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RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION: INITIATING A SCHOOL'S CHANGE

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP AND ACADEMIC CURRICULUM

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this to my wonderful family - to my husband, Mark, who gave me courage to continue even when the going was tough and to my sons, Alan and Kurt, and their families, who were always providing encouragement and who understood when homework and writing took center stage. They have stood beside me and encouraged me every step of the way – I could not have completed this without them. Thank you.

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ABSTRACT

Change in schools is ever present. This study looks at change in regard to the implementation of Response to Intervention. Response to Intervention is being implemented in schools around the country. With this implementation come many changes to a school – in the administration, the faculty, and the students. Very little research exists concerning the changes that school administrations and school faculty experience when implementing Response to Intervention. The administration and one faculty member from grades one through five as well as one grade level focus group and one special education teacher agreed to participate in this study.

Research was conducted during the year before implementation of RtI (phase one) and the year of full implementation of RtI (phase two). Data consisted of face-to-face interviews with the participants as well as journal entries, field note observations of the focus group PLC/RtI meetings, observations of interventions given to students, and various documents which included the district RtI manual. All interviews were transcribed and, using line-by-line coding, were analyzed for patterns. The patterns led to over-arching themes between the phases of the research and between the participants.

Findings show that change occurred from the inside, the inside-out, and the outside-in. A paradigm shift was experienced when these changes took place. Teachers began to consider each individual student's needs. Students needing extra support were identified earlier and provided with interventions. Teachers became responsible for all students in their classroom by providing instruction in the core curriculum, providing interventions, and providing grades. Implementation involved professional development and collaboration among colleagues. As with any change, concerns arose about time,

resources, support, meeting the needs of the students, and providing appropriate interventions.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

"For a reform to lead to meaningful change,
it needs to become a part of the fabric of a school,
not just another passing fad" (Datnow & Stringfield, 2000, p. 196).

Change in education systems can be a difficult journey. School reform requires more than passing legislation through either the federal or state government. McChesney and Hertling (2000) stated "…if some schools are not ready for reform, change will not happen" (p. 12). For change to occur, schools must understand the many challenges faced when working toward comprehensive school reform. All stakeholders must "buy-in" to the need for reform which can be difficult with differing beliefs and assumptions concerning education held by parents, school boards, administration, and faculty. Strong leadership skills from administration are needed. Principals should provide for their faculty adequate support, resources, professional development, and time for collaboration. Funds for resources and professional development are required; sustainability of the reform often ceases when funding runs out (Datnow, 2004; McChesney & Hertling, 2000; Wohlstetter, Datnow, & Park, 2008).

Theoretical Framework for Change

Fullan (2000) describes school change as occurring from the inside, the inside-out, and the outside in. This case study documents how one school implemented change from the inside, the inside-out, and the outside-in. From the inside, changes may occur by using professional learning communities (PLC's), focusing on student achievement through assessment, and changing instructional practices. Teachers use assessment data to improve student learning. The school must determine if they are "re-structuring" or "re-culturing" the system. "Re-structuring" the school is making

changes in organization; whereas, “re-culturing” the school brings changes in using assessment and pedagogy to further student learning with collaboration between the administration and the faculty (Fullan, 2000).

Changing from the inside-out occurs when the school realizes that re-culturing cannot occur unless help comes from outside sources (i.e. parents, technology, corporations, government policy, or the teaching profession). The faculty realizes they must be lifelong continuous learners. Professional development focuses on depth of knowledge rather than breadth of knowledge. Schools focus on the positive outcomes of working with parents, corporations, and legislators (Fullan, 2000).

Changing from the outside-in is recognizing that large scale reform requires decentralization of schools, local capacity building, a rigorous accountability system, and innovation. Schools must actively connect to what is occurring on the outside (Fullan, 2000). According to Fullan (2006), schools need lateral capacity building – the ability to learn from other schools. Collaboration needs to not only occur within a school but also across the schools in the district and across the districts within the state (Fullan, 2006).

According to Waldron and McLeskey (2010), comprehensive school reform is defined as changing the culture of a school through collaboration. Studies conducted by Irwin and Farr (2004) and Park and Datnow (2009) also focus on collaboration as a way to reform schools. Waldron and McLeskey feel that there should be discussion among all stakeholders that empowers teachers to make decisions on how to improve their classrooms and teach their students. Collaborative teams should be formed that work toward increasing student achievement. To increase school capacity, improvement in

professional development should occur. Professional development should be constructivist centered and cover topics of interest to the faculty. Schools must have strong leadership that can delegate responsibility, lead by example, set explicit goals, and provide resources and time for change. Faculty must be willing to work together instead of in isolation.

Park and Datnow's (2009) study showed that reform could be accomplished through (1) an ethos of learning and continuous improvement, (2) building capacity through modeling and learning, and (3) distributing decision making practices. Teachers should be given the power to make decisions in their classroom based on data. The data should not be used to place blame but to determine what needs to change to help all students learn. As stated earlier, it is important that administrators provide time, resources, professional development, flexibility, and empowerment to teachers for change to occur.

Finally, Irwin and Farr (2004) found that change occurred easier when teachers were given time to collaborate, discuss, give opinions, participate in professional development, and empowerment to make decisions that advanced learning. When that empowerment was taken away along with time to collaborate, change that was effective shifted back to a manage-based style of curriculum. More emphasis was placed on test scores, rote learning, memorization, and work sheets instead of authentic learning (Irwin & Farr, 2004).

Legislative Change

School change has been a focus of federal and state legislation beginning with PL 89-10, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), which

guaranteed the children of the U. S. a free, appropriate public education regardless of socio-economic status. PL 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (EAHCA) which was re-authorized in 1990 as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) provides children with disabilities the right to a free and appropriate education with highly qualified teachers using research-based instructional practices. This bill was re-authorized in 2004 as the Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Act (IDEIA).

An important part of IDEIA is how children are identified as having specific learning disabilities. The reauthorization gave states three criteria from which to choose to identify students (Zirkel & Krohn, 2008):

1. Severe discrepancy – States may prohibit the use of IQ discrepancy or may permit the use of IQ discrepancy as long as it is not the only means of identification.
2. Response to Intervention (RtI) – States must permit the use of response to a scientific, research-based intervention as well as a variety of forms of assessment.
3. "Other alternative research-based procedures" – States may permit other forms of assessment along with an RtI component.

These criteria went into effect October 12, 2006. Schools must use Response to Intervention and choose either IQ discrepancy or "other alternative research-based procedures" as the means to identify students with specific learning disabilities. IDEIA provides 15% of allocated special education funds to implement RtI. Although IDEIA

states schools must use RtI in identifying students with SLD, the legislation does not give guidelines on the implementation of RtI or provide a model of RtI.

Response to Intervention

IDEIA defines Response to Intervention as a child's response to scientific, research-based intervention delivered in tiers of increasing support (IDEIA, 2004). RtI is a means by which students are identified as needing early intervention to "catch up" to their peers; it is also used as one means of identification of specific learning disabilities (SLD) as defined in IDEIA. RtI typically follows a three tier model. Tier one consists of the general education population which receives scientifically research-based instruction from a highly qualified teacher. Student assessment occurs through a universal screener at the beginning of the year to identify struggling students. Based on the baseline benchmark of the screener, students not meeting the criteria are placed in tier two, where they receive interventions designed to meet specific needs. If the students do not respond to the interventions given, the students may be placed in tier three. Tier three may provide more intensive interventions or testing for SLD. Some schools identify special education services as tier three.

Response to Intervention brings change to schools from the inside-out and the outside-in. Changes occur due to legislation that comes from the outside-in such as IDEIA and No Child Left Behind. States may require schools to give assessments that determine promotion of students to the next grade level. Districts may require schools to meet certain guidelines regarding teacher effectiveness which is tied to student achievement. Outside-in changes are often seen as top-down change; the stakeholders are left out of decisions that directly affect them.

Schools sometimes require help from the inside-out to bring in needed funds and resources. Professional development may need to come from people outside of the school. Corporations may be able to provide funds and resources through grant money. Parents may be utilized to help in the classroom and throughout the school.

Implementing RtI also requires change in schools from the inside. Before RtI, teachers typically referred students for testing for SLD based on observation and/or work completed by the student. Changing to RtI requires teachers to provide documentation through assessment, interventions, and progress monitoring to determine if a student needs extra instruction to "catch up" to his/her peers. Teachers must provide intensive, targeted instruction designed to meet the student's particular needs. If students do not respond to the intervention, teachers must determine why.

Not only are changes taking place within the classroom, changes take place in the school as a whole. The school must work as one unit to use assessment and data to improve student learning. Whereas, before RtI, teachers may have worked in isolation, now the teachers must work together in professional learning communities both horizontally (grade-level) and vertically (across grade-level). PLC meetings provide time for teachers to collaborate and discuss student achievement. Professional development focuses more on depth of knowledge rather than breadth of knowledge. This type of change would be considered from the inside. This type of change sees the most success because it comes from the bottom up, from the stakeholders with the most to gain from the change. The school and the teachers see the importance of the change and choose to "re-culture" their school rather than being told from the outside to "re-structure" their school.

Statement of Problem

Research in the area of RtI has focused on several areas. Early identification of students (Gentry & Windfield, 2010; Speece, Schatschneider, Silverman, Case, Cooper, & Jacobs, 2011; VanDerHeyden, Witt, & Gilbertson, 2007) or improved student achievement after implementation (Chapman, Greenfield, & Rinaldi, 2010; Fletcher, Stuebing, Barth, Denton, Cirino, Francis, & Vaughn, 2011; Hagans, 2008; Mahdavi & Beebe-Frankenberger, 2009; Simmons, Coyne, Oi-man, McDonagh, Harn, & Kame'enui, 2008; Torgeson, 2009; VanDerHeyden, Snyder, Broussard, & Ramsdell, 2007) have been researched extensively. Research that exists concerning implementation of RtI within a school has focused on strategies of implementation (Lembke, Garman, Deno, & Stecker, 2010), collaboration (Mahdavi & Beebe-Frankenberger, 2009), sustainability (Santangelo, 2009) or an overview of statewide implementation (Palenchar & Boyer, 2008).

Researchers are beginning to see the importance of understanding how to effectively implement RtI in schools. Baca's (2011) dissertation focused on the implementation of RtI in the largest school district in the United States. Shepherd & Salembier (2010) followed the implementation of RtI at Riverside Elementary School. Their study gives five findings that influenced effective implementation and significant changes: (1) an increased understanding of assessments, instruction, and the organization of the tiers, (2) an understanding that RtI was for the general education classroom with increased collaboration between the general education teachers and the special education teachers, (3) the creation of teams that worked together to promote the school's RtI model, (4) the use of professional development that supports the faculty

and sustains the RtI model, and (5) the provision of time, resources, and professional development along with leadership from the principal. Rinaldi, Averill, and Stuart (2010/2011) conducted a three year study that focused on the teachers' perceptions of implementation. The findings of their study showed positive outcomes in increased collaboration among the faculty, improvement in instruction to all students, and less referrals to special education. The teachers' perceptions shifted from thinking about the students in their classrooms to being collectively responsible for all students' learning. White, Polly, and Audette (2012) followed the implementation of RtI in one elementary school in North Carolina. Several recommendations came from this study including building support between the general education and special education teachers, implementing at a manageable pace, using data to show student success, and developing a plan for families to participate in the RtI process. While these four studies highlight implementation of RtI, little research could be found during a review of the literature that focused specifically on changes that occurred during implementation of RtI in regard to the school as a whole, the administration, or the faculty. This case study seeks to add to the current literature concerning RtI implementation by focusing on the changes that occur in the school, with the faculty, and with the administration.

Purpose of Study

This case study looks at changes that occur in one elementary school in the first year of implementation of Response to Intervention. The school involved is one of the last schools in the district to implement RtI. RtI is being used in the school district as a means of identifying students not meeting grade level expectations and providing intensive targeted instruction for those students. With the implementation of RtI,

teachers must change the way they identify and work with students who are not on grade level. The purpose of this study is to focus on one school's perception of change from the inside, the inside-out, and the outside-in in regard to RtI, and how the faculty and administration work through this change. Through this study, a clearer picture should emerge that may help other schools faced with implementing Response to Intervention.

Research Questions

Four questions guided the research for this case study. School environments are constantly in a state of change but very little research focuses on how change affects the faculty and administration. The questions for this case study are:

1. How does one elementary school implement change in regard to Response to Intervention?
2. What types of change occur at the administrative level?
3. What types of change occur at the faculty level?
4. What kind of support does faculty receive in regard to resources, training, data collection and data analysis?

Contributions of Study

Response to Intervention is rapidly expanding across the country. However, little research has been done regarding how the change to RtI affects schools, the administrators, and the faculty. Educational change and ensuring that all students learn is a goal that concerns all stakeholders (parents, school boards, administrators, and faculty). How change occurs within schools should be documented for schools that are beginning to make changes so the changes can be made with integrity and fidelity.

Attitudes of teachers can be difficult to change; however, when change is needed, all stakeholders' voices need to be heard. This case study provides an avenue for the voices of teachers facing change in their classrooms and administrators facing change in their school. By listening to the administration and faculty, implementing a new way of thinking can be less stressful.

Implementing RtI brings with it a host of other areas that need to be addressed. This research will show administrators the importance of addressing the ongoing demands of professional development for their faculty. Resources, funds, and faculty turnover are areas that also need to be addressed. This study will show how the school implementing RtI meets these demands and the importance of sustaining RtI.

Finally, this research will help colleges of teacher education develop instruction that will inform future teachers about RtI. It is important that pre-service teacher candidates have a solid knowledge base of what RtI encompasses, how it is used, and how to reach each student in their classroom. Pre-service teachers need exposure to the assessments and interventions they will be required to use and, hopefully, have some experience in working with students who may be in need of tier two and tier three intervention services.

Definitions of Terms

Following are definitions to key terms found throughout this study. The researcher chose to organize the terms in relation to overarching themes.

Response to Intervention (RtI) – Response to Intervention is a framework states must use to identify students struggling with behavior, reading or math. Tiered interventions

with different intensities are conducted in the general classroom with or without the expertise of a special education teacher or reading specialist.

Approaches to Response to Intervention –problem solving, standard protocol, hybrid

Problem solving model – This approach to Response to Intervention involves a collaborative team of professionals which includes an administrator, school counselor, school psychologist, general education teachers and special education teachers. The problem solving model uses a broad array of assessments to guide the team in making decisions for an individual student.

Standard protocol model – The standard protocol model uses specific, scripted interventions regardless of the student's individual need.

Hybrid model – The hybrid model approach to Response to Intervention involves using both the problem solving approach (a collaborative team effort) and the standard protocol approach (specific, scripted interventions) in identifying and serving students at risk of reading failure.

Interventions – Interventions are strategies used by teachers to support struggling students. Interventions are individualized for each student and supplement the general curriculum allowing the student to find success at their own rate of learning.

Intervention Levels – Tier 1, Tier 2, Tier 3

Tier 1 – Tier 1 is the first tier of Response to Intervention which is given to all students in the general education classroom through the core curriculum. Approximately 80% of students in a classroom respond to the instructional strategies employed by a highly qualified teacher.

Tier 2 – The second tier of Response to Intervention is needed by approximately 10-15% of students in a given classroom. The second tier consists of scientifically research-based interventions administered by the general education classroom teacher with small groups of students three to four times a week. Students may move back to Tier 1 if gains are documented during the six to nine week intervention time. If no gain is detected, students may move to tier three once sufficient documentation has been accrued.

Tier 3 – The most intensive tier of intervention is needed by approximately 5% of students in a given classroom. This tier consists of scientifically research-based interventions administered one-on-one with the student. The interventions can be implemented by the general education teacher but often is provided by the special education teacher or reading specialist. Students may move back to tier two if adequate gains are made or undergo a comprehensive evaluation for a suspected learning

disability and possibly qualification for special education services.

Legislative Acts

IDEA – Passed in 1990, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act provides children with disabilities the right to a free and equal education in the least restrictive environment. This bill was reauthorized in 2004 as the Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Education Act (IDEIA).

NCLB – The No Child Left Behind legislation was signed by President George W. Bush in 2002. It is also known as PL 107-110. The legislation was intended to close the achievement gap by providing accountability, flexibility, and choice in an education environment.

General Terms and Definitions

Classroom Dynamics – Classroom dynamics are the interacting forces that take place in a classroom between the teacher and his/her students. Classroom dynamics are in a continuous state of change, growth, and activity.

IQ discrepancy – IQ discrepancy is considered to be two standard deviations between an individual's average or higher intelligence on a standardized test compared to a discrepancy of measured achievement in one or more academic areas.

Scientifically research-based – Scientifically research-based research has applied rigorous, systematic, and objective procedures resulting in valid and reliable data which has been accepted by a peer-reviewed journal or panel of experts.

Specific learning disabilities (SLD) – SLD is a disorder in which one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken

or written, manifests itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations. Disorders in this category include perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. (IDEA Section A.602.30)

Universal Screener – A universal screener is an assessment given to a student body that provides data to help guide instruction. Sometimes also referred to as curriculum based measurements, universal screeners can be teacher made or scientifically research-based. Most schools choose a specific universal screener that is used by every teacher in the district. The most commonly used universal screener is the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS, UOCTL, 2012) developed by Good and Kaminski from the University of Oregon.

Overview of Study

The first chapter has provided background to Response to Intervention and school change along with the purpose of the study and the research questions. Important terms are defined for the reader. Chapter Two provides a review of the literature surrounding RtI and elements within implementation. A brief history of legislation concerning school reform and its relation to RtI is also found in Chapter Two. Chapter Three gives the methodology used in this case study. Descriptions of the recruitment of participants as well as the two phases of the study are provided. Discussions of data analysis and data sources are provided. Ethical issues of the study are also discussed. Chapter Four provides contextual information necessary for the reader to understand the study as a whole. The elementary school and the participants are described in detail. Also, a comparison of RtI models from the available research,

the district, and the school is provided. The findings are presented in Chapter Five according to each research question and each phase of the study. Themes are presented with supporting comments from the participants. Lastly, Chapter Six discusses the findings, recommendations, and future implications for research in the area of RtI implementation.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

For many years, teachers have focused on how their class as a whole was doing; but with increased accountability, teachers must focus on each student's success. This is an enormous responsibility placed upon teacher's shoulders. Teachers must find time in their already hectic day to provide differentiated small group or one-on-one instruction.

Response to Intervention is a means that may be utilized by teachers to improve students' success. Response to Intervention is meant to keep our students from failing. For too long, schools have operated on the "wait-to-fail" model instead of seeking ways to keep students from reaching that point. Research clearly indicates that student achievement correlates to teacher effectiveness (Brophy, 1986). For a child to respond to interventions requires teachers who are skilled and responsive to each student's needs (Lose, 2007). Skilled and responsive teachers seek ways to enhance their knowledge through professional development and staying abreast of current research. However, when schools implement new approaches, such as RtI, teachers often approach this change with apprehension. At times, teachers fail to see the importance of change. It is felt that what has worked in the past will surely work in the present. Change is difficult; in order for educational systems to meet the demands of an ever-changing global world, teachers must be willing to accept and embrace change.

This review of literature is divided into three sections. The first section reviews the literature that discusses the Response to Intervention framework including the tiers of intervention, the approaches to RtI, and the use of a universal screener. The second section discusses learning theories in regard to Response to Intervention. The final

section discusses school change, the support and professional development needed within the school for change, and how Response to Intervention has been implemented in schools.

