stage 1, and Personal, Stage 2, indicate that his personal concerns regarding RTI implementation do not outweigh his

Table 57

Frequency of Second-Highest Stage of Concern for Individual Participants at MES

Second-Highest Stage of Concern	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
Number of Participants	4	6	8	3	0	3	1	25
Percent of Participants	16	24	32	12	0	12	4	100

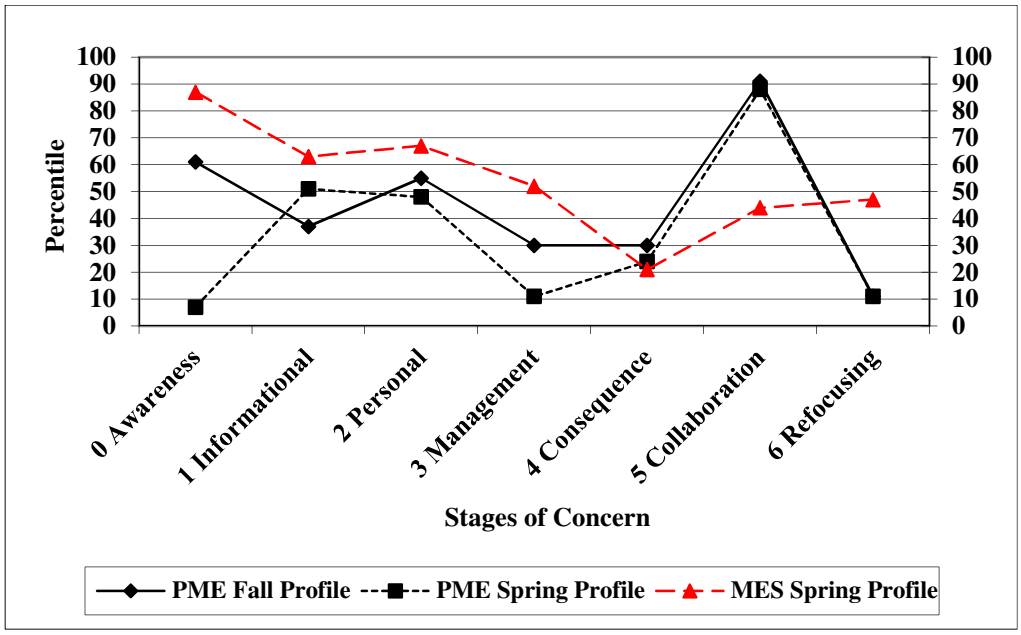


Figure 39. **SoCQ Spring and Fall Profiles for PME.**

desire to obtain more information on RTI at this point in time. His score on Refocusing, Stage 6, did not result in a "tailing up" as noted by George et al. (2006), and a possible desire to return to previous methods of identifying learning disabilities was not indicated.

When comparing PME's fall and spring SoCQ scores, he scored higher in the spring on Information, Stage 1. Lower scores were noted in the spring for the following stages: Awareness, Stage 0, Personal, Stage 2, Management, Stage 3, and Consequence, Stage 4. His scores on Collaboration, Stage 5, and Refocusing, Stage 6, remained consistent from fall to spring. A comparison of PME's SoCQ scores to that of the school profile for spring indicates PME scored lower than the school average on all stages except for Consequence, Stage 4, which was slightly higher than the average for the school, and Collaboration, Stage 5, which was much higher than the school average.

The SoCQ fall and spring profile for APME is summarized in Figure 40, along with the spring SoCQ profile of MES for comparison. APME's highest score was on Awareness, Stage 0, with a score at the 96th percentile. This suggests she is very aware of RTI implementation but is also aware of other competing district initiatives being implemented simultaneously with RTI. Her second-highest score occurred on Personal, Stage 2, with a score at the 67th percentile. This indicates she is highly concerned about how RTI implementation affects her on a personal level.

In examining the relationship between APME's scores on Information, Stage 1, and Personal, Stage 2, she does not exhibit a pattern noted by George et al. (2006) as a "negative one-two split." Her score on Personal, Stage 2, is slightly higher than her score on Information, Stage 1, which suggests she is not so overwhelmed with personal

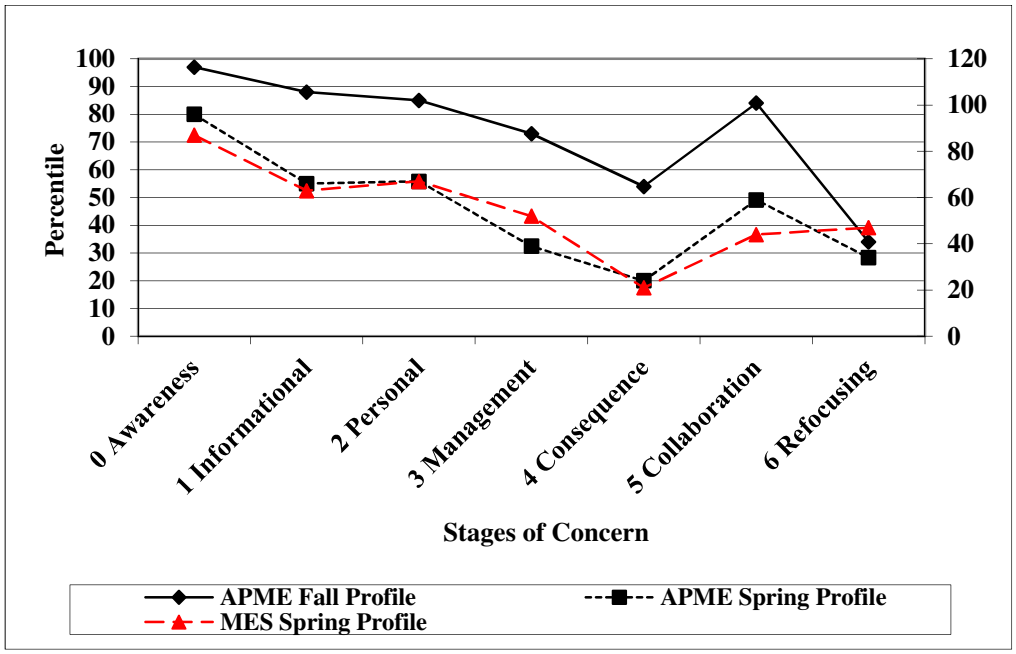


***Figure 33*. SoCQ Spring and Fall Profiles for APME.**

concerns regarding RTI implementation that she does not desire to learn more about RTI. Her score on Refocusing, Stage 6, does not "tail up" and thus there do not appear to be competing ideas on how to best implement RTI.

From fall to spring, APME scored much lower on all stages except for Refocusing, Stage 6, which was only slightly lower in the spring than the fall. Her scores on the SoCQ in the spring are highly commensurate with those of the school profile.

Figure 41 summarizes the fall and spring SoCQ scores for T16ME. Her highest score was on Awareness, Stage 0, with a score at the 87th percentile. This score indicates T16ME is highly aware of RTI but is also aware of other initiatives being implemented being implemented simultaneously with RTI. Her second-highest score occurred on Information, Stage 1, with a score at the 84th percentile. This score suggests T16ME would like to learn more about RTI implementation.

In analyzing the relationship between T16ME's scores on Information, Stage 1, and Personal, Stage 2, it was noted that she scored much higher on Information than Personal. This pattern indicates T16ME is not so overwhelmed by personal concerns that she has no desire to learn more about RTI implementation. Her score on Refocusing, Stage 6, does not "tail up" and does not suggest competing ideas for how to best implement RTI.

From fall to spring, T16ME scored higher on the SoCQ on Information, Stage 1, Collaboration, Stage 5, and Refocusing, Stage 6. She scored lower on Personal, Stage 2, and Consequence, Stage 4. Her scores on Awareness, Stage 0, and Management, Stage 3, remained consistent from fall to spring. When compared to the school averages for

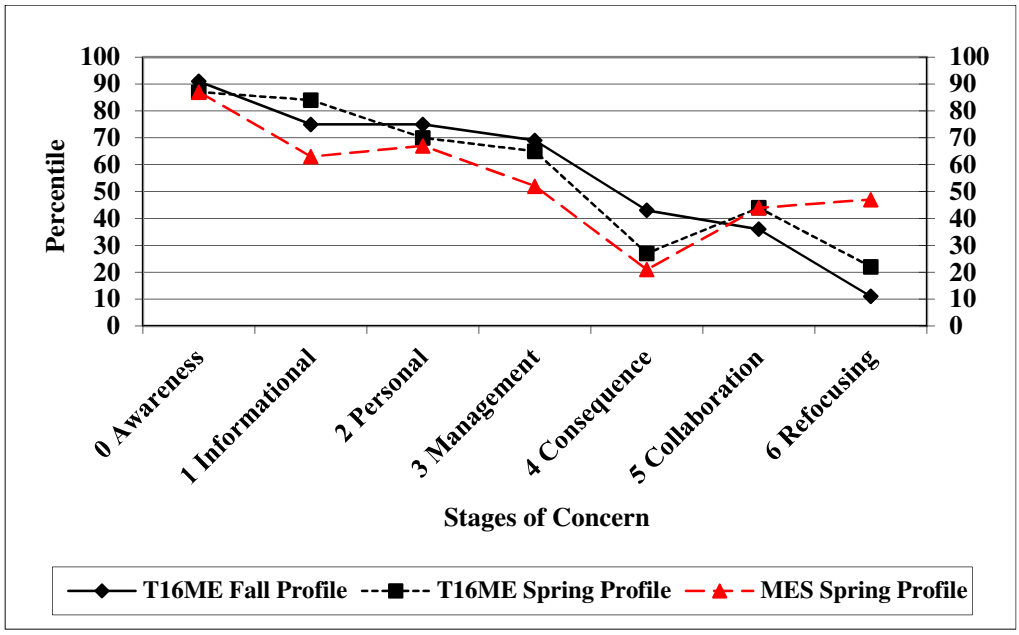


Figure 34. **SoCQ Spring and Fall Profiles for T16ME.**

spring, T16ME scored higher on Information, Stage 1, Management, Stage 3, and Consequence, Stage 4, and lower on Refocusing, Stage 6. Her scores on Awareness, Stage 0, Personal, Stage 2, and Collaboration, Stage 5, were commensurate with those of the school averages.

Fall and spring SoCQ scores for T10ME are provided in Figure 42. She scored highest on Awareness, Stage 0, with a score at the 55th percentile. Her score suggests she is aware of RTI but is also aware of other initiatives being implemented simultaneously with RTI. Her second-highest score was on Personal, Stage 2, with a score at the 39th percentile. This score suggests T10ME is very concerned with how RTI implementation affects her on a personal level.

When the relationship is examined between Information, Stage 1, and Personal, Stage 2, a pattern noted by George et al. (2006) to be a "negative one-two split" occurs. This pattern results from T10ME's higher score on Personal, Stage 2. Interpretively, this pattern suggests she is so overwhelmed by personal concerns that her desire to learn more about RTI is overshadowed. Her score on Refocusing, Stage 6, resulted in what George et al. refer to as a "tailing up" and typically suggests a desire to return to more familiar practices rather than the implementation.

T10ME's spring scores on the SoCQ were lower than her fall scores on Awareness, Stage 0, Information, Stage 1, and Collaboration, Stage 5, and higher on Personal, Stage 2, and Consequence, Stage 4. Her scores on Management, Stage 3, and Refocusing, Stage 6, remained consistent from fall to spring. When compared to the school averages, T10ME scored lower than the school profile on all stages.

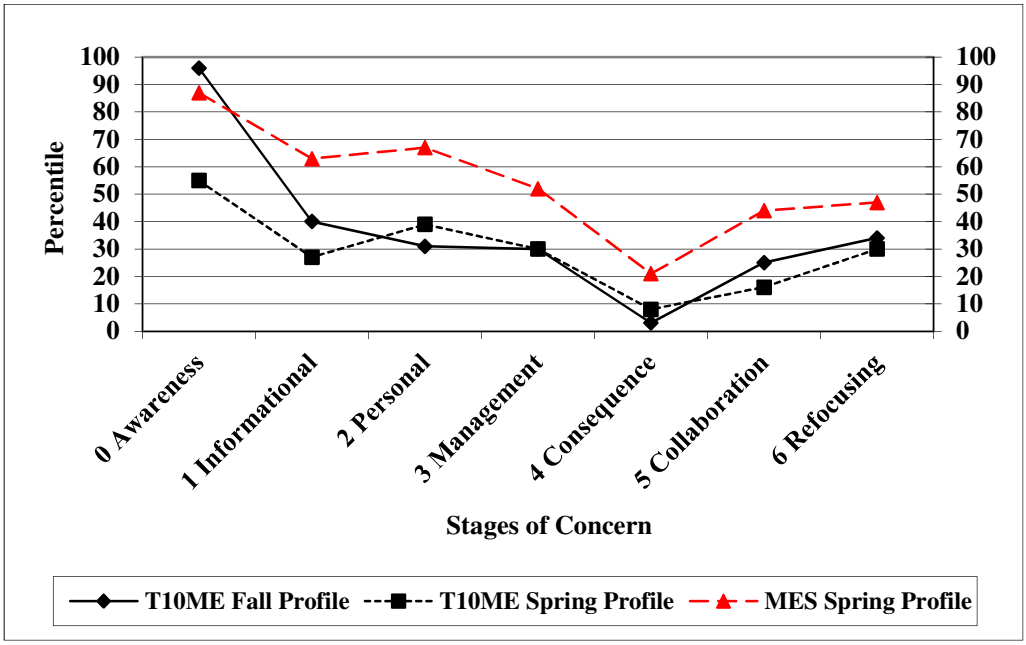


Figure 35. **SoCQ Spring and Fall Profiles for T10ME.**

***Paired Samples t*-test**

In order to determine if the concerns expressed on the SoCQ by the participants at MES varied significantly from the beginning to the end of the first year of RTI implementation, I performed a paired samples *t*-test to compare the scores for fall and spring for participants who completed the SoCQ for both data collection periods. A total of 17 teachers completed both assessments. Descriptive statistics from the paired samples *t*-test are summarized in Table 58. For both fall and spring, the highest mean score based on raw scores occurred on Collaboration, Stage 5, with a mean score of 19.71 in the fall and 18.82 in the spring. Results of the paired samples *t*-test are provided in Table 59. The paired samples *t*-test was run on each of the seven Stages of Concern to determine whether the concerns expressed by participants in the fall decreased or increased to a statistically significant extent by the spring. When looking at the stages, there were no significant differences noted on Awareness ($t = 1.46$, df = 16, $p > 0.05$), Information ($t = .79$, df = 16, $p > 0.05$), Personal ($t = .32$, df = 16, $p > 0.05$), Management ($t = 1.71$, df = 16, $p > 0.05$), Consequence ($t = .59$, df = 16, $p > 0.05$), Collaboration ($t = .88$, df = 16, $p > 0.05$), or Refocusing ($t = -2.03$, df = 16, $p > 0.05$). These findings imply that the intensity of concerns on the SoCQ did not vary significantly from fall to spring for the participants at MES. Therefore, I fail to reject the null hypothesis that holds there is no statistically significant difference between SoCQ scores in the fall and spring for the participants at MES.

