

UNDERSTANDING TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF  
RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION THROUGH THE  
CONCERNS-BASED ADOPTION MODEL

By

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Title of Study: UNDERSTANDING TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION THROUGH THE CONCERNS-BASED ADOPTION MODEL

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Abstract: The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions and stages of concerns of elementary teachers regarding the Response to Intervention model (RTI). Those perceptions help gauge the level of acceptance of RTI and assist school leadership in providing support and professional development to ensure a successful adoption. This study was guided by three questions: (1) What are teachers' perceptions about RTI (2) How does Concerns-Based Adoption Model explain the stages of concern teachers have about RTI and (3) How do teachers' perceptions influence their willingness to fully implement RTI? Individual interviews were conducted with six teachers and one principal from the same school. Teachers also completed the Survey of Concerns Questionnaire (SoCQ) online. Two observations were made of grade level RTI team meetings. The theoretical lens through which this study was viewed was the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM). Results from the interviews as well as the SoCQ indicated five of the six teachers were in the early stages of adoption. Recommendations based on the themes that emerged from the interview data were made to facilitate the continuing adoption process. These included providing additional personnel and strategies to help with time issues, additional training and resources as requested by teachers, and facilitating collaboration among staff.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

“For decades, educational organizations have been pummeled by external reform initiatives. Most of these well-intended efforts have striven to make schools more rational and technically advanced, emulating what people assume to be more like successful businesses” (Deal and Peterson, 2009, p. 4). Even with reform initiatives, the United States is falling behind in reading, mathematics, and science when one compares 15-year old students to those of other developed nations around the world. In 2009, students from nations such as Finland, China, Singapore, Canada, New Zealand and Korea scored higher on the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in Reading, Mathematics and Science when compared to students of other member countries of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), including the United States (OECD, 2010). OECD members are developed countries with high-income economies, committed to democracy, and the free-market economy. In the last two decades, researchers such as Robert Marzano, Diane Ravitch, and Linda Darling-Hammond have focused on finding solutions to improve the education process. The federal and state governments have passed legislation in attempts to guarantee that every child receives a quality education from highly effective teachers and no child is left behind. With esteemed researchers and government lawmakers placing this emphasis on improvement, why is it that the U.S. is not catching up? What is standing in the way of change?

Innovation is defined by Hord, Rutherford, Huling-Austin and Hall (1973) as “an improvement identified for implementation” (p. 8). In education innovation is desired, rewarded, and often demanded by those both inside and outside of education. Innovation is encouraged through incentives that include the federal government’s Race to the Top program and The Gate’s Foundation Grants. The federal government legislated reforms such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and the reauthorization of the Individual with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA). Out of these pieces of legislation came the Response to Intervention (RTI) approach to identifying academically struggling students.

RTI is designed to identify students at risk for failure and then to have teachers intervene with researched based practices to prevent that failure. The RTI model mandates that every student be screened three times a year. Students falling below a predetermined cutoff are classified “at-risk” and receive customized interventions in addition to regular classroom instruction. Those at-risk students are progress monitored after a set number of intervention sessions to ensure adequate progress. Data from the progress monitoring is graphed against an “aimline” that indicates the growth necessary to meet end of year goals. If adequate progress is not made, then interventions are increased in intensity and frequency and monitoring continues. Continued failure to make progress may indicate the child has a disability and the need for an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). RTI is very specific as to timing, quality, and fidelity, but not as to who is responsible for carrying out the various components; that is left up to the schools because resources may vary from site to site. As promising as RTI is for struggling students, the process can be overwhelming when first introduced to school staff. RTI requires a restructuring of procedures including a change in teachers’ roles. Ikeda (2012) noted, “We spend an incredible amount of energy finding students who are disabled and incredibly little time supporting teachers once students are identified” (p. 276). The changes RTI requires have been embraced at some schools, but not in others. Hall (2008) suggested the reason might be that “some staff will be threatened by changes in things that are so important to them” (p. 19).

The drive for educational improvement has also led to a focus on teacher quality and performance. NCLB includes requirements for teachers to be highly qualified in the position they are assigned. Current teacher evaluation systems in states across the country are under review. The federal government has awarded millions of dollars through Race to the Top grants that require states to link student progress as an indication of teacher effectiveness. Exactly how progress can be measured is a source of contention among legislators, educators, and teacher unions. Innovations and mandates often require a restructuring of school procedures, including a change in teachers' roles. These changes can challenge teachers' basic assumptions and beliefs. Hall (2008) explained, "Some staff will be threatened by changes in things that are so important to them" (p. 19). Drucker observed "the way in which a person defines his or her job will determine to a large extent the way in which he or she does that job" (as cited in Eaker, 2002). Eaker (2000) asserted, "Perspective is a powerful thing" (p. 33). Hargreaves (2005) maintained that educational change impacts teachers in multiple ways:

Educational change initiatives do not just affect teachers' knowledge, skill and problem-solving capacity. They affect a whole web of significant and meaningful relationships that make up the work of schools. Educational change efforts affect teachers' relationships with their students, the parents of those students, and each other. Teachers make heavy emotional investments in these relationships. Their sense of success and satisfaction depends on them.... What is the nature and importance of these relationships? How do teachers feel about educational changes and change processes in terms of their impact on these relationships? (p. 280)

Fullen (1993) suggested a solution that requires "creating conditions that enable and press people to consider personal and shared visions, and skill development through practice over time" (p. 23).

Many innovations are short-lived, quickly abandoned or never fully implemented (Fullan, 2007; Hargreaves, 2005; Hord, Rutherford, Huling-Austin, & Hall, 1987). Hargreaves (2005)

stated, “Contemporary patterns of educational change present educators with changes that are multiple, complex, and sometimes contradictory” (p. x). Adopting innovations inevitably means change. Evans (1996) asserted, “Whatever improvements change may promise, it almost always increases confusion and unpredictability” (p. 34). Fullan (2007) concluded,

Change will always fail until we find some way of developing new knowledge, skills, and understandings.... It turns out that we are talking not about surface meaning, but rather deep meaning about new approaches to teaching and learning. Meaning will not be easy to come by given this goal and existing cultures and conditions (p. 29).

How does a school’s administration team create the conditions that Fullan described?

What can be done to increase the probability of the successful adoption and longevity of an innovation? One possibility is recognizing and addressing the concerns teachers have when an innovation is undertaken in their school. Addressing teacher concerns could lead to differentiated training for teachers with follow up to see that new skills are actually being practiced. Just as it is important for teachers to assess their students’ skills, it is imperative that administrators are aware of teachers’ skills and concerns and provide the professional development teachers need.

Considering the current requirements to improve achievement of all students, the question facing schools is, “What can be done to ensure teacher commitment to an innovation designed to bring about improvement?” Educators have become reluctant and even resistant to educational innovations and legislative mandates. Possible causes of resistance may include lack of stakeholder buy-in due to poor training and support or the high cost to implement innovations in terms of both monetary and time commitments. Another possible cause of teacher resistance could be the fact that changes occur so often as to put educators in a constant mode of flux, thereby causing negative perceptions of those changes. The adoption of Common Core standards in Oklahoma in 2010 and subsequent repeal just months before the standards were slated to go into effect in 2014 is just one example. Teachers trained for several years to be ready for these

new standards and yet all that time and effort in the end was wasted. Additionally, innovations often are designed by those outside of education or imposed without concern for or input from educators. This resistance can lead to the demise of even the most effective research-based program. How do schools determine the causes of teacher resistance? How can schools alleviate resistance to innovation and change? How can schools assist educators in adopting potentially beneficial innovations? This study will look at teacher perceptions regarding one current innovation in education, the Response to Intervention model (RTI) introduced in 2004 IDEIA.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions and stages of concerns of elementary teachers regarding the Response to Intervention model (RTI). Those perceptions will help gauge the level of acceptance of RTI and assist school leadership in providing support and professional development to ensure a successful adoption. In either case, a teacher's perception of a school's or district's mandated innovation would give insight as to what is needed to enhance teacher effectiveness and acceptance of the innovation. The perceptions can be utilized to differentiate professional development for teachers to increase their effectiveness with RTI.

### **Research Questions**

This study seeks to examine the perceptions of teachers regarding the Response to Intervention currently in place at their school. Specifically, the study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are teachers' perceptions about RTI?
2. How does CBAM explain the stages of concern teachers have about RTI?
3. How do teachers' perceptions influence their willingness to fully implement RTI?

### **Theoretical Framework**

The desire to understand change, the influence change has on individuals, and how to facilitate successful change has led to the development of change theories. The theoretical lens

through which this study will be viewed is the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM). This perspective for viewing change “offers a number of important ways for understanding what change is about, especially as it relates to the people involved. This perspective is based in our developing understanding of the efforts of individuals to learn about and become skilled and confident in using innovations” (Hall & Hord, 2011, p. xxiv). Frances Fuller, a counseling psychologist, conducted a series of studies on teachers’ concerns in the 1960s. Her findings, in 1969, suggested that teacher concerns appeared to progress through a continuum corresponding to their career stages. That continuum was: nonconcern: preteaching phase; concern with self: early teaching phase; concern with pupils: late teaching phase. Staff members of the Research and Development Center for Teacher Education of the University of Texas at Austin found similar concerns when observing teachers and professors adopting an innovation during the 1969-70 academic year. Those researchers then began to document the concerns of other educators when adopting various educational innovations. The documentation led the researchers to hypothesize that “(a) there were definite categories of concerns among innovation adopters and (b) the concerns changed in what seemed to be a logical progression as users became increasingly confident in using innovations” (George, Hall & Stiegelbauer, 2008, p. 4).

The CBAM model was developed, originally proposed in 1973 by Hall, Wallace, and Dossett, as the result of a federally funded study through the National Institute of Education. The purpose of the study was to “look into educational change and improvement processes in an effort to understand how change could become a successful enterprise” (Hord, Rutherford, Huling-Austin, & Hall, 1987, p. 5). The developers of CBAM contended that understanding the perceptions or concerns of an individual gives insight to what type of information or assistance that person needs to enhance their adoption of the innovation. Several assumptions and assertions are critical to CBAM as outlined by Hall and Hord (p. 8ff, 1987):

1. Understanding the point of view of the participants in the change process is critical.
2. Change is a process, not an event.
3. It is possible to anticipate much that will occur during a change process.
4. Innovations come in all sizes and shapes.
5. Innovation and implementation are two sides of the change process coin.
6. To change something, someone has to change.
7. Everyone can be a change facilitator.

Given these assumptions, the authors hypothesized, “There was a set of developmental stages and levels teachers and others moved through as they became increasingly sophisticated and skilled in using new programs and procedures” (Hall & Hord, 1984, p. 7). The progression ranged from a focus on self to a focus on the task of using the innovation and lastly, to a focus on the impact the innovation had on students. Within each focus area were stages that an individual experienced as they progressed. In total there are seven stages. The first three are labeled “unconcerned,” “informational” and “personal.” These stages show a focus on how the innovation impacts the individual. The next stage is “management,” and the focus is on the processes of the innovation. The last three stages are “consequence,” “collaboration,” and “refocusing”; in these stages, the individual is focusing on the impact the innovation has on students, coordinating with others and how to make beneficial changes. Table 1 illustrates the stages using the definitions provided by Hall and Hord.

Table 1

*Stages of Concern about the Innovation*

Focus	Stage	Characteristics of Stage
Impact	Stage 6	The focus is on exploration of more universal benefits from the innovation, including the possibility of major changes or replacement with a more powerful alternative. Individual
	Refocusing	

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		has definite ideas about alternatives to the proposed or existing form of the innovation.
Impact	Stage 5 Collaboration	The focus is on coordination and cooperation with others regarding use of the innovation.
Impact	Stage 4 Consequence	Attention focuses on impact of the innovation on student in his/her immediate sphere of influence. The focus is on relevance of the innovation for students, evaluation of student outcomes, including performance and competencies, and changes needed to increase student outcomes.
Task	Stage 3 Management	Attention is focused on the processes and tasks of using the innovation and the best use of information and resources. Issues related to efficiency, organizing, managing, scheduling, and time demands are utmost.
Self	Stage 2 Personal	Individual is uncertain about the demands of the innovation, his/her inadequacy to meet those demand, and his/her role with the innovation. This includes analysis of his/her role in relation to the reward structure of the organization, decision-making, and consideration of potential conflict with existing structures or personal commitment. Financial or status implications of the program for self and colleagues may also be reflected.
Self	Stage 1 Informational	A general awareness of the innovation and interest in learning more detail about it is indicated. The person seems to be unworried about himself/herself in relation to the innovation. She/he is interested in substantive aspects of



the innovation in a selfless manner such as general characteristics, effects, and requirements for use.

Unrelated	Stage 0	Little concern about or involvement with the innovation is
	Awareness	indicated.

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*Note.* From *Measuring Implementation in Schools: The Stages of Concern Questionnaire*, by A.A. George, G. E. Hall, and S. M. Stiegelbauer, 2006, p. 8.

In this study, I used CBAM to understand the perceptions of teachers in schools that have adopted the Response to Intervention model (RTI). Understanding perceptions can assist the change facilitator in addressing concerns that may lead to rejection of RTI. School leadership can be informed as to what stage of acceptance the majority of teachers fit into, and thus, how well RTI is being accepted. Professional development can then be tailored to provide training specific to teacher's individual needs.

### **Procedures**

I used a qualitative case study methodology to analyze the research problem and questions. Case study was selected because its purpose is to understand the perceptions of individuals (Key, 1997). Merriam characterized the researcher in case studies as "interested in insight, discovery, and interpretation rather than hypothesis testing" (1998). This study has the characteristics Merriam stated that qualify it as a case study. Those characteristics are particularistic (focusing on a particular program), descriptive (including a thick description of the phenomenon under study) and heuristic (increasing understanding or bringing about the discovery of new meaning). Creswell (2009) described qualitative research as "a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (p. 4).

Data were collected from interviews with six regular education classroom teachers in an elementary school that had implemented Response to Intervention for five years. The school is part of a small suburban district and was selected because it had participated in a Response to Intervention pilot program. Interviews were conducted during the fall of 2014. Each interview lasted approximately forty-five to sixty minutes.

I examined artifacts, including documents from professional development for RTI, RTI implementation manuals and records, and minutes from school RTI meetings to collect additional data relevant to understanding the responsibilities of teachers regarding RTI. To identify patterns and themes, I coded the data from the interviews and artifacts as suggested by Patton (2002) and Creswell (2009).