Response to Intervention Framework

The reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004) and the signing of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2002 (USDE, 2002) brought changes in how students were identified for special services. The previous IQ-achievement discrepancy model used to identify students with specific learning disabilities could be replaced with Response to Intervention (RtI) (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). A major premise behind RtI is that fewer children will be identified as needing special services if interventions are begun early in a child's schooling (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006; Howard, 2009; Lose, 2007). Following the suggestions of the National Reading Panel's report on children's literacy development, NCLB and RtI emphasized the need for research-based instruction in effective literacy instruction (Howard, 2009). Howard stated,

> The goal of any RtI framework is to broaden instructional alternatives, settings, and support systems for delivering instruction *before* special education services are considered. The intent of RtI is to ensure that students receive rich literacy experiences *every* year in *every* setting with *every* teacher, not merely in some years in some settings with some teachers (p. 15).

With this change, school districts were allocated up to 15% of special education funds for the implementation of early interventions (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). The interventions must be scientifically research-based (Howard, 2009); however, how RtI is implemented has been left up to each state, the districts within the state, and possibly each school site within the district.

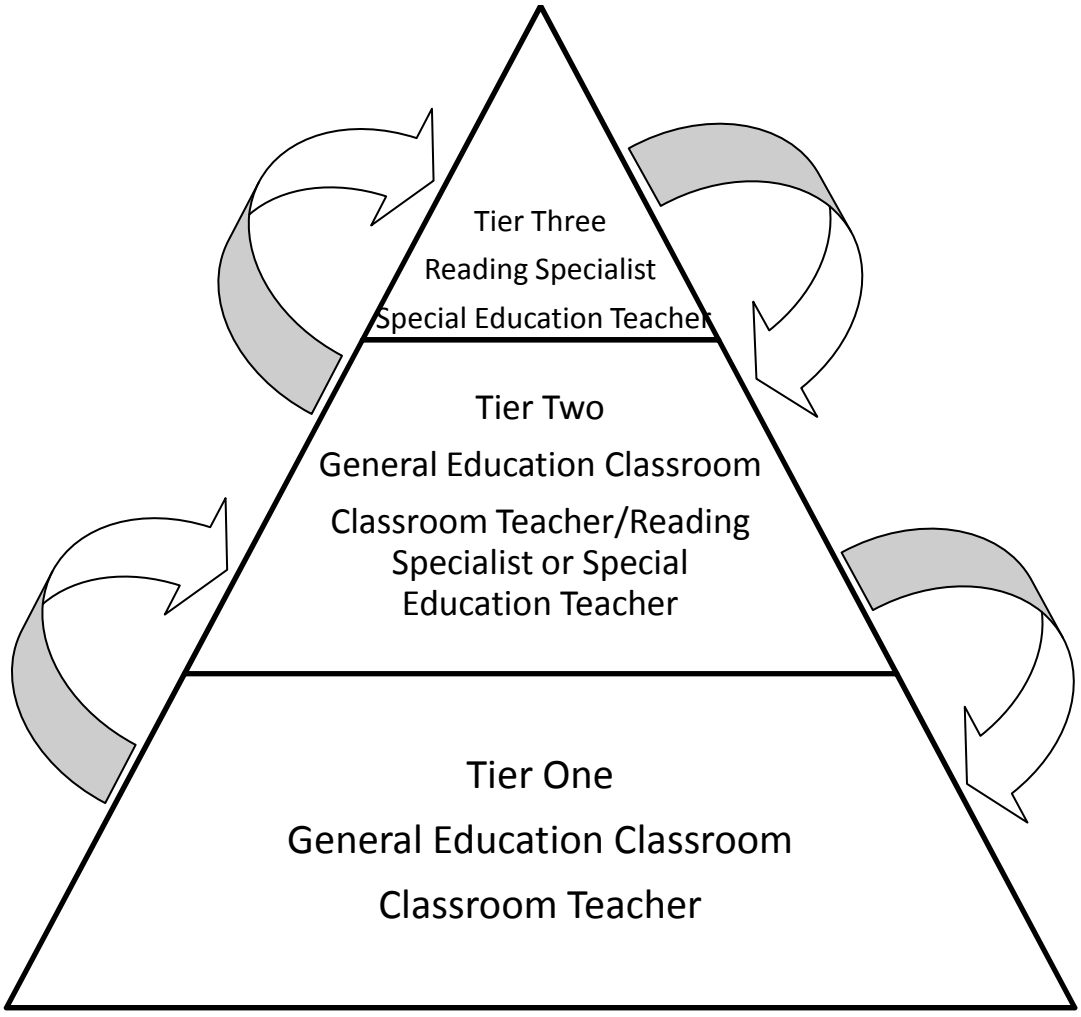
According to Lose (2007), "…research has shown that signs of a child's literacy learning difficulties usually surface after one year in school" (p. 276). Accordingly, many schools begin assessing their students' literacy knowledge during their first year of school, usually kindergarten. Benchmark assessments take place at the beginning, middle, and end of each year which allows teachers to identify students who may be in need of intervention. Any student who does not meet the criteria set by the district is targeted for intervention.

RtI Tiers

What does RtI look like? Fuchs and Fuchs (2007) stated that RtI can have from two to four tiers depending on the model the school district adopts. Most schools have adopted a three tier model. Approximately 80% of students from the general education classroom respond to tier one where differentiated instruction and flexible grouping takes place on a daily basis. Ten to fifteen percent of students in the general education classroom move to tier two where small groups of students (no more than five) are given daily intervention strategies by the classroom teacher. Progress monitoring takes place weekly to determine if the students are responding to the intervention. After six to nine weeks of intervention, with weekly gathering of data, a team of teachers, including special education teachers and administrators, determine if the students are making progress. If progress is evident, a student may move back into tier one with the rest of the class. However, if little progress is being made, the team must decide if the student will continue with tier two interventions or move to the third tier. The third tier is considered as a more intensive intervention time; the student is given one-to-one instruction in two sessions during the school day given by either the classroom teacher

or in collaboration with a special education teacher. Again, progress monitoring occurs during the duration (six to nine weeks) and afterwards the team meets again to determine the next step. The student may move back to tier two or, if the student is not showing any progress, testing begins to identify the problem area (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2007; Howard, 2009).

Figure 1 – Three-tiered Response to Intervention Model



RtI Decision Making Approaches

Once a decision has been made regarding the number of tiers that will be in the model, a decision regarding the approach to RtI must be made. Three different approaches are found in the literature regarding RtI: (1) standard treatment protocol, (2) problem solving, and (3) hybrid.

Most researchers prefer the standard treatment protocol approach (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). This approach is designed to promote acquisition of new skills through the use of small group tutoring provided by either the teacher or a trained paraprofessional. Sessions occur three to four times per week for 10-20 weeks. The interventions used during the tutoring sessions are highly prescriptive and scripted "…that benefits most students" (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2007, p. 16). The session's intentions are to ensure mastery on the skills in which the student is not proficient (Crockett & Gillespie, 2007; Fuchs & Deschler, 2007; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2007). The standard treatment protocol approach is being used in Oregon and Pennsylvania. Oregon requires tier two to be small groups for 30 minutes per day and utilizes a specific checklist for teachers to complete to ensure fidelity. Pennsylvania leaves these decisions up to the specialists in each school (Berkeley, Bender, Peaster & Saunders, 2009).

The problem solving approach uses tailored interventions to meet each student's needs (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2007). Most practitioners prefer this approach over the standard protocol because of the individualized approach to assessment and intervention. However, a weakness of this approach is the assumption that teachers have the expertise to conduct varied assessments and determine the appropriate intervention (Fuchs &

Fuchs, 2006). The problem solving approach is intended to increase student performance on skills already acquired. While some schools use a collaborative team approach which follows a step-by-step process in individualizing interventions for each student, other schools have given this responsibility to the school psychologist to meet with and design tailored interventions for students (Crockett & Gillespie, 2007; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2007). Berkely, et al., (2009), in their review of state implementations, found that Iowa uses a four step problem solving approach, Nebraska uses a five step approach, and North Carolina uses a seven step approach. Fuchs and Deshler (2007) felt the problem solving approach is best used with behavior problems.

Berkely, et al., (2009) and Fuchs and Fuchs (2007) recommend that schools use what they term as the hybrid approach to Response to Intervention. The hybrid approach combines the standard treatment protocol with the problem solving approach. The standard treatment protocol would be used for academic problems while the problem solving approach would be used for behavioral issues. Berkely, et al., found that of the 15 states adopting a Response to Intervention model, 10 are using the hybrid approach. Some states allow individual schools to determine which approach is used which results in different models being used within the same district. Other states blend both approaches resulting in tier two interventions being standard treatment protocol and tier three being individualized interventions.

The Oklahoma State Department of Education provides a Response to Intervention (RtI) Guidance Document (July 2010) that is "designed to assist school districts in understanding RtI, its origins in educational practice and research, its usefulness and value, and how it can be implemented" (p. 5). The document provides

guidelines for components of RtI but does not give specific procedures for implementation; implementation is determined by each school district within the state. The Oklahoma State Department of Education recommends the use of a three-tier framework which aligns with the model found in most of the literature. The approach to RtI is also determined by each school district; however, most schools in Oklahoma use the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS) model for behavior issues that may affect academic growth and the collaborative team approach to disseminate data and make decisions.

RtI and Universal Screeners

Another key component of RtI is the use of a universal screener. According to Fuchs, Fuchs, and Vaughn (2008), the use of a universal screener in RtI has both a purpose and a goal. The purpose is to select a subset of students who may be considered at risk of reading failure. The goal is to provide intervention services as early as possible to the identified subset of students. Four key considerations should be addressed by school districts: (1) choosing a universal screener, (2) establishing a screening schedule, (3) identifying who will conduct the universal screener, and (4) interpreting the results (Howard, 2009).

Howard (2009) stated, "Universal screening is a school wide overview of student needs related to grade level and district goals. Screening is not detailed enough to tell us *what* to teach…but suggest who may need additional support… (It) is a snapshot…" (p. 95, 96). Universal screeners are not intended to be a comprehensive test of diagnosis for reading disabilities. "Assessment must support rather than supplant instruction…" (Howard, 2009, p. 100). Dorn and Henderson (2010) suggest using a

literacy diagnostic assessment after students have been identified to determine the student's strengths and weaknesses.

When districts and schools choose a universal screener, Dorn and Henderson (2010) suggest asking five questions: (1) Does it accurately classify at-risk students? (2) Is it a good predictor of later reading outcomes? (3) Is it sensitive to different levels of reading development? (4) Can it be administered quickly, efficiently and economically? (5) Does it enable at-risk students to receive timely and effective intervention? Types of assessments used as universal screeners include the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screener (PALS), informal reading inventories, Basic Early Assessment of Reading (BEAR), Literacy First, and Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Vaughn, 2008; Howard, 2009; Paris, 2010; Scanlon and Anderson, 2010; UOCTL, 2012). Most teachers use the screener provided by the district with DIBELS being the most widely used. The screener should vary by grade level and focus on valued literacy performances (Howard, 2009).

Once chosen, a schedule should be established for the screenings. Usually the first screening is done two to three weeks after the school year has begun. This allows for teachers and students to establish a relationship with each other and for the teacher to conduct a variety of informal assessments. A mid-year screening should occur one to two weeks after the holiday break. An end of the year screening should take place two to three weeks before the end of the school year (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Vaughn, 2008; Howard, 2009).

Districts and schools must also determine the cut score to be used in identifying at-risk students. Scanlon and Anderson (2010) suggest using scores below the 25th- 30th

percentile; however, Fuchs, Fuchs, and Vaughn (2008) suggest using both the universal screener and progress monitoring with a cut score that falls below the 50th percentile which would "cast a wide net" (p. 31) so as not to miss any student who may have a severe reading problem.

Most researchers agree that the teacher should be the person to give the assessment. After all, it is the teacher who has the most knowledge about the students in his/her classroom. The teacher has spent the first three weeks getting to know the students habits and strategies used during reading. Unfortunately, in many schools, the teacher is left out of the assessment; support staff or paraprofessionals are used to conduct the assessment while the teacher continues to provide instruction (Howard, 2009).

The final key consideration suggested is to determine how the data collected from the assessment will be interpreted. Equal value should be placed on both the qualitative and quantitative data collected. It is not enough to record scores from an oral reading fluency progress monitoring on a graph. Other factors may come into play such as problems at home, lack of sleep, illness, difficulty of the reading passage, or disinterest in the given reading passage. Often speed of reading is over emphasized as well as the decoding of nonsense words, especially in the lower grade levels. This may lead to two problems: (1) an over emphasis on skills that are easily measurable, and (2) a misinterpretation of data (Howard, 2009; Paris, 2010). While it is generally agreed upon that fluency is a bridge to comprehension, the definition of fluency should encompass more than speed and include phrasing, intonation, expression, and inflection.

Learning Theories and RtI

Response to Intervention is grounded in the theory of behaviorism. Behaviorism in learning focuses on an observable change in behavior. More specifically, RtI relates to Skinner's operant conditioning theory and Thorndike's law of readiness. Thorndike's law of readiness describes the steps needed to learn. A student begins with an easy task; once that is accomplished, a more difficult task is assigned. This process continues until the desired outcome is reached. Skinner's theory, in relation to learning, is considered programmed instruction. In other words, instruction is broken down into small steps. Skinner felt that extrinsic motivation, such as a reward system, may be employed to keep the student interested in achieving the desired outcome. As with Thorndike's law of readiness, Skinner's operant conditioning states that as each step is mastered and rewarded, a more difficult step follows until the student reaches the desired outcome (Tracy & Morrow, 2006).

Response to Intervention relates to behaviorism in that interventions are designed and implemented in stages. Instruction becomes systematic in that one skill must be accomplished before another skill is introduced. In RtI, each student is given assessments in which benchmarks have been set to identify whether the student is on, above, or below grade level. When students do not meet the benchmark set, tier two intervention begins. The skill deficit of the student determines which intervention should be used. Research indicates that phonemic awareness and knowledge of the alphabet are important pre-cursors to beginning reading (Ehri & McCormick, 2004). Therefore, in relation to Skinner's theory, if a student's kindergarten assessments indicate below grade level for both phonemic awareness and alphabetic knowledge, the

teacher would begin the intervention phase with phonemic awareness activities. Weekly progress monitoring of the student's activities with phonemic awareness interventions will help the teacher determine when to move on to interventions designed for alphabetic knowledge. Depending on the program of intervention adopted by the school, these interventions may consist of scripted, systematic, programmed instruction. To keep students motivated to succeed, a reward system may be put in place. For example, when a student masters a particular skill through intervention, they receive extra time on the computer.

In contrast to behaviorism is the theory of constructionism. Crotty (1998) stated that constructionism is knowledge "…constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world" (p. 42). Knowledge is constructed through interactions between people and the world in which they live. This implies that there is a social aspect to the gaining of knowledge. In the classroom, students construct knowledge by interacting with their teacher. "We do not create meaning. We construct meaning" (Crotty, 1998, p. 43-44). Vygotsky (1986) believed that learning occurs when the learner interacts with a knowledgeable other person, i.e. adult or peer. Learning occurs when the learner is in their zone of proximal development (Crotty, 1998; Davis, 2004; Vygotsky, 1986). The task is not too easy or too difficult. For concepts to be transferred to student's knowledge, tasks need to be structured so that the learner experiences success. The teacher and the students, through interaction, construct knowledge. Constructing "…meaning is always an 'ongoing accomplishment'" (Crotty, 1998, p. 48) in the classroom.

Response to Intervention relates to constructionism in that teachers need to understand the importance of determining each student's zone of proximal development in order to design interventions that are not too easy or too difficult. Interventions need to be at the student's instructional level in order for mastery to occur. However, mastery will be difficult for the student if the teacher and student do not work together. The teacher becomes the guide for the student, allowing the student to make mistakes while also providing the encouragement needed for mastery. For Response to Intervention to work, and for a change to occur in the student's learning, the teacher must be confident in designing instruction and giving adequate support to guide students to the next level of mastery.

School Change

Studies on school change and implementing RtI in school settings were used for the third section of this review of literature. Databases searched were ERIC, PsychINFO, Academic Search Complete, Dissertation Abstracts, Education Research Complete, and Professional Development Collection. Citations from articles guided the search for related articles and further research findings. Key terms used for locating items on school change were *school change, literacy,* and *response to intervention.* Key terms used for locating items on implementation of Response to Intervention were *response to intervention, literacy,* and *implementation.* To narrow the result, abstracts were read to determine if the article described implementation of Response to Intervention in elementary schools, school change, contrasting views, and teacher attitudes.

Criteria for Inclusion

While there are many components to RtI, the researcher chose to focus on the implementation of RtI specifically in the area of school change and literacy. The researcher discovered there is little empirical research in relation to the implementation of RtI in regard to school change. The majority of the research focuses on student achievement after implementation or the rate of referral rates for special education. The resulting pool of articles met the following criteria:

1. *RTI implementation resulted in lower referral of students to special education.* Teachers often sense when a student needs more help than they can possibly give. In the past, students would be referred to testing for special education before any interventions may have taken place resulting in high numbers of students being identified as having specific learning disabilities. Implementing RtI has shown the number of referrals to decrease.
2. *School change and RtI targeted literacy.* Although RtI is used for behavior issues and low math abilities, for the purpose of this review, literacy was targeted. Approximately 80% of students referred for special education are referred due to reading disabilities (Lyon, 1995 as cited in Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006).
3. *Professional development and support from administrators played a role in implementation.* When change occurs, it is of utmost importance that the teachers receive adequate professional development. Faculty must receive

appropriate and adequate resources. Support from the principal is necessary for faculty to feel that change is important and worth the effort.

4. *Focus on implementation in elementary schools.* Because of the focus on literacy for this review, implementation in elementary schools became an important criterion. Instruction in reading often begins in kindergarten; therefore, it is important to begin screening for possible difficulties in the beginning stages of reading instruction.
5. *Focus on English speaking students.* The researcher recognized that referrals for special education often target ELL students. Response to Intervention is an important concept for ELL students; however, it is felt that this topic could be covered in another review that focuses on RtI for ELL students.

Implementing Response to Intervention

IQ Discrepancy versus Response to Intervention

Since 1975, when PL 94-142 was passed, schools have used IQ discrepancy as the sole means of identifying students with specific learning disabilities. In order to qualify, students generally demonstrated an average or higher intelligence on a standardized test compared to a discrepancy of measured achievement in one or more academic areas (Richards, Pavir, Golez, Canges & Murphy, 2007). The discrepancy was usually two standard deviations. With the reauthorization of IDEIA in 2004, IQ discrepancy could no longer be used as the only indicator of specific learning disability; schools must use Response to Intervention in conjunction with IQ discrepancy or some other form of assessment (Zirkel & Krohn, 2008) to identify students who may have a

specific learning disability. This change in identifying students brought a paradigm shift to schools. Schools could no longer wait until an apparent IQ discrepancy could be determined through testing. Schools were required to identify and intervene early in a student's academic career through a Response to Intervention model. As of 2009, 37 states used both RtI and severe discrepancy, two states (Delaware and Georgia) used only RtI, while ten states continue to use discrepancy only to identify students with specific learning disability (Berkeley, et al., 2009).