Table 58

Descriptive Statistics for Paired Samples *t*-test for MES

Stage		Mean	N	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean
0 Awareness	F	15.47	17	4.03	.98
	S	13.76	17	5.15	1.25
1 Information	F	17.65	17	7.17	1.74
	S	16.35	17	5.85	1.42
2 Personal	F	18.12	17	8.20	1.99
	S	17.53	17	6.08	1.47
3 Management	F	15.18	17	7.33	1.78
	S	12.06	17	5.61	1.36
4.Consequence	F	17.53	17	6.27	1.52
	S	16.94	17	5.48	1.33
5 Collaboration	F	19.71	17	7.14	1.73
	S	18.82	17	7.30	1.77
6 Refocusing	F	11.53	17	6.12	1.48
	S	15.53	17	8.85	2.15

Table 59

Results of Paired Samples *t*-test for MES

Stage	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean	*t*	df	Significance
0 Awareness	1.71	4.82	1.17	1.46	16	.164
1 Information	1.29	6.75	1.64	.79	16	.441
2 Personal	.59	7.48	1.81	.32	16	.750
3 Management	3.12	7.52	1.82	1.71	16	.107
4 Consequence	.59	7.52	1.82	.32	16	.751
5 Collaboration	.88	7.20	1.75	.50	16	.620
6 Refocusing	-4.43	8.49	2.06	-2.39	16	.060

Summary

Spring data analysis for MES was summarized according to research questions. Three themes were developed identifying overall concerns expressed by participants at MES in the spring which included concern regarding scheduling the various demands associated with RTI, insufficient training on RTI implementation, and the need for more resources to sustain RTI implementation. Concerns regarding the scheduling difficulties and insufficiency of training were also noted in the fall, but the training concerns were subsumed under the global concern of lack of clarity regarding the RTI process. By spring, these concerns regarding insufficiency of training had become identifiable as a stand-alone theme. The need for additional resources was a new theme that was developed in the spring. The training theme is considered a Personal, Stage 2, theme when viewed through the Stages of Concern framework because it pertains to the participants' feelings of inadequacy based on their lack of training to implement RTI. The concerns regarding scheduling difficulties and the need for additional resources are both considered to be Management, Stage 3, because each pertains to how continued implementation of RTI can be sustained or managed. A potential barrier to future RTI implementation was identified as the participants' perception that RTI was a cumbersome and overly lengthy process that delayed the special education identification process. Teachers identified the primary effect of RTI on their role as teachers as a process leading to improved instructional practices, while the administrators identified the primary effect of RTI on their role as an increased need to support teachers, share leadership, and collaborate with others. Both themes are considered Personal, Stage 2,

themes. Finally, improved outcomes for students was identified as a factor that facilitates RTI implementation. This theme is considered to be a Consequence, Stage 4, theme as it pertains to a positive outcome resulting from RTI implementation. This theme was also seen in the fall.

The SoCQ profile was reviewed for the average scores for all participants at MES, as well as each individual participant in the interviewing. Participants at MES indicated Awareness, Stage 0, as their highest stage of concern followed by Personal, Stage 2. Results of the paired samples *t*-test indicated no statistically significant differences between SoCQ scores at the beginning and at the end of the first year of RTI implementation for MES. Therefore, I fail to reject the null hypothesis that holds there is no statistically significant difference between SoCQ scores in the fall and spring for the participants at MES.

CHAPTER 12

ACROSS CASE ANALYSIS OF SPRING DATA

Chapter Introduction

Spring data were discussed for Camellia Garden Elementary, Gardenia Elementary, and Magnolia Elementary in Chapter 9, Chapter 10, and Chapter 11 for a within-case analysis. Qualitative themes were developed and discussed, along with quantitative data, for each school in answer to the research questions I proposed for this study which are the following:

1. What are the concerns of teachers and principals as they experience RTI implementation?
    a. What do teachers and principals perceive as barriers to implementing RTI?
    b. How are the roles of teachers and principals affected by RTI?
    c. What factors facilitate RTI implementation?
2. To what extend to the concerns expressed by teachers and principals vary from the beginning to the end of the first year of RTI implementation?

The purpose of the present Chapter is to provide a comparison of the qualitative themes developed for each of the three schools and to analyze statistical data generated from the Stages of Concern Questionnaire (SoCQ) in order to obtain a global analysis of the three schools participating in this mixed-methods case study as they ended their first year of RTI implementation in the spring. The Chapter was structured based upon the research questions I sought to answer in this study through discussion of qualitative themes and

quantitative data developed during within-case analysis in order to answer these above-noted questions.

Research Question 1: What are the Concerns of Teachers and Principals as they Experience RTI Implementation?

The first qualitative research question addressed the global concerns teachers and principals had regarding implementing RTI during the first year of implementation. Spring qualitative data were collected from January 2009 through April 2009 in the form of interviews which occurred March 12, 13, 18, and 25, 2009, observations which occurred January through April 2009, and documents. Consequently, the participants at each of the three schools were in the process of implementing RTI during data collection, and the themes developed reflect their concerns in terms of thoughts and perceptions of RTI based upon their experience during their first year of implementation. Using the Stages of Concern (SoC) component of the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) as my theoretical framework, the themes developed were conceptualized in light of the six Stages of Concern (see Table 2) users of an innovation experience as they implement a new program or process. Based upon the CBAM framework, all participants in this study were considered to be early users of RTI in the spring due to the fact they were in the process of experiencing RTI for the first time. Four distinct themes were developed across the three schools in answer of the first research question which indicates the participants at all three schools had similar global concerns. These concerns pertained to difficulty understanding the RTI process and requirements of the district's RTI model, insufficiency of training to be able to implement RTI, difficulty scheduling time to

conduct RTI-related activities within the daily schedule, and the need for additional resources to successfully sustain RTI implementation. Table 60 provides a summary of these themes by school along with the corresponding SoC. Each of these themes is discussed thoroughly in the sections that follow.

Confusion over Process

Participants at Camellia Garden Elementary (CGE) and Gardenia Elementary School (GES) indicated difficulty understanding the RTI process. This theme was also seen in the fall among all three schools. By spring, participants at CGE and GES continued to express confusion regarding the RTI process, but participants at Magnolia Elementary School (MES) did not. This theme is considered a Personal, Stage 2, theme as it addresses how participants personally understand the RTI process and how they are to carry out the various demands.

Specifically, participants at CGE questioned whether Curriculum Based Measurement (CBM) was an appropriate measure to be used as the Universal Screening. Because the Universal Screening identifies students who are struggling with reading and thus initiates the RTI process, the teachers expressed doubt that CBM was appropriate to use. They questioned whether fluency was appropriate to denote all skills involved in the reading process, and they also expressed doubt over using timed tests as part of the RTI process. The teachers felt that there were better ways to address reading that would be far more accurate in identifying struggling students.

Participants at GES also expressed frustration regarding their lack of understanding for how the whole RTI process worked. They felt they could not see the

Table 60

Analysis of Spring Themes for RQ1 by School and SoC

School	Theme	Stage of Concern
Cross-Cases	***Confusion over Process***	***2 Personal***
Camellia Garden Elementary	Accuracy of CBM for Universal Screening	2 Personal
Gardenia Elementary	Confusing Process	2 Personal
Cross-Cases	***Insufficient Training***	***2 Personal***
Camellia Garden Elementary	Insufficient Training to Implement RTI	2 Personal
Gardenia Elementary	Lack of Training	2 Personal
Cross-Cases	***Scheduling RTI***	***3 Management***
Camellia Garden Elementary	Effect of RTI on Scheduling	3 Management
Gardenia Elementary	Time Management	3 Management
Magnolia Elementary	Scheduling Difficulties	3 Management
Cross-Cases	***Need More Resources***	***3 Management***
Gardenia Elementary	Need for Additional Resources	3 Management
Magnolia Elementary	Need More Resources	3 Management

process from beginning to end, and that limited vision was preventing them from coming to a complete understanding of how the process would look in its entirety. While the teachers at GES did not specifically mention the reading CBM measure, they did question how the whole tier process was organized and how students moved through the tiers. They felt the criteria was too complicated to understand, and they were frustrated with their lack of understanding how movement through the tiers worked. In addition, the teachers at GES felt that the data analysis required by the RTI process was very complicated and hard to understand.

At the end of the first year of implementation, two of the schools in this study continued to express their confusion regarding how the RTI process worked. Participants at these two schools began the year concerned regarding their lack of understanding of this process, and they ended the year with the same concerns.

Insufficient Training

A second area of concern addressed what participants at CGE and GES perceived as insufficient training to successfully understand and implement RTI. Lack of sufficient training was also noted across all three schools in the fall, but this concern was subsumed under the global theme of lack of understanding of how the RTI process worked. By spring, however, the concern expressed by participants at CGE and GES regarding their perceived insufficiency of training to successfully implement RTI had become an independent theme in itself. This theme is considered to be a Personal, Stage 2, theme within the Stages of Concern framework because it addresses how participants perceive they do not have enough training to be able to understand and carry out the demands of

RTI implementation. Participants at MES did not express concern regarding their lack of training.

Participants at CGE and GES expressed their perception that they had not had sufficient training to be able to understand the various components associated with RTI implementation, nor had they had enough training to be able to actually implement RTI successfully. The trainings provided by the district on district-wide professional development days, as well as the ongoing and embedded training provided by the principals, were not felt to be adequate in preparing them to understand and implement RTI.

For participants at CGE, the trainings were ineffective because teachers of all grade levels received the same training at the same time. These teachers felt that the lower grades (grades K-3) have issues with reading instruction and scheduling that are vastly different from the upper grades (grades 4-6). The trainings would have been more beneficial if they had been designed specifically for lower grades and upper grades so as to better address the unique issues associated with each. The teachers at GES felt that many of their questions were left unanswered by the trainings and that there was currently no format to address those questions. Participants at both schools expressed their frustration at trying to implement a process they had so little preparation to implement.

Scheduling RTI

Teachers at all three schools continued to express their concern regarding the scheduling of RTI activities into the daily schedule. In the fall, the teachers were very

concerned regarding the incorporation of the 90-minute reading block of uninterrupted reading instruction. By spring, the teachers did not express concern regarding the reading block, but they did continue to express concern for the amount of time other RTI activities were taking. Within the Stages of Concern framework, this theme falls within the Management, Stage 3, level because it addresses the managing or scheduling of activities associated with the RTI implementation. This concern was present in the fall and continued to be a strong area of concern in the spring.

Teachers at all three schools indicated that the RTI process was very time consuming and that incorporating RTI into the daily schedule was very difficult. The primary area mentioned by participants at GES and MES was the amount of time to designate as intervention time. As previously discussed, the RTI framework adopted by Meadowlands School District required 30 minutes of RTI intervention. All three schools had scheduled 30 minutes within the master schedule for each grade level in the fall. However, the teachers noted that it was difficult to keep this time free. In fact, the participants at CGE added that to incorporate the 30 minutes for intervention interfered with the time for instruction in social studies and science. These participants felt that these two subject areas were being shortchanged by implementing the 30-minute intervention period.

Other time consuming tasks were noted to be the three times a year Universal Screening using reading CBM, as well as the weekly progress monitoring component for students in the tiers. As noted previously, students who are designated at-risk for reading difficulties based on their performance on the three-times-a-year benchmark assessment

begin receiving intervention with weekly progress monitoring. Finding the time to progress monitor students weekly was noted to be a difficult thing to do in addition to adding an additional 30 minutes for intervention plus the 90-minute reading block.

In addition, participants at CGE and MES expressed concern regarding what to do with other students while conducting interventions with a small group of students, as well as doing the weekly progress monitoring with students in the tiers. This had been noted as a concern in the fall as well and continued into the spring. The teachers expressed concern regarding how to plan and schedule activities for the majority of the class while intervening with one or two students. Teachers of younger students, particularly, expressed frustration with being interrupted repeatedly as they attempted to provide intervention to struggling students. By spring, this issue had not been resolved for the participants at CGE and MES and remained an area of concern.