### **Significance of Study**

This study adds to the knowledge of educational change literature by examining the concerns of teachers adopting an innovation, Response to Intervention. I interpreted these concerns through the lens of the concerns-based adoption model (CBAM). The Survey of Concerns Questionnaire, Levels of Use interview and Change Facilitator Style Questionnaire, additional components of CBAM, were not used for this study. Two of the authors of CBAM, Hall and Hord, have proposed interventions for each stage of concern designed to make significant positive differences in the adoption of a new innovation (Hall & Hord, 2011). Upon determining the concerns of staff members, principals or other change facilitators could utilize those interventions to foster the adoption of an innovation.

### **Limitations and Assumptions**

This study focuses on teacher perceptions and stages of concerns regarding one education innovation, RTI. These perceptions and stages of concerns may vary from those about other innovations. Other innovations may impact teachers in ways different from those of RTI. The method of introduction of an innovation could also impact the concerns teachers express. The teachers interviewed in this study were not included in making the decision to adopt RTI. That decision was made at the district level, so the adoption was mandatory. This may have some influence on the feeling teachers had toward RTI. Because I interviewed teachers from only one school, generalizations cannot be made to the entire population of educators.

I assumed that the interviewed teachers were forthright and honest in their responses. Another assumption was that the teachers had knowledge of RTI, were utilizing RTI, and doing so in the manner the school administrator expected.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Change facilitator:** The individual responsible for assisting various individuals and groups in developing the competence and confidence needed to use a particular innovation (Hall and Hord, 1987, p. 11)

**Curriculum-based measurements:** An assessment of a basic skill or content area utilized to measure progress. “Curriculum-based measures employ direct (low-inference) observations during which correct and incorrect student responses to real tasks are counted within a set time interval (usually in minutes)” (Hosp, Hosp, & Howell, 2007, p. 7). An example is a three-minute timed test of basic math multiplication facts.

**Discrepancy model:** The basic premise of the discrepancy model is that if a student displays a significant difference between his level of potential or intellectual functioning (commonly associated with an IQ score), and his level of achievement, then theoretically he may be presumed to have a learning disability (Jenkins, 2007, p. 17).

**Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA):** Passed in 1965 as a part of President Johnson’s war on poverty, ESEA was the federal government’s first involvement in education. The law established the Title I program to meet the needs of educationally deprived children, especially through compensatory programs for the poor. Initially, ESEA did not include students with disabilities. However, Congress quickly addressed this omission by amending the Act one year later with Title VI “Aid to Handicapped Children.” This ESEA amendment served as a basis for the Education for All Handicapped Children Act passed in 1975 and now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Congress reauthorized it in 2002 as the No

Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

**Individualized Education Plan (IEP):** A document outlining a student's current performance, annual goals, special education services, related services, when those services begin, how often they will be provided, how long they will last, and how a student's progress will be measured and reported to parents. (U. S. Dept. of Education, 2007)

**No Child Left Behind (NCLB):** The reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act renamed and signed by President Bush in 2002. It was designed to improve education for disadvantaged students and give them and their parents greater school choice, drive gains in student performance as measured by mandated testing and hold states and schools more accountable for student progress. It gave states and districts greater flexibility in how they spent federal dollars. There was also a greater emphasis on reading through the Reading First grant program.

**Professional Learning Communities:** "Educators committed to working collaboratively in ongoing processes of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve. Professional learning communities operate under the assumption that the key to improved learning for students is continuous job-embedded learning for educators." *Learning by Doing (2006)*

**Progress monitoring:** Progress monitoring is a scientifically based practice that is used to assess students' academic performance and evaluate the effectiveness of instruction. Progress monitoring can be implemented with individual students or an entire class. (National Center on Student Progress Monitoring, <http://www.studentprogress.org/>)

**Research based interventions:** Educational practices proven effective through scientifically designed testing.

**Response to Intervention (RTI):** A Multi-tiered approach to help struggling learners. Students' progress is closely monitored at each stage of intervention to determine the need for further

research-based instruction and/or intervention in general education, in special education, or both.  
(RTI Action Network)

**Title I:** A provision of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act passed in 1965 that funds schools that serve students from low-income families. “Title I funds are targeted to high-poverty schools and districts and used to provide educational services to student who are educationally disadvantaged or at risk of failing to meet state standards.” (Education Week, August 4, 2004)

### **Summary**

Chapter One provided an introduction to the study. This chapter includes background information, the purpose of the study, the research questions and theoretical framework as well as research procedures, significance of the study and definition of terms. Chapter Two presents a review of the literature on the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and its reauthorization to No Child Left Behind (NCLB). The legislation governing special education, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and its recent revision is discussed as well. The Response to Intervention model follows as it was developed to meet the provisions of that revision. Finally, change theory and specifically CBAM are discussed. Chapter Three describes the design of the study, sample, instrument, data gathering and analysis. Chapter Four reports the interview and meeting data. Chapter Five is a discussion of the major findings of the study. Chapter Six provides conclusions and recommendations.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This review of literature begins with a discussion of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act put in place to help students overcome the barriers of poverty. The discussion follows the reauthorization of that legislation renamed as No Child Left Behind (NCLB). NCLB aimed to improve the plight of children of poverty by requiring school accountability, annual state assessments, and higher teacher qualifications. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act is also reviewed along with modifications that led to the implementation of the Response to Intervention model. In an effort to explain the impact of these particular pieces of legislation on teachers, I review various change theories with an emphasis on the Concerns-based Adoption Model (CBAM). CBAM focuses on the concerns of individuals who are faced with the adoption or implementation of an innovation. A discussion of the seven stages of concerns concludes this section and illustrates how it can assist change facilitators in understanding teachers' concerns with the goal of providing supports.

#### **The Elementary and Secondary Education Act**

Education in the last fifty years has undergone major changes brought about by federal legislation. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1965), known also as ESEA, was established to help combat the detrimental effects of poverty on children by providing funding programs in the public schools. Among its many provisions is Title I funding that provides services for low-income students who are struggling academically. Although ESEA was

initially written to expire at the end of 1970, Congress has reauthorized it every five years since then. The current reauthorization is known more commonly as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

### **The No Child Left Behind Act**

NCLB was signed into law by President George W. Bush in 2001. Its purpose was to “close the achievement gap with accountability, flexibility and choice, so that no child is left behind” (Public Law 107-110). NCLB added requirements to ESEA designed to create academic accountability for school districts and increase teacher qualifications. The basic tenets of NCLB are as follow:

1. Each state is to develop standardized testing for elementary and secondary schools. Federally funded schools had to administer state standardized tests annually, (20 USC 6311, Sec. 1111.b.2.A)
2. Those schools must show adequate yearly progress of standardized test scores, (20 USC 6311, Sec. 1111.b.2.B)
3. All students must be taught by highly qualified teachers. (20 USC 6623, Sec. 2123.a.1.B)

These tenets called for major changes in education. States were required to develop standardized tests and implement them in schools that received federal funds. Schools had to report their students’ performance on the standardized tests through a metric known as Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Failure to make adequate progress overtime could result in various consequences for the school. Examples of consequences are the intervention by the state’s education department to assist the school or district in improving its effectiveness with students and a change in staff or administration. States were required to determine standards for teachers to be highly qualified. For example, in Oklahoma to be highly qualified, teachers must have: 1) a

bachelor's degree, 2) full state certification or licensure, and 3) prove that they know each subject they teach i.e. passage of a state-developed test, major is the subject, or a graduate degree. If they were not highly qualified, they needed to take additional coursework to become so or risk losing their position. Finally, schools were required to plan for improvements in student test proficiency. That is, schools had to plot out a projection for regular increases in state testing scores by student with the goal of 100% students testing proficient by 2014.

### **The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act**

In 1975, Public Law (PL) 94-142, commonly referred to as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, was enacted, mandating a free and appropriate public education for students with disabilities. It was amended in 1990 and renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Since IDEA's initial enactment in 1975, an increasing number of students have qualified for special education services as districts proactively attempt to identify students with special needs. The percentage of students identified for services has increased 200% since 1977 (Bradley, Danielson, and Doolittle, 2005) with Learning Disabled being the fastest growing category.

Students with a suspected learning disability are identified for special education through cognitive and academic testing. Testing is administered in most cases by a school psychometrist or psychologist. The testing model widely used to identify students with a learning disability is called the IQ-achievement discrepancy model, and consists of an IQ test and achievement tests. The premise in a discrepancy model is that a student scoring significantly lower on achievement tests as compared to what his or her score should be given his/her IQ indicates a learning disability is present. However, this model has come under scrutiny because the model fails to provide information that could be used to guide instruction with the struggling student (Bradley et al. 2005). "Today, discrepancy varies nationwide in terms of (a) how it is computed (e.g., standard IQ score minus standard achievement score versus the regression of IQ on achievement), (b) its size (e.g. 1.0 *SD* versus 2.0 *SDs*), and (c) which IQ and achievement tests are used" (Fuchs



& Fuchs, 2006, p. 96). In addition, each state determines the type and version of IQ and achievement tests it will utilize.

In addition to the inconsistency of application nationwide, Fuchs and Fuchs (2006) identified other criticisms of this model:

First, it represents a wait-to-fail model antithetical to early intervention; that is, children must fall dramatically behind their peers in academic achievement to qualify as LD.

Second, critics say that the low achievement of so-called children with LD is presumed to reflect disability when, more often times than not, it reflects poor teaching. (p. 96)

These criticisms led to an update in the IDEA to be more in line with some of the provisions in NCLB. President Bush signed the update, the Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Act (IDEIA), into law on Dec. 3, 2004. To qualify students for special education services, IDEIA 2004 allowed school districts to choose either the discrepancy model or Response to Intervention Model. In addition, under IDEIA 2004, the discrepancy model is no longer required to identify specific learning disabilities in children. Language used by the U.S. Department of Education (2005) strongly encourages the use of a response to intervention model by all states:

In considering alternative models for identification, we believe that the focus should be on assessments that are related to instruction, and that identification should promote intervention. 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. (p. 35802)

## **Response to Intervention Model**

Buffum, Mattos and Weber (2009) defined the Response to Intervention model:

[RTI is] the practice of 1) providing high-quality instruction and interventions that match students' needs and 2) using students' learning rate over time and level of performance to make important education decisions. (p. 14)

The National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE) (2006) defined RTI as follows:

[RTI is] a practice of providing high-quality instruction and interventions matched to student need, monitoring progress frequently to make decisions about changes in instruction or goals and applying child response data to important education decision. (p. 3)

The National Center on RTI defined RTI as a system:

Response to intervention integrates assessment and intervention within a multi-level prevention system to maximize student achievement and to reduce behavioral problems. With RTI, schools use data to identify students at risk for poor learning outcomes, monitor student progress, provide evidence-based interventions and adjust the intensity and nature of those interventions depending on a student's responsiveness, and identify students with learning disabilities. (p. 2)

While the model used for determining what type of interventions students receive can take on a variety of forms, most fall within two categories: either a protocol system or problem-solving system. Protocol systems are prescriptive, with student performance measured against predetermined criteria and a limited number of intervention plans. Decisions are guided by data from frequent progress monitoring. Teachers have a limited repertoire of interventions to learn, and this makes monitoring the fidelity of those interventions easier. The problem-solving system is less rigid, and students may be served differently depending on how closely they come to meeting the criteria. Teachers customize the interventions for each child to match the deficit so

extensive training on interventions is needed for teachers. Individuals responsible for monitoring fidelity in this system would require training on the interventions being used by teachers so that they can evaluate the teacher's implementation of the intervention.

RTI is typically a three-tiered model; however, the steps for implementing RTI and who is responsible at each step vary (Wright, 2007). The National Center on Response to Intervention recently moved away from the term "tier" and is now calling the model a "multi-level prevention system." The number of steps typically ranges from four (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006) to ten (McCook, 2006). The level of instruction increases in intensity, length, and/or frequency as the student progresses through the system. Steps as defined by Buffum, Mattos and Weber (2009) include the following:

- Implementing a core program (Tier 1)
- Employing universal screening
- Implementing a classroom intervention
- Monitoring students' progress in the core program
- Initiating a supplemental intervention (Tier 2)
- Monitoring student progress to the supplemental intervention
- Initiating an intensive intervention (Tier 3)
- Monitoring student progress in response to the intensive intervention (p.31)

The model is constructed so that a majority of students (80%) have their needs met within the core program at Tier 1. The remaining 20% of students receive interventions at Tier 2 at least three times a week for 30 minutes in a small group setting for six to eight weeks. Progress monitoring occurs after a set number of interventions have been completed. The data points from the progress monitoring will be plotted and compared to an aimline depicting typical growth. A lack of adequate progress necessitates either a change in intervention or if that has already

occurred, movement on to Tier 3 with daily sessions per week in smaller groups and perhaps even more intensive one-on-one instruction.

The RTI process is initiated with universal screening, the assessing of all students, within the first few weeks of school. Subjects typically assessed are math, reading, and writing, utilizing curriculum-based measurements (CBM) designed to predict performance. Students falling below the grade-level cut off are considered at risk and monitored for a specified time, typically eight weeks, while receiving instruction in the regular classroom from the classroom teacher. In struggling schools the percentage of students at risk can reach 25% while schools with high quality instruction may have only 10% (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2009, p. 54). Universal screening is repeated midyear and again at the end of the school year. Student progress during the year is charted and measured against an increasing goal leading to the end-of-year benchmark determined by the school or district. That goal can be set to predict success on the state assessment or to indicate the meeting of local or national norms. If insufficient progress was made during the specified time toward the end-of-year goal, then the student is moved to Tier 2 and research-based interventions are provided to the student.

Tier 2 interventions are administered at least three times a week in a small group setting, and progress is again monitored for a specified time. This is in addition to the core curriculum used in the classroom. If a protocol approach is used, a specific scientifically-based intervention is prescribed for a student identified as at risk. If a problem solving approach is used, a team made up of school professionals determines a customized intervention plan dependent upon the identified problem. In both approaches, weekly monitoring is conducted with progress charted against expected growth lines for six to eight weeks. It is expected that a large majority of students will show adequate progress with Tier 2 interventions (National Center on Response to Intervention, 2010). If a student does not show expected progress, the intervention is either changed or the frequency per week is increased and monitoring continues. No progress at this level of interventions moves the student into Tier 3.

Tier 3 increases the intensity of the intervention by increasing the frequency of interventions and focusing the support to one-on-one delivery. Monitoring continues weekly and is compared against expected growth. Lack of progress at this stage then can be considered an indicator of the presence of a learning disability. Five percent of students typically fall in this category. An individualized education plan (IEP) is developed to address the specific learning needs of the student. Intense interventions are utilized on a daily basis and most often implemented by the special education teachers in the building.