The use of IQ discrepancy has often been referred to as the "wait-to-fail" model because struggling learners were not identified early enough for intervention to take place (Reynolds & Shaywitz, 2009; Richards, et al., 2007). Many researchers claim that RtI has been needed to keep students from being given a label that will stay with them throughout their school career (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2007; Howard, 2009; Lembke, Garman, Deno & Stecker, 2010; Torgeson, 2009). However, Reynolds and Shaywitz (2009) feel that RtI is just another fad, much like whole language. They feel that RtI should not be used to identify specific learning disabilities because RtI models vary from state to state, district to district, and possibly from school to school. The interventions being used in classrooms may be unreliable, invalid, and inconsistent due to lack of fidelity by the teachers. Furthermore, Reynolds and Shaywitz assert that RtI does not tell teachers what to do if students do not respond to the intervention given. "For RtI to be effective, the interventions need to be tailored to the needs of the individual child" (p. 140). Reynolds and Shaywitz believe that RtI will become "watch-them-fail" instead of "wait-to-fail".

Each state determines what type of model is used, how the model will be developed, how the model is implemented, and what type of professional development takes place. Most states that have implemented RtI, or are in the implementation phase, have chosen a three tier model; how the model functions is also determined by each state. Because RtI is interpreted and implemented differently from state to state, Berkeley, et al. (2009) feel that it is imperative that communication take place between all stakeholders involved (parents, administrators, faculty, and specialists).

As RtI is implemented in schools, teachers find themselves having to change the way they think about making referrals. Change is difficult in any given situation; but, when change occurs in schools, many people are affected. A discussion of change within schools follows.

Effects of School Change

When change occurs in schools, it not only affects the school, it affects the systems within the school and the system the school is a part of. For change to occur, change must fit within the culture of the school and take place at many levels (Kratochwill, Volpiansky, Clements & Ball, 2007; Stollar, Poth, Curtis & Cohen, 2006). Within schools, administrators, faculty, and specialists realize that change needs to take place but are often not sure of the best way to implement the change (VanDerHeyden & Jimerson, 2005).

Noell and Gansle (2009) stated, "Systems change inevitably requires creating behavioral change in others" (p. 79). According to Noell and Gansle, there are four relevant features of systems change:

1. Assessment of the implementation should occur by an outside body.

2. Data should be discussed with each teacher.
3. "Problem-solving action" should take place if change is implemented poorly.
4. Consequences should take place whether the implementation is done poorly or strongly.

For administrators and teachers to undergo change, they must "buy-in" to the change that is to take place. According to Putman, Smith, and Cassady (2009), "…teachers need to *want* to expand their knowledge base and improve their methods as well as be willing to put into practice the steps necessary to do so" (p. 210). When systems change is deemed necessary, those implementing the change need to weigh the theoretical, ethical, and pragmatic implications (Putman, Smith & Cassady, 2009). All interested stakeholders need to be a part of the change that is taking place (Mahdavi & Beebe-Frankenberger, 2009). Fullan (as cited in Sansoti & Noltemeyer, 2008) suggests educational change should come in three phases:

1. All parties must agree there needs to be a change; if the change comes from the top, it will most likely fail.
2. Change consists of four sub-factors -
    a. The district must demonstrate support for the change and decide upon the degree the staff will be involved in the implementation of the change.
    b. The school board is instrumental in hiring or firing those responsible for making the change. Parents must be a part of the change process.

c. Principals must lead and initiate the change. They must provide support and resources needed for the change and be a "cheerleader" for all involved.

d. Teachers' prior experiences in change can set a tone for the change that will take place. Teachers need adequate support and professional development.

3. Sustainability of the change - Most schools never get to this phase due to lack of support, fidelity of implementation, lack of funds and lack of resources.

Noell and Gansle (2009) feel that for systemic change to succeed and be beneficial, the change must occur longer than one semester or even one year. Sansoti and Noltemeyer (2008) stated "…the fundamental ingredients necessary for educational change are improving relationships and increasing the skill set of all involved…" (p. 56).

Implementing RtI in schools is "…a paradigm shift in both form of instruction and educational decision making…" (p. 58) and it is a "…transformation in the way that systems, schools, and professionals operate…" (Sansoti & Noltemeyer, 2008, p. 56). For this paradigm shift to take place requires time, energy, patience, and persistence (Bianco, 2010; Mahdavi & Beebe-Frankenberger, 2009; Richards, et al, 2007). To understand how schools implement RtI, a review of the current literature follows.

Implementing RtI

According to VanDerHeyden and Jimerson (2005), "…children are more likely to receive help in the general classroom environment much more quickly under RtI models" (p. 22). An advantage of RtI is the earlier identification of students needing

help and supplying those students with adequate and appropriate interventions (Lembke, et al., 2010; Torgeson, 2009). As mentioned earlier, administrators and faculty need to believe that changing to an RtI model is important for the students (Mahdavi & Beebe-Frankenberger, 2009; Putman, Smith, & Cassady, 2009); a shift from thinking "How is my class doing?" to " How is each student doing?" must occur with every faculty member (Bianco, 2010; Richards, et al., 2007). "Intentional teachers continue to adapt and recognize the need to continually differentiate instruction to meet the students at their readiness level" (Putman, Smith & Cassady, 2009, p. 213). RtI is seen as an effective way to meet the instructional needs of all students and as a method for identifying specific learning disabilities (Lembke, et al., 2010).

Schools should implement Response to Intervention in phases (Burns & Ysseldyke, 2005; Lembke, et al., 2010; Palenchar & Boyer, 2008; Shepherd & Salembier, 2010). All involved stakeholders should understand the key elements of RtI before beginning implementation. Response to Intervention is for the general education classroom; it is not a special education initiative (Shepherd & Salembier, 2010). Specific skills are needed by those involved which "…may include assessing for intervention, interpreting assessments, matching interventions to student needs, presenting intervention outcomes to others, and engaging in the problem-solving process" (Sansoti & Noltemeyer, 2008, p. 62). Extensive training and professional development should take place, evidence based assessments need to be chosen, multi-disciplinary problem-solving teams should be in place, who is giving what interventions needs to be decided, and how the data will be used in tier placement, should take place

before implementation (Burns & Ysseldyke, 2005; Glover & DiPerna, 2007; Lembke, et al. 2010; Shepherd & Salembier, 2010).

Playing a key role in all of the aforementioned areas is the administrators at the school (Shepherd & Salembier, 2010). Burns and Ysseldyke (2005) stated, "The need for leadership is not restricted to initial implementation of RtI, but is *perhaps more important* (emphasis added) for sustaining RtI practices" (p. 14). Administrators play an important role in providing support for their faculty, encouraging a collegial atmosphere, and keeping communication lines open (Kratochwill, et al., 2007; Sansoti & Noltemeyer, 2008). Mahdavi and Beebe-Frankenberger (2009) feel that professional development for administrators is just as important as it is for the faculty; administrators must understand the underpinnings of RtI and be able to help their faculty through the process of implementation. Administrators should also provide the time necessary for grade level team meetings, for meetings with specialists (reading coaches, counselors, school psychologists, and special education teachers), and the funds and resources necessary for evidence-based interventions (Murawski & Hughes, 2009; Sansoti & Noltemeyer, 2008; Shepherd & Salembier, 2010; Stuart & Rinaldi, 2009).

Professional development should play a major role in implementing RtI. According to Kratochwill, et al. (2007), "Strong professional development is needed for effective program implementation and program implementation integrity" (p. 622). Professional development should center on the faculty and sustaining the model chosen by the school (Shepherd & Salembier, 2010). Professional development should give the faculty a strong knowledge base, training in conducting assessments, training related to progress monitoring, how to effectively use interventions, how to sustain services, and

how to maintain fidelity (Kratochwill, et al., 2007; Richards, et al., 2007; Sansoti & Noltemeyer, 2008; Shepherd & Salembier, 2010). When there is staff turnover and first year teachers hired, administrators should plan how the new employees will receive adequate professional development in the school's RtI model (Kratochwill, et al., 2007; Noell & Gansle, 2009).

Another key element noted in the literature is the importance of collaboration in effectively implementing Response to Intervention. According to Richards, et al. (2007), Response to Intervention moves special education teachers "from the frontline to the intervention of last resort" (p. 60). As noted before, Response to Intervention is not a special education initiative; it is meant to be used in the general education classroom. However, for Response to Intervention to work, there must be a collaborative effort between the general education classroom teacher and the special education teacher (Mahdavi & Beebe-Frankenberger, 2009; Murawski & Hughes, 2009; Shepherd & Salembier, 2010). The general education classroom teacher must also collaborate with reading coaches/specialists, speech-language pathologists, and counselors/school psychologists (Richards, et al., 2007). Stuart and Rinaldi (2009) discussed one schools use of the Collaborative Instructional Planning and Intervention framework to help accomplish collaboration. This framework consisted of three areas: instructional planning, execution, and feedback. Collaborative planning took place within grade level team meetings with specialists. During the meetings, the team identified the academic area the student needed intervention in by looking at screening measurements and progress monitoring. After the student received an intervention for

multiple weeks, the team met again to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention and decide what to do next to help the student (Stuart & Rinaldi, 2009).

A major concern of implementing RtI is fidelity of implementation. Fidelity of implementation refers to teachers using the intervention in the manner the intervention was intended to be used and that data are being used from assessments to drive instruction (Bianco, 2010; Richards, et al., 2007). It is imperative that fidelity and integrity be maintained during implementation (Glove & DiPerna, 2007). Faculty must be given the skills necessary to ensure fidelity (Sansoti & Noltemeyer, 2008). Bianco (2010) details the importance of fidelity of implementation in her research conducted in a New Jersey school. The school was in their fourth year of district-wide implementation of RtI. The school chose to use "three supports to improve fidelity of implementation" (Bianco, 2010, p. 7): (1) forms to track instruction and for data collection, (2) reading coaches, and (3) video clips of instruction. For each student identified in need of RtI, a form was kept detailing the targeted skill, the name of the intervention, the frequency of the intervention, the duration of the intervention, and the student's response to the intervention. Teachers were also asked to report if there was any deviation from the intervention protocol. Reading coaches reviewed the form of each student every week, making note if a student was not responding, if the teacher was not providing the required intervention, or if the teacher was not recording the information. The reading coach could offer assistance to the teacher by demonstrating interventions, or work with the teacher to ensure the intervention was delivered in a timely manner. Video clips of teachers giving interventions were made; the clips considered particularly instructive were used throughout the district for professional

development. As previously described, one school used the Collaborative Instructional Planning and Intervention framework to ensure fidelity (Stuart & Rinaldi, 2007). If RtI is not implemented with fidelity, it will not achieve what it was meant to achieve – provide intervention to keep students from being labeled and from falling further and further behind.

Response to Intervention that has been effectively implemented has shown success. In Florida, RtI was implemented in Reading First Schools. Districts noticed a dramatic decrease in referrals for special education. Two possible reasons for this decrease are (1) RtI actually reduced the percentage of students with serious reading problems and (2) teachers and schools became more confident in meeting the needs of students in general education classrooms (Torgeson, 2009). RtI helps students become more aware of their performance; therefore, they are vested in their learning. RtI ensures that parents receive more information regarding the progress their child is making (Lembke, et al., 2010).

Although RtI has shown to be effective, several cautions are warranted. Typically, assessment begins either during kindergarten or first grade. Hagans-Murillo (2005) felt that assessment should begin earlier – possibly at the pre-kindergarten level. However, because many early childhood professionals feel that assessment at this age is not developmentally appropriate, valid and reliable assessments have not been developed. Head Start programs typically do not stress the importance of language acquisition or developing pre-reading skills (Hagans-Murillo, 2005). Teachers for this age level need a higher level of education in order to adequately provide the instruction

needed, give assessments and interventions, and recognize when a student may need more than what the general education classroom can provide.

Torgeson (2009) also cautions that the referral rate between upper and lower elementary grades be monitored. RtI has shown its effectiveness in lower elementary grades; but, when students move to upper elementary grades and beyond, RtI implementation has been slow. Torgeson also stated,

> If schools spend significant amounts of time experimenting with interventions that are not sufficiently powerful before they refer students for potentially more powerful special education services, then the RtI instructional model could actually *delay* the identification of students for needed instructional services (p. 40).

It is also important to remember that RtI is not a one-size-fits-all model. What works for one school may not work for another. Schools implementing RtI need to remain flexible and open to change when goals are not met. Schools must decide which RtI model best meets the needs of their students (Lembke, et al., 2010).

Discussion

As with any change occurring in education, there are possibilities that the change does not meet the needs of the students or the change will not be given the required time and effort needed to implement effectively. Response to Intervention is a change that could benefit many students; however, because there is not one concise model for schools to implement, it is difficult to provide evidence that the concept is truly working.

Fidelity of implementation is a major concern. Faculty must understand the need for change and "buy in" to the change that will occur. Faculty must understand the importance of using assessments and interventions in the way they were designed to

be used. If fidelity and integrity are not maintained throughout implementation, RtI will be compromised. Students will not receive the benefits of intensive intervention as designed; RtI will remain a "wait-to-fail" model.

Collaboration among general education and special education teachers must occur. As students move through the tiers of intervention, there will be a point in which the general education teacher will need help from someone with more expertise. Therefore, it is imperative that dialog occurs regularly between special education teachers, reading specialists/coaches, speech-language pathologists, school psychologists, and the general classroom teacher.

The professional development required by the administration and faculty needs to remain current and constant. Professional development should concentrate on depth of knowledge rather than breadth of knowledge. Funds need to be available for both professional development and the resources needed to sustain the RtI model put into place.

Another area that should be addressed is faculty turnover and pre-service teachers. Schools should have a plan in place for new faculty to be trained in the model that has been adopted by the school. As stated earlier, models can vary from school to school, district to district, and state to state. Anyone who has a background in RtI may understand the model used previously, but working in a different school will bring changes and challenges.

Colleges of education need to prepare pre-service teachers to understand the Response to Intervention framework. Pre-service teachers need to understand the background of RtI, how models may be interpreted differently from school to school,

and how to collaborate with their peers and specialists. Pre-service teachers should be aware of assessments and interventions used in RtI and how to monitor progress of students. Pre-service preparation should include strategies that promote an understanding of how to collect data, how to interpret data, and how collected data should drive instruction.

Summary

This literature review has focused on three areas in regard to RtI: (1) the RtI framework which includes the tiers of intervention, the approach used, and the use of a universal screener, (2) learning theories and RtI, and (3) school change in regard to the implementation of RtI. Most schools use a framework which consists of three tiers with each tier consisting of increasing support and interventions. Two approaches to RtI are used, the standard protocol approach or the problem solving approach. Most researchers prefer the standard protocol approach as it generally uses specific, scripted interventions. Most practitioners prefer the problem solving approach which is often used in regard to behavior issues. Schools employ the use of a universal screener to identify students who are not performing on grade level.

Response to Intervention relates to the learning theory of behaviorism in that instruction in each tier is delivered in steps. Once a student has mastered a skill identified as deficient, the next skill is introduced. Work continues on that skill until it is mastered. However, RtI also relates to constructionism in that the interventions must be delivered by a knowledgeable other person, i.e. the teacher. The teacher must design the intervention to be within the student's zone of proximal development. The student constructs knowledge with the teacher being the guide.

In relation to school change and implementing RtI, the existing literature shows the importance of working together as a team to make decisions based on the data collected. Fidelity checks need to take place on a regular basis to ensure the interventions are being administered properly. Professional development needs to be a high priority to maintain sustainability. All stakeholders need to understand the importance of and need for Response to Intervention.

Response to Intervention has the potential to help many students who struggle, whether it is with behavior, math, or reading. If implemented with fidelity, if teachers realize the importance, if teachers are willing to change and think about how each of their students are doing, then Response to Intervention has the ability to become "Watch our students succeed" instead of "Watch our students fail."

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research is to observe the implementation of RtI in an elementary school and document how the changes associated with the implementation affect the administration and faculty. More specifically, this research addresses the following questions:

1. How does one elementary school implement change in regard to Response to Intervention?
2. What types of changes occur at the administrative level?
3. What types of changes occur at the faculty level?
4. What kind of support does faculty receive in regard to resources, training, data collection and data analysis?

This research will explore the challenges administrators and faculty face when change occurs. Through the documentation of these challenges, other schools will gain insight about change that result from implementation of RtI. This case study will focus on how the administrators and faculty adapt to the changes that occur with the implementation of Response to Intervention.

Research Design

Qualitative research is used to research a particular problem or issue that may be complex or detailed. Quantitative research does not provide the rich, contextual information that is found in qualitative research; it just does not fit the problem. Qualitative research also allows the participants voices to be heard (Creswell, 2007). Qualitative research was chosen for this study because change is a complex issue that involves, in this case, perspectives from multiple participants.

Case study methodology was chosen over phenomenological or grounded theory methodology. Phenomenological studies focus on the lived experiences of the participants who have all been a part of the shared phenomenon. Grounded theory seeks to develop a theory from the views of the participants. The researcher chose case study methodology because the study centers on one particular event, the implementation of RtI, and how that implementation changes the culture of the school, the administration, and the faculty.

Creswell (2007) stated,

> Case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a ***bounded system*** (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving ***multiple sources of information*** (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case ***description*** and case-based themes (p. 73).

The size of a bounded case determines the type of case study. Creswell (2007) described three types of case studies: (1) the single instrumental case study, (2) the collective or multiple case studies, and (3) the intrinsic case study. The single instrumental case study focuses on a particular issue or concern and uses one bounded case to highlight that issue or concern. This research is a single instrumental case study, the study of one school (single instrument) implementing change in regard to RtI (one issue). For this research, the case study methodology was chosen because the researcher looked at how one elementary school implemented change in regard to a top-down decision to begin Response to Intervention. When such decisions are made, it becomes imperative to listen to those directly affected by the decision.

According to Barone (2011), "…case studies can be used for description and explanation as well as exploration. Importantly, case studies are most often used when

the researcher has no control over the behaviors being studied…" (p. 22). This statement is also supported by Yin (2009). This study describes changes that occur in a school setting when change is implemented in regard to RtI. By exploring the changes that take place with the faculty and administration, other elementary schools may be able to use the information to help ease transitions when implementing change.

Case study is commonly used when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon taking place in a real-life situation. It requires direct observation of the events and interviews of the people involved in the event. Case studies answer "how" or "why" questions. Case study is also used when researching organizational change and the implementation process (Yin, 2009). This study seeks the answer to how one elementary school is able to make changes in the identification of students who may be struggling and how those changes affect the administration and faculty. In this case study, the researcher observed the bi-weekly PLC/RtI meetings of the third grade teachers in order to understand the changes that were taking place within the school and within the classroom. Interviews were conducted with a teacher from each grade level in grades one through five, a focus group of teachers, one special education teacher, one counselor and two administrators. Through the semi-structured interviews, the researcher was able to listen to each participant and ask probing questions that allowed the participant to think about the change in a different way. For example, participants in phase one were asked how they felt when working with struggling students. After asking this question to Amy, she paused before answering. She replied, "The first thing I think about is what I, what can I do to help them get where they need to be." This led

the researcher to ask if the thought of a student not being on grade level scared her or caused her to work harder. She stated,

> "It does make me work harder. It concerns me when we're thinking…do I send them on to the next grade level? Do they need to repeat? They need more time and our time in our day is so limited. But they are such rewarding children to work with. When you see them starting to be able to do things, the interventions are working and it's such a rewarding feeling for them and for myself. I'm going to be thinking about that one (question) for a long time."