Need More Resources

A fourth theme was developed addressing the concern expressed by participants at GES and MES regarding the need for additional resources to be able to successfully sustain RTI implementation. This theme was not noted in the fall but rather was first seen in the spring. Within the Stages of Concern framework, this theme is considered a Management, Stage 3, theme because it addresses the need for additional resources to manage the RTI implementation.

One area noted as a need was specific reading interventions to use for students in Tier 2A and 2B. Participants at both schools noted their frustration with feeling like they did not know what to do for Tier 2A or Tier 2B interventions with their struggling

students. Once students have moved out of Tier 1, which is done within the 90-minute reading block through differentiated instruction, teachers were not as certain about what materials and instruction they should use in Tier 2A and Tier 2B. Principals at both schools noted their concern in this area as well. Purchasing intervention materials was a budgetary issue, and they had not been given any funds with which to purchase intervention materials. In addition, PME noted the need for additional resources to pay for substitutes to release teachers from their classroom duties to undergo enough training to fully prepare them to implement RTI. These two leaders were concerned regarding how to best address these issues in the upcoming years of RTI implementation.

In addition, the administrators at both schools expressed their concern regarding the lack of support positions to implement RTI successfully. Both felt that additional personnel would be necessary to sustain the RTI initiative, and neither had the funding within their budgets to hire additional personnel. PGE had filled a part-time position he had with a RTI Coach, and he noted that part-time was not sufficient to meet the needs of the staff and students in the RTI implementation. PME noted that he had a part-time reading specialist and a part-time school psychologist. In order to be able to sustain RTI implementation, he felt he needed a full-time reading specialist and a full-time school psychologist. For both principals, these positions were needed to support teachers as they conducted interventions, to provide ongoing and embedded training on RTI, and to assist in ensuring the implementation was being carried out with fidelity.

Research Question 1a: What do Teachers and Principals Perceive as Barriers to Implementing RTI?

This subquestion addressed what teachers and principals perceived to be barriers to implementing RTI at the end of their first year of RTI implementation. This area involved concerns that elicited strong emotions in the participants in comparison to the other research questions. While any concern within the SoC framework can become a barrier to successful implementation if left unresolved, these concerns expressed by the participants in this study appeared to be potential deal-breakers in implementing RTI. In the fall, three themes dealing with adding more teacher responsibilities, the appropriateness of the RTI model for schools' population of students, and the slowing down of the referral process were developed across the three sites. By spring, one theme was developed addressing the perception of the participants at all three schools that the RTI process delayed students receiving help or services they needed to be successful. This theme is viewed through Personal, Stage 2, within the SoC framework as it addresses the attempt of the participants to determine how RTI implementation affects them. In addition, an outlier theme was noted pertaining to the continued perception of the teachers at CGE that RTI does not align well to their school or their students. A summary of the themes by school and SoC is provided in Table 61.

Process Delays Help

Participants at all three schools expressed concern that the RTI process delays struggling students from receiving help that they need. This concern was also noted in the fall. Within the Stages of Concern framework, this theme is considered to be a

Table 61

Analysis of Spring Themes for RQ1a by School and SoC

School	Theme	Stage of Concern
Cross-Cases	***Process Delays Help***	***2 Personal***
Camellia Garden Elementary	Blocked from Accessing Services	2 Personal
Gardenia Elementary	Movement through the Tiers	2 Personal
Magnolia Elementary	Process is Overly Cumbersome and Lengthy	2 Personal
Outlier Theme		
Camellia Garden Elementary	Doesn't Align with Our School Or Our Students	2 Personal

Personal, Stage 2, theme as it addresses how the participants perceive RTI to be affecting them on a personal level.

Teachers at all three of the sites described their frustration with the RTI process in terms of the demands entailed, as well as the length of time required. Of particular concern to the teachers at MES is the fact that the CBM assessments have to be given three times a year for all students as part of the Universal Screening, then weekly to students identified as at-risk and who are receiving intervention. To these teachers, this is a demand on teachers' time that is considered unreasonable.

Another area described as frustrating by the teachers at GES are how students move through the tiers. The teachers felt that the way the goals for each tier are set may not be the most appropriate way to show whether or not students are making enough growth to close the gap in their reading skills. Since the goals are set to the lowest possible growth exhibited by typical, average students and not the amount of growth needed to close the gap, the teachers felt like the goals were too easy to master. They did not understand the concept of minimal growth necessary being the floor to student growth and determining need for further intervention.

For teachers at CGE, the way the RTI model defined at-risk resulted in only one student in the whole school being considered at-risk. This caused considerable frustration among the teachers. In addition, because the services of the reading specialist were tied to the RTI model, many teachers at CGE felt like a needed service that had previously been available for their students was now being blocked. This service was

also seen by the teachers as a support to them as classroom teachers, and the perceived loss of this support was very frustrating.

Participants at all three sites expressed their concern that the process, with all of the above-noted problems, had resulted in a delay in evaluating students for additional help through special education. Teachers felt the process took too long and unnecessarily created a delay in allowing children to receive help through special education services. In addition, participants at GES and MES perceived the Tier 1 process of differentiating instruction within the core reading instruction as a delay in students receiving intervention. These teachers did not seem to understand that by differentiating and working with students through flexible grouping, they were intervening with reading difficulties.

An outlier theme was noted among the participants at CGE. This theme did not fit within the overall theme as discussed above. This theme addressed the perception of the participants at CGE that the RTI process did not align with their school or with their students. This theme was also seen in the fall with participants at CGE and GES. However, participants at GES did not note this them be the spring, while participants at CGE continued to express this concern. As discussed previously, only one student at CGE scored low enough to be considered at-risk. Consequently, CGE went from being one of the highest referring schools for special education evaluations in the district to being one of the lowest. The teachers and administrators at CGE were very concerned about this trend.

Research Question 1b: How are the Roles of Teachers and Principals Affected by RTI?

The second subquestion sought to identify how teachers and principals perceived their roles to be affected by RTI implementation. Among the teachers at the three sites, one distinct theme was developed pertaining to the perception of the teachers that they were learning new ways of teaching through implementing RTI. This is a change from the fall, at which time participants at each site had a different theme for how they perceived their role as teachers to be affected by RTI. By spring, with more familiarity with RTI, the teachers were able to see how their role was affected through being forced to learn new ways of teaching. The administrators, principals and assistant principals, at each site indicated their role to be primarily affected through the need to lead their staff through conflict. This is a slight change from the fall, when the administrators saw the primary impact of RTI on their role was through the need to walk alongside their staffs and guide and support them. By spring, the administrators still supported their staffs in implementing RTI, but they also realized that they were going to have to lead their staffs through a process the teachers did not particularly enjoy and support. All of these themes in this section are viewed through the Personal, Stage 2, stage of the SoC framework and reflect how the participants are attempting to analyze how their roles fit within the RTI model and how RTI impacts their current roles. The themes developed in answer to the second subquestion are summarized by school and by SoC in Table 62.

Learning New Ways

The teachers at all three sites participating in this study indicated that they had learned a new process over the course of the first year of RTI implementation. While

Table 62

Analysis of Spring Themes for RQ1b by School and SoC

School	Theme	Stage of Concern
Cross-Cases	***Learning New Ways***	***2 Personal***
Camellia Garden Elementary	Learning a New Way of Teaching	2 Personal
Gardenia Elementary	Improved Teaching	2 Personal
Magnolia Elementary	A Positive Process Leading to Improved Instruction	2 Personal
Cross-Cases	***Leading Through Conflict***	***2 Personal***
Camellia Garden Elementary	Leading and Learning Through Conflict	2 Personal
Gardenia Elementary	Changes in Leadership Style	2 Personal
Magnolia Elementary	Supporting, Sharing Leadership, And Collaborating	2 Personal

there were many uncertainties and questions about the RTI process, the teachers believed that they had learned new methods of teaching that, in retrospect, were not negative at all but rather very positive. For teachers at CGE and MES, the RTI process had created a situation where they had to rethink what they understood about the referral process and to change their way of teaching to accommodate the demands of RTI implementation. Teachers at both schools indicated this to be a positive experience at the end of the first year of RTI implementation.

These changes in instruction brought about through RTI implementation were noted to improve instruction by the teachers at GES and MES. These teachers perceived the practices associated with implementing RTI to enhance their instruction. These teachers felt that the data provided through Universal Screening and progress monitoring provided them with more information on how children were doing with their reading skills. Consequently, this data allowed the teachers to see more quickly who was making progress and who was not. Data associated with RTI implementation also assisted the teachers in grouping students for better differentiation.

Teachers at CGE also expressed their fear of making mistakes with RTI because they were so unclear about how to implement it. This pressure to get it right without full understanding of the process was also seen in the fall by teachers at MES. By spring,however, the teachers at MES were no longer expressing this concern while the teachers at CGE began expressing that particular concern. In addition, the teachers at CGE also expressed concern that while they were learning a new way of teaching and

while they thought that this new way of teaching was positive, they nonetheless felt that teacher judgment was being questioned through the RTI process.

Leading through Conflict

In the fall, the administrators at the three sites were focused primarily on supporting teachers through the beginning of RTI implementation, and they saw that need for additional support as the primary effect of RTI on their role as administrators. By spring, however, the administrators continued to support their staff but they also began to see the need for leading their staff through conflict. Much of the conflict pertained to teacher perception that services they previously had access to, such as the support of the reading specialist, had been removed through the RTI process. PCGE and PGE noted this as an area that had been a challenge for them in their buildings. In addition, lack of understanding of the RTI process had created situations where teachers were not following the district RTI plan, and the principals had to intervene and ensure the model was being implemented with fidelity. For PGE, dealing with staff conflict over RTI implementation resulted in his having to adopt a more direct style of leadership than he is accustomed to using in ensuring his staff is following the district's model of RTI implementation. He has not been very comfortable with this change, but he has made the change as needed.

Collaboration has also been a common theme among the three schools. The three administrators and their assistant principals perceived the RTI process to allow them to learn alongside their staff and to work with their staff in finding solutions for the many questions associated with RTI implementation. By collaborating and sharing leadership,

the principals have attempted to lead their staffs into unchartered territory with RTI implementation.

Research Question 1c: What Factors Facilitate RTI Implementation?

The purpose of the third subquestion was to identify factors teachers and principals perceived to facilitate implementing RTI. In the fall, participants at all three sites identified improved instructional practices as a factor they felt would facilitate the process. By spring, participants at CGE continued to perceive improved instructional practices as a factor that facilitated RTI implementation. Viewing this theme within the lens of the Stages of Concern framework, the theme falls within Consequence, Stage 4. Participants at GES and MES expressed their belief that implementing RTI would lead to improved outcomes for students and that this factor facilitated RTI implementation. When viewed through the Stages of Concern framework, this theme is also a Consequence, Stage 4, theme. This stage in the Stages of Concern framework focuses on how RTI implementation will affect students within the participants' immediate sphere of influence and on how relevant the implementation will be for students. This theme suggests that the teachers and principals clearly perceive that the long-term benefits of RTI implementation have a positive effect on the lives of their students. Table 63 provides a summary of this theme by school and by Stage of Concern.

Improved Outcomes

Teachers at GES and MES expressed their belief that RTI implementation would lead to improved outcomes for students. First, they indicated that practices associated with RTI implementation, such as Universal Screening and progress monitoring, enabled

Table 63

Analysis of Spring Themes for RQ1c by School and SoCQ

School	Theme	Stage of Concern
Cross-Cases	***Improved Outcomes***	***4 Consequence***
Gardenia Elementary	Improved Outcomes for Students	4 Consequence
Magnolia Elementary	Improved Outcomes for Students	4 Consequence
Outlier Theme		
Camellia Garden Elementary	Improved Instructional Practices	4 Consequence

teachers to better track student growth. By having this information readily available, the teachers indicated that they believed students would show more growth because of the focus on progress monitoring. In addition, providing interventions early without having to wait for special education eligibility would allow many students to receive the support they need without ever going into special education. Thus, the teachers perceived a preventative component to RTI that they believed would better serve and support students.

While participants at GES and MES moved from the perception that improved instructional practices was the factor that facilitated RTI implementation to the perception that these practices led to improved outcomes for students, the participants at CGE did not. The participants at CGE continued to express their perception that RTI implementation led to improved instructional practices, such as the 90-minute reading block and data-informed instruction, and these improved instructional practices facilitated RTI implementation.

Research Question 2: To What Extent do the Concerns Expressed by Teachers and Principals Vary from the Beginning to End of The First Year of RTI Implementation?

The second research question sought to address whether teacher and principal concerns expressed on the Stages of Concern Questionnaire (SoCQ) varied significantly from the beginning of the first year of RTI implementation to the end of the first year of RTI implementation. SoCQ profiles for the sites were discussed in the within-case analysis for each school in Chapter 5, Chapter 6, Chapter 7, Chapter 9, Chapter 10, and Chapter 11. A cross-case comparison of the sites was made in Chapter 8, and a one-way

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was performed on each of the seven Stages of Concern from the fall SoCQ data in order to determine if the three schools differed significantly in their concerns at the beginning of the RTI implementation in the fall. Results suggested significant differences ($p < .05$) existed between the participants of CGE and the participants of GES and MES on Information, Stage 1, Management, Stage 3, and Refocusing, Stage 6. In addition, participants at CGE scored significantly higher ($p < .05$) than participants at GES on Awareness, Stage 0, and significantly higher ($p < .05$) than participants at MES on Personal,Stage 2. This finding suggests that the participants at CGE began the first year of implementation of RTI with higher concerns as measured on the SoCQ than did participants at the other two sites. The purpose of the following section is to determine whether SoCQ scores differed significantly in the spring at the end of the first year of RTI implementation and to determine whether scores on each of the Stages of Concern varied significantly from the beginning to the end of the first year of RTI implementation.