The RTI model changes the way students are identified for special education services by requiring increasingly intensive instructional interventions and progress monitoring before assigning the student to a special education category. The RTI model does not specify who is responsible for interventions, although interventions usually begin with the general education teacher. Schools are free to utilize personnel according to availability and funding when designing the various levels of intervention and assigning responsibilities for those interventions. This has led to changes in responsibilities and roles for teachers that may be different than their traditional roles. These changes present challenges for general education teachers as well as special education teachers (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2005).

Coleman and Buysse of the FPG Child Development Institute, in collaboration with The National Center for Learning Disabilities, Inc., and The National Association for the Education of Young Children (2006), conducted a research synthesis on RTI that looked at fourteen studies investigating the efficacy of RTI. The significant finding of this research follows:

There is an emerging body of empirical evidence to support claims that RTI is an effective method for identifying children at risk for learning difficulties and for providing specialized interventions either to ameliorate or to prevent the occurrence of learning disabilities. (p. 26)

## Change Theory

In *The New Meaning of Educational Change*, Fullan (2007) stated, “The history of intensive educational change is little more than half a century old” (p. 4). In the United States, prior to 1957, individuals such as John Dewey espoused education reform, but those ideas were left to filter down to the classroom teacher “of their own volition” (Elmore, 1995, p. 18). That led to little true reform. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the United States government attempted a large-scale nationwide curriculum reform; according to follow-up studies in the 1970s, yielded very little change (Fullan, 2007, p. 5). The same appears to be true of other large-scale reforms such as The Effective School Movement of the 1970s and the Standards and Accountability movement of the 1980s.

Fullan (2007) contended that no large-scale attempt at reform has worked. He suggested that a set of strategies that combine a top-down and bottom-up approach to change was needed. The top-down method where actions are initiated at the management level often fails at gaining buy-in from those involved in the proposed change and the bottom-up method where input is sought from employees at all levels tends to lack focus.

Ellsworth (2000) also suggested a combined approach to change in *Surviving Change: A Survey of Educational Change Models*. Ellsworth devised seven categories differentiating models of educational change. Each category differs in the component of change that is targeted in that model. The first category, called the Diffusion of Innovations, developed by E.M. Rogers (1995), highlights the innovation and what attributes the innovation needs to facilitate its acceptance.. The second category looks at the environment and what conditions should exist to assist in the adoption of the change; D. P. Ely (1990a) is the author of this model called the Conditions of Change. The individual responsible for the change, the change agent, is the focus of the third category. Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991) described this model in the book *The New Meaning of Educational Change*. The stages of change are emphasized in the fourth category, The Change Agent’s Guide, developed by Havelock and Zlotolow (1995). Zaltman and Duncan

(1977) placed importance on resolving the resistance encountered when attempting change in the fifth model, *Strategies for Planned Change*. The system, components outside and inside of the organization undergoing change, is the center of attention in a sixth category, the Systemic Change in Education model developed by Banathy (1973) and expanded by Reigeluth and Garfinkle (1994b). The concerns-based adoption model (CBAM) developed by Hall, Wallace, and Dossett (1973) looks at the intended adopter to understand the concerns he or she has when attempting to implement an innovation. This seventh and last category is the focus of this research as the intended adopter holds the key to an innovation's success.

### **Concerns-based Adoption Model**

CBAM was developed to investigate the reasons newly adopted programs in the 1960s and 1970s did not meet with the same levels of success achieved by the developers of the adopted program. At that time, innovations were “developed by an external source and presented to schools as a packaged product” (George, et al., 2008). Researchers at the Research and Development Center for Teacher Education (R&DCTE) at the University of Texas at Austin began focusing on the individuals responsible for implementing the innovation; their work resulted in the Concerns-Based Adoption Model.

The authors of CBAM believed that change begins with the individual, in this case the teacher, and focused on understanding what happens when an individual was asked to change a practice or adopt an innovation. They found that their analysis of the concerns expressed by individuals undergoing change in the academic year 1969-1970 was similar to the developmental sequence of concerns proposed by Fuller in 1969 (George, Hall, & Stiegelbauer, 2006). Fuller categorized the concerns into sequential phases that align with career phases: nonconcern (preteaching), concern with self (early teaching), and concern with pupils (late teaching phase)(as cited in George, Hall, & Stiegelbauer, 2006).

As the staff of R&DCTE continued to document teacher concerns, they developed seven categories of concern through which teachers progressed as they adopted an innovation. The

resulting Stages of Concern became the “hallmark” (George, Hall, & Stiegelbauer, 2006) of CBAM. These stages provided a framework for understanding the personal element of the change process. Loucks-Horsley (1996) described the model:

[CBAM] holds that people considering and experiencing change evolve in the kinds of questions they ask and in their use of whatever the change is. In general, early questions are more self-oriented: What is it? And how will it affect me? When these questions are resolved, questions emerge that are more task-oriented: How do I do it? How can I use these materials efficiently? How can I organize myself? and Why is it taking so much time? Finally, when self-and task concerns are largely resolved, the individual can focus on impact. Educators ask: Is this change working for students? and Is there something that will work even better? (paragraph 1)

The SoCQ allows for the assessment of teacher concerns about programs or innovations being introduced. Two of the ways the SoCQ has been used as noted by George, Hall, and Stiegelbauer (2006) are (a) as a tool to help researchers evaluate and understand a change process and support the implementation process, and (b) as a means to develop, focus, and support professional development.

The original SoCQ was developed over a three-year period beginning in the fall of 1973. The first instrument contained open-ended concerns statements and forced ranking. In the spring of 1974, the researchers had developed a paper-pencil questionnaire that became the SoCQ. A second instrument consisting of open-ended questions became the Open-Ended Statement (Newlove & Hall, 1976). The initial SoCQ contained statements written by the project members that could indicate concerns voiced by individuals the various stages of innovation adoption as categorized in Hall, Wallace, and Dossett’s original 1973 CBAM paper. The Open-Ended Concerns Statement also provided statements. From this version, 544 statements were generated. The statements were sorted by ten people (judges) into eight groups corresponding to the seven Stages of Concerns with an additional group added for “unacceptable” responses. Four hundred



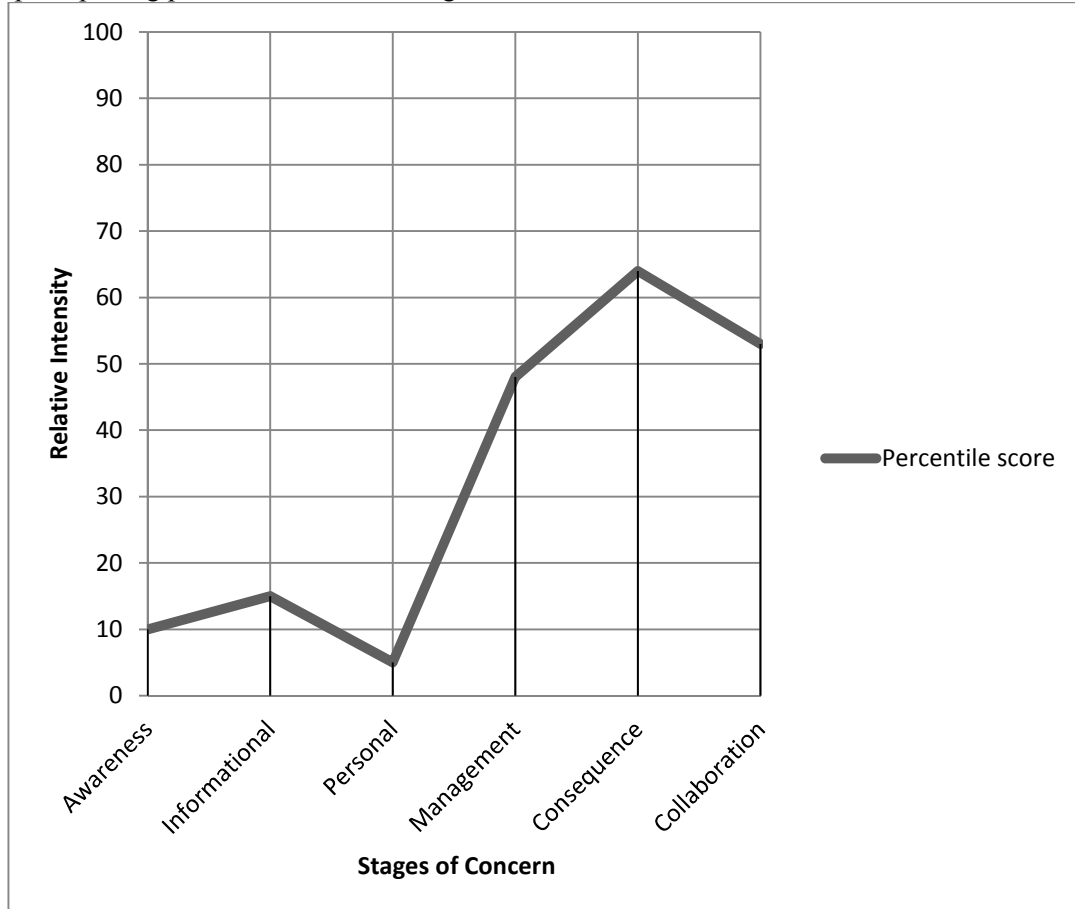
of the statements belonged to specific stages as agreed upon by six or more of the judges. After editing for repetition, the number of statements was reduced to 195. (George, Hall, & Stiegelbauer, 2006).

A pilot study utilizing the 195-item questionnaire was conducted in 1974 that involved an innovation in elementary schools and another innovation in colleges. Item correlation and factor analysis of the 363 returned questionnaires indicated that seven factors explained more than 60% of the variation between items. The researchers then reduced the questionnaire to 35 items by selecting five items for each of the seven stages. It was administered twice in the fall of 1974 to test reliability. The coefficients of internal reliability ranged from .64 to .83 for the seven stages with  $n = 830$ . One hundred seventy-one education faculty members were asked to retake the SoCQ two weeks later to establish test-retest reliability. One hundred thirty-two members completed and returned the data. The test/retest reliabilities ranged from .65 to .86 and the alpha-coefficients ranged from .66 to .83 (George, Hall, Stiegelbauer, 2006).

The questionnaire items remain the same regardless of the educational innovation being addressed. The only customized aspect of the SoCQ is the name of the innovation inserted on the cover page. The SoCQ contains five statements for each stage. Appendix A groups the statements according to the stages to which they belong. To score the SoCQ, the scorer adds together the ratings given to each statement in a given stage. That stage total is converted to a percentile score. The percentiles were determined from the responses to the survey of 830 individuals in the fall of 1974. The validity studies previously mentioned were conducted using these percentiles. The percentiles for each stage are graphed to produce a profile for each teacher. The higher the percentile score for a given stage, the higher the concerns are at that stage. The highest score will show up as a peak in the graph; this peak will indicate the most intense Stage of Concern for that individual. For example, the graph in Figure 1 shows a peak at Stage 4. This suggests that the consequences of the innovation in terms of its impact on students are this

teacher's main concern. This teacher may be considering the relevance of the innovation for his or her students or changes needed to improve student outcomes.

Figure 1  
Graph depicting peak of concerns in Stage 4



The authors of CBAM also provide a way to display group data. A table with columns for each stage can show the tally of the number of teachers whose peak score was in that stage. This information can be helpful to change facilitators as it gives a quick overview of staff concerns.

Johnston (2010) suggested that when a teacher's instruction does not work as well as anticipated, the reason could lie in instructional interactions. Reviewing and discussing these interactions can make teachers feel vulnerable, but if interaction is within collaborative learning communities with the support of administration, it can help change instruction for the better.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### **Introduction**

This chapter details the methodology that was used in this research study. The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions and stages of concerns of elementary teachers regarding the Response to Intervention model (RTI). The research design, researcher's role, participants, and procedures are described in this chapter, and a description of the how the participants were selected is also included. The chapter continues detailing the data collection, characteristics of data included and the subsequent analysis. The chapter concludes with ethical considerations, data triangulation, limitations of the study, and a summary of the main points.

#### **Research Design**

This study was designed to identify teachers' perceptions and stages of concerns regarding RTI. Because this study examined the experiences of real people in a real setting, a qualitative approach was used. According to Hatch (2002), "Understanding how individuals make sense of their everyday lives is the stuff of this type of inquiry" (p. 7). Hatch explained, "Qualitative research seeks to understand the world from the perspectives of those living in it" (p. 7). This type of methodology leads to a better understanding of the data because the researcher works with real people rather than with statistics (Patton, 2002). Creswell (2009) noted that qualitative research involves the researcher gathering data through multiple forms, "such as interviews, observations and documents" and keeping a focus "on learning the meaning that the participants hold about the problem or issue" (p. 175). According to Merriam (1995), the focus

on understanding the problem, situation or issue and meaning for those involved lends itself to a case study design. She stated that insights “gleaned from case studies can directly influence policy, practice, and future research.” The design strategy was purposeful sampling. Patton (2002) stated this is appropriate when the study “is aimed at insight about the phenomenon, not empirical generalization from a sample to a population” (p. 40).

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions and stages of concerns of elementary teachers regarding the Response to Intervention model (RTI). This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are teachers’ perceptions about RTI?
2. How does CBAM explain the stages of concern teachers have about RTI?
3. How do teachers’ perceptions influence their willingness to fully implement RTI?

The data in this study were obtained from interviews with individual teachers and their administrator. Interviews of the educators were conducted to create a thick rich description of teacher perceptions and stages of concerns. Interviewing the principal gave background information on the program, the training given staff and her expectations of both the program and teachers. The study was conducted in accordance with regulations and guidelines established by Oklahoma State University’s Institutional Review Board in compliance with the U.S. Code of Federal Regulations, DHHS (CFR), Title 45, Part 46 (45 CFR 46) titled Protection of Human Subjects. Approval was received from the Institutional Review Board before data collection begins. A copy of the approval letter is provided in Appendix A.

### **Researcher Role**

Although I have not been a teacher in a school that has RTI in place, I was an administrator responsible for implementing RTI in my school. RTI was both rewarding and frustrating. The implementation required an enormous time commitment from personnel to design a model that would fit the school. The school’s groundwork of Professional Learning

Communities (PLCs) helped teachers analyze data, collaborate on effective practices, and discuss interventions they might utilize in the classroom. Implementation of RTI is truly a process and not an event. RTI has been in place in my school for five years; however, the work is ongoing in tweaking procedures and training teachers in an effort to create a system that benefits students.