Study Design

The study was conducted in two phases. Phase one was conducted during the 2011 spring semester. Of the 15 elementary schools in the district, this school was in the beginning stages of implementing RtI. Several elementary schools in the district had previously implemented the district model and serve as models for the remaining schools as implementation continues throughout the district. This elementary school had spent the 2010-2011 school year establishing grade level professional learning communities (PLC's), conducting professional development with the faculty, requiring the faculty to identify students needing interventions, and implementing interventions learned through professional development.

Phase two of the study was conducted during the 2011-2012 school year. The 2011-2012 school year was designated by the school as the first year of full implementation of Response to Intervention. The researcher determined that, in order to understand the changes that were occurring, further research needed to be conducted during the first year of implementation. Table 1 gives the timeline of the conducted research.

Table 1 – Research Timeline

Phase One
• January, 2011 – Recruitment of participants
• February, 2011 – Interviews conducted; journals delivered to participants
• March, 2011 – Interviews conducted with principal, assistant principal, and school counselor
• May, 2011 – Second interviews conducted with participants
Phase Two
• September, 2011 – Participants from Phase One contacted to ask for continuance in research; recruited 3rd grade team; began observations of PLC & RtI meetings; delivered journals to 3rd grade team
• November, 2011 – Conducted focus group interview with 3rd grade team; provided journal prompts for participants
• February, 2012 – Observed interventions given to students in four different classrooms
• February and March, 2012 – Conducted exit interviews with all participants; collected journals from participants; began analysis of data

Participants

The participants for phase one of this study were recruited through several different means: (1) a presentation was made by the researcher at a faculty meeting, (2) e-mail invitations were sent to each grade level, (3) recommendations were made by the principal, and (4) an e-mail invitation was sent to each recommended faculty member. Participants included the principal, assistant principal, counselor, one special education teacher, and one teacher from each grade level, grades one through five. The fourth grade teacher participated in the first interview and afterwards decided not to continue in the study due to time constraints. The fifth grade teacher was unavailable for the second interview at the end of the semester due to illness but chose to remain in the study upon returning the following year. One participant had no previous experience

with RtI while the remaining participants had previous experience in Oklahoma, Texas, Kansas, and Florida either as a reading specialist, special education teacher, or general education classroom teacher. All participants were compensated with a $10 Panera Gift Card at the end of the study or upon deciding to no longer participate.

Phase two participants consisted of the participants from phase one as well as a focus group of the remaining third grade teachers. According to Glesne (2006), focus groups are valuable for understanding a group's opinions or attitudes toward a particular topic. Focus group interviews are commonly used when researching the process of decision making (Glesne, 2006). The third grade teaching team was targeted as the focus group due to the mandates of NCLB (all third grade students will read on or above grade level by 2014) and current Oklahoma legislation which prohibits social promotion. The school psychologist participated only as the facilitator of the RtI Big Block (PLC) meetings and did not participate in a face-to-face interview or in the focus group interviews. A detailed description of each participant is located in Chapter Four.

All participants were referred to by a number to protect confidentiality. Participants were given a copy of the findings for review in case any misconceptions occurred during analysis (Barone, 2011). Also, for permission to be granted for the research to be conducted, an agreement was made between the district and the researcher that all participants would be considered co-authors if any part of the final study were submitted for publication.

Data Sources

Data sources for case studies should use multiple sources of evidence to achieve triangulation. Data sources suitable for case studies are interviews, observations,

documents, archival records and physical artifacts (Barone, 2011; Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2009). Data sources for this study included semi-structured interviews, observations/field notes of the PLC/RtI meetings of the third grade team, observations of interventions, and documents such as the district RtI manual. Descriptions of the data sources used in each phase of this study follow.

Data sources for phase one. Phase one data sources included audio taped, face-to-face, semi-structured interviews (Appendix A), journal entries and the district RtI manual. Interviews must be held when the interviewee is available (Yin, 2009); therefore, interviews were conducted with each participant at a time that was convenient for them and did not interfere with class instruction time. Interviews with the faculty participants took place during late January/early February, 2011 with a follow-up interview conducted in late April/early May, 2011. Both interviews consisted of ten questions with probing questions asked to further clarify any information given during the interview. Each interview lasted approximately 45-60 minutes. Interview questions focused on their feelings about the changes taking place, their feelings about working with struggling students, and their feelings concerning the training and support being given during the change to Response to Intervention.

One interview was conducted in this phase with the principal, assistant principal, and counselor. The semi-structured interviews were audio-taped, face-to-face interviews consisting of ten questions with probing questions asked to clarify information given. Questions for the interview centered on the RtI model that was being implemented, the types of assessments and interventions the faculty received training on, the types of support faculty received from administration, and the impact

RtI would have on the school. Each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes and was conducted in the offices of each administrator.

Each faculty member and administrator was asked to keep a journal during the months between interviews in which they discussed their apprehensions, their successes or failures, and how RtI has affected their teaching. Documents, such as journals, can help to corroborate and augment other sources, i.e. interviews (Yin, 2009). Journal entries were used as documentation that verified information given during interviews.

A copy of the district RtI manual was given to the researcher in this phase of the study. This manual gave valuable information concerning the districts view of Response to Intervention. It provided details concerning data collection, decision making, and descriptions of the tiers of intervention support.

Data sources for phase two. For phase two, data sources consisted of semi-structured face-to-face interviews with the participants from phase one, continuation of the journals as well as journal prompts provided by the researcher, a focus group interview with the added participants from the third grade, various artifacts, field notes, and observations. All interviews were conducted either at the end of the school day or during PLC meetings. Final interviews with the phase one participants were audio taped, face-to-face interviews consisting of the same questions asked in the phase one interviews. The final interviews were conducted during February and March, 2012.

The first focus group interview (Appendix B), conducted in November, 2011, consisted of semi-structured questions and was conducted face-to-face; however, several of the focus group participants did not consent to be audio taped requiring a transcriber to be present to record answers. A final focus group interview was

conducted in March, 2012 consisting of five questions (Appendix B). Each third grade teacher was asked to participate in a face-to-face, one-on-one interview; however, only the phase one third grade teacher agreed to participate. All interviews were transcribed and sent to the participants for approval. Questions centered on preparation for the implementation of RtI, how RtI would affect their classroom, and the support being received in regard to RtI. The interviews lasted approximately 60 minutes.

A final interview was conducted with the principal and assistant principal near the end of the 2012 school year. The interview consisted of the same questions asked in the phase one interview. The interviews were transcribed and sent to the participants for approval. The final interview lasted approximately 60 minutes.

Journals are one way in which participants may be more willing to document their experiences rather than in face-to-face interviews. Each participant kept a journal in which they recorded their feelings toward RtI, how RtI affected their teaching, and any successes or failures experienced. Journal prompts (Appendix C) were given to the participants during the months of November, 2011, December, 2011, January, 2012, February, 2012, and March, 2012. Prompts for the faculty focused on the interventions they had used, the usefulness of the bi-weekly RtI meetings, and their feelings toward progress monitoring, support, training, and resources being given. Prompts for the administration centered on the types of changes seen in the school and faculty, the effectiveness of the implementation, and how the administration kept the faculty motivated throughout the implementation of Response to Intervention.

Several artifacts were gathered over the course of the research study. The district RtI manual, a reading summary sheet, sample Tier 2 parent letter (Appendix D),

district expectation sheet, the Tier 2 intervention log (Appendix E), school mission, vision, and value statements, and school brochure were collected. By using artifacts and documents, the researcher was able to recognize misconceptions of the participants found in the interviews. Documents were used to corroborate and augment interviews and observations. The district manual provided specific details that may not be recalled by the participants during the interview process. Analysis of the manual allowed the researcher to make inferences regarding the implementation of Response to Intervention (Yin, 2009).

Each grade level had "Big Block" time which is their professional learning community (PLC) weekly meeting. The researcher was provided access to the weekly meetings of the third grade teachers as a non-participant observer. The meetings consisted of the teachers, principal and/or assistant principal discussing information regarding student progress. Every other week the meetings were facilitated by the school psychologist. The bi-weekly RtI meetings focused on the implementation of RtI, assessments, benchmarks, interventions, and student progress. Field notes were taken during the meetings. All field notes were transcribed, reviewed and approved by the participants, and used during data analysis.

Observations of tier two and tier three interventions took place as students were identified in need of more intense intervention. Using an observation protocol (Appendix F), the researcher observed four teachers provide tier two and tier three interventions. Observation of the interventions allowed the researcher to gain insight of the types of interventions given and the time needed in order to give the intervention.

Table 2 provides correlation between the research questions and the data sources for phase one. Data for phase one were interviews, journal entries, and the district RtI manual. Table 3 provides correlation between the research questions and data sources for phase two. Data for phase two were interviews, journal entries, artifacts, and observation of the PLC/RtI meetings and interventions. Table 4 provides triangulation between the themes for each research question and the data sources.

Table 2 - Phase One Data Source Table

Research Question	Faculty Interview	Administrator Interview	Journal Entries	Artifacts
How does one elementary school implement change in regard to RtI?	#2 – feelings regarding RtI #3 – apprehension toward RtI	#2 – description of RtI #8 – impact on faculty, students, school	Participant described feelings toward RtI	District RtI Manual Ch. 6-8, 10-12
What types of changes occur at the administrative level?		#6 – training #7 – support	Participant described feelings toward RtI	
What types of changes occur at the faculty level?	#1 – identification of struggling students #5 – teaching struggling students #6 – RtI, struggling students #7 – instructional changes	#1 – identification of struggling students #3 – student assessment for Tier 1, 2, and 3 #5 – how RtI will help teachers and students #8 – impact on faculty, students, school	Participant described feelings toward RtI	District RtI Manual Ch. 6-8, 10-12
What kind of support does faculty receive in regard to resources, training, data collection, and data analysis?	#4 – training #9 – support	#3 – student assessment for Tier 1, 2, and 3 #4 – interventions #6 – training #7 – support	Participant described feelings toward RtI	District RtI Manual Ch. 6-8, 10-12

Table 3 – Phase Two Data Source Table

Research Question	Interviews	Journal Prompts	Artifacts	Observations
How does one elementary school implement change in regard to RtI?	**Faculty** #2 – feelings regarding RtI #3 – apprehension toward RtI **Administrator** #2 – description of RtI #8 – impact on faculty, students, school **Focus Group Initial** #7 – feelings concerning RtI **Focus Group Final** #1 – affect of RtI on school #5 – effectiveness of RtI in identifying struggling students	**Faculty** #2 – RtI meetings #3 – progress monitoring #4 – instructional change **Administration** #1 – leadership #2 – support #3 – instructional changes #4 – feelings concerning implementation	District RtI Manual School Brochure School Mission Statement	Observing PLC/RtI meetings Observing teachers give interventions
What types of changes occur at the administrative level?	**Administrator** #6 – training #7 – support	**Administrator** #1 – RtI and leadership of faculty #5 – keeping faculty motivated	Follow-up field notes District RtI Manual	PLC/RtI meetings
What types of changes occur at the faculty level?	**Faculty** #1 – identification of struggling students #5 – teaching struggling students #6 – RtI, struggling students #7 – instructional changes **Administrator** #1 – identification of struggling students	**Faculty** #2 – bi-weekly RtI meetings #3 – progress monitoring #4 – instructional changes	District RtI Manual Tier 2 Parent Letter Tier 2 Intervention Log	PLC/RtI meetings Observation of teachers giving interventions

Table 3 - Continued

	#3 – student assessment for Tier 1, 2, and 3 #5 – how RtI will help teachers and students #8 – impact on faculty, students, school **Focus Group Initial** #8 – how RtI affects teaching #9 – how RtI affects daily schedule #10 – RtI and students **Focus Group Final** #2 – affect of RtI on daily schedule #3 – affect of RtI on teaching	**Administrator** #3 – changes seen in faculty	Reading Summary Sheet District expectation sheet	
What kind of support does faculty receive in regard to resources, training, data collection and data analysis?	**Faculty** #4 – training #9 – support **Administrator** #3 – student assessment for Tier 1, 2, and 3 #4 – interventions #6 – training #7 – support **Focus Group Initial** #1 – training #3 – types of resources #4 – adequate resources #5 – preparation for implementing interventions #6 – support	**Faculty** #1 – interventions used #5 adequate support, resources, training **Administrator** #2 – support for faculty	PLC/RtI meetings	Observation of teacher giving interventions

Table 4 – Triangulation of Research Themes and Data Sources

Research Question/Theme	Interviews	Journal Prompts	Artifacts	Observations
How does one elementary school implement change in regard to RtI?				
RtI/Paradigm Shift	X	X	X	X
Change	X	X		
Concerns	X	X		
The Future	X	X		
What types of changes occur at the administrative level?				
Administrator's Role	X	X		
Counselor's Role	X	X		
Changes	X	X		
The Future	X	X		
What types of changes occur at the faculty level?				
Instructional/Schedule Changes	X	X		
Time/Classroom Dynamics	X	X		X
Collaboration	X	X	X	X
Concerns	X	X		
Success Stories	X	X		
What kind of support does faculty receive in regard to resources, training, data collection and data analysis?				
Professional Development				
Resources	X	X		
Support	X	X		X
Fidelity	X	X	X	X
Data	X	X	X	X
Concerns	X	X		X
	X	X		

Data Analysis

All interviews, journals, and documents were used during analysis. Thematic analysis requires the researcher to identify themes within the data. Themes are not pre-determined. Themes are determined through open-coding of the data (Ezzy, 2002). According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), open-coding is a result of microanalysis of the data. Through this microanalysis, emerging patterns (Shank, 2002) can be grouped into concepts which in turn are grouped into categories. Categories lead to overarching themes. Strauss and Corbin (1998) describe three ways of conducting open-coding. The first is line-by-line, which is time-consuming but helps the researcher to "…discern the range of potential meaning contained within the words used by respondents and develop them more fully…" (p. 109). The remaining open-coding methods are coding by sentence and paragraph or by looking at the entire document. For this case study, the researcher chose line-by-line, open-coding to glean the most meaning from the interviews.

Phase one data analysis. To begin data analysis, the researcher correlated each interview question with a research question (see Table 2 and Table 3). For example, question number six for an administrator was, "What types of training are your teachers receiving before implementation?" This directly correlates to research question number four, "What kind of support does faculty receive in regard to resources, training, data collection and data analysis?" This same question was rephrased for the faculty in question number four, "Describe the training you have received concerning the implementation of Response to Intervention." By asking both the faculty and the

administration the same question, the researcher was able to obtain the viewpoint of both parties.

After correlating the interview questions with the research questions, the first interview with the faculty was coded, line-by-line, by looking for key phrases and comments that answered the research question. The key phrases and comments were analyzed for emerging patterns. The same process was used in the second interview with the faculty to determine if any new patterns emerged. Journal entries from faculty were coded following the same procedure looking for any new emerging patterns. The patterns were grouped into overarching themes for each research question.

The administrator's interview questions that had been correlated with the research questions were also coded line-by-line for key phrases and comments. The key phrases and comments were analyzed for emerging patterns. Patterns were grouped into overarching themes.

Patterns emerging from analysis of data from the interviews and journals of both faculty and administration showed similarities and were therefore combined. For example, research question one asks, "How does one elementary school implement change in regard to Response to Intervention?" Interview questions for the faculty that related to this research question asked how they felt about implementing RtI and to discuss any apprehensions they felt toward the implementation. The administration was asked to describe the RtI model they would be using and what kind of impact they felt RtI would have on the faculty, the students, and the school. Journal entries that addressed these questions were also used as well as several chapters from the district's RtI manual. Looking specifically at the transcribed answers to the questions, the researcher

highlighted comments and/or phrases that pertained to the research question. The highlighted portions of the interviews were then written on sticky notes so that all the comments could be easily manipulated. This allowed the researcher to find emerging patterns of comments. Once the patterns were identified, overarching themes were developed. For example, the faculty discussed the concept of RtI, previous experiences, collaboration, and a paradigm shift. The administration discussed the school model, the process of implementation and a paradigm shift. These patterns led to an overall theme of paradigm shift.

The district RtI manual was written in three sections (Introduction, Essential Elements for Successful RtI Implementation, and The Three-Tiered Approach: Procedures and Guidelines) with 12 chapters. The researcher was allowed to copy the manual for personal analysis. Each chapter was read in its entirety to understand the district's viewpoint of Response to Intervention. After reading the entire document, the researcher determined which chapters dealt with the research questions addressed in this study. This analysis allowed the researcher to make inferences in regard to comments made in the interviews with the participants.

Phase two data analysis. Phase two data analysis followed the same procedures as phase one. The interview questions, journal prompts, and field notes were correlated with each research question. After correlation the interviews, journals and field notes were coded, line-by-line, looking for key phrases and comments. The key phrases and comments were analyzed for emerging patterns. The patterns that emerged from the faculty and administration showed similarities and were combined. For example, research question three asks, "What types of changes occur at the faculty level?" Faculty

talked about collaboration occurring during the Big Block meetings, the creativity of providing interventions at opportune times, and the possibility of grouping students for intervention. At the same time, the administration also discussed different types of collaboration being observed and the faculty's creativity in providing interventions. These patterns provided an overall theme of collaboration. After determining the themes of each research question in phase one and phase two, the researcher compared the themes. The researcher found that the themes were fairly consistent between both phases with some questions having an additional theme. For example, research question four asks, "What kind of support does faculty receive in regard to resources, training, data collection and data analysis?" Phase one themes included professional development/training, resources, support, fidelity, data, and concerns. Phase two themes included professional development/training, resources, support, collaboration, fidelity, and data.

Ethical Issues

Ethical issues are concerns of research studies. Researchers should identify and report any biases that may influence the findings (Barone, 2011). Informed consent must be obtained from participants (Ezzy, 2002). It is important that the researcher establish a bond of trust with the participants and that the researcher respect the rights of the participants (Esterberg, 2001; Ezzy, 2002; Glesne, 2006). The researcher must always protect the privacy of the participants by using identifiers other than the participant's name (Esterberg, 2001; Glesne, 2006).

Following the guidelines of university research policy, permission was granted from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the research. Upon the completion of

phase one, the researcher determined the need for modifications, completed the required forms, and obtained permission from the IRB to continue the research. Before interviews were conducted, each participant was given an Informed Consent form (Appendix G) detailing the type of research being conducted, the purpose of the research, research procedures, length of participation, and type of compensation given at the end of the research. Participants were assured of confidentiality and that no risk of losing employment would occur. Participants were also advised that at any time during the interview, they may decline to answer any question. If the participants chose to discontinue the research, they could do so at any time without any penalties. Permission was granted from the participants for phase one interviews to be audio taped and consented to being quoted directly. Several participants in phase two chose not to be audio taped or quoted directly. Each participant was given instructions on how to contact the researcher if any questions or concerns arose during the course of the research. This research remained under continuing review by the IRB of the university until completed.

The researcher's perspective played a role in this study. Because of past classroom experience with struggling students and as a third grade teacher, the researcher kept opinions concerning the process of identification of struggling students in check. The researcher is familiar with this school as it is one of the schools used for practicum placements of pre-service teacher candidates. As a part of the researcher's job requirements, the researcher must spend a considerable amount of time at this school observing pre-service teacher candidates teach; therefore, there is an established relationship among some of the participants in the study. During observations, it was important to not take on any other role than observer (Esterberg, 2001; Glesne, 2006). It

was, at times, tempting for the participants to ask questions concerning research in the field of reading and which interventions may be more appropriate. The researcher made a concerted effort to not influence the participants or to give feedback on what was taking place. Field notes taken during observations described only what occurred. The researcher avoided giving opinions of what should be taking place during the implementation of RtI.