Spring SoC Profiles for Sites

Figure 43 provides a comparison of the spring profiles on the SoCQ for CGE, GES, and MES. Comparing the three sites, all scored highest on Awareness, Stage 0. In addition, all of the percentile scores were high, with percentiles of 96, 81, and 87, respectively for each school. These scores suggest the participants were very aware of RTI but were also aware of other initiatives besides RTI. Participants at CGE and GES scored second-highest on Management, Stage 3, with scores at the 80th and 69th percentiles, respectively. Participants at MES indicated Personal, Stage 2, as their

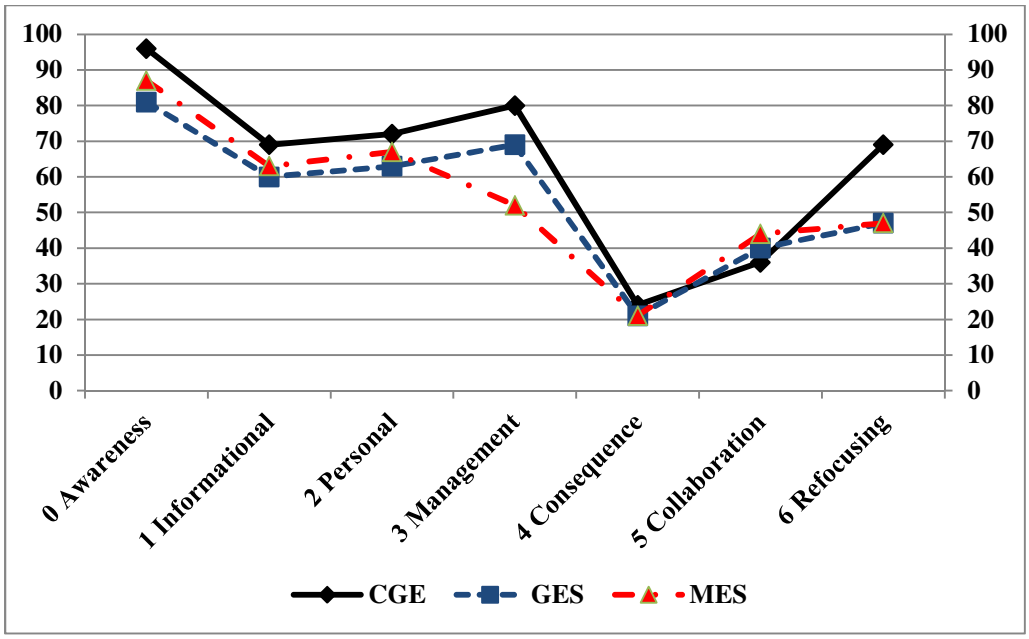


Figure 36. **SoCQ Spring Profiles for Sites.**

second-highest score with a score at the 67th percentile. Scores among the three sites were fairly similar with the exception of Awareness, Stage 0, Management, Stage 3, and Refocusing, Stage 6. As can be seen, participants at CGE indicated higher scores than participants at GES or MES on all three of these stages. Participants at MES scored higher than participants at GES on Awareness, Stage 0, and lower than participants at MES on Management, Stage 3. Participants at both schools scored consistent with each other on Refocusing, Stage 6. Whether these differences reach statistical significance will be discussed below.

Frequency of SoCQ Scores by Participants

Table 64 provides a summary of the frequency of scores in each of the seven Stages of Concern by participant for each of the three sites. As can be seen, the majority of participants scored highest on Awareness, Stage 0, with 57 percent falling within this category. The next highest score was noted on Management, Stage 3, with 13 percent of participants indicating that stage as their highest score.

The frequency of participants' second-highest score is summarized in Table 65. The highest number of participants indicated Personal, Stage 2, as their second-highest score followed by Management, Stage 3, with 24 percent and 19 percent of participants falling within those categories. Second-highest scores on Awareness, Stage 0, Information, Stage 1, and Refocusing, Stage 6, were very close to these highest two with a total of 49% percent of participants falling in these three categories.

Table 64

Frequency of Highest Stage of Concern for Individual Participants on Spring SoCQ

School	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
CGE	19	4	1	2	0	3	1	30
GE	17	1	3	9	1	3	1	35
ME	15	2	4	1	0	1	2	25
Total	51	7	8	12	1	7	4	90
Percentage	57	8	9	13	1	8	4	

Table 65

Frequency of Second-Highest Stage of Concern for Individual Participants

School	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
CGE	4	2	7	9	0	1	7	30
GE	8	5	7	5	0	3	7	35
ME	4	6	8	3	0	3	1	25
Total	16	13	22	17	0	7	15	90
Percentage	18	14	24	19	0	8	17	

Variance Among Sites

To prepare to answer my second research question of whether the concerns expressed by teachers and principals on the SoCQ varied significantly from the beginning to the end of the first year of RTI implementation, I first wanted to know whether there were significant differences between the three schools on the SoCQ at the end of the first year of implementation. Consequently, I performed a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) on each of the seven Stages of Concern to determine whether the differences between schools varied significantly for each of the SoCQ scales. Table 66 summarizes the mean responses to each of the seven Stages of Concern in relation to each of the three sites. The total highest means occurred on Personal, Stage 2 (18.03), and Collaboration, Stage 5 (17.54). This suggests that most of the teachers indicated the highest scores on the Personal stage, followed by the Collaboration stage. In addition, the mean scores on Management, Stage 3 (17.49), and Refocusing, Stage 6 (17.41), were very close to the top two scores, suggesting these concerns were also predominant among participants. Qualitative themes developed in the spring were mostly Personal concerns when viewed through the SoC framework, but there were also Management concerns, as well. Results of the ANOVA are provided in Table 67. Prior to analyzing whether differences between sites on the Stages of Concern were significant or not, I performed Levene's Test of Homogeneity of Variance on each of the seven ANOVAs to determine whether the dependent variable, the scores for each Stage of Concern, met the assumption of equal variance between groups. In all seven instances, the Levene's statistic was not significant

Table 66

Means for Stages of Concern by Site

Site	N		Self			Task	Impact		
			Awareness 0	Information 1	Personal 2	Management 3	Consequence 4	Collaboration 5	Refocusing 6
CGE	30	Mean	18.30	19.27	20.00	21.00	17.80	16.67	21.03
		S.D.	6.01	6.37	7.44	7.50	5.96	8.01	7.82
GE	35	Mean	14.03	15.86	16.91	17.63	16.89	17.74	15.50
		S.D.	4.27	6.55	7.04	6.77	7.53	5.82	7.20
ME	25	Mean	14.08	16.48	17.24	13.08	15.84	18.32	15.32
		S.D.	5.02	6.30	6.59	6.73	6.07	6.70	7.95
All	90	Mean	15.47	17.17	18.03	17.49	16.90	17.54	17.41
		S.D.	5.47	6.53	7.12	7.59	6.61	6.81	7.97

Table 67

Spring ANOVA Results for Between Groups Analysis of Stages of Concern

Stage of Concern	Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	*F*	*p*
0 Awareness	Between Groups	361.29	2	180.64	6.83	**.002**
	Within Groups	2301.11	87	26.45		
	Total	2662.40	89			
1 Information	Between Groups	204.11	2	102.05	2.47	.090
	Within Groups	3558.39	87	41.25		
	Total	3792.50	89			
2 Personal	Between Groups	175.60	2	87.80	1.76	.177
	Within Groups	3799.06	87	49.76		
	Total	4504.90	89			
3 Management	Between Groups	856.48	2	428.24	8.72	**.000**
	Within Groups	4274.01	87	49.13		
	Total	5130.49	89			
4 Consequence	Between Groups	52.40	2	26.20	.60	.554
	Within Groups	3837.70	87	44.11		
	Total	3890.10	89			
5 Collaboration	Between Groups	39.53	2	19.76	.42	.658
	Within Groups	4088.79	87	47.00		
	Total	4128.32	89			
6 Refocusing	Between Groups	593.78	2	296.89	5.11	**.008**
	Within Groups	5054.01	87	58.09		
	Total	5647.79	89			

Note. Bold *p* levels denote significance.

($p > 0.05$) which suggests the assumption of equal variance between sites can be made. An analysis of the results suggests there were no significant differences between the schools on Information, Stage 1 ($F = 2.47$; df = 2, 87; $p > 0.05$), Personal, Stage 2 ($F = 1.76$; df = 2, 87; $p > 0.05$), Consequence, Stage 4 ($F = 0.59$; df = 2, 87; $p > 0.05$), and Collaboration, Stage 5 ($F = 0.42$; df = 2, 87; $p > 0.05$). This finding suggests that the participants at the three schools were fairly similar in their scores on these two stages. A change was noted on two of the stages from fall to spring. However, significant differences were noted between the three schools on Awareness, Stage 0 ($F = 6.83$; df = 2, 87; $p < 0.05$), Management, Stage 3 ($F = 8.72$; df = 2, 87; $p < 0.05$), and Refocusing, Stage 6 ($F = 5.11$; df = 2, 87; $p < 0.05$).

To determine where the significant differences between sites existed, I next performed post hoc Scheffe tests for Stage 0, Stage 3, and Stage 6. Results are summarized in Table 68. When the results were analyzed, participants at CGE scored significantly higher ($p < 0.05$) than participants at GES and MES on Awareness, Stage 0, and Refocusing, Stage 6. In addition, participants at CGES scored significantly higher ($p < 0.05$) than participants at MES on Management, Stage 3, while participants at GES scored significantly higher than participants at MES on Refocusing, Stage 6.

Results of the ANOVA performed on SoCQ data in the fall suggest that the participants at Camellia Garden began the first year of RTI implementation with concerns year of RTI implementation with concerns that were significantly higher on these scales than did the participants at the other two sites. In the fall, participants at CGE scored significantly higher ($p < 0.05$) than participants at GES and MES on Information, Stage

Table 68

Results of Scheffe Post-Hoc Comparison for Significant SoC

SoC	School	School	Mean Difference	Standard Error	*p*
0 Awareness	CGE	GE	4.27	1.28	**.005**
		ME	4.22	1.39	**.013**
	GE	CGE	-4.27	1.28	**.005**
		ME	-.05	1.35	.999
	ME	CGE	-4.22	1.39	**.013**
		GE	.05	1.35	.999
3 Management	CGE	GE	3.37	1.74	.160
		ME	7.92	1.90	**.000**
	GE	CGE	-3.37	1.74	.160
		ME	4.55	1.84	.051
	ME	CGE	-7.92	1.90	**.000**
		GE	-4.55	1.84	.051
6 Refocusing	CGE	GE	5.23	1.90	**.026**
		ME	5.71	2.06	**.025**
	GE	CGE	-5.23	1.90	**.026**
		ME	.48	2.00	.972
	ME	CGE	-5.71	2.06	**.025**
		GE	- .48	2.00	.972

Note. Bold *p* levels indicate significance.

1, Management, Stage 3, and Refocusing, Stage 6. By spring, however, there were no significant differences between sites on Information. CGE remained significantly higher than GES and MES on Refocusing and significantly higher than MES on Management. GES also scored significantly higher than MES on Refocusing in the spring. In addition, in the fall participants at CGES scored significantly higher ($p < 0.05$) than participants at GES on Awareness, Stage 0, and this remained the case in the spring. Finally, participants at CGE scored significantly higher ($p < 0.05$) than participants at MES on Personal, Stage 2, in the fall. By spring, however, there were no significant differences between sites on Personal. Thus, although significant differences between sites existed in fall on Information and Personal, there were no significant differences among the schools by spring. Scores on the SoCQ were more commensurate on these stages. Significant differences continued to exist between the three sites on Awareness, Management, and Refocusing.

Variance from Fall to Spring

In order to determine if the concerns expressed on the SoCQ by the participants at in this study varied significantly from the beginning to the end of the first year of RTI implementation, I performed a paired samples *t*-test to compare the scores for fall and spring for participants who completed the SoCQ for both data collection periods. A total of 71 participants completed both assessments. Descriptive statistics from the paired samples *t*-test are summarized in Table 69.

The highest mean score in the fall was on Personal, Stage 2 (20.52), and Management, Stage 3 (20.13). By spring, the highest mean score was on Refocusing,

Table 69

Descriptive Statistics for Paired Samples *t*-test

Stage		Mean	N	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean
0 Awareness	F	16.46	71	5.64	.67
	S	15.70	71	5.74	.68
1 Information	F	19.37	71	7.10	.84
	S	16.86	71	6.51	.77
2 Personal	F	20.52	71	7.40	.88
	S	18.01	71	6.86	.81
3 Management	F	20.13	71	8.72	1.04
	S	17.56	71	7.73	.92
4.Consequence	F	16.24	71	5.89	.70
	S	17.80	71	5.99	.71
5 Collaboration	F	18.24	71	6.98	.83
	S	17.77	71	7.24	.86
6 Refocusing	F	14.79	71	7.48	.89
	S	18.06	71	8.07	.96

Stage 6 (18.06), and Personal, Stage 2 (18.01). Most qualitative themes developed in the fall and spring were classified as Personal themes within the Stages of Concern framework, and Management themes were also noted in fall and spring.