While I was an assistant principal, I attended trainings conducted by a professor who assisted the State Department of Education in implementing the RTI model. Through these trainings, I became aware which districts were piloting the program. The school district in which I live is a pilot district for RTI; however, I do not have any children attending this district's schools, nor did I ever. I do know the principal of one of the elementary schools in the pilot district. The district I work for is not participating in the pilot program.

### **Participants**

This qualitative study examined the perceptions and stages of concerns of elementary teachers regarding RTI. The teachers selected were from the same elementary school to ensure the RTI program procedures and expectations were identical. An effort was made to include teachers with varying tenure and of different grade levels. The principal had been in her position at this school for two years.

### **Methods/Procedures**

The suburban school district in a midwestern state has approximately 5,000 students. I chose the district for my study because it is a pilot district for RTI with the State Department of Education. The district has a limited business tax base and property taxes within the district are higher than surrounding communities. The average household income of this upper middle class community is a little more than twice the state average. Less than ten percent of the student population qualifies for free and reduced lunch program. The ethnic makeup of the district is 80% Caucasian, 6% Asian, 6% Hispanic, 5% Black and 3% Native American. Construction of new single-family homes as well as apartment complexes has been on the rise and the district enrollment has grown by approximately three hundred students in the last five years. One

elementary school was selected to ensure that the RTI process is identical for the teachers being interviewed.

The district's strategy in building elementary schools, grades Pre-kindergarten through 4<sup>th</sup> is to keep each one approximately 500 students. The enrollment at this elementary school is 460 students with a staff of 26 certified teachers. This school is six years old, and the student population has grown by 28% since it opened. The building has a large covered porch that offers protection to students from the elements as they wait to be picked up after school. Upon entering the building, I noticed the foyer's high ceiling and windows that give it a light and airy feel. The furnishings in the foyer were sparse, but there were a few colorful posters on the light tan walls. The main office was to the right of the doors as I entered the building, and directly in front of the main doors beyond the foyer was the library. The walls were solid on the lower half and glass on the upper half that allowed sunlight to penetrate the library. Behind the library were several halls that fanned out to the classrooms. Each hallway had a different theme, and bright paintings covered the walls. The cafeteria and gym were to the left of the main doors. Many of my visits were at the end of the school day when there often were pockets of parents and teachers chatting and laughing.

### **Participant Selection**

#### Description of selection process

I contacted the principal of this school and after explaining my research I obtained permission to interview teachers (See Appendix B). The principal allowed me to attend a weekly faculty meeting where I explained my study and invited teachers to participate. I provided each teacher with a printed summary of that explanation and a consent form. I included a self-addressed stamped envelope so they could return the completed form directly to me. Seven teachers responded: however, one preferred to decline if I was able to get six other respondents. I did not include that teacher in the interview process. Pseudonyms were used to protect the

teachers' identities. The six teachers and the principal were given Consent forms (Appendix C) to review and sign.

### **Participant Interviews**

Teacher participants included two representatives from first grade, one from second grade, two from third grade and one from fourth grade. One teacher had 4 years of teaching experience, one 9 years, one 12 years, one 14 years, one 17 years. One teacher was in her first year of teaching. I scheduled interviews over a two-week period. All the teachers requested to be interviewed at their school, and all but one of the interviews took place after school in the participant's classroom; the one interview not in the classroom took place in a conference room after school. I took written notes and recorded the interviews. The interviews were transcribed by a transcription service. I interviewed six teachers. Those interviews provided a thick description of the perceptions and stages of concerns they had about RTI. The interview questions can be found in Appendix D.

After conducting each interview, I gave each participant a gift card to a local restaurant. I followed up with an email thanking them for their time and providing them with a link to the SoCQ online survey. I sent reminders to three of the participants to complete the survey. These three teachers completed the survey within a week of the reminders.

In her interview, the principal provided details about the implementation of RTI and her expectations of the program and her staff. In addition, I viewed and analyzed document artifacts provided by the principal and teachers. These included RTI training materials utilized with this staff, documentation of the RTI process required of teachers, and resources available to the staff.

### **Procedures/Documents, Artifacts or Instruments**

As the researcher, I was the primary instrument in the collection of data. This is in keeping with the characteristics of qualitative research as described by Patton (2002) and Hatch (2002). The interviews were semi-structured. Hatch described semi-structured interviews as

those conducted by researchers who “come to the interview with guiding questions, [but] they are open to following the leads of informants and probing into areas that arise during the interview interactions” (p. 94). I hired a transcription service to transcribe the interviews and stored the transcriptions in a locked cabinet at my home. The electronic recordings were stored on a flash drive in a separate cabinet

The Stages of Concerns Questionnaire (SoCQ) was an additional instrument used in the study. After the interview, participants were asked to complete the survey. The SoCQ (Appendix E) is a set of 35 statements that participants rate according to how relevant the statement is to them at that time. An introductory cover letter and copy of the permission letter from the copyright holders for the use of the SoCQ explained the survey and the rating scale; I gave these documents to the participants. The rating scale is “0” to “7” with “0” meaning the statement or item is completely irrelevant to me at this time and “7” meaning the statement is very true of me at this time. Instructions directed the participants to consider their current feelings only about the program or innovation named on the survey, in this case “Response to Intervention.” The name of the program or innovation was the only customizable element of the survey.

### **Reliability and Validity**

The manual for the SoCQ provided by SEDL contains the following tables showing the reliability of the SoCQ. Table 2 shows the alpha coefficients of internal consistency for each of the seven Stages of Concern. This test was completed in the fall of 1974 with the 35-item questionnaire and 830 participants.

Table 2

*Coefficients of internal reliability for the Stages of Concern Questionnaire*

Stage	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Alpha	.64	.78	.83	.75	.76	.82	.71

*Note.* 35 items, n=830, Fall 1974. Adapted from “Measuring Implementation in Schools: The Stages of Concern Questionnaire” by A.A. George, G. E. Hall, and S. M. Stiegelbauer, 2006, p.20. Copyright 2006 by SEDL.



Table 3 shows the test-retest correlations done two weeks later with 132 of the same participants that had completed the initial questionnaire.

Table 3

*Test-Retest correlations on the Stages of Concern Questionnaire*

Stage	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Alpha	.65	.86	.82	.81	.76	.84	.71

*Note.* n=132. Adapted from “Measuring Implementation in Schools: The Stages of Concern Questionnaire” by A.A. George, G. E. Hall, and S. M. Stiegelbauer, 2006, p.20. Copyright 2006 by SEDL.

### **Data Analysis**

Hatch (2002) described the purpose and processes of data analysis:

Analysis means organizing and interrogating data in a way that allows researchers to see patterns, identify themes, discover relationships, develop explanations, make interpretations, mount critiques or generate theories. It often involves synthesis, evaluation, interpretation, categorization, hypothesizing, comparison, and pattern finding (p. 148).

The approach I used was a typological analysis to divide the data set into categories as described by Hatch (2002). The typology came from the CBAM framework, and I categorized teacher comments by whom or to what they referred. The categories outlined in CBAM are concerns about self, the task or process, and impact.

After I identified the categories, I reviewed the collected data and marked entries related to each typology. Next, I read entries by category looking for main ideas, patterns, relationships, and themes (Hatch, 2002, p. 153). After patterns were identified, the data were coded accordingly. I also compared and contrasted the patterns with the data from the SoCQ. I made note of any non-examples that called for further explanation. This included considering any data that was not coded for insights into contradictory patterns or typologies. If contradictory patterns

were found, they were acknowledged and discussed. According to Hatch, the next step was to look for relationships among the patterns. The final two steps were to write the patterns as one-sentence generalizations and select data excerpts that supported those generalizations.

### **Triangulation of Data**

Golafshani (2003) defined triangulation as “engaging multiple methods, such as, observation, interviews and recordings [that] will lead to more valid, reliable and diverse construction of realities” (p.604). To that end, I asked the participants if they would allow me to review the documentation they kept as part of the RTI process. Each teacher gave me that permission. I also reviewed any other documentation such as training manuals or protocols of the RTI process. I attended two of the weekly RTI meetings held on Fridays the teachers mentioned in their interviews. Member checks were conducted by giving the teachers and principal the opportunity to read the transcriptions of their individual interviews for accuracy.

### **Ethical Considerations**

I have been an elementary school administrator for seven years in three different schools. RTI was in the process of being implemented in each school when I arrived. Since my tenure at each school was relatively short, I have not seen teachers move through the continuum of adoption. RTI was not optional in my district, and teachers were not invited to express their concerns. Understanding the concerns of teachers may give insight for the change facilitator as to the acceptance level and adoption of the innovation into the teaching pedagogy.

### **Limitations of Study**

RTI is just one innovation teachers in this state have been asked to adopt in a relatively short time. The adoption and subsequent repeal of the Common Core State Standards, the development by the State Department of Education of new standards, and a new teacher evaluation system are additional innovations in this particular state. The number of innovations at the same time may negatively impact the ease with which teachers can adopt them. This study

focused on the RTI process at only one school. Generalization to all teachers is not an aim of this study. The RTI process may not be standardized from school to school, district to district, or even state to state. The differences in the process may lead to different perceptions and stages of concerns of teachers than the ones included in this study.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I described the reasons for choosing a qualitative approach and the research methodology. I conducted interviews with six educators at a suburban elementary school that had adopted RTI. Documents maintained by the teachers and documents relating to the RTI program were reviewed to provide triangulation of data. Teachers' perceptions and stages of concerns were categorized using the CBAM framework and the data were analyzed for patterns. The subsequent chapters of this study are dedicated to the analysis, interpretation, discussion, and summary of the findings.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS AND FINDINGS

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions and stages of concerns of elementary teachers regarding the Response to Intervention model (RTI). I interviewed elementary teachers, observed them in the classroom and sat in on a weekly RTI meeting. I present the data from the interviews first. Results from the survey are reported at the end of each teacher's interview data. A brief interpretation follows the results. After the data from the interviews I present data from the two RTI meetings I observed. A more in depth interpretation of the SoCQ results is included in Chapter 5.

#### **Interviews**

##### **Barbara Skye**

Barbara Skye had been teaching for seventeen years at various grade levels, the last five years at this school in 4<sup>th</sup> grade. She was introduced to RTI at this school five years ago. I arrived after school had dismissed on a gray afternoon with rain threatening to begin at any moment. There were pockets of parents chatting and laughing as they walked out of the building with their children. Inside, the foyer of the school was bright and open. Several teachers were standing and talking, having just gotten off duty. Ms. Skye recognized me and broke away from the group; after we exchanged hellos, she suggested we go to the conference room to conduct her interview.

We walked through the administrative office area that I observed to be very neat and uncluttered. The secretary greeted me with a smile as we proceeded to the back of the area and into the large conference room. It was a very plain room with a table large enough to comfortably seat ten people. At one end of the room was a built-in cabinet with a coffee machine setting on

the counter. The rest of the room was sparsely furnished. Ms. Skye settled into a comfortable padded chair at the head of the table. She appeared very relaxed and was dressed in jeans and school t-shirt. Ms. Skye briefly listed her experience that began with teaching eighth grade Spanish. In the seventeen years that she taught she was in three districts, taught at four different grade levels and is now teaching fourth grade.

She described the RTI process at this school in a very cursory manner. Tier 1 students are progress monitored using DIBELS; every Friday, the grade level team meets with the principal, reading specialist and sometimes, the school psychologist to discuss the data. If students are moved to Tier 2 then they go to the reading specialist four days a week, and teachers “do other interventions in the classroom as well.” When asked to elaborate on Tier 1, she said they just stay in the classroom; however, the reading specialist had a few spots for “any kid that we feel like, just needs a little extra.” The most challenging aspect of RTI for Ms. Skye was finding the time to progress monitor the eight students that required it while keeping the other nineteen students quiet and occupied. The most successful aspect of RTI was seeing her student’s progress as she graphed their data points.

Ms. Skye became much more animated when asked how RTI has affected her teaching and students. She said she was more cognizant of the need to differentiate for students at all levels including those that are gifted. “I just feel like each child is obviously individual now, and they have their own needs; and even if they’re not on an IEP, they still have things we’re responsible for meeting.” Even though she saw the need for working with students individually, she believed that doing so caused the student to be embarrassed. Discretion was the key as the student was “probably already self-conscious as it is because they know that they struggle, especially in the fourth grade.” When asked about the effect on faculty, Ms. Skye paused as if to choose her words carefully. Her opinion was that the effect was more negative than positive. The change to RTI “wasn’t welcomed” and was met “with more resistance than not.” She just did as she was told and “rolled with it,” but eluded to the fact that her teammates did not. When asked

what concerns she had about RTI, she mentioned that it was time consuming--not for her personally but again alluded to others--with more than ten struggling students, that might only have time for the very lowest of the low.

Ms. Skye's opinion of RTI compared to what she had used in the past was that RTI took a long time to place a child into Special Education. She said she would prefer a combination of RTI and traditional discrepancy testing. She would also like clarification on what indicates a move for a student from one tier to the next. That would help her to do more to move the student through the tiers faster. I concluded the interview by asking if there was anything else she wanted to tell me that I had not asked. She thought for a moment then said there was not, but that if I needed to speak with her again that would be fine. I thanked her for the interview and she led me out through the now empty office area.

The results of Ms. Skye's SoCQ are shown in the Table 4.

Table 4

*Ms. Skye's Percentile Scores*

Stage 0 Unconcerned	Stage 1 Informational	Stage 2 Personal	Stage 3 Management	Stage 4 Consequence	Stage 5 Collaboration	Stage 6 Refocusing
61%	19%	17%	27%	4%	10%	17%

The SoCQ manual gives the following explanation of percentile scores:

The percentile score indicates the relative intensity of concern at each stage. The higher the score, the more intense the concerns are at that stage. The lower the score, the less intense the concerns are at that stage. *The percentile figures are not absolute; instead they are relative to the other stage scores for that individual.* (p. 32)

The percentile scores indicate the level of highest percentile score was in Stage 0 for Ms. Skye. The higher the score in Stage 0, the greater the indication that an individual was not solely concerned about the innovation, or RTI in this case, and that there were other innovations, task, or activities that were of concern. Ms. Skye's second highest score was in Stage 3, showing a

concern about the management, time, and logistical aspects of RTI. Stage 4 focused on the impact of RTI on students. This was Ms. Skye's lowest area of concern.

### **Peggy Taylor**

My second interview was with Peggy Taylor. I arrived at the school about ten minutes before school was dismissed. Parents were chatting amicably as they waited outside the building to pick up their children. My appointment with Ms. Taylor was set for 10 minutes after dismissal, so I waited until the bell rang before I made my way into the building. I checked in with the friendly office secretary who offered me a seat and then called Ms. Taylor. The secretary then led me to Ms. Taylor's classroom.