CHAPTER FOUR: CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION

The qualitative researcher is a story teller who must provide rich, thick description of important elements pertaining to the conducted research (Wolcott, 2009). Case studies are used to develop in-depth descriptions of a particular event or issue surrounding a particular case (Creswell, 2007). In order to fully understand the findings of this research, descriptions follow of the school site and the participants, as well as a comparison of RtI models.

Site Description

The researcher chose one elementary school within a large Mid-western school district in the implementation phase of Response to Intervention for this bounded, single-instrumental case study. The focus of the case study was to document the changes that took place within the school, the administration, and the faculty during the implementation of RtI.

The school district in which the study took place serviced 21,995 (2011-2012 school year) students in grades Pre-Kindergarten through 12. One of the largest school districts in the state, the district covers 130 square miles in two counties with families living in both suburban and rural settings. The district is comprised of 15 elementary schools, five middle schools, three high schools, and one alternative high school; two of the elementary schools are open-enrollment schools where parents must apply in a lottery for their children to attend. This case study was conducted in a non-lottery school which is one of the newer schools in the district. One hundred eleven languages are spoken; 34% of the students are minority (Black, Hispanic, Native American, Native Hawaiian, Asian, and mixed) and 27.4% are considered economically disadvantaged. The district's mission statement is "Empowering all students to succeed in a changing world." The

district strives to ensure all students receive a strong core curriculum that will aid in academic and life skills. The district places an importance on raising the academic level of all students while reducing the gap between low and high performing students.

The elementary school chosen for the study serviced 1,021 students in pre-kindergarten through fifth grade in 2011-2012. The students enrolled in this school live in portions of two counties in the center of the state. The families in this community live in suburban and rural settings. The school is located in the middle of a wealthy community; however, 12.45% of the students qualified for the free/reduced lunch program. A summary of a demographic survey completed by the principal follows (Appendix H).

Table 5 – Overview of Student Body

2011-2012 enrollment	1,021
Students qualifying for free/reduced lunch	12.45%
Students in need of Response to Intervention	13.3%
Students classified as special needs	11.53%

Table 6 – Ethnic Categories

Caucasian	79.5%
African American	1.8%
Hispanic	7.5%
Asian	1.3%
Native American	2.4%
Other (two or more)	7.4%

Table 7 – Socio-economic status based on income (based on information provided to the school by OG&E, 2004)

Less than $15,000	12%
$15,000 - $24,999	7.25%
$25,000 - $34,999	8.88%
$35,000 - $49,999	13.22%
$50,000 - $74,999	17.89%
Greater than $75,000	40.75%

Consisting of 40 enclosed classrooms, a new early childhood center, two offices, two computer labs, a media center, a gymnasium and a cafeteria/auditorium, the school chosen for this research is able to service over 1,000 students from pre-kindergarten through fifth grade. With the addition of the early childhood center, the school prides itself on the first universally accessible playground in the state. This playground allows all students, regardless of disabilities, the ability to play together. The addition of this playground was made possible through cooperation with Lowe's Charitable Foundation and contributions from Wal-Mart and Sam's Club. Each classroom is equipped with a SMARTBoard and projector which were funded by the Parent-Teacher Organization. The PTO continually supports the teachers by providing funding for various classroom needs, most recently providing math manipulatives for a new math curriculum.

The school's mission statement is to foster a community of life-long learners. Teachers strive to connect with each student's parents through conferences, newsletters, weekly folders, and community events. The leadership at this school continually challenges the faculty to learn and utilize best practices in their classrooms through professional development. Teachers collaborate on a weekly basis through Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings at each grade level as well as through school wide faculty meetings.

Reading and math are the foundation of the curriculum. Opportunities for enrichment are available for students through the gifted/talented program; for students in need of additional support, RtI and special education resources are provided. Measurement of student progress occurs through a universal screener given three times per year, through district benchmark assessments given each quarter of the year, and through criterion referenced testing conducted in April.

The Participants

One teacher from each grade level, grades 1 through 5, participated in phase one of this study as well as the principal, assistant principal, counselor, and one special education teacher. The participants for phase two of this study remained the same with the addition of the third grade teaching team and the school psychologist. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality. This pseudonym will be used in describing each participant and in the discussion of the findings in Chapter Five. The table below provides information for each participant regarding teaching experience, previous RtI experience and the portion of the study in which they participated.

Table 8 - Participants

Participant	Teaching	Previous	Study

	Experience	RtI Experience	Phase
Janet – 3rd gr. teacher	9 yrs.	yes	1 and 2
Amy – 1st gr. teacher	34 yrs.	yes	1 and 2
Allison – 4th gr. teacher	10 yrs.	no	1
Robyn – spec. ed teacher	38 yrs.	yes	1 and 2
Caren – counselor	9 yrs.	no	1 and 2
Laura – 2nd gr. teacher	15 yrs.	no	1 and 2
Beth – 5th gr. teacher	11 yrs.	yes	1 and 2
Kathryn – 3rd gr. teacher	2 yrs.	no	2
Gail – 3rd gr. teacher	12 yrs.	no	2
Judy – 3rd gr. teacher	15 yrs.	no	2
Leslie – 3rd gr. teacher	8 yrs.	no	2
Paula – 3rd gr. teacher	22 yrs.	no	2
Aubrey – principal	12 yrs. classroom/20 yrs. admin.	no	1 and 2
Debbie – asst. principal	5 yrs. classroom/4 yrs. admin.	no	1 and 2
Karen – school psychologist	0 yrs.	no	2

Janet

Janet is a third grade teacher and a mother of two children who at the time of the research were in the first grade and fifth grade at the research site. She participated in both phase one and phase two of the research. She has nine years of teaching experience in second, third, and fourth grade. Phase one of the study was her first year at the research site; her previous years had been spent in Title 1 schools in Florida and another school district within the state. While teaching in Florida, RtI was implemented in the school in which she was teaching. She stated, “I’m pretty sure one of the things that she (the principal) looked at before she hired me was my previous experience with RtI.” She was hesitant to participate in the research because of this previous experience, but the

researcher assured her that it was important to have her viewpoint of the implementation of RtI. When asked about her feelings regarding RtI, she stated,

> "Okay, I feel like where it is good for some children it is not good for every child…RtI steps and the tiers take a long time, so are we doing them a disservice or are we helping them? Some kids need more than you can give them and is RtI kind of preventing that? Or is it going to be that we're just getting rid of special education?"

For her, change is inevitable, "we're constantly introduced to new things and…you've got to go with the flow."

Amy

Amy is a first grade teacher with 34 years of teaching experience. At the time of phase one, she was in her fourth year at the research site. She participated in both phase one and phase two of the study. She is the only first grade teacher with previous experience in RtI at a Reading First elementary school in Kansas. Before coming to the research site, Amy taught in the following areas: physical education, special education, first, second, third, and fourth grades, and literacy coach. She was excited to be back in the classroom so that she could use the tools she suggested to teachers in her role as a literacy coach. She felt the literacy coach training she received gave her an advantage over other teachers. She stated, "Being in the classroom is different than being the [literacy] coach." She realizes that change is hard, but necessary; teachers need to keep trying new things, "…just keep trying and changing ourselves… [we] can't always do it the same old way."

Allison

Allison is a fourth grade teacher with 10 years of teaching experience. She spent five years in another school district within the state in second and third grade classrooms where RtI was being used. She has spent the past five years at the research site in fourth grade. She chose to drop out of the study after the first interview stating that she had responsibilities that would keep her from fully participating.

Robyn

Robyn is one of two special education teachers at the research site. She participated in both phase one and phase two of the study. Robyn brings 37 years of teaching experience and previous RtI experience to the study. She spent 17 years in a general education classroom in a school district within the state, three years at a community college within the state, five years in Texas teaching special education, and the remaining years in another district within the state working with students with special needs. Phase one of the study was her first year at the research site. She felt RtI brought a new way of thinking about how to work with struggling students, how to organize your time and classroom, how to work with colleagues, and how to use data from testing. The school where she was employed in Texas handled RtI differently; special education occurred after students went through all three tiers and was based on all the data gathered during that time. She believes that RtI will cut down on labeling students by "identifying these [students] and actually doing something with them from the beginning…and not waiting until the gap is huge…" Regarding RtI, she feels it is important to "…make a believer out of everybody, show them the reason and the purpose and what it will do for the students and how it's moving education on…"

Caren

Caren has nine years of counseling experience at the research site. She participated in phase one of the study. The counselor is considered a part of the administrative team that looks at placement for students on interventions and in special education. She spends time discussing with parents the changes taking place in regard to identifying children for special education. She also provides guidance activities in the classroom in order for the teachers to attend their PLC meetings. In regard to change she stated, "I think change is difficult. This is a total change of philosophy. This is a change in paradigm. We are looking at special education in a whole different light than the way we use to look at it."

Laura

Laura participated in both phase one and phase two of this study. She is a second grade teacher with no previous experience with Response to Intervention. She did not begin teaching until her children were in school. She has 15 years' experience with most of that time teaching second grade. She also taught briefly in first grade and fifth grade. She has at times felt overwhelmed and has expressed some apprehension with the implementation of RtI. Several teachers in her grade level retired during phase one of this study which brought even more change to her team. She expressed that there was some comfort in knowing that someone in the school had extra training on the universal screener (referring to the third grade teachers who received DIBELS training). She stated, "My main concern [is]…identifying kids quickly and getting them help quickly…sometimes I think it's still as slow as it was before…"

Beth

Beth is a fifth grade teacher and mother of three. She has 11 years of teaching experience of which ten years were spent in Texas. Phase one of the study was her first year in the state, at the research site, and in teaching fifth grade. She participated in both phase one and phase two. She had previous RtI experience in Texas at the middle school level. She felt very comfortable with the implementation of RtI stating, "I kind of do it anyway. I guess that's kind of my thought. I would do that kind of thing even regardless of whether they said you have to do this, you know, because that's your job as a teacher." In regard to change, she stated, "…change is good, you got to keep learning. Life time learners make really good teachers."

Aubrey

Aubrey is an administrator who has 12 years of experience in the classroom and 20 years of experience in administration. She participated in phase one and phase two of the study. She had no previous RtI experience. Over the past two years, her school has gone through several physical changes as well as the change to RtI. A new wing was added to the building as well as renovation of the office area. The physical changes led to decisions affecting the implementation of RtI and the use of DIBELS as the universal screener. She tried to make the decisions based on what she felt her faculty could handle. She is pleased with the results coming from the first year of implementing RtI. She stated, "It (RtI) has to be right for [our school] or I'm not going to get teacher buy in…if they're not engaged, it's not going to work." She has worked to ensure that RtI fits the needs of the school and understands that the model used in this school does not have to look like the models used in the other elementary schools in the district. She fully

understands that the change process may take four to five years in order to sustain the change.

Debbie

Debbie is an administrator who has five years of experience in the classroom and four years of experience in administration. She had no previous experience with RtI. She agrees with the previous participant that it is important to make RtI work for their school. She stated, "It's very good that [the school district] really allows us to be our own site. We don't have to model after what someone else looks like…" She thinks the biggest change with RtI is the fact that the general education teacher will have to work with students on IEP's more because students with IEP's will only be pulled out of the general education classroom for 30 minutes per day. She stated, "… [this is a] change of philosophy, that these are all our [students]…I think that's really important. [We need to] work smarter, not harder."

It is important to note that the following participants were asked to participate in a one-on-one interview but declined. Also, the participants asked not to be audio-taped or quoted directly. To accommodate their wishes during the first focus group interview, a transcriptionist attended the interview to manually record the answers to the questions. The transcriptionist had no ties to the university or the school district. Each third grade teacher received a copy of the transcriptionist's notes for approval. For the final focus group interview, the researcher recorded the answers to the interview questions, transcribed the notes and sent the transcription to the participants for approval. During observations of the third grade PLC/RtI meetings, no direct quotes were taken from the

participants. All participants received a copy of the field notes for clarification and approval.

Kathryn

Kathryn is a third grade teacher in her second year of teaching. She participated in phase two only. She had no previous experience with RtI. She was one of two third grade teachers sent to DIBELS training to be a trainer for the faculty. She participated in the focus group interviews and provided journal entries.

Gail

Gail is a third grade teacher with 12 years of teaching experience. She participated in phase two only. She has no previous experience with RtI. She participated in the focus group interviews.

Judy

Judy is a third grade teacher with 15 years of experience. She participated in phase two and had no previous RtI experience. She is also one of the two third grade teachers sent to the DIBELS training to train the faculty. She also received training as a Literacy First coach. She participated in the focus group interviews and provided journal entries.

Leslie

Leslie is a third grade teacher with eight years of experience and had previous RtI experience in another district within the state. She attended an RtI conference in Dallas in the summer of 2011. She participated in phase two of the study. She participated in the focus group interviews and provided journal entries.

Paula

Paula is a third grade teacher with 22 years of experience. She has no previous RtI experience. She participated in phase two of the study. She participated in the focus group interviews.

Karen

Karen is the school psychologist and serves as the school RtI coordinator. She had no previous experience with RtI. She participated in phase two as the facilitator of the RtI/PLC meetings. All the participants reported that she was very helpful in the meetings and in providing resources, data analysis on the students, and in working with parents of students on RtI.

Response to Intervention Models

As discussed in Chapter Two, research models of RtI consist of either three or four tiers and vary in the decision making approach. Each tier follows a prescribed amount of time with interventions taking place with students who have been identified as being at risk of not performing at grade level. Students may move in and out of tiers based on their performance during interventions. Decision making approaches may consist of the standard treatment protocol (preferred by researchers), problem solving (preferred by practitioners), or hybrid (combination of standard treatment protocol and problem solving) (Berkely, et. al, 2009; Fuchs and Fuchs, 2006; Fuchs and Fuchs, 2007; Fuchs, Fuchs, and Vaughn, 2008; Howard, 2009). The Oklahoma State Department of Education recommends the use of the three-tier model but leaves the approach decision to each school district.

Comparison of Research, District, and School RtI Models

Because there is no one-size-fits-all RtI model, it is important to understand the commonalities and differences of the research model presented in the literature review of this study, the model designed by the district in which this study took place, and the model used by the school in this case study. This comparison of Response to Intervention models will cover the following areas: tier levels, the approach, the universal screener, the collection of data and data analysis, and the interventions used during the implementation year. Graphic representations of the district and school model are included.

Tier levels. Research suggests using a three or four tier model. Tier one consists of all students in the general education classroom receiving differentiated instruction from highly-qualified teachers. Approximately 80% of the students in a general education classroom benefit from this instruction. Tier two consists of approximately 10-15% of the students in a general education classroom who do not respond to the differentiated instruction. These students typically score below a certain percentile (determined by the district or school) on a curriculum based measurement (CBM) given at the beginning of the school year. Tier three consists of approximately 5% of the students who are not responding to tier two interventions. Tier three is considered more intensive instruction and/or special education. All tiers remain fluid meaning that, as students experience success, there is movement between the tiers.

In the district and school in which this study took place, three tiers are referred to with slight differences at each tier. All students in the general education classroom who are performing at or above grade level with differentiated instruction given by a highly-

qualified teacher are considered to be on tier one. All students are given a CBM at the beginning of the year. Any student scoring at or below the 16th percentile on the CBM is considered at risk of not performing on grade level. Theoretically, in a class of 22-24 students, there should be three to four students performing at this level. Students at this level are placed on tier one at-risk and provided with an intervention by the teacher which is designed to help close the gap between their performance and the students performing on grade level.

Students failing to show progress on the intervention provided during tier one at-risk are moved to tier two. The intervention used in tier two supplements the intervention in tier one at-risk; the general education classroom teacher provides both interventions. Continuous progress monitoring takes place with data collected and analyzed every four weeks. Descriptions of interventions, data collection and data analysis are provided in forthcoming sections.

At the school in which the research took place, students who moved to tier two and did not show progress after eight to ten weeks with the provided intervention were moved to tier 2b. Essentially, the research site had decided that tier two would have two sections, tier 2a and tier 2b. When a student showed no progress with the supplemental intervention (tier 2a), an intervention was added or changed for another eight to ten weeks (tier 2b).

According to the district model, tier three was for students failing to show progress with tier two interventions. Tier three could also be for students in other programs such as Title I or ELL students. Any student being served with an IEP was considered to be on tier three.

At the research site, students failing to show progress with tier 2b interventions were eligible for tier three. This also included any student identified as an ELL student and any student served through in IEP before the implementation of RtI. Because the 2011-2012 school year was the full implementation of RtI, any student who had been previously identified as having a specific learning disability and was being served though an IEP was required to go through the interventions in each tier as well as the interventions for tier three. By going through the RtI process, documentation was collected verifying the student's placement in a special education setting. An appeal process for students on speech or other health impaired IEP's and who passed the CBM was put into place at the research site. Interventions for these students were deemed inappropriate; therefore, the student's teacher could file an appeal to the PLC team to exempt the student from unnecessary and inappropriate interventions.

As with the research model, the district and school models were fluid. Students could move in and out of tiers as well as stay in a particular tier if the teacher felt it was warranted. Below are graphic representations of the district and school RtI models.