Paired samples *t*-tests were performed on the fall and spring SoCQ data for each of the three sites participating in this study, as discussed in Chapters 9, 10, and 11. At CGE, significant decreases from fall the spring were noted on Information, Stage 1 (t = 2.81, df = 29, $p < 0.05$), Personal, Stage 2 (t = 2.64, df = 29, $p < 0.05$), and Management, Stage 3 (t = 2.39, df = 29, $p < 0.05$). Significant increases were noted on Consequence, Stage 4 (t = -2.32, df = 29, $p < 0.05$), and Refocusing, Stage 6 (t = -2.34, df = 29, $p < 0.05$). At GES, a significant decrease was noted on Personal, Stage 2 (t = 2.41, df = 23, $p < 0.05$), and a significant increase was noted on Refocusing, Stage 6 (t = -2.19, df = 23, $p < 0.05$). No significant increases or decreases were noted at MES. Thus, participants at both CGE and GES showed significant decrease from fall to spring on Personal, Stage 2, and significant increase on Refocusing, Stage 6.

Results of the paired samples *t*-test are provided in Table 70. The paired samples *t*-test was run on each of the seven Stages of Concern to determine whether the concerns expressed by participants in the fall decreased or increased by the spring. When looking at the stages, there were no significant differences noted on Awareness (t = 1.33, df = 70, $p > 0.05$), Consequence (t = -1.85, df = 70, $p > 0.05$), and Collaboration (t = .66, df = 70, $p > 0.05$). However, the scores on Information, Stage 1 (t = 3.03, df = 70, $p < 0.05$), Personal, Stage 2 (t = 3.15, df = 70, $p < 0.05$) and Management, Stage 3 (t = 2.83, df = 70, $p < 0.05$), decreased significantly from fall to spring. These findings imply that the

Table 70

Results of Paired Samples *t*-test for All Participants

Stage	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean	*t*	df	Significance
0 Awareness	-.76	4.82	.57	1.33	70	.188
1 Information	2.51	6.97	.83	3.03	70	**.003**
2 Personal	2.51	6.70	.80	3.15	70	**.002**
3 Management	2.56	7.64	.91	2.83	70	**.006**
4 Consequence	-1.56	7.10	.84	-1.85	70	.068
5 Collaboration	.46	5.92	.70	.66	70	.510
6 Refocusing	-3.27	7.23	.86	-3.81	70	**.000**

Note. Bold *p* levels denote significance.

intensity of concerns on these stages was significantly lower in the spring than in the fall. However, it should be noted that the mean scores for Personal and Management continued to be among the highest scores in the spring and were the highest two scores in the fall. Although there was a significant decrease in intensity, these areas continued to be of concern to the participants. Qualitative theme development also supported these areas of concern. In addition to these significant decreases, the score on Refocusing, Stage 6 (t = -3.81, df = 70, $p < 0.05$), significantly increased from fall to spring. Based on the results of the paired samples t-test, it appears that the participants at the three sites experienced changes in their concerns on the SoCQ from fall to spring of their first year of implementing RTI. Therefore, I reject the null hypothesis that holds there is no statistically significant difference between SoCQ scores in the fall and spring.

Summary

A comparative cross-case analysis was conducted for the three participating sites in this chapter. Participants identified confusion over the RTI process (CGE and GES), insufficient training to understand and implement RTI (CGE and GES), difficulty incorporating RTI processes into the daily schedule (all sites), and the need for more resources (GES and MES) as global concerns regarding RTI implementation at the beginning of the year. Barriers to RTI implementation was identified a perceived delay in securing help and support for struggling students. This was also an expressed concern in the fall by participants at GES and MES. In addition, participants at CGE expressed an unwillingness to perceive RTI practices as applicable to their school populations. This concern was also noted in the fall by both CGE and GES, but by spring only CGE

participants expressed this concern. Among the teachers across the three schools, learning new ways of teaching was noted to be the primary effect of RTI on their roles as teachers. Principals and assistant principals perceived their roles to be impacted by RTI implementation through the need to provide guidance and support for teachers as they implement RTI and by learning alongside of their staffs in the fall. By spring, principals and assistant principals perceived the need to adapt their leadership styles to address conflict within their staffs. Participants at GES and MES identified improved outcomes for students as factors that facilitate RTI implementation. Participants at CGE continued to express their belief that improved instructional practices facilitate RTI implementation, a theme expressed by participants at all three sites in the fall.

Data from the SoCQ were analyzed through ANOVA to determine whether significant differences existed between sites on each of the Stages of Concern at the end of the first year of RTI implementation. Results suggest significant differences ($p < 0.05$) exist between the participants of CGE and the participants of GES and MES on Awareness, Stage 0, and Refocusing, Stage 6. In addition, participants at CGE were significantly higher than participants at MES on Management, Stage 3, and participants at GES scored significantly higher than participants at MES on Refocusing, Stage 6. To determine whether the concerns of participants expressed on the SoCQ varied significantly from fall to spring of the first year of RTI implementation, a paired samples *t*-test was performed. Results suggested participants scored significantly lower in the spring on Information, Personal, and Management, and significantly higher on Refocusing. These findings suggest that the participants intensity of concern in these

areas was changing as they gained familiarity with implementing RTI. However, they continued to express concerns through qualitative data analysis that were largely Personal and Management when viewed through the Stages of Concern framework. Nonetheless, quantitative data analysis indicates the level of intensity is decreasing for Information, Personal, and Management and increasing for Refocusing.

CHAPTER 13

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Chapter Introduction

The purpose of this mixed-methods, multi-site case study was to identify and explore the concerns (i.e., feelings, thoughts, and reactions) of teachers and principals as they experienced the implementation of RTI and to determine whether these concerns differed significantly from the beginning to the end of the first year of implementation. This purpose was realized by utilizing three elementary schools who are currently implementing RTI in the southeastern U.S. This study specifically sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the concerns of teachers and principals as they experience RTI implementation?
    a. What do teachers and principals perceive as barriers to implementing RTI?
    b. How are the roles of teachers and principals affected by RTI?
    c. What factors facilitate RTI implementation?
2. To what extend to the concerns expressed by teachers and principals vary from the beginning to the end of the first year of RTI implementation?

To answer these questions, qualitative and quantitative data were collected in the fall of 2008 and spring of 2009 in the form of interviews, observations, documents, and responses on the Stages of Concern Questionnaire (SoCQ). Data were analyzed through within-case analysis for each of the three sites for fall and for spring. Cross-case analyses

were conducted across the sites for both fall data and spring data to compare similarities and differences across the three sites. All data were viewed within the Stages of Concern framework (George et al., 2006) to provide a theoretical framework for considering the answers to the research questions.

Stages of Concern is a component of the Concerns Based Adoption Model (CBAM) and consists of seven SoC which are used to denote developmental movement through an implementation process. As an individual experiences an innovation, he or she will experience a certain type of concern intensely, and as that concern subsides, another level of concern will emerge (George et al., 2006; Hord et al., 2004). In the Stages of Concern dimension of CBAM, a person will progress from having little or no concern about an innovation, to having personal or self-concerns, to having task concerns, to having concerns about the type of impact the innovation is having on students. As earlier concerns are reduced in intensity, later concerns emerge through increased intensity. The theory posits that an individual's concerns generally move toward higher-level stages with time, experience, and gaining new knowledge and skills. Whether individuals move to higher levels of concern and with what speed they move through the stages depends on both the perceptions of the individuals experiencing the innovation and the environmental context of the innovation in terms of the amount of assistance and support provided. Innovations that are more complex in nature require more skilled facilitation of the change, and that facilitation must carefully attend to the concerns of the teachers involved in the change. This need to attend to the concerns of users of an innovation is a critical aspect of the CBAM theory. The individual nature of

change is stressed in the SoC framework, and the individuals themselves ultimately will determine whether change will occur (George et al., 2006; Hord et al., 2004).

Conclusions

At the beginning of first year of RTI implementation, two global areas of concern regarding RTI implementation were identified by participants. The first concern pertained to being able to understand the RTI process. Because the school district implemented Curriculum Based Measurement (CBM) for Universal Screening and progress monitoring simultaneously with the overall RTI model, there was much confusion regarding what CBM was, what it measured, and how it measured it. In addition, the RTI process was described by participants as very confusing and hard to understand. How the tiers worked, who was at-risk, what interventions comprised each tier, and how long interventions lasted were noted to be confusing by participants. Early in the implementation process, participants felt they had not received adequate professional development to understand the RTI process. This concern is a "Personal" concern when viewed through the Stages of Concern framework and reflects participants concerns with their own understanding of how RTI works and what is expected of them.

This concern continued to be present by spring 2009 among participants at two sites, Camellia Garden Elementary (CGE) and Gardenia Elementary School (GES). Teachers and administrators continued to express concern regarding the use of CBM, in particular of reading fluency as an indicator of risk for reading difficulties, along with using timed tests. Another area of confusion was noted to be understanding the data provided by the progress monitoring and understanding movement through the tiers. At

the end of the first year of RTI implementation, participants at these two sites remained confused regarding the RTI process and the assessments used in that process.

At the beginning of the first year (fall 2008) of RTI implementation, participants expressed concern regarding the effect of scheduling RTI-related tasks during the day. Meadowlands School District had implemented a 90-minute reading block as part of its RTI process, and at the beginning of the year the participants were dealing with how to incorporate an additional 30 minutes for uninterrupted reading instruction. In addition, the RTI model used by the district required a 30-minute intervention block. In essence, the teachers were being asked to incorporate an additional hour into the daily schedule, and this was of concern to them in the fall. Other scheduling concerns at the beginning of the year included how to find time in the daily schedule to progress monitor students and what to do with other students while intervening with at-risk readers. This concern was classified as a "Management" concern as it pertains to the participants attempting to manage the demands of the implementation.

By spring 2009, participants continued to be concerned with scheduling difficulties. While the effect of scheduling 30 additional minutes for an uninterrupted 90 minutes of reading instruction and 30 minutes for intervention appeared to have abated by spring, participants continued to be concerned regarding finding the time in the daily schedule to do the interventions and what to do with other students in the class while doing interventions with at-risk students. The effect of increased time spent on reading instruction and reading intervention was noted to take away time spent on science and social studies, and this was also mentioned as an area of concern. At the end of the first

year of RTI implementation, participants remained concerned regarding the effect of RTI practices on the daily schedule.

As the first year of RTI implementation concluded, participants at two of the sites in this study, Gardenia Elementary and Magnolia Elementary, indicated the need for additional resources to be able to successfully sustain RTI implementation. When viewed through the Stages of Concern framework, this concern is considered to be a "Management" concern because it addresses the need for additional resources to manage requirements of RTI implementation. These additional resources included specific reading interventions for use in Tier 2A and Tier 2B and additional personnel to support teachers in implementing the requirements of RTI.

At the beginning of the first year of RTI implementation, barriers to implementing RTI were identified as adding additional responsibilities to teachers, the appropriateness of the district's RTI model for schools' population of students, and delaying the process for referral for special education. These themes were consistent across all three sites. Because these themes pertain to how participants perceive they are being affected by RTI implementation, these themes are considered to be "Personal" concerns within the Stages of Concern framework.

By spring of the first year of implementation, these concerns had condensed into one global concern that the RTI model used by the district resulted in delaying services for struggling students who most needed the help from special education. Teachers at all three sites expressed their frustration in terms of the demands of RTI and the length of time the process required. Specific frustrations included the use of CBM three times a

year for Universal Screening and weekly for progress monitoring for at-risk students, the method of goal-setting for progress monitoring and using a minimal growth goal, and beginning the RTI process in Tier 1 to include differentiated instruction as part of the core reading program rather than moving immediately into Tier 2A.

In the fall 2008, there was no consistent view among teachers at the three sites as to how their role was affected by RTI implementation. Teachers at Camellia Garden Elementary felt hampered in their duty to refer struggling students for special education services. At Magnolia Elementary, teachers felt pressured to "get it right." On the other hand, teachers at Gardenia Elementary indicated their belief that their roles as teachers were affected positively through improved teaching practices resulting from RTI implementation. By the end of the first year of RTI implementation, teachers had become more familiar with RTI practices, and they were able to see ways their roles as teachers had been affected through being forced to learn new ways of teaching. All of these themes were considered "Personal" as they directly pertained to how teachers in this study felt their roles as teachers were impacted by RTI implementation.

When beginning the RTI process in the fall, principals in this study saw their roles most affected by RTI implementation as creating a need to learn with their staffs and to guide and support them through the RTI process. As the first year of RTI implementation ended, the principals perceived their roles to be affected in having to lead their staffs through conflict, in addition to guiding and supporting them. This conflict arose from frustration felt by the teachers that they had been blocked from services from the reading specialist that had previously been available and, for Gardenia Elementary, from teachers

not following the district's model of RTI. The principal of Gardenia Elementary noted that this failure to follow the district procedure for RTI implementation had resulted in his taking a much more direct leadership style than he was comfortable with in order to ensure his staff remained in compliance with the expectations set forth by the school district for how RTI was to be implemented. These themes were noted to be "Personal" concerns within the Stages of Concern framework as they address how the principals perceived RTI to affect their roles as administrators.