Ms. Taylor was very nicely dressed and her dimples showed as she greeted me with a smile. The desks in the room were grouped into clusters of four. This turned out to be the norm as I discovered when I visited other classrooms in the building. There was very little room for gathering together on the floor. Ms. Taylor sat at a large horseshoe shaped table, and I sat across from her. This also turned out to be the norm for most of the interviews.

Ms. Taylor was in her fourteenth year of teaching. This was her ninth year of teaching second grade however she had only been at this school for two years. She had five years of RTI experience. Her explanation of the RTI was very simple. She screened students using the STAR reading test and those falling below grade level "by a lot, I think" were placed on Tier 1. The Tier 1 students were monitored weekly with the DIBELS progress monitoring instrument and moved to Tier 2 if they did not progress. She said RTI had been really good for her, and she enjoyed the charted information it gave her to show parents. "It's something neat that you can show parent that, 'Yes, they are below but look how much progress they're making.' Or, 'They're not making progress and this is probably the next step.'"

She thought the passages used for monitoring were the most challenging aspect of RTI.

Sometimes with DIBELS I feel like [the reading passage] one week may be difficult and

then the next week it's very easy. I mean, I've done this long enough that there are stories that I anticipate everyone is going to drop [the number of words read] that week.

Her instruction has not changed much with RTI other than adding an intervention with specific children, "It's just something extra we do." The intervention was decided upon in the weekly meetings held every Friday with the principal, the grade level team and occasionally the reading coach and special education teacher. She felt that RTI made her students more responsible for their progress. She encouraged students to beat their monitoring score from the previous week and that served as a motivator for the three students she monitored.

When asked about the affect RTI had on the faculty, she replied that some people liked it and some did not. She said she "just went with the flow". She explained,

At least, I have something to show; this is what we've done, this is where we are, and this is where we're going, and this is what we're going to do next. So for me, it was good.

There's always going to be someone that grumbles or grips but, I think, for the most part, that it's good for kids.

Ms. Taylor suggested that a document or binder of what to do if a child moves to Tier 2 would be beneficial. She admitted that it might already exist but she was not sure. The reading specialist was helpful in showing her the intervention she needed to use with the one student that recently moved to Tier 2 in her classroom. The change that she would like made to RTI is the length of time it takes to move a child from one tier to the next. "It is hard to wait sometimes when you think 'I know that this is not going to work.' But you have to wait through that because it's just a process of RTI." However, she saw RTI as an improvement over the previous system where children were recommended for testing. That process took a very long time as well. "At least you're doing something with RTI." She also mentioned that RTI provided an opportunity for better communication with parents. When asked how long she thought RTI would be in use, Ms. Taylor responded that it was hard to say but probably until the next fad hits. The interview concluded with her adding, "Overall, it's been okay for me."



The results of Ms. Taylor’s SoCQ are recorded in Table 5.

Table 5

*Ms. Taylor’s Percentile Scores*

Stage 0 Unconcerned	Stage 1 Informational	Stage 2 Personal	Stage 3 Management	Stage 4 Consequence	Stage 5 Collaboration	Stage 6 Refocusing
75%	34%	48%	18%	8%	44%	11%

Ms. Taylor’s highest percentile score was in Stage 0. This score showed that there are other aspects of her job besides RTI that were concerns for Ms. Taylor. The second highest score was in Stage 2 and indicated Ms. Taylor had personal concerns about RTI and its consequences for her. This did not mean that she was resistant to RTI but reflected her uneasiness about it.

**Gwen Durham**

The next day I returned to the school twenty minutes after school had dismissed. The parking lot had very few cars. The foyer was empty. The secretary remembered me from the previous day and asked who I “was needing” to see. She gave me directions to Gwen Durham’s room after calling her on the intercom to ensure Ms. Durham was in her room. Ms. Durham was sitting at her large horseshoe table and invited me to sit across from her. There was a stack of papers next to her that appeared to be work that she had been grading. She was a slender young woman with shoulder length blond hair. Her room was decorated in shades of blue and turquoise. Bright blue and yellow bins held materials on crowded shelves and a large rug with the letters of the alphabet printed on it designated the spot for whole group meetings. She seemed a little nervous as we began the interview.

Ms. Durham explained that she began her teaching career at the secondary level with an alternative certification license. She “did not gel well” with that age group, so she returned to school to obtain a master’s degree in early childhood education. She was in her fourth year of teaching and RTI, her first year at this school and first year teaching first grade after three years as a kindergarten teacher. When asked about how RTI looks in first grade, Ms. Durham could only describe what she had done up to that point in the year. She did not have any students

needing interventions so she was not sure how to determine what intervention to use when. She was very familiar with assessing students on letter sounds because she had done that as a kindergarten teacher. Reading fluency was going to be new, and she was not sure what that would look like.

The most challenging aspect of RTI for Ms. Durham was remembering to progress monitor at that same time every week. She informed each student of their monitoring score and challenged them to beat it the next time. Students soon got excited about beating their score and progress monitoring turned into a game. Telling about this in the interview, Ms. Durham became more relaxed and chuckled. The monitoring turning into a game with the students became the most successful aspect of RTI for Ms. Durham.

RTI affected Ms. Durham's teaching by causing her to focus more on those students she was monitoring. She said she made eye contact with them when teaching a skill they lacked. She commented, "It really does change your instruction when you know exactly what they're missing." I followed up by asking Ms. Durham how the implementation of RTI affected the faculty. Again she laughed and explained that in "the world of education, it always seems like there is one more thing, one more thing." She felt that there was an accountability piece with RTI that led to positive camaraderie with her teammates. The weekly meetings allowed her to discuss problems she was having with certain students, formulate possible solutions and assist others with their problems. The fact that everyone came prepared to the meetings and were willing to share made Ms. Durham feel that the faculty believed in RTI. The meetings also helped her to become more confident about expressing her viewpoint. This feeling of mutual support made Ms. Durham sure that she would not "fall through the crack" when it came time to implement interventions. She felt comfortable going to any teacher in her grade level and asking for help.

One of Ms. Durham's concerns about RTI was when students had to move to Tier 2. Tier 2 required additional paperwork that could cause parents to become defensive she believed. She was also fearful that the work she had done to make monitoring a game would be lost. At the end

of the interview when I asked Ms. Durham if there was anything she wanted to add, she expressed gratitude for being at this school since her experience with RTI in another district was not nearly as positive.

Ms. Durham's SoCQ results are shown in Table 6.

Table 6

*Ms. Durham's Percentile Scores*

Stage 0 Unconcerned	Stage 1 Informational	Stage 2 Personal	Stage 3 Management	Stage 4 Consequence	Stage 5 Collaboration	Stage 6 Refocusing
14%	40%	45%	15%	8%	44%	26%

Ms. Durham's highest percentile was Stage 2. This indicated strong concerns about RTI, and while she was not resistant to RTI, she felt some uneasiness. Her Stage 1 score was elevated as well, meaning she wanted more information about RTI. The second highest stage was Stage 5. This stage addresses the area of collaboration. The score for Ms. Durham in this stage combined with her score in Stage 1 suggested she has a desire to learn from her colleagues but not lead in the collaboration. Her lowest score was in Stage 4, how RTI impacted her students.

**Carmen Lopez**

The next interview was the following day afterschool with Carmen Lopez. By now, the secretary knew me by sight and asked who I needed to see that day. She sent me to Ms. Lopez's room, just a short distance from the office. This room was much more decorated than any others I had visited. Ms. Lopez was very fond of animal print fabric. There were leopard print fabric skirts on tables and desks, tiger borders around the leopard print bulletin boards and tiger edging around the rug on the floor. It was everywhere! Ms. Lopez greeted me from her desk and invited me to take a chair in front of the desk. She appeared very comfortable and relaxed. Her long dark hair framed a beautiful smile and bright blue eyes. I immediately felt that Ms. Lopez was a very confident individual.

At my request Ms. Lopez described her background in education. She had always taught first grade for the twelve years she had been a teacher. The first ten years were spent at another school in a different district before moving to her current school. She had about six or seven years of experience with RTI. She described RTI at her current school using some of the same verbiage the other participants had used. Tier 1 was “just good classroom teaching.” In her case, Ms. Lopez saw her lower performing students once a day in a small group setting and once a day one-on-one. She progress monitored them on Fridays and kept the data in a spreadsheet she had designed. She also tracked the daily work she had done with those students on the spreadsheet. The Friday meetings with the principal also from time to time included the counselor, school psychologist, and occupational therapist, if they were needed. When asked how she determined who was not performing at grade level, she mentioned the computerized STAR Reading program; but she also mentioned utilizing DRA (Developmental Reading Assessment). DRA is a program from Scholastic that is used to determine a student’s reading level and is similar to STAR but is administered individually by the teacher or reading specialist. It takes longer to assess an entire class with DRA than to have the class take a STAR test on the computer all at once. She said that the most challenging aspect of RTI was that the progress monitoring did not always match what she needed to work on with the student. However, the most successful aspect of RTI was the graphs that she created with the progress monitoring data. Showing the graphs to the students created in them the desire to beat their score the next week. She said,

I don’t want it to be a secret from them. It’s their progress, it’s what they’re doing and so I want them to know that we work as a team and that they can be a part of what they’re doing.

RTI changed her teaching practices. Ms. Lopez made sure she saw her struggling students daily so that new material was presented in a way they understood.

Ms. Lopez had a positive outlook on how RTI affected the faculty. She said that it held teachers more accountable because of the progress monitoring data. It also created an

environment where teachers shared frustrations and solutions. Ms. Lopez did feel that teachers could use a little more training about Tier 2, and the concerns she had about RTI focused on the length of time that it took to get students placed in Special Education. She could not think of anything more to tell me that I had not asked about when given the opportunity. The interview concluded, and I was on my way.

Table 7 presents Ms. Lopez’s SoCQ results.

Table 7

*Ms. Lopez’s Percentile Scores*

Stage 0 Unconcerned	Stage 1 Informational	Stage 2 Personal	Stage 3 Management	Stage 4 Consequence	Stage 5 Collaboration	Stage 6 Refocusing
7%	19%	12%	30%	33%	19%	38%

Ms. Lopez’s highest percentile was in Stage 6, the Refocusing Stage. Individuals scoring high in this stage are concerned with obtaining other ideas about RTI and may have some of their own already. Her second highest score in Stage 4 showed her strong student-oriented concerns typical of those with high Stage 6 concerns. Stage 0 was her lowest score and indicated RTI was important to her and central to her thinking and teaching.

**Yvonne Summers**

Yvonne Summers wanted to meet me on a Saturday morning at the school. I pulled into the empty parking lot and waited only a few minutes until she arrived. She got out of her car and waved to me. She was casually dressed in jeans and a sweater, and her long blond hair was pulled back into a ponytail. We went directly to her classroom through the quiet building. Just like the other classrooms I had visited, the desks were in groups of four; a large horseshoe table was situated in the back of the room. We sat at that table.

Ms. Summers was in her ninth year of teaching. She came to the current school two years earlier as a third grade teacher. Her experience with RTI began at that time. She described RTI a little differently than the other teachers. She indicated that all students started at Tier 1

every year. If the student attained a grade equivalency score of 2.9 or below, she read with them every day, either in small groups or one-on-one. She progress monitored them on Thursdays and met with the principal and her teammates on Fridays. An aimline was set for each child indicating how many words per minute needed to read by the end of the year. Four progress monitoring points below the aimline meant it was time to move them to Tier 2. At Tier 2, an intervention was added called cold read/hot read, a type of repeated reading. The third grade team decided upon that intervention, and the school psychologist then trained Ms. Summers. Ms. Summers had four students on Tier 2. She had one child who had four data points below the line in Tier 2 so she changed interventions; the child had another four points below the line, and Ms. Summers was ready to change the intervention again. She was unsure at what point the student would be moved to Tier 3 (Special Education). The STAR test was given again after the Christmas break to see if any students needed to be added to those already being monitored.

Time was Ms. Summers's biggest challenge. She had ten students to monitor this year as compared to five students last year. However, she said the extra time she spent with those ten students was also her most enjoyable RTI aspect. Listening to them read and seeing the progress on the graphs was very rewarding. She started including whole group reading fluency as a result of RTI and felt RTI made her more accountable. I asked how RTI had affected her students; she replied it been very positive, and students were successful with the program. She went on to say that in the beginning many of the teachers did not think there would be time to do the various components of RTI; yet in recent meetings, their attitudes had changed. Teachers needed to develop a routine that allowed for time with struggling students, but once that was achieved, they felt rewarded as they watched students progress. The Friday meetings were very helpful, and she thought it was "awesome" that her principal know all about her kids. She felt that more training on interventions would be helpful; she joked about wanting a longer school day; and her concern about RTI was that she was not sure it was helping with comprehension.

Ms. Summers's responses to the SoCQ are summarized in Table 8.

Table 8

*Ms. Summers's Percentile Scores*

Stage 0 Unconcerned	Stage 1 Informational	Stage 2 Personal	Stage 3 Management	Stage 4 Consequence	Stage 5 Collaboration	Stage 6 Refocusing
22%	16%	12%	18%	5%	14%	5%

The percentile scores from Ms. Summers's SoCQ were lower than the other participants; however, the scores are to be interpreted in relationship to scores of each stage not other participants. The lower scores indicated a less intense concern about each stage. Stage 0 was Ms. Summers's highest percentile followed by Stage 3. These two scores showed Ms. Summers was not focused entirely on RTI but had other innovations or activities on her mind, and management of RTI and perhaps the other activities was an issue. Stage 4 and Stage 6 were tied for her lowest score. She was not at the point where she could focus on the impact of RTI on her students. She did not have a negative opinion of RTI or opinions on how to change or improve it.

**Olivia Montgomery**

My next interview was with Olivia Montgomery. I checked in with the secretary and she gave me the room number for Ms. Montgomery. The hallways were empty of people but decorated with student artwork. I was able to find her room very easily. I knocked on Ms. Montgomery's door, and she greeted me warmly. She was a recent graduate in her first year of teaching. She was a very petite individual with long blond hair, very professionally dressed; she appeared a little nervous when we met after school on that Monday afternoon. Like most of the other teachers I interviewed, she sat at her horseshoe table and I sat across from her in her third grade classroom. She had been a long-term substitute the previous school year at this school. She had a lovely smile.

She had limited experience with RTI during her student teaching, so she considered this her first year with the program. The students she monitored were all on Tier 1. She had dismissed several already due to the excellent progress they had made. Ms. Montgomery was very

talkative, and her responses were much longer than the other teachers. Her biggest challenge with RTI was time management, and she was very complimentary regarding her grade level team and principal. During the Friday meetings those individuals provided support and advice, and she felt that the principal trusted the teachers to make the right decisions. The most successful aspect of RTI was observing students becoming more fluent and confident in their reading abilities. Students were motivated to improve when they saw their progress graphed each week.