Figure 2 – District RtI Model

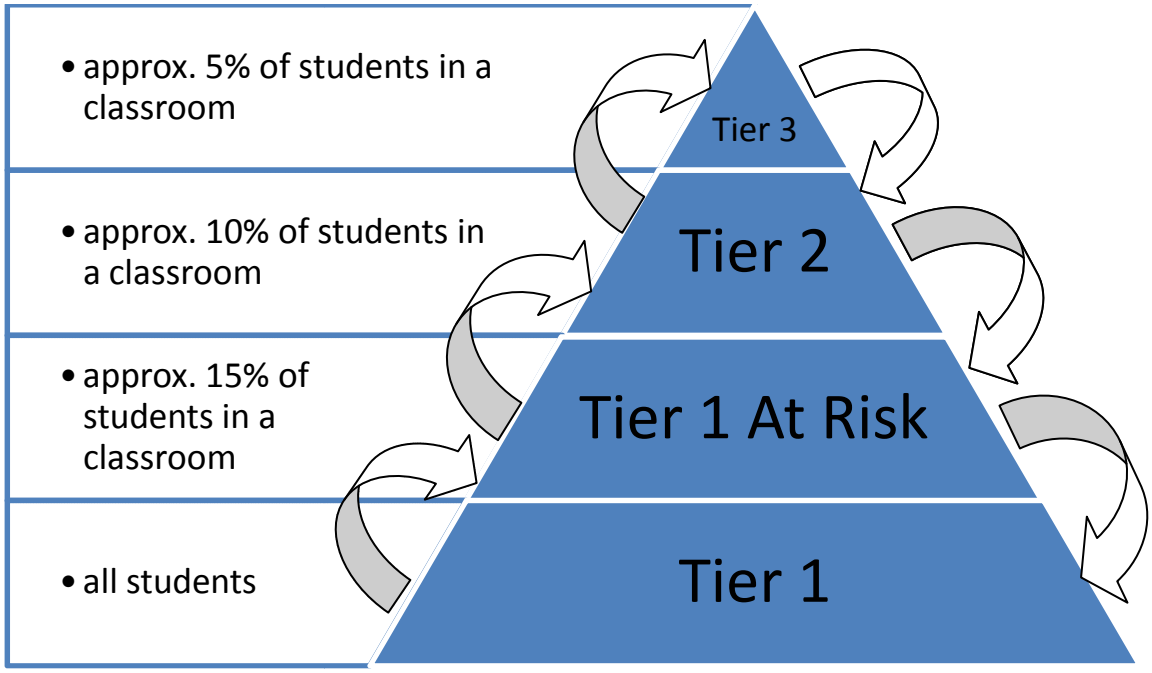
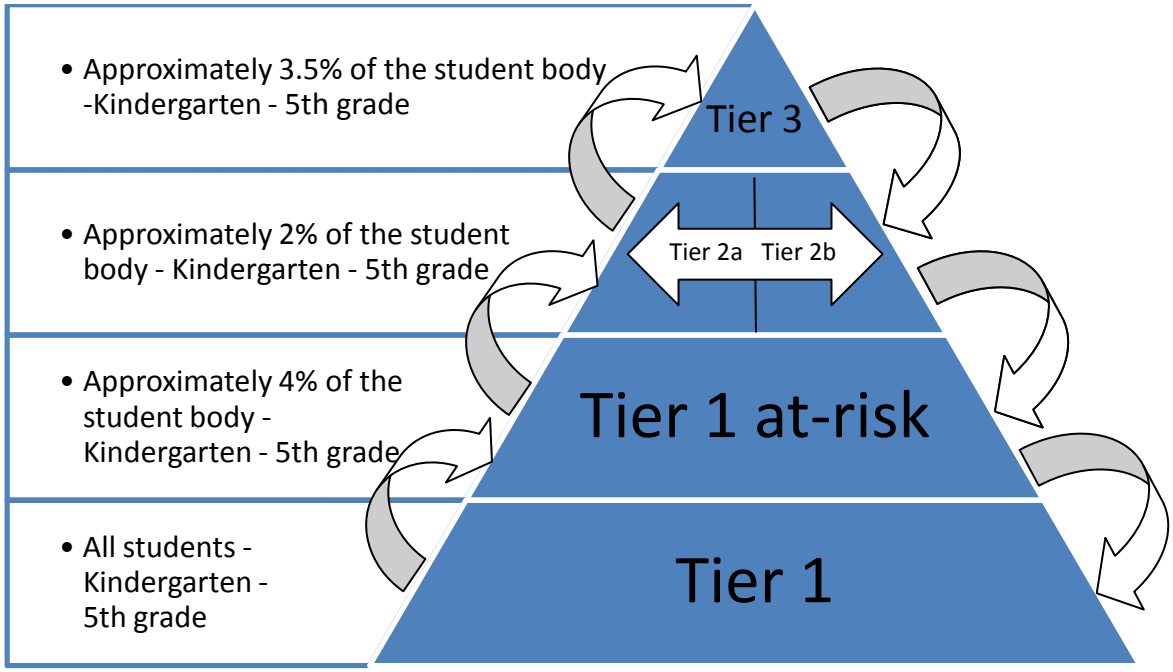


Figure 3 – School RtI Model - Percentage Served at End of 2012 School Year



RtI, at the research site, began with students in kindergarten. Kindergarten through fifth grade students totaled 930. Class size ranged from 19 – 26 students. Kindergarten, first grade, second grade, and fifth grade had seven classrooms; third and fourth grade had six classrooms. Three kindergarten teachers did not have any students on an RtI level; the remaining 36 teachers had one to two students on RtI levels by the end of the school year. One first grade teacher had an unusual number of students on RtI: five on tier one at-risk, two on tier two, and one on tier three. It is important to remember that students on tiers two and three were continuing to receive the intervention begun on tier one. For example, a student in third grade on tier three (who was previously identified as needing special services) would be spending 15 minutes using Success Maker each day along with 10-15 minutes with the general education teacher administering the Cold/Hot Read intervention as well as spending 30 minutes with the special education teacher. One student was placed on an IEP after going through all the tier levels by the end of the school year.

Approaches to Response to Intervention. The research reviewed in Chapter Two describes three different approaches to use in RtI: the standard protocol approach, the problem solving approach, and the hybrid approach. The standard protocol approach is usually a scripted program which most researchers prefer. For example, if a student's universal screener showed a weakness in phonemic awareness, specifically segmentation of phonemes, an intervention would be provided for the teacher that specifically targeted the ability to segment phonemes. The problem solving approach is preferred by practitioners. A problem is identified and a team of school personnel decide what intervention would be best for each individual student. Fuchs, Fuchs, and Vaughn (2008)

suggest using the hybrid approach which is a blend of the standard protocol and problem solving approach.

The district approach outlined in the RtI Manual describes using the problem solving approach. Decisions are made by an RtI team consisting of an administrator, a special education teacher, a general education teacher, the school counselor, the school psychologist, and the referring general education teacher. This team is much like the team used for IEP meetings. Once the problem is identified, the team meets to determine which intervention would be suitable for each student.

During observation of PLC/RtI meetings, the researcher determined that the school participating in the study used a hybrid approach for their RtI model. The RtI team was comprised of the grade level teachers, a special education teacher, an administrator, and the school psychologist. Upon receiving the results of the CBM, the school psychologist informed the teachers which students were being placed on tier one at-risk. The standard protocol approach was evident in that the teachers were given four options of interventions to use: Success Maker (a computer program used by the school), repeated readings, guided/flex reading groups, or Florida Center for Reading Research (FCRR) interventions. All grade levels chose to use the computer program for the tier one at-risk intervention (the interventions will be described in the intervention section that follows). Evidence of the problem solving approach being used during these meetings appeared when students did not show progress with the tier one at-risk intervention. The teams discussed why the student was not progressing and provided suggestions for interventions to the student's teacher. For example, some students were still not responding after the tier 2a intervention. The teachers determined that students

were not responding due to a lack of motivation. Therefore, a motivation piece was added in tier 2b, such as receiving a reward for completing a required number of sessions on the computer program.

Curriculum based measurements – universal screener. Curriculum based measurements (CBM's) are often referred to as universal screeners. The use of a universal screener determines a sub-set of students that may be at risk of performing on grade level. Often when schools implement RtI, the focus in the first year of implementation is literacy. A variety of published universal screeners for literacy exists from which schools may choose from when implementing RtI, such as the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screener (PALS), the Basic Early Assessment of Reading (BEAR), Literacy First, and the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Vaughn, 2008; Howard, 2009; Paris, 2010; Scanlon and Anderson, 2010). Teachers may also use an informal reading inventory which can be made by the teacher using passages from texts found in the classroom or published versions such as the Johns Basic Reading Inventory.

The Oklahoma State Department of Education requires school districts to choose one of the following assessments of literacy development: BEAR, Literacy First, or DIBELS. The BEAR is a criterion referenced assessment that covers kindergarten through third grade. Depending on the components used, the BEAR can take approximately 15-45 minutes to administer. It is a paper and pencil assessment that may be conducted with the whole class, in small groups, or in a one-to-one setting. Comprised of four assessments (reading basics, language arts, comprehension, and

fluency), it is written to measure mastery of reading and language arts standards. Cost to the school district can be rather expensive (Riverside Publishing, 2012).

Literacy First is designed for use in grades Pre-Kindergarten through 12. Literacy First is a research based, systematic, and comprehensive reform process designed to close the gap between below grade level and on grade level students. The Literacy First battery of screening instruments includes a phonological awareness skills test, a phonics assessment, and a curriculum based measure of oral reading fluency. The screening instruments are given to students in a one-to-one format; only specific components are given to certain grade levels (i.e. pre-kindergarten students are given only the phonological awareness skill test with components added or removed each school year). Benchmarks are given for each assessment; assessment is conducted three times per year (Literacy First, 2012). Until recently, school districts could send their faculty to Literacy First workshops free of charge; participants received a manual, resources, and training in administering the assessments. However, recent cuts in funding have necessitated a cost to the participants. Districts must now pay $850 per person for a five day workshop (L. Tilley, personal communication, April 12, 2012).

DIBELS was designed to be used with students in kindergarten through sixth grade. Given in a one-to-one setting, the assessments cover phonemic awareness, alphabetic principle, accuracy and fluency with connected text, reading comprehension and vocabulary. Administration of each assessment requires one minute. As with Literacy First, DIBELS begins with phonemic awareness assessments and adds or removes components with each grade level. For example, at the kindergarten level in the fall, screening consists of initial sound fluency and letter naming fluency. At the spring

screening, kindergarten students are assessed on letter naming fluency, phoneme segmentation fluency, and nonsense word fluency. Oral reading fluency begins with the benchmark taken at the mid-year assessment in first grade and continues through sixth grade. However, beginning with students in the third grade, the only assessments given are word use fluency, oral reading fluency, and retell fluency. Assessment materials for DIBELS can be downloaded free of charge from www.dibels.uoregon.edu; however, the use of the DIBELS assessment and reporting services averages one dollar per student (DIBELS, 2012). Training workshops are conducted in partnership with the Dynamic Measurement Group and costs $175 per person; this fee provides materials to the participants. Most districts choose to send representatives from each school in the district to the workshops to be trained as trainers for their respective schools. DIBELS seems to be the preferred screener used by schools because it is cost effective and easily and quickly administered by teachers (UOCTL, 2012).

The majority of the elementary schools in the district had been using DIBELS as the universal screener of choice. However, the research site had been using Literacy First and the Bear Spelling Inventory as assessments for identifying students' strengths and weaknesses in reading. Upon implementation of RtI, the district required the school to discontinue use of Literacy First and switch to DIBELS. This change in universal screeners was meant to bring continuity across the district. Two third grade teachers from the research site participated in DIBELS training in 2011 to be trainers for the school.

According to the district RtI manual, the universal screener initially helps to determine the problem a student may be having in a core academic area: reading, written

language, and math. Screening is conducted in the fall, winter, and spring. Teachers are not required to give the screening; it may be given by a volunteer, school psychologist, school counselor, or administrator. Data from the universal screener determines student performance rank for decisions made regarding interventions. The first screening is to be completed before the end of the fifth week of school. According to district standards, students performing below the 16th percentile and are not currently on an IEP are considered at-risk and are placed in tier one at-risk. The RtI coordinator (school psychologist) at each school must notify the parents of every student identified through a Parent Notification of Tier 1 At-Risk Support Form which requires the signatures from the parent, classroom teacher, RtI team coordinator, and an administrator. The district's goal for students identified as at-risk was to reach the 25th percentile after receiving intervention.

At the research site, DIBELS was given to the students by their teacher, and data were entered into a database on the teacher's computer before the end of the fifth week. Teachers were notified by the school psychologist of the students in their classroom who scored at or below the 16th percentile. Parents were notified through the Parent Notification of Tier 1 At-Risk Support Form that their child was receiving extra support during the school day in the area of reading. DIBELS assessments were given following the holiday break and at the end of the school year. A discussion of data collection and analysis of the data follow.

Data collection and data analysis. Upon identification and placement in tier one at-risk, students received interventions designed to meet the specific area shown as deficient on the universal screener. The district manual indicates that the intervention

should be given to small groups of students or individually four days per week for 30 minutes per session. Progress monitoring occurs weekly with the data entered into an Excel database on the teacher's computer. This database graphs the results of the data entered into it; a baseline, goal line, and state criterion referenced test predictor line are indicated as well. The state criterion referenced test is given to all students in the state in grades three through eight as well as end of instruction tests for secondary students. The criterion referenced predictor line is derived from information gathered from past criterion referenced tests which indicate that for students to be successful on the test in third grade, they need to be at or above the 120th percentile (or 168 words correct per minute on oral reading fluency). The district goal for third grade tier one at-risk students is to reach the 25th percentile (or 79 words correct per minute on oral reading fluency). The aimline goal is used as a reference point to determine if the intervention has been successful. Duration of tier one at-risk intervention lasts a minimum of four weeks and a maximum of ten weeks depending on the analysis of the data collected. Tier two interventions are delivered by the classroom teacher or a specialist if needed. Again, the intervention may be given individually or in small groups. The district recommends the intervention should occur four days per week for 30 minute sessions after which progress monitoring should be conducted. Duration of tier two interventions may last for ten weeks or longer depending on the data collected during progress monitoring. At the tier two intervention levels, a fidelity check must occur within two weeks of a student moving into tier two. At tier three, special education teachers provide intervention. Interventions at this level may last more than one year. Interventions at tier three are intended to be intense; therefore, the student may attend two sessions per day, with each

session lasting 30 minutes. The student leaves the general education classroom during these intervention sessions. The district requires that the student not be pulled from core curriculum (reading, math, language arts) instruction in the general education classroom. Progress monitoring occurs weekly, as in tier one at-risk and tier two, and is conducted by both the general education teacher and the special education teacher. Data from progress monitoring provides evidence for continuation of special services or movement to a modified IEP.

At the research site, data collection began in August, 2011 with all teachers giving the DIBELS screener. Assessment for third through fifth grade students would typically consist of three one-minute fluency measures; the words correctly read per minute of each reading are averaged to determine the baseline of the student. However, a decision by the administration resulted in only one fluency assessment given for the implementation year. This decision was based on the fact that construction of a new wing of the school delayed the teachers in moving to new classrooms until the day before school began. Teachers entered the results of the screener into the Excel database previously described. At the first RtI/PLC third grade meeting attended by the researcher, the teachers were given folders for each student in their classroom who scored at or below the 16th percentile. As a team, the teachers decided which intervention would be used for their tier one at-risk students. Four options were given: Success Maker (a computer program), repeated readings, guided/flex reading groups, or Florida Center for Reading Research (FCRR) interventions. Repeated readings were identified as an intervention to use for students on tier two. The third grade team chose to use the Success Maker computer program as the tier one at-risk intervention (the remaining

grades chose Success Maker as well). (Success Maker will be described in the intervention section that follows.) Tier one at-risk students would spend 15 minutes per day four days a week going to the computer lab to work on the program. A computer generated report of time spent on Success Maker for each student in a classroom was monitored by the administration. After four days of work on the computer program, progress monitoring would occur, which consisted of an oral reading fluency (ORF) measurement (3^{rd} -5^{th} grade). Even though a student on tier one at-risk may be reading below grade level, the ORF measurement is taken from a student reading a grade level passage with the number of words read correctly recorded in the Excel database. After four weeks of progress monitoring, the grade level team met to analyze the graph of each student receiving intervention (Appendix I).

Four consecutive data points are required on a student's graph before analysis begins. The data points must be consecutively above or below the aimline for decisions to be made. Four above the line is an indication that the intervention is working; teachers, as a team, must decide if the student is ready to move back to tier one without extra support. At this point teachers had several options to consider: (1) move the student to tier one without extra support; (2) keep the student on tier one at-risk, providing the intervention without progress monitoring every week; or (3) continue the intervention for another four weeks. If a student's four data points fell below the aimline, the teachers must decide to continue the intervention for four more weeks or move the student to tier two.

Tier two would require an added, second layer of intervention support. Tier two at the research site consisted of two levels, tier 2a and tier 2b. At tier 2a, the student

would continue using the Success Maker computer program along with an added intervention given by the general education classroom teacher. For third grade students, the added intervention was repeated readings (also referred to as a Cold/Hot Read, see the intervention section for a description). Fidelity checks for Success Maker was conducted weekly by the administration; however, at tier 2a, the teacher, was required to document on the Tier Two Intervention Log Sheet (Appendix E) the time and results of each intervention given. Within two weeks of a student beginning a tier two intervention, the school psychologist conducted a fidelity check to ensure the intervention was given as prescribed. Following the same pattern as tier one at-risk, progress monitoring occurred after four intervention sessions; after four data points were collected the teachers met to look at the graphs to make decisions. After eight to ten weeks of intervention at the tier 2a level, if progress was not being seen, the student moved to tier 2b, which required a change in intervention. Often this intervention consisted of a motivation piece being added to Success Maker and Cold/Hot Read interventions. Another eight to ten weeks of the second intervention would take place before a decision would be made to move the student to tier three.

Tier three would indicate that the student is in need of intense intervention given by a special education teacher. A decision on further testing would also be made at this point to determine if the student had a specific learning disability. Any student currently on an IEP was considered to be on tier three; however, for documentation purposes for RtI, students on an IEP were being given the same interventions as any other student who assessed at or below the 16th percentile on the universal screener. Interventions at tier three consisted of a scripted reading program, *My Sidewalks on Reading Street*,

conducted by the special education teacher for 30 minutes four days a week with progress monitoring occurring on the fifth day. Graphing of the data continued; students may move out of tier three or special education based on the data collected.

Interventions. All interventions used for the various tiers of RtI must be considered scientifically research-based interventions. According to the NCLB legislation, scientifically research-based:

> (A) means research that involves the application of rigorous, systematic, and objective procedures to obtain reliable and valid knowledge relevant to education activities and programs; and
> (B) includes research that –
>
> (1) employs systematic, empirical methods that draw on observation or experiment;
> (2) involves rigorous data analyses that are adequate to test the stated hypotheses and justify the general conclusions drawn;
> (3) relies on measurements or observational methods that provide reliable and valid data across evaluators and observers, across multiple measurements and observations, and across studies by the same or different investigators;
> (4) is evaluated using experimental or quasi-experimental designs in which individuals, entities, programs, or activities are assigned to different condition of interest, with a preference for random-assignment experiments, or other designs to the extent that those designs contain within-condition or across-condition controls;
> (5) ensure that experimental studies are presented in sufficient detail and clarity to allow for replication or, at a minimum, offer the opportunity to build systematically on their findings; and
> (6) has been accepted by a peer-reviewed journal or approved by a panel of independent experts through a comparably rigorous, objective, and scientific review (http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg107.html#sec9101, retrieved 04/29/2012).

It is important to remember that there is a difference between remediation and intervention. Remediation intends to fix the identified problem; whereas, intervention is meant to prevent or stop failure. Remediation tends to replace instruction; intervention supports the existing curriculum. Intervention is an adjustment of the intensity of

instruction and focuses on the process of reading, not specific skills. Intervention provides repeated practice through short term support (Howard, 2009). According to Howard, "…interventions accelerate learning to increase the possibility that students will return to the classroom quickly…emphasizing meaningful interaction with print…(and) complements a general literacy program" (p. 73). Howard feels that interventions should not be skill and drill worksheets, computer programs, copying definitions, or writing spelling words 20 times each.

As stated previously, when a student was identified as at-risk and placed in the tier one at-risk level, the teachers at the research site were provided options to consider for interventions. However, the district manual does not specify the options that were given to the faculty. All students at the research site who were identified as tier one at-risk worked on a computer program, Success Maker. As students moved into tier two, other interventions were designated for specific skills in which the student was lacking according to grade level. Over the course of the research, the researcher observed four specific interventions: (1) Cold/Hot Read, (2) Say It/Move It, (3) Fry's Phrases, and (4) *My Sidewalks on Reading Street* (tier three). A description of Success Maker (computer program) and the four observed interventions follows.

Success Maker. Success Maker is a commonly used computer program in schools that was designed by Pearson Publishing Company. This instructional software targets reading and math for students from kindergarten to eighth grade. An imbedded assessment determines each student's starting point and differentiates instruction based on the performance of the student. Instruction begins at an appropriate level for each student and provides feedback in layered scaffolding. Targeted areas of reading are

phonemic awareness, concepts of print, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, spelling, and grammar. Reports are provided to teachers that help monitor progress, grouping of students, and individualization of instruction. School districts must purchase a license to use the program indefinitely with the cost being less than one dollar per day per student (www.pearsonschool.com/index.dfm?locator=PSQk99, retrieved April 28, 2012).