Although the participants in this study struggled with implementing RTI in their first year, they nonetheless were able to see positive factors associated with RTI implementation, and these factors were felt to facilitate the process. In the fall 2008, participants at all three sites expressed the belief that implementing components associated with RTI led to improved instructional practices. By the end of the first year of implementing RTI, participants at Gardenia Elementary and Magnolia Elementary expressed their belief that RTI practices such as Universal Screening, weekly progress monitoring of at-risk students, and early intervention for struggling students led to improved outcomes for students. Teachers at Camellia Garden continued to express their belief that RTI led to improved instructional practices. These themes are considered to be "Consequence" themes within the Stages of Concern framework because they reflect participant concern regarding how RTI implementation will affect students within their immediate sphere of influence and how relevant the implementation will be for students.

To determine whether concerns expressed on the Stages of Concern Questionnaire (SoCQ) by participants in this study varied significantly from the beginning to the end of

the first year of RTI implementation, a paired samples *t*-test was performed on each of the seven Stages of Concern across 71 matched pairs of the SoCQ for fall and spring. Results suggest significant decreases in scores for "Information," Stage 1, ($t = 3.03$, df = 70, $p < 0.05$), "Personal," Stage 2, ($t = 3.15$, df = 70, $p < 0.05$), and "Management," Stage 3, ($t = 2.83$, df = 70, $p < 0.05$). These findings suggest that the intensity of concerns on these stages was significantly lower in the spring 2009 than they were in the fall 2008. Although the intensity of concern in these areas decreased, the mean scores on the spring SoCQ continued to be among the highest scores indicated by participants for "Personal" and "Management." Qualitative theme development also supported this finding. It thus appears that while the intensity of the scores significantly decreased for "Personal" and "Management," participants continued to have concerns in these two areas. In addition to the above-noted decreases, the score on "Refocusing," Stage 6 ($t = -3.81$, df = 70, $p > 0.05$), significantly increased from fall to spring. The results of the paired samples *t*-tests suggest significant variance between the scores of participants on the SoCQ in the fall and spring of the first year of RTI implementation.

Implications for Practice

While implications for practice are being drawn from the conclusions of this study of three elementary schools implementing RTI in the southeastern U.S., it is important to note that this study sought to give voice to school personnel directly involved in the responsibility of implementing RTI to omit a glaring deficit in the available literature on RTI, as discussed in Chapter 2.

The first implication concerns the complicated nature of RTI implementation with all of the required components such as Universal Screening, progress monitoring, and the resulting data analysis that is required. As school districts plan their RTI implementation strategies, caution should be used in attempting to implement all of these processes at once. Implementing CBM as the Universal Screening and progress monitoring tool is a major undertaking in and of itself and would be a good starting point to begin RTI implementation. Until teachers are comfortable with CBM as an assessment measure and confident in understanding and using the results, they will not completely understand the RTI process and how it works. Beginning the process with a focus on CBM and allowing teachers to become familiar with the administration, scoring, and interpretation of these measures would lay a foundation upon which to build RTI.

Professional development plays a large role in undertaking any new implementation, and RTI is certainly no exception. As school districts begin designing their RTI models, care should be taken to ensure teachers receive ongoing professional development in all aspects of RTI implementation, preferably well in advance of the actual implementation. While the team planning and designing the RTI model in Meadowlands School District took great care to embed ongoing professional development and training for its RTI model into the daily fabric of the school with the principals as the instructional leaders of the process, teachers consistently expressed their concern that they had received inadequate professional development to understand the RTI process. Perhaps spending time prior to actual implementation to conduct essential trainings regarding CBM, the tier structure of RTI, movement through the tiers, and

eligibility for special education would give teachers a preview of how the process works and would alleviate the anxiety and frustration experienced by teachers in this study when faced with actual implementation with simultaneous professional development. In addition, determining how time will be allotted for ongoing professional development for teachers implementing RTI is an issue that district level administrators will have to grapple with. Many districts have a specific number of professional development days allotted each year with predetermined content for those days. Finding a way to balance other district professional development topics alongside RTI will require district level administrators to prioritize the importance of professional development for RTI.

A third area of implication concerns the impact RTI implementation creates on the daily schedule of schools. A school day consists of a set number of hours with a set amount of curricular standards that must be covered by teachers in order to ensure their students learn the content on which they will be tested for Annual Yearly Progress under No Child Left Behind. Because RTI implementation depends on time in the daily schedule for assessment for Universal Screening of all students, along with intervention and progress monitoring of struggling students within the tiers, time must be created within the daily schedule to allow for these vital components of RTI to occur. Teachers in this study struggled with scheduling issues during their first year of RTI implementation. As schools begin preparing for RTI implementation, it is critical that principals and teachers work together to develop a schedule that incorporates time for RTI-related tasks but still allows time for adequate coverage of academic content. This is a task that should occur well in advance of actual implementation of RTI.

Another implication consists of the possibility of delaying the identification of struggling students for special education services. Teachers in this study expressed their concern that the RTI process created a delay in providing special education services which some of the students in the RTI process desperately needed. School districts designing plans for RTI implementation should carefully consider at what point the RTI process should be stopped and identification for special education services should begin so that children are not unnecessarily delayed in being identified as eligible to receive special education services. Knowing how much progress is needed and whether children in the RTI process are making that progress is a vital component of an RTI plan. For students who are well below grade level and making minimal progress on the progress monitoring assessments, there should be a provision clearly outlining when the RTI process should be cut short and eligibility for special education should begin. When to conduct additional assessments to rule out other potential disabilities under special education is another component that should be clearly delineated in district RTI plans.

Another implication for practice consists of district-level administrators ensuring that there are sufficient resources to sustain RTI implementation within school districts. The principals in this study expressed concern regarding their perceived lack of resources in both specific interventions for use and in personnel to assist in supporting RTI implementation. This concern is a valid one and suggests that district-level administrators will need to look very closely at existing resources and whether those resources are sufficient in providing the necessary support for teachers engaged in implementing RTI. In some cases, existing resources may be re-allocated in terms of

staff, but in other cases, additional staff may be necessary. This will become a budgetary issue that in these perilous economic times will create a need for district level administrators to look long and hard at how their districts can best implement RTI.

A final implication exists in the need for colleges and universities to incorporate RTI into existing courses pertaining to special education in order to provide students in teacher preparation programs with knowledge about RTI, how it works, and what they as teachers will be expected to do once they are in the field. By preparing teacher candidates on the front end, they will enter their teaching careers armed with information about RTI and the components associated with it.

Implications for Research

This study sought to capture the concerns of teachers and principals in the trenches engaged in implementing RTI in order to address a glaring gap in the available literature on RTI. While this study sought to address this gap, the need for further studies on RTI continues to exist. Because this study focused only on the concerns of teachers and principals in the first year of RTI implementation, a follow-up study would be ideal to determine what concerns exist after the first year of implementation and whether those concerns vary significantly from those expressed during the first year of implementation. A longitudinal case study would provide an invaluable base of information for the literature base on RTI and would yield helpful information to assist school districts in planning for RTI implementation.

In addition, there exists a need to study the concerns of teachers and principals engaged in RTI implementation at the secondary levels. There has been very little

research on RTI implementation in middle school and high school. Studies that focus on the concerns of teachers and principals at these levels would permit comparisons with school personnel at the elementary level to see what similarities or contrasts occur. Because middle school and high school have been so largely neglected in RTI research, there is very little known about how to implement the process for grades above the elementary level (i.e., above grade 5).

Another area of intriguing research regarding the concerns of teachers implementing RTI consists of examining whether concerns expressed by participants differ based on years of teaching experience. Studying the concerns of teachers and then looking for similarities or differences based on how long they had been in the classroom would offer a perspective on whether experience plays a role in the concerns teachers express regarding RTI implementation. Knowing the answer to this question would assist in guiding principals and other district administrators in planning for RTI implementation within school districts.

While this study focused on the concerns of RTI implementation at the school building level, future research is needed to expand the scope of this study to include the concerns of district-level administrators and itinerant staff such as school psychologists, reading specialists, and other assessment specialists who have a role within RTI implementation. Because RTI implementation affects so many personnel within a school district, knowing what the concerns are of each of the involved staff will greatly assist school districts in designing and implementing RTI plans that address the concerns of all involved parties.

Along these lines, future research is also needed to explore the concerns of parents of at-risk students who are active in the RTI process to determine the nature of the concerns of this vital group of stakeholders. Parents of struggling students experience a variety of concerns regarding their children's progress in school, and their concerns should be studied and analyzed, as well as the concerns of school personnel. This information would greatly enhance the research on RTI and would also assist school districts in designing RTI plans that incorporate the concerns of parents.

Finally, future research is needed to study not only the concerns of teachers and principals implementing RTI, but also what is actually being implemented. In addition to concerns, the Concerns Based Adoption Model (CBAM) addresses Innovation Configurations, which pertains to how an innovation is being implemented, and Levels of Use, which describes the extent to which an innovation is being used (Hall et al., 2006; Hord et al., 2004). By including these additional dimensions of the CBAM model, future researchers would go beyond the concerns of teachers and principals into what is actually being implemented by teachers and how much RTI is being used by teachers.

Summary

This study sought to bridge the gap between legislative policy and implementation at the school-level by giving voice to teachers and principals as they attempted to make RTI a reality. RTI implementation is a complicated process, and the participants in this study indicated their confusion over how the process works. If RTI is to be a reality in schools, much work is needed by district-level administrators to ensure the process is clearly explained to teachers and principals through ongoing and embedded

professional development. While RTI holds much promise as a method of identifying students with learning disabilities, it is imperative that school districts be able to define exactly what adequate response to intervention is so that teachers understand that their students are making improvement and, therefore, are not in need of special education referral. Teacher buy-in is a must in making RTI implementation work, and much is being asked of teachers to implement RTI. Without teacher support and buy-in, RTI will never become part of a school's culture as a meaningful and valued instructional method. Results of this study suggest there is hope for securing that buy-in from teachers in that the participating teachers and principals believed that improved educational outcomes for students was a factor that facilitated RTI implementation even as they struggled with the demands of implementing RTI in the first year. This belief, held close to the heart of an educator, may be the key to making RTI implementation work. The participants in this study shared their experiences in implementing RTI the first year and, hopefully, their voices will be heard.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

STUDY INFORMATION SHEET

Exploring the Concerns of Teachers and Principals Implementing Response to Intervention in a Pilot Project: Where Policy and Practice Collide

INTRODUCTION

You are invited to participate in a research study for a doctoral dissertation at The University of Tennessee. The purpose of the study is to identify and explore the concerns of teachers and principals as they experience implementing Response to Intervention (RTI) and how implementing RTI impacts the role of principals and teachers.

INFORMATION ABOUT PARTICIPANTS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY

This study will employ several procedures. All teachers and principals at the three participating elementary schools will be asked to complete the Stages of Concern Questionnaire (attached) at the beginning of the 2008-2009 school year and at the end of that school year. In addition, all principals and assistant principals will be interviewed. Teachers in each school will be randomly selected for interviewing. Observations of students participating in the interventions in the classroom will be conducted by the researcher, along with observations of I-Team meetings. Finally, documents such as teacher lesson plans/daily schedules, principal schedules/calendars, and RTI forms and paperwork will be collected by the researcher.

Estimated time for completion of the Stages of Concern Questionnaire is approximately 20 to 30 minutes. Interviews should take 30 to 45 minutes per participant. Duration of each school's participation in the study is approximately one to two weeks at the beginning and end of the 2008-2009 school year.

RISKS

There are no foreseeable risks associated with participation in this study.

BENEFITS

The anticipated benefits achieved from this research include giving a voice to teachers and principals currently engaged in implementing RTI procedures, assisting state and local decision-making regarding how RTI should be implemented, and raising awareness of implementation issues in the available research on RTI.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Information in the study records will be kept confidential. Data will be stored securely and will be made available only to the researcher conducting the study. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which could link participants to the study. Participants will be assigned a code number and the names of participating schools will be changed to ensure confidentiality.

CONTACT

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher, Lisa Michele Bilton, at 1506 Hatfield Drive, Franklin, Tennessee 37064, or by phone at (615) 627-8878. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, contact the Office of Research Compliance Officer at The University of Tennessee at (865) 974-3466.

PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary, and 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. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed your data will be returned to you or destroyed. Return of the completed questionnaire constitutes your consent to participate.

Appendix B

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

Exploring the Concerns of Teachers and Principals Implementing Response to Intervention in a Pilot Project: Where Policy and Practice Collide

INTRODUCTION

You are invited to participate in a research study for a doctoral dissertation at The University of Tennessee. The purpose of the study is to identify and explore the concerns of teachers and principals as they experience implementing Response to Intervention (RTI) and how implementing RTI impacts the role of principals and teachers.

INFORMATION ABOUT PARTICIPANTS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY

This study will employ several procedures. All teachers and principals at the three participating elementary schools will be asked to complete the Stages of Concern Questionnaire at the beginning of the 2008-2009 school year and at the end of that school year. In addition, all principals and assistant principals will be interviewed. Teachers in each school will be randomly selected for interviewing. Observations of students participating in the interventions in the classroom will be conducted by the researcher, along with observations of I-Team meetings. Finally, documents such as teacher lesson plans/daily schedules, principal schedules/calendars, and RTI forms and paperwork will be collected by the researcher.

Estimated time for completion of the Stages of Concern Questionnaire is approximately 20 to 30 minutes. Interviews should take 30 to 45 minutes per participant. Duration of each school's participation in the study is approximately one to two weeks at the beginning and end of the 2008-2009 school year.

RISKS

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The anticipated benefits achieved from this research include giving a voice to teachers and principals currently engaged in implementing RTI procedures, assisting state and local decision-making regarding how RTI should be implemented, and raising awareness of implementation issues in the available research on RTI.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Information in the study records will be kept confidential. Data will be stored securely and will be made available only to the researcher conducting the study. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which could link participants to the study. Participants will be assigned a code number and the names of participating schools will be changed to ensure confidentiality.