Another positive effect of RTI was the development of her classroom community. She explained, “I think it really has affected everyone in a positive way because my kids are now becoming peer tutors and helping each other.” Ms. Montgomery paused when I asked how RTI had affected her teaching. The time management challenge negatively impacted her teaching because she did not always get help or talk to every student each day. The positive effect was a desire to become more flexible and to differentiate instruction for all of her students.

When asked about the impact of RTI on the faculty, she responded favorably. Ms. Montgomery thought RTI encouraged collaboration and her grade level team was very interested in looking at the data, discussing problems and offering possible solutions to help each other out. I understood how important this was to Ms. Montgomery when she explained what concerns she had about RTI and what changes she would make to the program. She was not comfortable with conducting interventions and wanted more training on them. The time management issue came up again and she wondered if there was not some sort of technology that could help her. She also mentioned that she needed to remember that not all students had a love of reading like she did.

Table 9 shows the results of Ms. Montgomery’s SoCQ.

Table 9

*Ms. Montgomery’s Percentile Scores*

Stage 0 Unconcerned	Stage 1 Informational	Stage 2 Personal	Stage 3 Management	Stage 4 Consequence	Stage 5 Collaboration	Stage 6 Refocusing
91%	63%	87%	98%	16%	72%	69%



Ms. Montgomery's results show strong concerns about RTI. Her highest score was Stage 3, Management. Logistics, time, and the management of RTI were her main focus. The second highest score in Stage 0 indicated she had other activities or innovations she was concerned about. Her lowest score was Stage 4, the impact that RTI was having on her students. She may not have mastered the mechanics of RTI well enough to shift her attention to the results of RTI with her students.

### **Catherine Ford**

My last interview was with the principal, Dr. Catherine Ford. She asked if I could come during the afternoon of a school day, and I was able to accommodate that request. Dr. Ford was waiting in the main office for me when I arrived; we met in her office on a chilly Thursday afternoon at 1:00 pm. Her office was very neat and organized. She had a small round table in one corner in addition to her desk and built in credenza. The office was several feet away from the main office where the secretaries sat, so it was somewhat removed from the noise and action.

We started with Dr. Ford briefing me on her background in education. This school year was her twenty-second. She was a teacher for twelve years in various grade levels from eighth to kindergarten. She then was an assistant principal for three years and spent seven years as a principal, the last three at this school. Her experience with RTI began seven years previous to this year in another district.

I feel like I had really excellent training in my prior school district. I felt fairly confident coming in. I noticed when I started talking about RTI - and I didn't know the staff, but their reaction was not positive at all. A few people starting telling me that [so far] it had not been a good experience and that they weren't quite sure what to do. So I just introduced it the way I had been taught in my prior district, and we just went through together starting with Tier 1.

This district allowed for a dedicated professional development time every week by having students start late one day a week. Dr. Ford indicated that classroom instruction was frequently

addressed during this professional development time. Dr. Ford focused on Tier 1 only in the beginning and sat down with teachers to discuss which students they thought might be at risk. The entire school was screened using both STAR and DIBELS, and the data from those two screenings was compared to the teacher list. A Tier 1 list was created, and Dr. Ford taught the teachers how to progress monitor. “As soon as those students - when teachers saw student actually beginning to make progress, and they could even look at a graph and see that progress, that’s when I started actually getting some buy-in,” she explained.

She had a large binder on her desk that she then opened to show me the graphs of various students from each grade level. This was the binder that she took to the meetings on Friday. Data were recorded in pencil, and the binder was very organized and neat. Tier 2 involved interventions for those students not progressing adequately in Tier 1. Initially, Dr. Ford had their reading specialist perform those interventions, but the number of students on Tier 2 made that difficult as the years progressed. This year, classroom teachers began conducting interventions for their own Tier 2 students. Special education teachers went into the classroom if there were any Tier 3 students, co-taught with teachers and assisted struggling Tier 3 students.

RTI changed her role as administrator mainly because at this district the school psychologist travels between several schools, so Dr. Ford had to become more involved and help facilitate its implementation. This also was the most challenging aspect of RTI. She did not have the resources and time to follow-up with struggling students. She had to rely on her staff to do their very best. As a result, the change she wanted make to RTI in her district was to have a written protocol set up by the school psychologist. The most successful aspect of RTI was the shift the teachers made from complaining they did not have the time for RTI to wanting to monitor all the students in their classes. She now saw them taking “professional pride in the job that they are doing.” I asked her what concerns she had about RTI, and she mentioned the time commitment. She was afraid that RTI might go by the wayside since it takes a lot of time and effort.

Lastly, we discussed the fact that other initiatives were being mandated or considered. Dr. Ford viewed herself as a filter for her teachers when it came to deciding which initiatives to adopt. This school is high achieving due in part to their faculty, and Dr. Ford wanted to do what she legally needed to do but also make sure that whatever they did was good for her students. That being said, besides the state and federally mandated initiatives, this school had two other initiatives being adopted. One was a character-building program called Great Expectations that was started prior to Dr. Ford's tenure. Since the district superintendent wanted it continued, Dr. Ford had done so. She leaned forward in her chair to explain the other initiative - the Marzano High Reliability School framework. She had heard about it from a fellow principal and researched it. She was very excited about this, and it showed in her face. It is defined on its website as follows:

This framework, based on 40 years of educational research, defines five progressive levels of performance that a school must master to become a high reliability school—where all students learn the content and skills they need for success in college, careers, and beyond.

Dr. Ford felt strongly about this framework and proud that her school had attained the first level. She and her staff were working on the second level.

We right now are working on Level II which is our instructional framework where we have gone back, and we are looking at everything about our instruction and our level of effectiveness in the classroom. We've introduced instructional rounds where we are able to go around and visit other classrooms and have that dialogue, teacher to teacher, and to be able to be really just transparent about what we are doing in our classroom. That is the one initiative that I want to see carried forward and then I think our teachers are committed to seeing it through.

## **RTI Meetings**

I attended two Friday RTI meetings in addition to conducting interviews. The office had several other visitors when I walked in. A parent was signing a log indicating she was checking out her son. The secretary called Dr. Ford to inform her of my arrival. Dr. Ford quickly came out of her office to greet me and was excited for me to see her staff collaborating during the meetings. She led me down the office hall to the conference room where I met with first and second grade teachers during their respective RTI meetings. Dr. Ford apologized, saying she would be in and out of the meeting and left to take care of a student matter. Before exiting, she said the school psychologist might be arriving shortly.

### **Meeting One**

In the first meeting, one of the teachers took the lead. The principal had a binder with data for the entire school organized by grade level. The data consisted of screening data (DIBELS Next) which they collected at the beginning of the school year. Technology is not used to keep track of data. Data points and graphs are manually recorded in the binder by the principal. Teachers also utilized data collected from STAR. STAR is a web-based program that determines a student's reading level and recommends actions based on the reading level. Students scoring below national benchmarks and below grade level on STAR are considered at risk and teachers provide interventions. STAR is given at the end of each grading period for a total of 5 times. Teachers also use DRA to fine-tune the determination of reading level. There are times that the reading specialist helps with this process. The binder also contained handwritten spreadsheets that are used to record progress monitoring points. The meeting consisted of each teacher reporting that week's progress monitoring data and the lead teacher recording it in the binder. Teachers were responsible for graphing the points on the front of each child's DIBELS Next booklet. They discussed the graphs at the meeting. Anyone could bring up issues with students if they felt the need.

Two of the teachers commented that it would just be a matter of time before a student from their classrooms would be in special education. Teachers did not appear hesitant to discuss students or their progress. The meeting was very informal and relaxed. No one left until all teachers had reported and discussed their data. There were no major changes in interventions at this time.

### **Meeting Two**

The school psychologist arrived in time for the second meeting. We had several minutes before the next meeting so he and I chatted. This was his first year in the district, and he was anxious to contribute to the RTI process. He saw the need for some procedural changes; however, he did not feel that the director of Special Education was willing to make those district wide changes. The psychologist felt that each school is conducting RTI differently. This school came the closest to what he had learned RTI should look like. I commented to him that that surprised me since the district was in the pilot for RTI. He too, was surprised.

The principal came in and joined our conversation. She reiterated that she did make changes to the program when she arrived two years ago. She determined that they would use DIBELS and STAR to screen. She also emphasized with teachers that good classroom instruction was Tier 1. The psychologist took over recording points in the binder once all the teachers arrived. As the teachers reported their data points, they showed the psychologist the graph for each student. No student had to move to the next tier, but the psychologist did want a change to one intervention. One teacher was concerned about a student whose brother was already in the special education program. She was certain that her student would be placed in the program next year. She had already discussed with the principal putting him on the "Fast Track". That meant that when the next school year started, the student would be placed in Tier 2 from the beginning without starting new. Teachers left once their data points were recorded. That meant that there were fewer people to discuss an issue as the meeting progressed. At the end of the meeting, the last teacher had only the psychologist and me present. That teacher wanted input

from the psychologist regarding one of her students. They discussed a specific intervention, and the psychologist made sure she understood how to conduct it. The school psychologist made note of the new intervention in the binder. At the end of the second meeting, Dr. Ford came in. I thanked her for the opportunity to sit in on the meetings and left because she needed to talk to the psychologist.

### **Summary**

This chapter included a description of the interview process, a description of each of the six teacher participant interviews, a description of the principal participant interview and observations from two grade level RTI meetings. The teacher interviews explored their feelings and concerns about RTI and its impact on their teaching. The principal interview gave me information on the manner in which RTI had been introduced, details regarding the model as she expected it to look and the impact of RTI on her staff and herself. The next chapter will include an analysis of the data from these interviews and observations.

## CHAPTER V

### ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions and stages of concerns of elementary teachers regarding the Response to Intervention model (RTI). Chapter IV presented data from six teacher interviews, one principal interview and two grade level RTI meetings. This chapter begins with the analysis of the individual interviews. Common themes found from the interviews are discussed and then applied to the research questions. The first research question focused on the teachers' perceptions of RTI. The second question asked how the Concerns Based Adoption Model explained these perceptions by identifying the stage of adoption for each teacher. The last question relates to how teachers' perceptions affect the adoption of an innovation.

#### **Themes**

Using the typological analysis described by Hatch (2002), I analyzed the interview data. The three typologies came from the CBAM framework; concerns about self, the task or the process. Several themes emerged during my analysis of the interview data. The Concerns Based Adoption Model provided six stages of concerns that I utilized to understand the nature of these themes. Those six stages describe a progression of concerns from little or no concern, to self concerns, to concerns about the task of adopting RTI, and finally to concerns about the impact of RTI. I categorized the themes that emerged according to these stages.

### **Time Management (Concerns about the task)**

Time, or the lack of it, stood out as a major concern for all the teacher participants. Issues related to managing and scheduling fall under the management stage. Time to complete the requirements of RTI was a significant concern mentioned by every teacher interviewed. Ms. Summers said she worried about “just having the time to do it” and felt, “There is no way that I will have time to do this.” Ms. Durham complained, “I think in the world of education, it always seems like there is one more thing, one more thing, one more thing.” “It is challenging,” Ms. Skye replied, “just finding the time to progress monitor them, because we’ve got so many kids and you want to keep the other kids on task.” Ms. Montgomery felt strongly about her busy schedule. She explained, “Time, sometimes I feel like I have no time to get this done and it is so important. You don’t have enough hours in the day.” She returned to this topic later in the interview saying her time with students is so short to begin with that she felt “overwhelmed trying to do [RTI].” Ms. Taylor summed it up; “The biggest struggle is finding the extra time to give to that one-on-one with that child.”

### **Collaboration (Concerns about the impact)**

Every teacher participant commented on the weekly RTI meetings and how they enjoyed the camaraderie they felt among the members of their grade level team. They shared their data across the grade level and obtained help from the team when necessary. Ms. Lopez stated,

I get the ideas from other people. That’s made me more open and asking for help and asking for ideas from others, from my teammates and from other people and the reading specialist, people like that, on what I can do to help. So I think it opens the door for teachers especially to figure out ways to help those kids where before, I think a lot of times, we just close our door and struggle alone without asking people about it.

Ms. Durham felt supported by the teachers in her grade level team and said she knew she was not “going to fall through the crack” if she struggled at any point. Ms. Lopez was very positive about the Friday meetings.



I get ideas from other people. That's made me more open, asking for help and asking for ideas from others – from my teammates and from other people and the reading specialist, people like that - on what I can do to help. So I think it opens the door for teachers, especially, to figure out ways to help those kids where before, I think a lot of times, we just close our door and struggle alone without asking people about it.

Ms. Montgomery was equally positive.

My team has been great. My school has been great answering questions. It's interesting because when we bring our data to [the Friday meeting], we're seeing some of the same things with some of our students. So, we are all kind of brainstorming and we're realizing that a lot of our kids have similarities, and we can relate to each other. So it kind of just helps you feel like you are not alone and just have a partner to go ask questions and say, "Hey, what are you doing? Help me. I need another intervention or something. Something is not working."

Half of the teachers mentioned that they feel supported either by their principal or school psychologist when talking about the Friday meetings. Ms. Summers in particular said, "It's awesome that my principal knows all this about my kids." Ms. Montgomery had this to say about her principal: "At our school, our principal trusts us; she trusts what we are doing; she trusts our input; and she likes hearing about it."

### **Student Motivation (concerns about impact)**

Five of the six teacher participants recognized the impact feedback had on student motivation. The feedback came in the form of showing students their progress monitoring graph. Ms. Summers explained,

[I]t has been so interesting how...[seeing the graph of progress] has become such a motivation. I have one little kiddo that, I mean he's like, "I want to see my graph. I want to see what I've done." And he's so pumped! He just loves this! I think it help them get what we're trying to do. So showing them the graph has been very motivating to them.

Ms. Taylor said that creating that motivation helped her as well.

I think it's kind of made them responsible a little bit for their progress. And so, for my kids, it's a real competition with themselves to try to do better. It also helps me now. Is it ability, that they don't have the ability to read more, or is at a lack of motivation? And when you have that motivator, then you really, I think, you kind of get a better idea of what they can and cannot do.

### **Working with individual students (concerns about self)**

Even though time management was a significant concern for all teachers, the time spent working with individual students was a positive for four of the teacher participants. They felt it made them focus on struggling students and become more aware of what those students needed. Ms. Lopez commented, "I like making sure that [I am] keeping track of those kids and pushing them and making sure that I'm doing everything that I can to move them up." Ms. Summers shared, "I love it, and love that time with them and reading with them." Ms. Durham admitted, "It really does change your instruction when you know exactly what they're missing."