Success Maker was currently in use at the research site before RtI implementation. Teachers were experienced in using the program and felt comfortable with their students using the program as an intervention. Whereas the district manual required students to receive 30 minutes of tier one at-risk intervention, students identified as tier one at-risk at the research site were required to use the computer program only 15 minutes per day for four days a week. The only requirement of the teacher was to ensure that each student went to the computer lab for that length of time. Fidelity checks were made through reports generated by the program and monitored by the administration which showed the student's length of time spent on the computer program. Every week the administration would give each teacher the reports on their students' progress.

Cold/Hot Read. The cold/hot read was developed by Candyce Ihnot, a special education teacher. She developed a unique approach in which her students found success. The approach centered on repeated readings, teacher modeling, and self-monitoring of progress. She and her husband, Tom, founded Read Naturally, a company devoted to helping teachers develop fluent readers (www.readnaturally.com, retrieved April 29, 2012).

According to Read Naturally (2012), the cold/hot read consists of the student reading a grade level passage for one minute, recording the words read correctly, identifying words that were difficult, listening to the passage read by a fluent reader, and then reading the same passage a second time with the intent to increase the amount of words read correctly. The fluent reader may either be the student's teacher or a recorded reading.

Because fluency was the targeted area of assessment and intervention, the cold/hot read was the intervention given to all students on tier 2a in grades three through five. The research site varied this intervention slightly from the description given on the Read Naturally website. The school psychologist provided grade level passages to each teacher. The researcher observed a third grade female student for this intervention. The student followed along while listening to her teacher read the given passage for one minute. The student read the same passage (cold read) for one minute reading 102 words with two mistakes. The teacher pointed out the mistakes made and they discussed why the words might have been difficult. The student read the passage a second time (hot read) for one minute. The student paused during the reading and the teacher encouraged her to continue. For the second reading, the student read 130 words per minute. However, the student omitted one line during the reading causing her to have 14 errors taking her total words read correctly to 116. This information was recorded on the intervention log. The total time spent on the intervention was five minutes.

Say It, Move It. Say It, Move It develops phonemic awareness through the segmenting of phonemes. Many variations of this can be found in texts and the internet. A student uses Elkonin boxes (developed by D. B. Elkonin) and markers to help them

identify the phonemes in words. For this intervention, two students in a first grade classroom were observed, one male and one female. The school psychologist had provided lists of words for this intervention. On the day of the observation, the students were working with words in the consonant-vowel-consonant pattern. The teacher modeled the intervention for the students. After saying the word "cub", the teacher sounded each phoneme as she slid a marker into each section of the Elkonin box. After doing so, the teacher blended the sounds into the word (i.e. "cub, /c/, /u/, /b/, "cub"). The students took turns; if a student did not follow the pattern modeled, the teacher would stop the student to work with him/her until they understood what was to be done. This intervention continued for 17 minutes.

Fry's Phrases. Fry's Phrases (Appendix J) uses words from Fry's Word Lists to make common phrases. The school psychologist provided flash cards to the teacher for this intervention. The researcher observed this intervention in a second grade classroom. One male student read each flash card as quickly as possible. The phrases read quickly and smoothly were placed in one stack while the remaining phrases went into another stack. When all the phrases were read, the teacher mixed the more difficult phrases in with some of the easier phrases to read a second time. If a phrase proved to be difficult for the student, the teacher would ask the student what the phrase meant, taking the time to explain the meaning if necessary. This continued two more times for a total of 12 minutes.

My Sidewalks on Reading Street. At this point in the implementation of RtI, tier three was essentially special education; therefore, tier three interventions took place in the special education teacher's room with a group of two to three students at a time. The

special education teacher was required to use a scripted program published by Scott Foresman titled *My Sidewalks on Reading Street*. Students previously served through an IEP went to the special education teacher's room four days per week for 30 minutes per day. During their 30 minute intervention time, the students worked on phonemic awareness, alphabetic knowledge, sight words, and read a story from a basal reader provided with the scripted program. The researcher observed three groups of students from first, second, and third grade. The first group consisted of two male students from a first grade classroom. During their 30 minute session, the students worked on phonemic awareness by saying a word, counting the phonemes, and finally writing the word on a marker board. The students worked on alphabetic knowledge by identifying vowels and consonants, focusing on the sound each letter made and the location of the tongue when making the sound. Sight word flash cards included new or challenging words for the students. For the last 15 minutes, students read a story from the provided basal reader. Students predicted what the story was about by looking at the title, and comprehension questions were asked to the students as they took turns reading. The second group of students to arrive was two male and one female from the second and third grade; they worked on alphabetic knowledge with vowels, digraphs, r-controlled digraphs, and schwa sounds. The students worked on sight words for their grade level and read a story from the basal reader with an emphasis placed on plot, settings, and characters. The third group consisted of one male and one female from the second group with the addition of another male. For these interventions, the special education teacher was working with two different grade levels of students. The third graders worked in a workbook for reading and math while the second graders read another story

and worked in a workbook. The special education teacher kept a log showing the amount of time spent with each student, the interventions used, and evidence of progress made.

Summary

This chapter has included a detailed description of the research site, the research participants, and a comparison of the various RtI models found in research, the RtI district manual, and the research site model. A comparison of the various tiers and approaches was provided, as well as the universal screeners, data collection and analysis, and interventions. As noted, the research site varied their model from both the district and the research. As addressed in the literature review, RtI is not a one-size-fits-all program. It must be tailored to each school and the specific culture of the school. The research site determined that their model fit their culture and students for the implementation year but acknowledged that changes may be made depending on outcomes and observations made throughout the year. Chapter Five will present the findings from the participant interviews, observations, and artifacts lending further insight into the implementation of Response to Intervention and how the implementation affects the teachers, students, and administrators. Chapter Six will conclude with a discussion and summary of the research, noting limitations and possibilities for future research.

CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS

The participants involved in this case study were teachers and administrators at one elementary school which was in the process of implementing Response to

Intervention. Data analysis consisted of open, line-by-line coding of the interviews, journals, field notes, and documents submitted by the participants. Upon analysis of the data for each research question, patterns emerged which led to over-arching themes. Research questions for this case study were

1. How does one elementary school implement change in regard to Response to Intervention?
2. What types of change occur at the administration level?
3. What types of change occur at the faculty level?
4. What kind of support does faculty receive in regard to resources, training, data collection and data analysis?

This research identified the following themes:

Table 9 - Themes

Research Question	**Theme – Phase One**	**Theme – Phase Two**
How does one elementary school implement change in regard to RtI?	Paradigm Shift Change Concerns	RtI/Paradigm Shift Concerns The Future
What types of change occur at the administration level?	Administrator's Role Counselor's Role	Changes The Future
What types of change occur at the faculty level?	Instructional/Schedule Change Time/Classroom Dynamics Collaboration Concerns	Instructional/Schedule Change Time/Classroom Dynamics Collaboration Concerns Success Stories
What kind of support does faculty receive in regard to resources, training, data collection, and data analysis?	Professional Development Resources Support Fidelity Data Concerns	Professional Development Resources Support Collaboration Fidelity Data

Interviews consisted of the same questions in both phases of the study. Journal prompts, as well as the interview questions, were correlated with the four research questions. The researcher determined the emerging patterns were consistent between the administration and the faculty; therefore, the patterns were grouped together to identify themes. The

themes that emerged during analysis of each phase were consistent between each other. This study will identify the findings by research question and define each theme mentioned.

Research Question 1

How does one elementary school implement change in regard to Response to Intervention?

Four themes were identified from the data for Research Question 1: (1) paradigm shift, (2) change, (3) concerns, and (4) the future. A paradigm shift is a change in a belief or theory. The researcher found that the school experienced a paradigm shift in how students would be identified for special education services as well as a shift in the culture of the school. Change signifies an alteration or modification; in this case study, change occurred physically (addition to the building) and academically (implementation of RtI). Concern implies participants were affected by the paradigm shift. The paradigm shift created a heightened sense of attention and interest. As the implementation year drew to a close, the participants discussed how RtI would affect the 2012-2013 school year. Data supporting each theme is given.

Phase One

Paradigm Shift. Response to Intervention is a major paradigm shift for teachers and administrators. Previously, students in need of special education services were typically identified through testing for an IQ discrepancy. This type of testing usually occurs during third grade. Unfortunately, for children who have struggled for the first three years of schooling, students begin to have the attitude that they will never succeed; the learning gap becomes too wide for adequate intervention to help lessen the gap.

Students who might have succeeded in school if given adequate intervention now have a label attached to them. With the change to Response to Intervention, students would be identified as at-risk earlier and provided with interventions designed to decrease the learning gap. As Robyn stated, "RtI will cut down on too many being labeled. [We] had to wait until they fail[ed]… [and] the gap had become pretty wide. We've done a disservice to them."

Caren and Debbie, from the administration's point of view, also spoke of the shift of mindset that the teachers faced. Caren stated, "This is a total change of philosophy. This is a change in paradigm. We are looking at special education in a whole different light than the way we use to look at it."

Debbie stated,

> "The biggest thing for me is the change of philosophy that these are all of our kids. We're [general education teachers] going to have to give the kids that are on IEP's the grades. The special education teachers are just going to be giving tier three interventions. It will be different."

This shift will require changes in the general education classroom as well as the special education classroom.

Changes. Allison stated, "Being a teacher is about change; [we are] always evolving." Change, however, can be difficult. This school was going through many changes during phase one of this study. Construction of a new wing was occurring, a new math curriculum was introduced, and teachers were receiving training for RtI. Because of all the changes taking place, the administration chose to introduce and implement RtI in specific steps. Aubrey provided a timeline of RtI implementation which occurred during the 2010-2011 school year.

- ✓ Spring, 2010 – meeting with district RtI Coordinator; given basic overview of RtI
- ✓ 2010-2011 school year – continued meetings with district RtI Coordinator; reviewed RtI basics; PLC meetings consisted of training in differentiated instruction, understanding the difference between interventions and modifications, and introduction of specific interventions for reading
- ✓ Suggested teachers try interventions with three to four lowest students in their class three times per week
- ✓ Discussed math screener and interventions
- ✓ Monitored teacher feedback
- ✓ Sent two third grade teachers to DIBELS training
- ✓ Faculty trained in how to administer DIBELS

The administrators felt that by going slowly, the teachers would not be overwhelmed. Even though the participants had a partial understanding of why the "baby steps" were utilized, Amy felt like, for some of her colleagues, it was overwhelming. As stated in Chapter Four, five of the phase one participants had previous experience with RtI. This previous experience played a role in participants' views of RtI and their feelings toward the process of changing to RtI. Participants with previous experience had seen positive outcomes in their previous schools from changing to RtI but remembered the misgivings and apprehension they and their colleagues felt during the implementation process. They understood what their colleagues at the research site were feeling who had no prior experience. For example, Amy stated, "For some in the room [during DIBELS training], it was overwhelming. But, I've given [DIBELS] before; it wasn't as overwhelming for me." Janet, who also had previous experience, pointed out that learning about RtI and the components is different from actually doing RtI and felt that the longer the teachers had to wait to begin using the concepts of RtI may not have been a wise choice. Laura had no prior experience with RtI and felt some apprehension but noted that it was comforting to have faculty members with training and previous experience in the building.

As with any change taking place, negative comments arose. Teachers with many years of experience felt RtI was going to be just another fad. The idea of being responsible for students identified as having specific learning disabilities and their grades worried many. However, the administrators felt that RtI would help teachers become more knowledgeable and "feel a sense of accomplishment and some reward that they were able to bring this [student] along." Debbie stated, "I think [RtI] is going to be pretty motivating. As we introduced the interventions, I think teachers were surprised at how quickly the [students] could improve their reading scores."

Concerns. The change to RtI brought two specific concerns from the faculty: (1) having the time to provide interventions, and (2) the change in classroom dynamics. Three participants, all of whom had previous experience with RtI, expressed concern over having time to screen students and to provide interventions. Teachers would have to re-organize their day in order to cover the material required. Having an uninterrupted scheduled time for reading may be difficult to find as well as the time needed to give specific interventions to small groups of students.

The dynamics of the classroom would change with the implementation of RtI. As previously stated, the general education teacher would be responsible for all students assigned to their classroom and their grades. Students identified as having specific learning disabilities would be in the general education classroom for the majority of the day. The biggest concern stated by several participants was the fear that they would not be able to provide the extra support needed by students served through an IEP. Another concern was for the students working at or above grade level. One participant noted the quality of students' work decreased when she was not walking around the classroom to

check on their work. She felt as if she was ignoring the remaining students in her classroom when she provided interventions for three students. Robyn expressed that several teachers had come to her asking questions concerning students who were far below grade level remaining in the classroom and how to work with them. Her fear at this point was that the general education teachers would not invest in their struggling students because the mindset of "these are not my students" had not changed. On the other hand, Janet stated, "We are always talking about the lowest of the low. Sometimes those highest [students] don't get as much of you as you would like."

The administrators also voiced concerns about RtI and specific groups of students. Aubrey stated,

> "I'm really worried that it's not going to address some needs. We have a pretty significant number of [students] with autism, and I can't have a teacher changing every 30 minutes to something new. We have some [students who] are really, really severely learning disabled and they can't do interventions 24 hours a day. I'm afraid we're not going to meet their needs with this structured program."

Administrators noted possible problems for the implementation year. Aubrey felt the main challenge would be starting the next school year in a good frame of mind because of the changes taking place. Caren stated they anticipated "hiccups" in the fall "no matter how prepared we are." Debbie stated,

> "It's going to be hard at first. I have no doubt in my mind that there's going to be some grumbling. I think we've done that whole process nicely of preparing for change; but I don't think you can ever be 100% prepared. There's going to be some bumps but we'll figure it out."

Despite the anticipated bumps, a positive impact from implementing RtI was viewed by Caren, who stated,

> "[For the] short term, I think we will be better able to meet student's needs. I think that [students] that get lost in the gap are not going to get lost in the gap

> anymore. Long term, if [students] are getting help sooner…and it's targeted in what they need sooner, then it will help everyone down the way."

Phase Two

RtI and Paradigm Shift. The implementation of RtI in 2011-2012 did indeed bring a paradigm shift in how students with specific learning disabilities were considered by the general education teacher. Teachers can sometimes be very resistant to change and need support and training for such a huge shift in thinking. Robyn described the shift by saying,

> "[It] hasn't been that 'hand them over process'. I think it's been more ownership, and the teachers have felt more comfortable with that because now they've been given some things to do. They've got the data to look at. They've got the interventions to work on. I think it's just a win-win situation for everybody. It's showing the teachers that they can do a little bit more. In the past, special education is thought, well, you know, they're going to qualify for special education. There's nothing I can do. But now, I think, they see, well, we can keep working so that maybe they don't qualify for special education."

From the administrator's viewpoint, the implementation had successes and setbacks. The construction of the new wing set the teachers back in preparing their rooms until the day before school started. With the teachers "stretched as thin as they could possibly be," the administrator's chose to have the third through fifth grade teachers conduct one oral reading fluency assessment rather than the recommended three. This strategy led to some students receiving a false positive identification with placement on tier one at-risk. Several teachers had a greater number of students identified as tier one at-risk than expected. Aubrey stated, "If I had it to do again, I would have done a universal screener at the end of last year on every [student]. This year I will have a universal screener to place [students]." By being able to look at data, more appropriate placement of students will occur for the 2012-2013 school year. Debbie felt very

confident in what took place during the implementation year; however, she is passionate in the area of letting teachers teach using best practices. The interventions were quite prescriptive in nature; the teachers were told specifically what intervention to give according to the grade level and the tier level of each student. In her words, "Teachers cannot sit and do interventions all day."

Both administrators felt that the transition went smoothly and were appreciative the district allowed them to make the district RtI model fit their school. They realized that the model had to be right for their school in order to achieve buy-in from the faculty. Aubrey referred to the implementation "like folding in egg whites; you have to do it gently, a little bit at a time. We have begun the process successfully but [are] far away from completion of implementation." The timeline for the second phase of the implementation is listed below.

- ✓ 2011-2012 – by-weekly RtI grade level meetings with school psychologist which provided professional development on an on-going basis
- ✓ Spring, 2012 – added motivation component for students at tier 2b
- ✓ Spring, 2012 – transition began to give ownership of PLC and RtI meetings to faculty
- ✓ 2012-2013 – behavior component of RtI will be added
- ✓ 2013-2014 – math component of RtI will be added

As evidenced by the timeline, the implementation will take approximately five years as the remaining components of RtI are added.

The faculty participants agreed with the administrators in the importance of every stakeholder buying into the change to RtI. However, some participants felt that the baby steps taken by the administration led to confusion. For some, seeing the whole picture of RtI first, and then the parts of RtI, would have helped them through the implementation process. Also, one of the interventions the faculty was trained to give the previous year

was changed in the way it was administered (Cold/Hot Read), and the administration of the DIBELS screener was modified. The decision to administer one oral fluency measure led to several faculty members having a large number of students on tier one at-risk. Because the students were identified as at-risk, they were required to go through four weeks of intervention in order to move back into tier one. This process caused concern for the teachers as they had no idea how they were going to meet the intervention needs of the students. When the school psychologist gave the option of using a computer program for the tier one at-risk intervention, the concern subsided somewhat.

For the participants with previous experience, the transition went smoothly, and they were able to help their colleagues through the first semester. However, there was some confusion as the faculty began to communicate with teachers at other sites within the district who had previously implemented RtI. Perhaps the administration did not communicate to them that RtI would look different from other schools within the district. Confusion existed in regard to the universal screener and why only parts of DIBELS were being utilized in the screening process. The two DIBELS trainers for the school expressed concern over the utilization of specific portions of the DIBELS. During the focus group interview, one participant stated that all the assessments were necessary in order for DIBELS to give a complete picture of the student. She compared this to a board game. One cannot use only the rules or pieces they want to play the game; all the rules and pieces must be used.

All the participants agreed that RtI affected their school in a positive manner. Teachers were now focusing on the data generated by the universal screener and progress monitoring which documented growth of students. This documentation was readily

available when conferencing with parents. The graphs generated by the data made it easy for parents to see their child's progress. Janet stated, "I don't have any apprehension. As a teacher, we're constantly introduced to new things. You've got to go with the flow."

Concerns. Faculty participants and administrators voiced concern regarding students' needs being met with the change to RtI. RtI identifies some but not all students at-risk of succeeding in school. Amy stated, "You have the children who didn't qualify as at-risk but yet they're struggling. Yet we have to pay all of our attention…on the [students] at-risk." This statement was reiterated by Debbie when she stated, "you have [students]…that are technically fluent readers that are struggling. You're not catching comprehension." Aubrey voiced the same concern. She stated, "I'm going to bet we have about 20 [students] that are very fluent readers and horrible comprehenders. We need some way to be able to identify what their issues are and be able to provide interventions to them."

Another concern was the time required to move students across intervention tiers. Teachers were required to administer interventions four times per week and progress monitor one time per week. The district RtI model stated that four consecutive progress monitoring data points indicated a trend as to whether the intervention was successful or inadequate. As Laura stated,

> "You can pick those [students] out of your class [who] are the ones [who] really need some intervention without waiting six weeks for them to score four times under a line. And then six more weeks to score under this line and then finally we might test them the right way. If you're just kind of going on your own, you would just pick something different that you thought maybe would help a little bit more…give him a little bit more support. I'm still a little bit worried that we're really doing the right thing for some of the [students]. There's still a lot of concern that I have on identifying [students] quickly and getting them help quickly."