_____ Participant's Initials

EMERGENCY MEDICAL TREATMENT

The University of Tennessee does not "automatically" reimburse subjects for medical claims or other compensation. If physical injury is suffered in the course of research, or for more information, please notify the researcher in charge (Lisa Michele Bilton, (615) 627-8878).

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher, Lisa Michele Bilton, at 1506 Hatfield Drive, Franklin, Tennessee 37064, or by phone at (615) 627-8878. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, contact the Office of Research Compliance Officer at The University of Tennessee at (865) 974-3466.

PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary, and 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. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed your data will be returned to you or destroyed. Return of the completed questionnaire constitutes your consent to participate.

CONSENT

I have read the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.

Participant's signature _____ Date _____

Investigator's signature _____ Date _____

Appendix C

Interview Protocol: Teachers

1. Describe your experience as a teacher at _____ school.
2. How were you introduced to the RTI process?
3. Describe your training experiences for implementing RTI.
4. How would you describe the RTI process?
5. How many of your students have participated in RTI?
6. How would you characterize your experience with RTI?
7. What feelings have you associated with implementing RTI?
8. How would you compare the progress of students participating in RTI with the progress of those who are not?
9. What differences in classroom performance in reading do you see between Tiers 2 and 3? Provide an example or examples for me.
10. How have you utilized results from the RTI process to inform instruction?
11. Describe how you have implemented the tiers in your daily schedule. What would a typical day look like?
12. What variations in instruction are necessary to incorporate the interventions?
13. Describe how you perceive the RTI process to be a success. In your opinion, how could the program be more successful?
14. Discuss the challenges of implementing RTI. Please provide examples.
15. In your opinion, what changes to the current model do you perceive to be necessary and why do you believe these changes are needed?
16. How has the referral process changed since implementing RTI? How comfortable are you with this change?
17. Whose responsibility is it to teach at-risk children? Explain your belief.

Appendix D

Interview Protocol: Principals

1. Describe your experience as a principal at _____ school.
2. How were you introduced to the RTI process?
3. Describe your training experiences for implementing RTI.
4. How would you describe the RTI process?
5. How many students in your school have participated in RTI?
6. How would you characterize your experience with RTI?
7. What feelings have you associated with implementing RTI?
8. How have you as a principal been affected by implementing RTI?
9. What has been the biggest impact of RTI on your role as principal?
10. How does RTI impact your school?
11. Describe how you have implemented the tiers in the daily schedule. What would a typical day look like?
12. What variations in your schedule are necessary to incorporate the RTI process?
13. Discuss how you perceive the RTI process to be a success. In your opinion, how could the program be more successful?
14. Discuss the challenges of implementing RTI. Please provide examples.
15. In your opinion, what changes to the current model do you perceive to be necessary and why do you believe these changes are needed?
16. How has the referral process changed since implementing RTI? How comfortable are you with this change?
17. Whose responsibility is it to teach at-risk children? Explain your belief.

Appendix E

SoCQ 075

Stages of Concern Questionnaire

Name (optional): _____

The purpose of this questionnaire is to determine what people who are using or thinking about using various programs are concerned about at various times during the adoption process.

The items were developed from typical responses of school and college teachers who ranged from no knowledge at all about various programs to many years' experience using them. Therefore, **many of the items on this questionnaire may appear to be of little relevance or irrelevant to you at this time.** For the completely irrelevant items, please circle "0" on the scale. Other items will represent those concerns you do have, in varying degrees of intensity, and should be marked higher on the scale.

For example:

This statement is very true of me at this time.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	(7)
This statement is somewhat true of me now.	0	1	2	3	(4)	5	6	7
This statement is not at all true of me at this time.	0	(1)	2	3	4	5	6	7
This statement seems irrelevant to me.	(0)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Please respond to the items in terms of **your present concerns**, or how you feel about your involvement with **this** innovation. We do not hold to any one definition of the innovation so please think of it in terms of your own perception of what it involves. Phrases such as "this approach" and "the new system" all refer to the same innovation. Remember to respond to each item in terms of your present concerns about your involvement or potential involvement with the innovation.

Thank you for taking time to complete this task.

Appendix E, Continued

0	1 2	3 4 5	6 7
Irrelevant	Not true of me now	Somewhat true of me now	Very true of me now

Circle One Number For Each Item

1. I am concerned about students' attitudes toward the innovation.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. I now know of some other approaches that might work better.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. I am more concerned about another innovation.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. I am concerned about not having enough time to organize myself each day.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. I would like to help other faculty in their use of the innovation.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. I have a very limited knowledge of the innovation.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. I would like to know the effect of reorganization on my professional status.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. I am concerned about conflict between my interests and my responsibilities.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. I am concerned about evaluating my use of the innovation.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. I would like to develop working relationships with both our faculty and outside faculty using this innovation.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. I am concerned about how the innovation affects students.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. I am not concerned about the innovation at this time.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. I would like to know who will make the decisions in the new system.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. I would like to discuss the possibility of using the innovation.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. I would like to know what resources are available if we decide to adopt the innovation	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. I am concerned about my inability to manage all that the innovation requires.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. I would like to know how my teaching or administration is supposed to change.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. I would like to familiarize other departments or persons with the progress of this new approach.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix E, Continued

0	1 2	3 4 5	6 7
Irrelevant	Not true of me now	Somewhat true of me now	Very true of me now

Circle One Number For Each Item

19. I am concerned about evaluating my impact on students.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
20. I would like to revise the innovation's approach.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
21. I am preoccupied with things other than the innovation.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
22. I would like to modify our use of the innovation based on the experiences of our students.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
23. I spend little time thinking about the innovation.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
24. I would like to excite my students about their part in this approach.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
25. I am concerned about time spent working with nonacademic problems related to the innovation.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
26. I would like to know what the use of the innovation will require in the immediate future.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
27. I would like to coordinate my efforts with others to maximize the innovation's effects.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
28. I would like to have more information on time and energy commitments required by the innovation.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
29. I would like to know what other faculty are doing in this area.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
30. Currently, other priorities prevent me from devoting my attention to the innovation.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
31. I would like to determine how to supplement, enhance, or replace the innovation.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
32. I would like to use feedback from students to change the program.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
33. I would like to know how my role will change when I am using the innovation.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
34. Coordination of tasks and people is taking too much of my time.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
35. I would like to know how the innovation is better than what we have now.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Appendix E, Continued

Please complete the following:

1. How long have you been involved with the innovation, not counting this year?
   Never ___ 1 year ___ 2 years ___ 3 years ___ 4 years ___ 5 or more ___

2. In your use of the innovation, do you consider yourself to be a:
   non-user ___ novice ___ intermediate ___ old hand ___ past user ___

3. Have you received formal training regarding the innovation (workshops, courses)?
   Yes ___ No ___

4. Are you currently in the first or second year of use of some major innovation or program other than this one?
   Yes ___ No ___

   If yes, please describe briefly:

   _____

   _____

   _____

Thank you for your help!

Appendix F

ADVANCING RESEARCH
SEDL
IMPROVING EDUCATION

SEDL License Agreement

To: Lisa Bilton (Licensee)
1506 Hatfield Dr.
Franklin, TN 37064

From: Nancy Reynolds
Information Associate
SEDL
Information Resource Center—Copyright Permissions
4700 Mueller Blvd.
Austin, TX 78723

Subject: License Agreement to reprint and distribute SEDL materials

Date: January 30, 2008; revised June 10, 2010

Thank you for your interest in using the instrument ***Stages of Concern Questionnaire*** (SoCQ) published by SEDL in *Measuring Implementation in Schools: The Stages of Concern Questionnaire* written by Archie A. George, Gene E. Hall, and Suzanne M. Stiegelbauer in 2006 as Appendix A, pages 79-82 and on also as a PDF document on an accompanying CD-ROM. The questionnaire will be referred to as the "work" in this permission agreement.

SEDL is pleased to grant permission for use of the material cited above by the Licensee who will use the work in her dissertation which will involve conducting a mixed-methods, multi-site case study on implementing Response to Intervention using the SoCQ as her theoretical framework at The University of Tennessee. The following are the terms, conditions, and limitations governing this limited permission to reproduce the work:

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2. No adaptations, deletions, or changes (the only exception allowed is to replace the words "the innovation" with a word or phrase participants will recognize, such as the name of the innovation or initiative; otherwise, the wording and order of items cannot be changed) will be made in the material nor shall any derivative work based on or incorporating the work be created, without the prior written consent of SEDL.

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SEDL License Agreement, p.2

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I'm e-mailing you a PDF of this agreement. Please print and sign one copy below, indicating that you understand and agree to comply with the above terms, conditions and limitations, and send the original back to me. If you wish to keep a copy with original signatures, please print a second copy, and also sign and return it to me and, after I receive and sign it, I'll return it with both of our signatures to you.

Thank you, again, for your interest in SEDL's ***Stages of Concern Questionnaire***. If you have questions, please contact me at (800) 476-6861, ext. 6548 or 512-391-6548, or by e-mail at nancy.reynolds@sedl.org.

Sincerely,

Nancy Reynolds — July 26, 2011

Nancy Reynolds for SEDL — Date signed

Agreed and accepted:

Signature Lisa M. Bilton — 7/26/11

Printed Name: Lisa M. Bilton — Date signed

Appendix G

Code Mapping: Three Iterations of Analysis: Camellia Garden Elementary School

Code Mapping for RTI
(Qualitative Research Questions 1, 1a,1b, and 1c)

Research Question 1: What are the concerns of teachers and principals as they experience RTI implementation? Themes 1A, 1B

Research Question 1a: What do teachers and principals perceive as barriers to implementing RTI? Themes 2A, 2B

Research Question 1b: How are the roles of teachers and principals affected by RTI? Themes 3A, 3B

Research Question 1c: What factors facilitate RTI implementation? Theme 4A

RQ1	RQ1a	RQ1b	RQ1c
(Second Iteration: Pattern Variables)			
1A Cart Before the Horse: Lack of Clarity in the RTI Process	2A Juggling One More Thing Amidst a Sea of Change	3A Hampering the Referral Process: Teachers' Duty to Refer Struggling Students	4A Creating Responsive Instructional Practices With RTI
1B Scheduling RTI: How to Manage the Process	2B Paradigm Shift: What is a Student With a Disability?	3B Principals Supporting Teachers Through Implementing RTI	
RQ1	**RQ1a**	**RQ1b**	**RQ1c**
(First Iteration: Initial Codes/Surface Content Analysis)			
1A Confusion about RTI 1A Accuracy of CBM? 1A Lack of Training	2A One more thing for teachers to do 2A Managing other district initiatives	3A Blocked from Referring Students for help 3A Hampers our Communication With Parents 3A Perceived lack of trust for Teachers	4A Improves Instruction 4A Informs Instruction 4A Shows Student Growth
1B Scheduling 90 minutes 1B Scheduling Time for Interventions 1B Scheduling Time for CBM 1B What to do with other students?	2B Does not work for our school 2B Are we identifying the right students?	3B Role of Principal: Supporting the Teachers	
DATA	DATA	DATA	DATA

Appendix H

Code Mapping: Three Iterations of Analysis: Gardenia Elementary School

Code Mapping for RTI
(Qualitative Research Questions 1, 1a,1b, and 1c)

Research Question 1: What are the concerns of teachers and principals as they experience RTI implementation? Themes 1A, 1B

Research Question 1a: What do teachers and principals perceive as barriers to implementing RTI? Themes 2A, 2B, 2C

Research Question 1b: How are the roles of teachers and principals affected by RTI? Theme 3A

Research Question 1c: What factors facilitate RTI implementation? Themes 4A, 4B

RQ1	RQ1a	RQ1b	RQ1c
(Second Iteration: Pattern Variables)			
1A Swimming in Mud: Lack of Clarity for The RTI Process	2A One More Thing: Finding time to Implement RTI	3A Improved Teaching Through RTI	4A Following the Principal's Lead To Improved Instruction
	2B Change to Referral Process		
1B Challenges in Scheduling RTI	2C Reluctance to Perceive RTI As Applicable To Their School		4B Using Data to Help Children
RQ1	**RQ1a**	**RQ1b**	**RQ1c**
(First Iteration: Initial Codes/Surface Content Analysis)			
1A RTI Process Unclear	2A One More Thing	3A Increased awareness	4A Principal-Led
1A Cumbersome Process	for Teachers to do	of Differentiation	4A Provides Structure
1A Change to Referral Process	2A Dealing with other District Initiatives	3A Better grouping 3A More Information	4A Better Instructional Practices
1A Takes Too Long	2A Too Much	for Teachers	
1A Process Keeps Changing	Paperwork		
1A Lack of Training	2B Uncertainty Regarding Referral Process		4B Data-Driven Process 4B Will Help More Childrenl
	2B Takes Too Long		4B Prevention
1B Scheduling RTI	2B Cut-Off is Too Low		
1B Lack of Time	for our School		
1B What to do with Other Students	2B We've Already Done All We Can		
DATA	DATA	DATA	DATA

Appendix I

Code Mapping: Three Iterations of Analysis: Magnolia Elementary School

Code Mapping for RTI
(Qualitative Research Questions 1, 1a,1b, and 1c)

Research Question 1: What are the concerns of teachers and principals as they experience RTI implementation? Themes 1A, 1B

Research Question 1a: What do teachers and principals perceive as barriers to implementing RTI? Theme 2A