### **Satisfaction with work (concerns about self)**

RTI has contributed to how the teacher participants feel about their jobs. Some of those feelings are positive and some are negative. As previously mentioned, the teachers enjoyed the collaboration the RTI meetings encouraged, but the time management aspect was a negative. Several teachers admitted RTI held them accountable since they were required to report their data in the Friday meetings every week. That same data also brought satisfaction to them when they saw students succeeding. Ms. Skye summed it up: "It's rewarding to see how they're progressing. I mean, honestly--just their success."

The teachers used almost the exact same words to describe Tier 1. They said it consisted of "good quality classroom instruction." They progress monitor students who are below grade level as determined by the STAR reading test, a computerized reading skills program from Renaissance Learning. The teachers use DIBELS progress monitoring materials to assess the

students every week. Students in the first grade are monitored on nonsense word fluency the first half of the year and then are switched over to oral reading fluency in January. The upper grade levels are progress monitored only on oral reading fluency. Four of the teachers worked with below grade level students either one-on-one or in small groups. They read with them daily or had some extra practice work for them to complete. They did not consider this extra attention an intervention. Interventions were put in place if a student failed to make adequate progress and was moved to Tier 2.

### **Responses to Research Questions**

I used the themes from teachers' responses to the interview questions to answer research questions 1 and 3. Question 2 was answered utilizing the data from the SoCQ data.

#### **Research Question 1.** What are teachers' perceptions about RTI?

Teachers were asked what were the most challenging and the most successful aspects of RTI. The most challenging issues for all the teachers had to do with time, such as finding the time in the day to work with individual students, conducting the interventions or progress monitoring them. Another time issue that three of the teachers mentioned addressed the amount of time that it took before a child was placed into a special education program and its impact on the student. "I feel like RTI takes so long to get a child where they need to be even if you're doing [the interventions]. It's almost like they wasted an entire year before you get them on an IEP," bemoaned Ms. Skye.

When asked what material, training, support, etcetera would be beneficial, five of the six teacher participants responded that they would like additional training on the RTI tiers, especially on Tier 2 for students that do not progress and need more help. They expressed a desire to learn more interventions and to have a binder of interventions as a resource. It appeared that Dr. Ford was aware of this desire. She mentioned in her interview that she and the school psychologist wanted to create a binder that included procedures for RTI and a list of interventions.

The successful aspects of RTI mentioned by the teachers were varied. Seeing a visual representation of student growth by graphing progress monitoring points was a positive for five teachers. “It’s rewarding to see how they’re progressing,” said Ms. Skye. Not only did the teachers enjoy seeing growth, but they also discovered that showing the students their own graphs motivated those students to continue to improve. “I have one little kiddo that, I mean he’s like, ‘I want to see my graph, I want to see my graph!’ And he’s so pumped...I think it helps them get what we’re trying to do,” Ms. Summers said with pride. Ms. Durham’s students were equally enthusiastic. “They [the students] get really excited when they’re showing that upward growth.” Ms. Lopez also commented on the impact of showing students their graphs. “[The students] look at those graphs and they get competitive with it and they want to beat themselves each week.” Ms. Taylor was slightly less exuberant but still positive and said, “I kind of like to see the progress that the kids make.”

**Research Question 2:** How does CBAM explain the stages of concern teachers have about RTI?

The last chapter reported the individual results of the Survey of Concerns Questionnaire each teacher completed after their interviews. In addition to their individual results, a report for the entire cohort was generated. I converted the report into a table showing the ranking of each stage with “1” being the stage with the highest concerns and “7” the stage with the lowest level of concern. Stages 2 and 3 were tied for the second highest level of concern and I have denoted that by giving them both the rank of “3”. The rankings for the cohort are shown in Table 10.

Table 10

*Ranking of stages from most to least concern by cohort*

Stage 0 Unconcerned	Stage 1 Informational	Stage 2 Personal	Stage 3 Management	Stage 4 Consequence	Stage 5 Collaboration	Stage 6 Refocusing
1 (48%)	4 (34%)	3 (39%)	3 (39%)	7 (9%)	5 (31%)	6 (26%)

The highest levels of concern for the cohort were in Stages 0 through Stage 3. These stages showed a concern about how RTI affected the teachers themselves and the task of

management of time and resources for RTI. Stages 4, 5 and 6 were lower. Stage 4 concerns addressed the impact RTI has on students, Stage 5 concerns addressed coordinating with others, and Stage 6 concerns addressed altering or replacing the innovation respectfully. Stage 0 (Unconcerned) had the highest rank overall and, in the teachers' reports, the highest percentile for three of the six teachers, Ms. Taylor, Ms. Skye and Ms. Summers. However, this does not mean that the teachers are unconcerned about RTI. The following explanation was given in the interpretation guide for the SoCQ:

Stage 0 does not provide information whether the respondent is a user or nonuser; instead Stage 0 addresses the degree of interest in and engagement with the innovation in comparison to other tasks, activities, and efforts of the respondent. A low score on Stage 0 is an indication that the innovation is of high priority and central to the thinking and work of the respondent. The higher the Stage 0 score, the more the respondent is indicating that there are a number of other initiatives, task, and activities that are of concern to him or her. In other words, the innovation is not the only thing the respondent is concerned about. (p. 33)

The two other initiatives this school adopted could be the reason for the high Stage 0 scores. Two characteristics of these teachers stand out. They have taught between nine and seventeen years, and Ms. Skye and Ms. Taylor have five or six years of experience with RTI. Stage 0 concerns would be expected from those individuals fairly new to RTI, as was Ms. Summers. Reflecting on the interviews, I noted that Ms. Skye and Ms. Taylor were the only ones who mentioned how RTI was met with resistance at first. Ms. Skye said she just did as she was told and that the initial reaction of her team "wasn't pretty...it wasn't welcome." Ms. Taylor's comments were only slightly more positive: "Some people didn't like it and some did.... There's always going to be someone that grumbles or gripes but I think, for the most part, that it's good for kids." It could be that the negativity they felt or witnessed prevented them from moving forward toward fully embracing RTI.

Stages 2 (Personal) and 3 (Management) tied for the second ranking.. Five teachers had one of these two stages as their first or second highest percentile. I had expected a high score for Stage 3 since one of the themes that emerged was concern about time management by all the teachers. The high score for Stage 2 was not as evident. Stage 2 concerns focus on status, rewards and what effects the innovation might have on them personally. However, the comments about accountability in the form of having to meet weekly to report their data could support that finding. Five teachers reported that they enjoyed the Friday meetings and the opportunity to problem solve and learn from each other. While on the surface it appeared that the teachers wanted to help each other, indicating teachers at a Stage 5 (Collaboration) level of concern, this high Stage 2 percentile could mean that the teachers were concerned about getting their own questions and problems taken care of by the team. These Friday meetings may have been the forum for getting their problems heard and solved.


The lowest ranking was Stage 4 (Consequence). Five of the six teachers had Stage 4 as their lowest percentile. This suggests that the teachers had minimal concerns about the effects of RTI on their students. CBAM hypothesizes that the stages of concerns are somewhat developmental; individuals must resolve concerns in one stage before progressing to the next. These results would support that hypothesis. Ms. Lopez's Stage 4 percentile was her second highest; Stage 6 was her highest. It appeared she had moved through the lower stages and was focused on how to improve or change RTI to better impact her students. She felt very confident in the RTI training she received in another district and liked the program from the very beginning. "I know what needs to be done and how to do it," she declared. She also designed a spreadsheet that served as a log for interventions that was used by several teachers in the building. The other teachers were still focused on the mechanics of RTI.

Table 11 shows a breakout of each teacher's stages of concern in order from highest to lowest level of concern. Three of the six teachers highest three stages of concern are Stages 0

(Unconcerned) through Stage 3 (Management). Four of the teachers had Stage 4 (Consequence) as their lowest level of concern.

Table 11

*Ranking of stages from highest to lowest concern by teacher*

Participant	Stage with highest level of concern						Stage with lowest level of concern
Skye	0	3	1	2 (tied with 6)	6 (tied with 2)	5	4
Taylor	0	2	5	1	3	6	4
Durham	2	5	1	6	3	0	4
Lopez	6	4	3	5 (tied with 1)	1 (tied with 5)	2	0
Summers	0	3	1	5	2	4 (tied with 6)	6 (tied with 4)
Montgomery	3	0	2	5	6	1	4

**Research Question 3:** How do teachers’ perceptions influence their willingness to fully implement RTI?

I asked the teachers how RTI changed their teaching, and all of them claimed that it had impacted them in a positive manner. They enjoyed the one-on-one time with students and seeing students grow. Several mentioned that they check in on their struggling students more often and altered instruction to include the “missing” skills. Ms. Montgomery said RTI taught her “to be more differentiating, to add more differentiation, that my kids don’t all learn the same and they don’t all learn at the same speed.” Ms. Taylor said,

Response to Intervention has really been good for me. I kind of like to see the progress that the kids make.... Even if, say, they're not at grade level, it's something neat that you can show parents, "Yes, they are below but look how much progress they're making." Ms. Lopez thought RTI was beneficial to her because it helped keep her "on track, especially during the really busy times of the year." The fact that RTI required recorded data helped hold her accountable. She went so far as to say that even if RTI went away, she would continue with it; she likes making sure that she is "doing everything that [she] can to move [students] up." Ms. Summers also referred to this accountability component as "one of the good thing about RTI."

The SoCQ results showed that most of the teachers were focused on lower or early adoption concerns after several years of experience with RTI. This finding does not mean that these teachers are bad teachers. Concerns are neither good nor bad. The finding indicates the kind of assistance they need to move forward through the adoption process. Overall, the teachers were positive about RTI in the interviews. They need help with the time issue. Dr. Ford acknowledged this to a certain degree when she said she saw herself as "a filter" for the teachers, determining what was most important. Additional assistance may need to be given. At this time, the teachers seemed willing to continue with RTI but that may change if their struggles with these concerns are not resolved.

### **CBAM as the conceptual framework**

The manual for the Survey of Concerns questionnaire describes the Concerns-Based Adoption Model as a "conceptual framework that describes, explains, and predicts probable behaviors throughout the change process, and it can help educational leaders, coaches, and staff developers facilitate the process." (George, p. 5) The SoCQ helped identify the level or intensity of concern at each stage for the teachers I interviewed. I believe CBAM supported the interview data and showed that all but one teacher were in the early stages of adoption of RTI. They were more concerned with the management aspect of RTI for themselves than anything else.



The one teacher who differed was further along in the adoption of RTI than were the other five. She focused on how she could make RTI work better for her students rather than for herself. The Friday meetings included discussion of struggling students, some problem solving and a lot of reporting data. Much of the discussion focused on how to get students placed in special education. Five of the six teachers also needed more information about Tier 2 and mentioned the need for resources.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions and stages of concerns of elementary teachers regarding the Response to Intervention model (RTI). In this chapter I presented an analysis of the individual interviews and discussed the common themes that developed. Time management was a significant concern of all six teachers. Other themes or concern categories were: collaboration, working with students, student motivation, working with students, and satisfaction with work. This portion of the analysis addressed the first and third research questions. Five of the six teachers appeared to be in the early stages of adoption as shown by the data from the SoCQ. This result answered the second research question.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions and stages of concerns of elementary teachers regarding the Response to Intervention model (RTI). I used the Concerns-Based Adoption model to categorize those perceptions and concerns into three categories: concerns about self, the task, and the process. The SoCQ data from the teacher participants allowed me to view those concerns in a way that suggested where each participant was on the continuum of acceptance of RTI. This combination of interview data and SoCQ data can assist school leadership in providing support and professional development to ensure a successful adoption. The teachers' perceptions of RTI provided insight as to what was needed to increase acceptance of the innovation. Knowing the stage of adoption can give insight to administrators on what each teacher may need to continue progressing through the adoption of the innovation. The perceptions can be utilized to differentiate professional development.

#### **Conclusions**

The analysis of the data provided the following conclusions specific to the study of this school:

1. The teachers viewed RTI as beneficial for their students and themselves. All the teachers interviewed mentioned an increase in student motivation to become more fluent when reading. Ms. Lopez said even if RTI was not required, she would “continue to do some of the practices that are here, because I like checking those kids weekly, I like making sure that I’m writing that stuff down and that I’m holding myself accountable.” Ms. Montgomery reported, “[RTI] helps us have a better footing on where our kids are in general.”
2. Time management may be a major issue when implementing RTI. Time management was a concern of every teacher interviewed. They found it difficult to find the time to

work with individual students daily and monitor the fluency of their struggling students weekly. “I need 45 more minutes” Ms. Summers complained. Ms. Montgomery voiced a similar feeling, “You don’t have enough hours in the day.” “The biggest struggle is finding the extra time,” Ms. Taylor stated.

3. Teachers’ knowledge of the tiers and interventions are a key component of implementation. At this school, that knowledge needs to be expanded. Training on Tier 2 interventions and a resource manual are desired by a majority of the teachers interviewed. Ms. Durham wanted to know “What happens when we get to level 2 Tier 2 interventions?” Ms. Skye wanted to understand how to determine when a child moved from one tier to the next. “I think that is one of the most confusing things” she added. “I would love to go to an RTI training just on different types of interventions” was Ms. Montgomery’s request.
4. Administrator support is an important element of successful implementation. The teachers felt supported by their administrator. Ms. Montgomery said, “Our principal trusts us, she trusts what we are doing, she trusts our input and she likes hearing about it.” Ms. Durham appreciated the support that made her feel like “You’re not going to fall through the crack.”

### **Implications**

Education continues to be under scrutiny by lawmakers, parents and the educational community itself. It is inevitable that legislation, reforms, and research will impose innovations on the education system. Understanding the effect of these changes and how to facilitate these changes is crucial to successful implementation of an innovation. The concerns of teachers need to be identified and addressed to create in them the desire and ability to keep moving through the continuum of adoption and acceptance. Response to Intervention touches many different facets of a teacher’s job. It takes up time during the day, necessitates one-on-one interaction with students,

forces the sharing of data, and requires changes to teaching practices. Other innovations may not be so intrusive. For innovations such as RTI, understanding the concerns of teachers is paramount to its success.

Criticisms of stage theories should be acknowledged. One criticism is that stages may not be linear. This was suggested by McLeod (2007) when discussing Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, and Corr in regards to Kübler-Ross' Stages of Grief. Corr (1993) stated "Kübler-Ross seems to have agreed with this point since she argued for fluidity, give and take, the possibility of experiencing more than one of these reactions simultaneously, and an ability to jump around from one "stage" to another" (p. 73).

Another criticism of stage theories was presented by Hopkins (2011) in his article about Piaget's stages of cognitive development in infants and young children.. This criticism refers to the uniqueness of each individual and the difficulty in predicting human behavior. Hopkins wrote,

Stage theories of development have fallen out of favor in developmental research. Although stages are seen as useful heuristics for describing the trajectory of human behavior, several problems have pushed stage theories aside. One problem is that stages often fail to capture the complexities of intraindividual and interindividual variation in development.

### **Recommendations for Practice**

The findings of this study coupled with my own experience in education with RTI lead to several recommendations:

Teachers struggled to find time in their schedule for RTI. My first recommendations are to assist teachers who found it difficult to progress monitor their students once a week. Having extra personnel such as teacher aides or parent volunteers come into the classroom to assist for

short periods of time on a weekly basis might help. Perhaps rearranging the schedule for music, physical education, library, or other activities could give teachers time to occasionally work with students outside of classroom time.

Teachers also struggled with finding time to meet with the students several days during the week for extra help in reading. This could be arranged by having time set aside for centers during several days for small groups of students. Center work is typically work that can be done independent of the teacher and can reinforce or extend learning. The teacher would include herself as a center during that time either remediating or enriching the students that come to him or her as their skill level warrants. Discussing this concern with the teachers may allow them to come up with additional ideas and ways to manage their time.

The next recommendations fall under the category of providing ongoing professional development on RTI for teachers. First, access to a resource containing interventions and training on how to conduct those interventions are important to the successful implementation of RTI. Several of the teachers included in this study asked for the development of the intervention binder as a resource. This could be quickly compiled and should be a priority. Second, two of the teachers interviewed were unsure what happens once a student qualifies for Tier 2. Providing that information and assuring them that they will receive support and training necessary to assist students on Tier 2 would alleviate some of the anxiety of teachers and satisfy a desire they have to learn more about this aspect of RTI.

The grade level team meetings facilitate the RTI process. The opportunity to meet together as a grade level team was mentioned by all six of the teachers interviewed as being helpful. I recommend that teachers participate in the entire RTI meetings instead of leaving once their data have been reported. This gives teachers the opportunity to learn from the questions and discussions their teammates have with the principal and school psychologist. The teachers could also make suggestions and/or share what worked or did not work in their classrooms. This type of collaboration was viewed as positive by several of the teachers interviewed.

My last two recommendations are for principals. First, in regard to RTI, teachers may be at various stages of acceptance. In my experience, teachers accept help from fellow teachers more readily than from other sources. I would enlist those teachers who are further along the continuum of acceptance, like Ms. Lopez in this study, in coming up with additional recommendations and/or presenting some of the recommendations I suggested.

Second, this school has at least three innovations being introduced at the same time. Soon, the state will be adopting new education standards. If these new standards differ significantly from the ones currently in place, teachers will be required to adjust to another innovation. Dr. Ford mentioned that she thinks of herself “as the filter” and tries “not do every single thing that comes along.” With time being an issue for teachers, it would be beneficial to adopt only one innovation at a time. Regardless of how good an innovation might appear, too many at once could create a situation where teachers have to choose between innovations when deciding how to maximize their time and effort.

### **Recommendations for future research**

1. This study was small in scale involving only a percentage of teachers in one school. To gain more information about the concerns of the faculty regarding the adoption of an innovation, more teachers should be given the SoCQ. Having that information would allow professional development to be customized to each teacher’s needs. Besides professional development, there may be other aspects of the teaching day that could be modified such as scheduling to help teachers.
2. If the innovation is district wide, the scope of the research could be broadened to include all the schools in the district. Again, professional development could be customized from the results of study.

3. The length of a teacher's tenure might be a factor in how easily innovations are adopted. Research could be conducted to see if the number of years in the profession is related to the time required for full adoption by teachers.
4. While the authors of CBAM contend that the stages of concerns are common to nearly every innovation, the complexity of the innovation may affect the time frame of the adopters moving through those stages. It seems logical that the more complex the innovation, the greater the need for training and support and the longer it would take for teachers to become proficient. A study with two similar participant groups adopting two innovations of differing complexity might provide the data necessary to test that assumption.

### **Researcher Reflections**

I have been an administrator for nine years. There is much I need to know to do my job well, and it is difficult to keep up with it all. It is the same for teachers. There is always something new: new curriculum, new legislation, new technology, new evaluation, new testing requirements, new academic standards, and so forth. I understand how overwhelming the changes can be. This study has made me aware of how I need to really listen to my staff and hear their concerns. Those concerns tell me how I need to direct my efforts in helping teachers adapt and grow.

I also believe that there is a disconnection between the educational community and those creating the legislation impacting education. I question whether there is an attempt to learn how proposed legislation would affect teachers and their daily practices. Do lawmakers understand what their legislation will require of educators? Have they conducted an impact study? I appreciate the efforts of those within my own district attempting to rectify that problem by offering their expertise to any lawmaker willing to listen.

I do not think that there will ever be a time that there is not something new for educators to tackle. As the number of innovations undertaken by the school staff at any given time increases, it is inevitable the concerns of the teachers involved will increase and deepen. As noted earlier, many innovations come from outside the educational community; teachers, administrators, and even districts may have little say in how many innovations they take on at any given time.

### **Summary**

This chapter presented the conclusions, implications and recommendations of a research study designed to provide an understanding of teacher perceptions regarding Response to Intervention. Response to Intervention is designed to identify students at risk for failure and providing interventions to improving student performance. RTI is one of many innovations aimed at reforming education in the United States. These educational reforms and innovations will continue to place demands on educators. Imposing those demands without addressing the needs and concerns of educators can slow down or even stop the adoption of an innovation.



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## APPENDIX A

Statements from the SoCQ arranged according to stage.

Item #	Statement
Stage 0	
3	I am more concerned about another innovation.
12	I am not concerned about this innovation at this time.
21	I am preoccupied with things other than this innovation.
23	I am spending little time thinking about this innovation.
30	Currently, other priorities prevent me from focusing my attention on this innovation.
Stage 1	
6	I have a very limited knowledge of the innovation.
14	I would like to discuss the possibility of using the innovation.
15	I would like to know what resources are available if we decide to adopt this innovation.
26	I would like to know what the use of the innovation will require in the immediate future.
35	I would like to know how this innovation is better than what we have now.
Stage 2	
7	I would like to know the effect of the innovation on my professional status
13	I would like to know who will make the decisions in the new system.
17	I would like to know how my teaching or administration is supposed to change.
28	I would like to have more information on time and energy commitments required by this innovation.
33	I would like to know how my role will change when I am using the innovation.
Stage 3	
4	I am concerned about not having enough time to organize myself each day.
8	I am concerned about conflict between my interest and my responsibilities.
16	I am concerned about my inability to manage all the innovation requires

- 25 I am concerned about time spent working with nonacademic problems related to this innovation.
- 34 Coordination of tasks and people is taking too much of my time.

Stage 4

- 1 I am concerned about students' attitudes toward this innovation.
- 11 I am concerned about how the innovation affects students.
- 19 I am concerned about evaluating my impact on students.
- 24 I would like to excite my students about their part in this approach.
- 32 I would like to use feedback from students to change the program.

Stage 5

- 5 I would like to help other faculty in their use of the innovation.
- 10 I would like to develop working relationships with both our faculty and outside faculty using this innovation.
- 18 I would like to familiarize other departments or people with the progress of this new approach.
- 27 I would like to coordinate my effort with others to maximize the innovation's effects.
- 29 I would like to know what other faculty are doing in this area.

Stage 6

- 2 I now know of some other approaches that might work better.
- 9 I am concerned about revising my use of the innovation.
- 20 I would like to revise the innovation's instructional approach.
- 22 I would like to modify our use of the innovation based on the experiences of our students.
- 31 I would like to determine how to supplement, enhance, or replace the innovation.

---

*Note.* Adapted from *Measuring Implementation in Schools: The Stages of Concern Questionnaire* by A. A. George, G. E. Hall, and S. M. Stiegelbauer. 2006 p. 27.

## APPENDIX B

### Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date: Monday, September 15, 2014  
IRB Application No ED14128  
Proposal Title: Understanding Teachers' Perceptions of Response to Intervention Through the Concerns Based Adoption Model

Reviewed and Processed as: Exempt

**Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved Protocol Expires: 9/14/2017**

Principal Investigator(s):

Penny J. Dilg	Bernita Krumm
14709 Hollyhock Dr.	310 Willard
Oklahoma City, OK 73142	Stillwater, OK 74078

---

The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval. Protocol modifications requiring approval may include changes to the title, PI advisor, funding status or sponsor, subject population composition or size, recruitment, inclusion/exclusion criteria, research site, research procedures and consent/assent process or forms
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of the research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Dawnett Watkins 219 Cordell North (phone: 405-744-5700, dawnett.watkins@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,



Hugh Crethar, Chair  
Institutional Review Board

## APPENDIX C

### Letter to the Principal

May 1, 2014

Dear [REDACTED],

I have completed my Educational Leadership coursework at Oklahoma State University and am working on my dissertation. I will soon present my proposal. The topic I am researching is the concerns of teachers as they implement the Response to Intervention model. In order to prepare my dissertation proposal I am seeking your permission to contact and request interviews with six teachers from [REDACTED]. These interviews will take place in the spring of 2014. Each interview should last from thirty to sixty minutes. Please refer to the included summary sheet that will provide a general overview of the study. Should you have questions, feel free to contact me by phone or email. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Penny Dilg

[penny.dilg@edmondschools.net](mailto:penny.dilg@edmondschools.net)

Phone: (405) 921-9941



## APPENDIX D

### Informed Consent Document

**Project Title:** Response to Intervention Implementation

**Investigators:**

Penny J. Dilg, Bachelor of Science in Business Administration; Masters of Education; Doctoral Candidate

**Purpose:**

The purpose of this study is to understand the perceptions of teachers regarding implementing the Response to Intervention model. Teachers will be chosen from this school because the school has implemented the RtI model. Teachers will be asked during a recorded interview about the model, how they were informed of its purpose and structure and their opinions and concerns RtI.

**Procedures:**

Information will be collected through interviews with classroom teachers. Teachers will be asked to respond to questions during a one on one interview, which will be recorded on a digital voice recorder. The interview will last approximately one hour. It will take place at each interviewee's school site or public library and will be arranged at their convenience. Each teacher will be assigned a pseudonym to maintain confidentiality. The interviews will be transcribed and a copy will be given to the participants to ensure accuracy. Finding time for the interview may be a possible inconvenience. Nervousness about answering questions and being recorded are two possible sources of discomfort.

**Risks of Participation:**

There are no known risks associated with this project that are greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life.

**Benefits:**

There is no expected benefit to the participants.

**Confidentiality:**

Data will be reported by using assigned pseudonyms for the participants to ensure complete confidentiality. Research records will be stored securely and only the researcher and individuals responsible for research oversight will have access to the records. The data will be kept for two years.

**Compensation:**

A gift card in the amount of ten dollars to a local restaurant.

**Contacts:**

Questions regarding research and subject's rights may be directed to the investigator, Penny J. Dilg, (405) 921-9941, or Advisor, Dr. Bernita Krumm, 310 Willard Hall, Oklahoma State University, (405) 744-9445. Any questions about the rights of research volunteers may be directed to Dr. Shelia Kennison, IRB Chair, 219 Cordell North, Stillwater, OK 74078, (405) 744-3377 or irb@okstate.edu.

**Participant Rights:**

Your participation is voluntary and you may discontinue the interview at any time without reprisal or penalty.

**Signatures:**

I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy of this form has been given to me.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

I certify that I have personally explained this document before requesting that the participant sign it.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## APPENDIX E

### Interview Questions

Teacher Interview Questions:

Do you mind if I take notes?

1. Please tell me a little about your background in education.
  - a. Length of time as an educator
  - b. Length of time at this school
  - c. Educational level and/or specialty
  - d. Grade level taught
  - e. Number of years using RTI
2. What does RtI look like in your school? (Stage 1)
3. What has been the most challenging aspect of RTI? (Stage 2 or 4)
4. What has been the most successful aspect of RTI? (Stage 4 or 5)
5. How has the implementation of RtI affected the way you teach? (Stage 2, 3, or 5)
6. How has the implementation of RTI affected your students? (Stage 4)
7. How has the implementation of RTI affected the faculty? (Stage 3 or 5)
8. How would you describe your level of expertise with RTI? (Stage 2 or 6)
9. What materials, training, support, etc. would be beneficial to you?
10. What changes would you make to RTI? (Stage 6)
11. What is your opinion about RTI versus what you used in the past?
12. When you think about RTI what concerns do you have?
13. How long do you think RTI will be in use?
14. What would you like to tell me that I didn't ask you about?

## Principal Interview Questions

Do you mind if I take some notes?

1. Tell me about your background in education?
2. How long have you been at this school?
3. How many years have you been using RTI, Response to Intervention?
4. Tell me what RTI looks like here at your school.
5. How was RTI introduced to your staff?
6. How did RTI change your role as an administrator?
7. What has been the most challenging aspect of RTI?
8. What's been the most successful aspect of RTI?
9. How has the implementation of RTI affected the faculty?
10. How would you describe your faculty's level of expertise with RTI?
11. What changes would you make to RTI?
12. What is your opinion about RTI verses what you used in the past?
13. When you think about RTI what concerns do you have?
14. What other initiatives has, have your school implemented in the years, three years that you have been here?
15. Is there anything that you would like to tell me?

I appreciate your time.

## APPENDIX F

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.

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 revising 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

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 focusing my attention on 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

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:

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Thank you for your help!



VITA

Penny Jo Dilg

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: UNDERSTANDING TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION THROUGH THE CONCERNS-BASED ADOPTION MODEL

Major Field: School Administration

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in December 2015.

Completed the requirements for the Master of Education in Elementary Education at The University of Central Oklahoma, Edmond, OK in 1998.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Science in Business Administration at the University of Missouri, St. Louis, Missouri in 1982

Experience:

2012-2015 Principal, Russell Dougherty Elementary  
Edmond, Oklahoma

2011-2012 Principal, Orvis Risner Elementary  
Edmond, Oklahoma

2007-2011 Assistant Principal, Will Rogers Elementary  
Edmond, Oklahoma

1998-2007 Teacher, Angie Debo Elementary  
Edmond, Oklahoma

Professional Memberships:

Oklahoma Association of Elementary School Principals

National Association of Elementary School Principals

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development