Research Question 1b: How are the roles of teachers and principals affected by RTI? Theme 3A, 3B

Research Question 1c: What factors facilitate RTI implementation? Theme 4A

RQ1	RQ1a	RQ1b	RQ1c
(Second Iteration: Pattern Variables)			
1A Struggling to See The "Big Picture" of the RTI Process	2A Slowing Down the Referral Process	3A Pressure to Get It Right: Increasing the Stress Level for Teachers	4A Improved Instructional Practices That Help Children
1B Scheduling Difficulties: How to Manage RTI		3B Principals: Learning Alongside Teachers	

RQ1	RQ1a	RQ1b	RQ1c
(First Iteration: Initial Codes/Surface Content Analysis)			
1A RTI Process Unclear and Poorly Defined	2A Longer Referral Process	3A Pressure to Get It Right	4A Informs Instruction
	2A Takes Too Long		4A Assists in Grouping
1A Lack of Training		3A Stressful Process	4A Will Help Children
1A Inability to See the Big Picture			
1B Scheduling RTI		3B Learning with Staff	
1B What to Do With Other Students		3B A Learning Process	

DATA: Interviews	DATA: Observations	DATA: Documents

Appendix J

Code Mapping: Three Iterations of Analysis: Spring Data for CGE

Code Mapping for RTI
(Qualitative Research Questions 1, 1a,1b, and 1c)

Research Question 1: What are the concerns of teachers and principals as they experience RTI implementation? Themes 1A, 1B, and 1C

Research Question 1a: What do teachers and principals perceive as barriers to implementing RTI? Themes 2A and 2B

Research Question 1b: How are the roles of teachers and principals affected by RTI? Themes 3A, 3B, and 3C

Research Question 1c: What factors facilitate RTI implementation? Theme 4A

(Third Iteration: Application to Data Set)

(Second Iteration: Pattern Variables)

1A Accuracy of CBM for Universal Screening	2A Does Not Align with Our School or Students	3A Learning a New Way of Teaching	4A Improved Instructional Practices
1B Insufficient Training to Implement RTI	2B Blocked from Accessing the Reading Specialist	3B Teacher Judgment Versus RTI	
1C Effect of RTI on Scheduling		3C Principals Leading and Learning through Conflict	
RQ1	**RQ1a**	**RQ1b**	**RQ1c**

(First Iteration: Initial Codes/Surface Content Analysis)

1A fluency as an indicator 1A using timed tests 1A better ways of assessing reading	2A doesn't work for our school 2A our students don't fit this model	3A learning a new process 3A don't want to make a mistake	4A 90 minute reading instruction 4A informs instruction
1B training for grade levels 1B inadequately prepared	2B delay in accessing reading specialist 2B loss of classroom support	3B teacher judgment questioned	
1C time consuming 1C what to do with other students 1C covering science and social studies content		3C learning together collaboratively 3C dealing with teacher frustration/conflict 3C encouraging to stay the course	
DATA: Interviews	DATA: Observations		DATA: Documents

Appendix K

Code Mapping: Three Iterations of Analysis: Spring Data for Gardenia Elementary

Code Mapping for RTI
(Qualitative Research Questions 1, 1a,1b, and 1c)

Research Question 1: What are the concerns of teachers and principals as they experience RTI implementation? Themes 1A, 1B, 1C

Research Question 1a: What do teachers and principals perceive as barriers to implementing RTI? Theme 2A

Research Question 1b: How are the roles of teachers and principals affected by RTI? Themes 3A, 3B

Research Question 1c: What factors facilitate RTI implementation? Theme 4A

(Third Iteration: Application to Data Set)

(Second Iteration: Pattern Variables)			
1A Confusing Process	2A Movement Through the Tiers	3A Improved Teaching	4A Improved Outcomes for Students
1B Time Management		3B Changes in Leadership Style	
1C Need For Additional Resources			

RQ1	**RQ1a**	**RQ1b**	**RQ1c**
(First Iteration: Initial Codes/Surface Content Analysis)			
1A understanding whole process	2A inappropriate goal setting	3A better instructional practices	4A student growth
1A confusing data analysis	2A length of time/	3A teaching with more	4A supports students
1A understanding the tiers	waiting to intervene	data	
1B time for progress monitoring		3B leading staff through conflict to understanding	
1B time for interventions		3B a more direct leadership style	
1C need interventions			
1C need personnel to Support RTI			
DATA: Interviews	DATA: Observations		DATA: Documents

Appendix L

Code Mapping: Three Iterations of Analysis: Spring Data for Magnolia Elementary

Code Mapping for RTI
(Qualitative Research Questions 1, 1a,1b, and 1c)

Research Question 1: What are the concerns of teachers and principals as they experience RTI implementation? Themes 1A, 1B, 1C

Research Question 1a: What do teachers and principals perceive as barriers to implementing RTI? Theme 2A

Research Question 1b: How are the roles of teachers and principals affected by RTI? Themes 3A, 3B

Research Question 1c: What factors facilitate RTI implementation? Theme 4A

(Third Iteration: Application to Data Set)

(Second Iteration: Pattern Variables)

1A Lack of Training	2A Process is Overly Cumbersome and Lengthy	3A A Positive Process Leading to Improved Instruction	4A Improved Outcomes for Students
1B Scheduling Difficulties		3B Supporting, Sharing Leadership, and Collaborating	
1C Need More Resources			

RQ1	RQ1a	RQ1b	RQ1c
(First Iteration: Initial Codes/Surface Content Analysis)			
1A insufficient preparation	2A takes too long	3A a good process	4A prevention
1A unanswered questions	2A wait to intervene	3A informs instruction	4A student growth
1B time for interventions		3B supporting teachers	
1B what to do with other students		3B sharing leadership	
		3B collaborating with other RTI principals	
1C need resources for professional development			
1C need interventions			
1C need additional support positions			
DATA: Interviews	DATA: Observations		DATA: Documents

Appendix M

Development of Categories for Fall Data: Camellia Garden Elementary

COMPONENT OF CATEGORIZATION	TEMPORAL DESIGNATION		
Origination	**A priori**	**A posteriori**	**Iterative**
Where does the authority for creating categories reside?			
-participants			CBH SR OMT PST CRP
-programs			
-investigative			
-literature			
-interpretative		PS HRP	
Verification			
On what grounds can one justify a given category?			
-rational		PS HRP	CBH SR OMT PST CRP
-referential			
-external			
-empirical			
-technical			
-participative			
Nomination			
What is the source of the name used to describe a category?			
-participants			CBH OMT PST
-programs			
-investigative			
-literature			
-interpretative		PS HRP	SR HRP CRP

Category Label Key:
The Cart Before the Horse: Lack of Clarity for the RTI Process (CBH)
Scheduling RTI: How to Manage the Process (SR)
Juggling One More Thing Amidst a Sea of Change (OMT)
Paradigm Shift: What is a Student With a Disability (PS)
Hampering the Referral Process: Teachers' Duty to Refer Students (HRP)
Principals Supporting Teachers Through Implementation of RTI (PST)
Creating Responsive Instructional Practices through RTI (CRP)

Appendix N

Development of Categories for Fall Data: Gardenia Elementary School

COMPONENT OF CATEGORIZATION	TEMPORAL DESIGNATION		
Origination	**A priori**	**A posteriori**	**Iterative**
Where does the authority for creating categories reside?			
-participants			SM SR OMT SDR IT PG
-programs			
-investigative			
-literature			
-interpretative		RP FPL	
Verification			
On what grounds can one justify a given category?			
-rational		RP FPL	SM SR OMT SDR IT PG
-referential			
-external			
-empirical			
-technical			
-participative			
Nomination			
What is the source of the name used to describe a category?			
-participants			SM OMT PG
-programs			
-investigative			
-literature			
-interpretative		RP FPL	SR SDR IT

Category Label Key:
Swimming in Mud: Lack of Clarity for the RTI Process (SM)
Challenges in Scheduling RTI (SR)
One More Thing: Finding time to Implement RTI (OMT)
Reluctance to Perceive RTI as Applicable to Our School (RP)
Slowing Down the Referral Process (SDR)
Improved Teaching Through RTI (IT)
Principals: Providing Guidance (PG)
Following the Principal's Lead to Improved Instruction (FPL)

Appendix O

Development of Categories for Fall Data: Magnolia Elementary School

COMPONENT OF CATEGORIZATION	TEMPORAL DESIGNATION		
Origination	**A priori**	**A posteriori**	**Iterative**
Where does the authority for creating categories reside?			
-participants			BP SR CRP LAT IIP
-programs			
-investigative			
-literature			
-interpretative		PGR	
Verification			
On what grounds can one justify a given category?			
-rational		PGR	BP SR CRP LAT IIP
-referential			
-external			
-empirical			
-technical			
-participative			
Nomination			
What is the source of the name used to describe a category?			
-participants		PGR	BP LAT
-programs			
-investigative			
-literature			
-interpretative			SR CRP IIP

Category Label Key:
Struggling to See the Big Picture of the RTI Process (BP)
Scheduling Difficulties: How to Manage RTI (SR)
Change to Referral Process (CRP)
Pressure to Get it Right: Increasing the Stress Level for Teachers (PGR)
Principals: Learning Alongside Teachers (LAT)
Improved Instructional Practices that Help Children (IIP)

Appendix P

Development of Categories for Spring Data: Camellia Garden Elementary

COMPONENT OF CATEGORIZATION	TEMPORAL DESIGNATION		
Origination	**A priori**	**A posteriori**	**Iterative**
Where does the authority for creating categories reside?			
-participants		DA BS	IT SR LNW LL IIP
-programs			
-investigative			
-literature			
-interpretative		CBM	
Verification			
On what grounds can one justify a given category?			
-rational		CBM DA BS	IT SR LNW LL IIP
-referential			
-external			
-empirical			
-technical			
-participative			
Nomination			
What is the source of the name used to describe a category?			
-participants		DA BS	LNW LL
-programs			
-investigative			
-literature			
-interpretative		CBM	IT SR IIP

Category Label Key:
Accuracy of CBM for Universal Screening (CBM)
Insufficient Training to Implement RTI (IT)
Effect of RTI on Scheduling (ES)
Doesn't Align with Our School or Students (DA)
Blocked from Accessing Services (BS)
Learning a New Way of Teaching (LNW)
Leading and Learning Through Conflict (LL)
Improved Instructional Practices (IIP)

Appendix Q

Development of Categories for Spring Data: Gardenia Elementary School

COMPONENT OF CATEGORIZATION	TEMPORAL DESIGNATION		
Origination	**A priori**	**A posteriori**	**Iterative**
Where does the authority for creating categories reside?			
-participants			CP TM NR IT CLS IO
-programs			
-investigative			
-literature			
-interpretative		MT	
Verification			
On what grounds can one justify a given category?			
-rational		MT	CP TM NR IT CLS IO
-referential			
-external			
-empirical			
-technical			
-participative			
Nomination			
What is the source of the name used to describe a category?			
-participants			CP NR
-programs			
-investigative			
-literature			
-interpretative		MT	TM IT CLS IP

Category Label Key:
Confusing Process (CP)
Time Management (TM)
Need for Additional Resources (NR)
Movement Through the Tiers (MT)
Improved Teaching (IT)
Changes in Leadership Style (CLS)
Improved Outcomes for Students (IO)

Appendix R

Development of Categories for Spring Data: Magnolia Elementary School

COMPONENT OF CATEGORIZATION	TEMPORAL DESIGNATION		
Origination	**A priori**	**A posteriori**	**Iterative**
Where does the authority for creating categories reside?			
-participants		OC	LT SD NR PP SSC IO
-programs			
-investigative			
-literature			
-interpretative			
Verification			
On what grounds can one justify a given category?			
-rational		OC	LT SD NR PP SSC IO
-referential			
-external			
-empirical			
-technical			
-participative			
Nomination			
What is the source of the name used to describe a category?			
-participants		OC	LT NR PP
-programs			
-investigative			
-literature			
-interpretative			SD SSC

Category Label Key:
Lack of Training (LT)
Scheduling Difficulties (SD)
Need More Resources (NR)
Process is Overly Cumbersome and Lengthy (OC)
A Positive Process Leading to Improved Instruction (PP)
Supporting, Sharing Leadership, and Collaborating (SSC)

VITA

Lisa Michele Bilton was born in New Orleans, Louisiana, on February 9, 1966. She was reared in West Monroe, Louisiana and attended school in the Ouachita Parish School System. She graduated from West Monroe High School in 1984. Dr. Bilton attended Louisiana Tech University from 1984 to 1987 and graduated with a B.A. in English. She attended Northeast Louisiana University from 1988 to 1993 and earned a M.S. in Psychology and a Specialist in School Psychology degree. She was a member of Psi Chi honor society. She graduated with a Ph.D. in Education with a concentration in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies from The University of Tennessee in December 2011. Dr. Bilton worked in the East Baton Rouge Parish School District as a school psychologist for five years before moving to Knoxville, Tennessee, where she worked as a school psychologist for eight years and as a Special Education Consultant for two years in the Knox County School District. She also worked in Williamson County School District for two years, where she was a Special Education Coordinator and supervised Gifted Education, the referral process, Child Find, the Research and Development Leadership Team, and Elementary Special Education. She is currently employed by Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools as an Exceptional Education Coordinator and supervises school psychologists and State and Federal IDEA compliance at 25 elementary schools. Professional memberships include Phi Kappa Phi, National Association of School Psychologists, Tennessee Association of School Psychologists, and Tennessee Association of Administrators of Special Education.