The same concern was voiced by Robyn; she felt the program she was required to use moved too slowly for some of her students. While some of her students needed to move at a slower pace, she felt that some were being held back because of her inability to use material that would best suit the students' needs.

Participants voiced another concern over about time – time to administer the universal screener, to progress monitor, time to teach and to keep students on grade level. When asked what her number one concern was in regard to RtI, Aubrey stated,

> "Time – I can't control that though. Time is definitely number one because I think that is where they are feeling crunched and that's why I continue to look at schedules. We'll continue to look at what other sites are doing [in regard to schedules]."

Another issue in relation to time that affected faculty was the recent legislation concerning retention of third grade students who do not pass the reading portion of the state criterion referenced test. Amy expressed this concern by saying,

> "We've got a time line to meet. We're kind of all panicking and thinking these first graders when they're third graders, if they don't pass that test they're going to be repeating third grade and we don't want to see that."

This sentiment was also evident from the administration's point of view. Aubrey felt that the benchmarks for the first and second grade are not an equivalent marker to the state criterion referenced test "which is why we're getting surprised in third grade by some [students] who don't pass and why third grade teachers are shocked that some second grade [students] weren't on Success Maker." With RtI in place, first and second grade teachers will experience more accountability for their students.

Finally, participants voiced concern about the false positive identification of some students and the inconsistencies seen in progress monitoring data. Aubrey attributed

some of the false positive identification to the students not being familiar with the new screener. She realized this was frustrating to the teachers because of having to spend four weeks to provide intervention and progress monitoring in order for a student to move back to tier one. "We won't have that next year." Also, expectations were that students would show consistency in progress monitoring; data points would be either above the aim line showing success or below the line indicating the need for more intense intervention. This was not the case. Some student graphs showed peaks and valleys; one week a student would score very well on the reading passage with the following week scoring very low. Because of this fluctuation, concerns were voiced about the passages used for progress monitoring. Students were required to read passages that were on grade level even though many of the students identified were reading below grade level. Aubrey stated,

> "I think the DIBELS [passages] are not progressively grade level increasing. You'll get one that will have one bingo word in it and it will be in there five times…and the [student] can't do the word or it will be an ethnic name that just screws them up over and over again and so it'll zing that one down. [If they are] interested [in the passage], they go to town. [Another factor] I think [is] the [student's] health. If you get a [student] who's sick one week…that impacts it, you know. I just expected consistent [scores]…it's not."

The Future. Both faculty and administration were looking forward to the 2012-2013 school year. The problems with false positive identification would be unlikely to occur because the 2011-2012 data would be available for class placement. The administration will consider the data to ensure that teachers have no more than three to five students on tier one at-risk in their classroom. The faculty will have the data at their fingertips which will show "where they are, their growth, and [we will] know what to teach." The model has been "tweaked" with the input of the faculty and administration.

This "tweaking" involved moving the cut-off line from the 16th percentile to the 25th percentile in order to identify more at-risk students at an earlier age and to more closely align with the state criterion referenced test passage rates. All participants seemed to be looking forward to adding the behavior component next school year and the math component in 2013-2014.

Summary

How does one elementary school implement change in regard to Response to Intervention? In summary, this elementary school chose to implement RtI in progressive stages. The beginning stages began one year before the full implementation. Faculty received training in how to use the universal screener and specific interventions, practiced giving interventions with students, and were able to provide feedback to their administrators. As the implementation year progressed, concerns arose about the aimline, the screener, and progress monitoring. Faculty and administration are still concerned that some students' needs are not being met; however, as they continue through the process of implementing the remaining components of RtI, these areas will more than likely be addressed. As the year came to a close, most participants were beginning to see the positive impact RtI was having on their school. Because they would begin the next year with existing data, the faculty was looking forward to the 2012-2013 school year.

Research Question 2

What types of change occur at the administration level?

Two themes for phase one were identified from the interview data: (1) the administrator's role and (2) the counselor's role in implementing RtI. The data from the

interview in phase two gleaned two themes also: (1) changes that occurred during the implementation and (2) looking toward the future. Both administrators were enthusiastic about implementing RtI and tried to convey that enthusiasm to the faculty through professional development and encouraging feedback. The counselor took an active role in the implementation by listening to the faculty when there were problems and by providing instruction to the students which allowed the faculty to attend meetings. During phase two of the study, the administrators actively transformed the faculty to be more accountable and empowered through the relinquishing of the agenda of the PLC/RtI meetings. The meetings at the beginning of the year tended to be rigid but as the year progressed, everyone began to relax and make RtI fit the needs of the students and the school. Aubrey also realized that the addition of a third special education teacher would benefit the students, the teachers, and the school. As the implementation year went by, both administrators began to think about the coming year and the changes that would bring to RtI. Discussion of themes and supporting data follows.

Phase One

Administrator's Role. Both administrators understood the importance of advanced preparation for the changes that were to come. Debbie felt that "we are as prepared as we can be [and we need to] just make sure we've got all our ducks in a row with RtI…and have our expectations clear on what we expect from teachers." Aubrey stated that it was important to her as a leader to empower the faculty by allowing them to give input on decisions being made.

Caring for the faculty is an important duty of the leadership in a school. The leadership at this school was constantly "taking the temperature" of the faculty through

various means. "Taking the temperature" occurred through anonymous surveys, monitoring how fast the Snickers disappeared from the candy jar in the office, or observing how many teachers were visiting with the counselor. By paying attention to these items, administrators knew when it was time to have a celebration or order from Ted's Café Escondido (a local restaurant) for lunch. The teachers seemed to respond well to positive notes placed in their mailboxes as well as having a time to socialize. It was important to the administration that the teachers feel loved and supported while implementing the change to RtI.

However, the administrator's and counselor felt the biggest challenge was not the change to RtI, but the fact that the building was in disarray from the construction taking place. As discussed in the previous section, this did, in fact, become an obstacle at the beginning of the implementation year. Another transition was the retirement of several teachers in the building. This would lead to the hiring of new teachers who had not been through the training which had occurred throughout the year.

Counselor's Role. Caren was considered a part of the administration in this school and played a part in the transition to Response to Intervention. The school had over 1,000 students and only one counselor to meet the needs of the students and faculty. Her main role was to discuss the change from the IQ discrepancy model to RtI with parents. She also would counsel with teachers concerning any student who was struggling in the classroom. In order for the teachers to have time to attend the PLC meetings, Caren conducted guidance activities with classes.

Phase Two

Changes. Changes for the administration came in the way of giving more accountability and empowerment to the faculty. For example, beginning in January, 2012, each grade level was expected to prepare an agenda for their PLC/RtI meetings. The administrators wanted to "be able to come to a PLC meeting and have them [the faculty] control it…it's their meeting." When problems arose, administrators and faculty were able to "sit down and come up with a compromise that we feel good about that will still support the [students] but will make it livable for the teacher."

The administration realized the need for a third special education teacher due to the change to the RtI model. Special education teachers were allowed to have students for 30 minutes per day four days per week. This required the administration to make schedule changes. However, this change also allowed special education teachers the ability to go into the classroom to work with students. According to Aubrey, "…that gives a day for that teacher [special education teacher] to be able to float in, kind of check on them and mainstream. They like the schedule better."

Changing to RtI was seen as a step toward progress. In the beginning, everyone was very rigid, trying to do everything as the RtI district manual dictated. By the end of the year, everyone seemed to be more comfortable with the process and relaxed. The school was beginning to realize that the model could be their own allowing them to meet the needs of their students. The administrators realized that the process of change was going to take time. As Aubrey explained,

> "I'm not going to put the pedal to the metal because I think we've kind of settled in now to a really good spot. We're not going to go 80 and we're not going to slow down a lot. We're going to talk about what's working for us, where we need to tweak a little bit. [This] process will take four or five years and I'm okay with that. We have so much coming at us. We've got Common Core, the new

evaluation system, we have more things. There has to be a balance between all those things."

For the administrators, the most important idea was for the "school [to] keep going and we feel good." The administration did not want the faculty to experience too much pressure which could lead to burn out. As a school, the administration wanted to continually be improving in teacher effectiveness and student achievement.

The Future. The future brings challenges but, with what has been learned during the implementation year, the administration felt they were prepared. The 2012-2013 school year would bring the addition of the behavioral component of RtI; the following year, math would be added. The administration constantly looked forward in order to be prepared for what lies ahead.

A key component of being prepared for the future was keeping the faculty motivated. By giving information in small chunks, the administration hoped to not overwhelm the faculty. Ample lead time was given in order for the faculty to process the change and seek assistance if necessary. This slow approach was deemed effective by the administration and would be used with the implementation of the behavior component. To help with data collection, the administration kept records of the time students were on Success Maker. Administrators helped teachers keep an eye on the growth students were experiencing and focused on the positive aspects of changing to the RtI model.

Summary

In summary, the greatest change experienced by the administration was giving accountability and empowerment to the teachers in order to make the RtI model work for

the school. The administration provided assistance and support through professional development and time to relax. Administrators made it a habit to write positive notes to keep morale up as well as the opportunity to express opinions through anonymous surveys. By not moving too quickly, the administration felt that the faculty was well prepared for the implementation of RtI and the changes that RtI brought with it.

Research Question 3

What types of change occur with the faculty?

Phase one and phase two data for Research Question 3 had four common themes; phase two data identified one additional theme. The themes were (1) instructional/schedule changes, (2) time/classroom dynamics, (3) collaboration, (4) concerns, and (5) success stories. As previously mentioned, change implies that something has become different, altered, or modified. The faculty participants realized that their instruction became more intentional; they began to focus on each individual student as well as considering all the students in the grade level. The faculty also discovered that, in order to provide interventions and progress monitor, the daily schedule changed. Time became precious; most of the participants did not have enough time during the day to provide all that was needed for the students in their classrooms. Classroom dynamics are the interacting forces that take place in a classroom between the students and the teacher. Classroom dynamics are in a continuous state of change, growth, and activity. The implementation of RtI brought a change in the classroom dynamics; students served through special services were in the classroom during core subject instruction. The general education faculty became responsible for providing modified instruction and giving grades for students with SLD. Because of the classroom

dynamic change, concerns arose. Concerns are matters that grab an individual's attention, interest, or care. For the faculty participants, providing adequate instruction, appropriate interventions, and meeting each student's needs were major concerns. Faculty participants found that collaboration was a key ingredient in the success of implementing RtI. Collaboration is the ability to work with one another in order to achieve a common goal. The grade level teams worked together to find time to provide interventions to students. Participants shared success stories as the study grew to a close; students' confidence was building, fluency rates were growing, and some student's moved to a modified IEP. Data supporting each theme is provided.

Phase One

Instructional/schedule changes. With the faculty trying interventions with their lowest students during this phase of the study, participants did not identify any instructional changes. Laura did note the need for "smaller groups that are individualized [that] really target the things that [the students] are having trouble with." Janet attended an RtI workshop conducted by Mary Howard; she implemented a strategy learned at the workshop that enabled her to spend more time listening to each student read.

However, Robyn, from previous experience, noted several changes that were about to take place of which the general education teachers were not aware. For her, the time she would have students on IEP's would be cut to 30 minutes per day with a maximum number of five to six students. She understood that the general education teachers were going to have her students during reading which had not been the case up to this point. She stated,

> "…next year when they (general education faculty) first start working with including my students…it will be difficult for them. I think part of it is they've never had to work with the students once they are in special education. They don't have the responsibility of working with them and now they're going to. I think it will be very hard for the general education teacher when they start collecting that data and knowing what data to collect."

This same viewpoint was expressed by Debbie, but she was excited that the general education teacher would soon be more involved in the grades for their students serviced through an IEP. She stated,

> "We're going to have some third graders next year that are reading at first grade level and these third grade teachers are going to have to teach them. They just don't get to go to special education. I think that's going to be the biggest change. But, I think it's going to be what is best for [students]."

With the implementation of RtI, the administration expected the faculty to provide differentiated instruction as well as find time to administer interventions to students. Interventions were given four days per week with progress monitoring occurring on the fifth day. Interventions were to be supplemental to the daily required work completed by students and taught by teachers. Most teachers at this school felt more comfortable giving whole group lessons. To give interventions to three or four students meant that teachers must provide something to keep the remaining students in the room engaged. The hope of the administration was that the faculty would become so adept at differentiated instruction that it would not be just the students below benchmark receiving attention; the students above the benchmarks would be engaged in "really good projects."

Time/classroom dynamics. During phase one of this study, the participants were beginning to see how the change to RtI would impact their time and classroom dynamics. The participants with previous experience were aware of the additional time required to administer interventions along with the added paperwork RtI would bring. They also

were more aware of the need to provide differentiated instruction to a classroom containing all levels of learners. Laura, in regard to providing differentiated instruction, said, "You're going to have to be really creative in keeping everybody else doing something that's appropriate and strengthens their skills, too, which is like being a miracle worker." Allison agreed and added, "…it's not as noticeable when I have a student teacher."

Robyn wrote in her journal concerning the set time limits she would have for her students in special education. She stated, "Individual students' needs must be met. The schedule can't rule what special education students need." She also needed time to attend the grade level PLC meetings so that she would be able to collaborate with the teachers of her students.

Beth discussed the differences she would encounter from her previous experience with RtI. Her previous experience was at a middle school grade level where she had 50 minutes per class period. This time limitation required her to conduct interventions before and after school. At the elementary level, she found she was able to do spot checks throughout the day with students at-risk and realized she would need to find a specific time during her day to work with her identified students.

The question that all participants asked was, "How do I find the time in my day?" When April and the state criterion referenced tests came along, the few interventions that were being done were completely forgotten in order to prepare the students for the standardized testing. Allison asked, "Is it effective to stop the interventions for a period of time due to testing? Is this hurting or impacting students in any way?"

The administration expressed the same sentiments. Caren discussed how RtI was going to impact the teacher's day. She was beginning to hear from teachers their concern about how there were not enough hours in the day for everything that was required. Aubrey acknowledged that some of the faculty had difficulty with time management and that it would be necessary to monitor at the beginning but eventually turn everything over to the teachers. She expressed the same sentiment concerning differentiated instruction. She stated, "Differentiated instruction…some teachers have it…some of them really struggle with it."

Collaboration. Janet, Amy, and Robyn, had previous experience with RtI and understood the value of collaborating with their colleagues. Little to no collaboration was taking place between the general education teachers and the special education teachers at this time. Robyn knew the value of collaboration with the general education teachers and wanted to be able to attend the PLC meetings. This did not occur during phase one of this study. In her previous schools, she was able to participate in co-teaching and inclusion and was hoping that the change to RtI would bring that about at this site.

Janet and Amy were keenly aware of the value of collaborating. Janet stated, "If somebody else is doing something great, I want to know about it so that I can do it, too." Amy expressed the value of sharing materials and working with other teachers to get ideas and interventions that worked for them. In her words, "[We] need to combine [students] and energy to work smarter, not harder."

When Aubrey was asked about the ability of her faculty to collaborate, she had high praises for them. She felt the faculty was very adept at working together across

grade level, but admitted that collaboration between grade levels probably needed to occur more often. "Our teachers are really good about helping each other. [We] have a very high level of conversation PLC wise already going on within the grade level."

Concerns. With the implementation of RtI came not only a change in how students would be identified for special education but also a change in the instrument used to identify students at-risk. This school had been using a combination of assessments to identify students who were struggling with reading, i.e. Literacy First, Bear Spelling Inventory, and the STAR assessment from Accelerated Reader. The faculty received training in DIBELS from two third grade teachers who had been trained as trainers for the school. After receiving training on DIBELS, several participants expressed concern over the assessment. Beth stated,

> "One of my concerns [is that] I know research shows that fluency builds comprehension but some of them, they're reading, they can read their words per minute and be above level but then if I turn around and [ask] what did you just read. They love to read fast and it does make them feel better, but [there is] no comprehension."

Concern was also expressed about the interventions the teachers were asked to try before full implementation. Depending upon the grade level, one intervention was demonstrated at a PLC meeting for the teachers to begin trying out with their lowest students. Lower grade levels were trained in the Say It, Move It intervention and upper grade levels were trained in the Cold/Hot Read intervention. One participant stated, "We are all doing the same intervention [because] we are just learning. I think doing the same intervention for four months is probably not the best idea because the kids are bored to tears." This same concern was expressed by one administrator, Debbie, when she stated, "Our teachers really wanted more. They kind of got bored with just doing one

intervention with every [student]. Then we figured out…there's different ways you can do Say It, Move It, so that was us learning."

Several participants felt that good teachers were probably already using interventions without realizing it. Several stated that they would look for strategies they had used before to work with a student; or, they would discuss with their colleagues what they were doing in their classrooms and how it was working.

The participants were also expressing specific concerns for the next school year and the full implementation of RtI. There was a realization that special education students were only going to be out of the classroom for 30 minutes for reading and 30 minutes for math. Most teachers were not used to students served through an IEP being in their classroom for the majority of the day; they were unsure of how to keep them involved along with the rest of the class. However, according to Robyn, this was seen as an advantage for her students. She stated,

> "Special education students need to be in the classroom. [They] receive incidental learning [along with] language [skills.] [There is] a lot more growth when they are in the classroom and they are learning what everyone else is learning. They get a lot more out of it than if you pull them out."

In regard to the implementation year, one participant stated that it "would be nice if we could get that testing done before they came into the classroom…it's pretty overwhelming to think that you're going to do this screening for each child in fluency." Another participant expressed the same feeling but realized that would have to be a decision made by the administration. She also wondered if there would be resistance to conducting assessments before the end of the year along with all the other things that must be accomplished.

Phase Two

Instructional/schedule changes. As far as general instruction with the whole class, most teachers did not see any change; however, Amy noted that as she "came to a part that has a Say It, Move It type of activity in it [I try to make] sure I'm watching and focusing on the one's who I'm working with on that as an intervention." For most of the participants, the changes came back to the issue of time to provide the intervention, which will be discussed further in the next section. Teachers reported that they were beginning to understand the importance of small group, differentiated instruction and struggled to find the time to work small groups into their day. One participant chose to give up her time before the school day began to work with students who arrived to school early. Two teachers chose to share story time during the day; while one read to both classes, the other pulled student's aside to provide interventions. Beth chose to set aside that last 30-40 minutes of each day to conduct interventions. She stated, "I just kind of made it be part of the daily [routine]. At 3:00 every day, they sit down with me here and my other [students] are either working on an assignment for me [or] working on math or something from another class they didn't finish or reading their novel…Everybody is so used to it."

Robyn perhaps had the biggest change due to the time limit imposed by the district RtI model. She had students for 30 minutes per day four days per week; the reading program she is required to use was meant to cover a 45 minute time period. Because this school utilized a pull-out program, students were sent to her classroom, not always arriving on time. Being fully aware of what happens in a classroom and how time can get away from the general education teacher, she was not surprised this occurred.

Because of this, she would like to see more of a push-in program utilized. She would be better able to provide support for the students in their classroom and capitalize on the core curriculum taught by the general education teacher.

Time/classroom dynamics. Time and classroom dynamics remained major issues with the implementation of RtI during phase two of the study. Time was needed for administering the universal screener, interventions and progress monitoring. This was added to the time needed to give district benchmark assessments as well as prepare for state testing in grades three through five. Some participants expressed that the amount of assessment seemed to be growing and this was taking away from their teaching time. Because of the emphasis of providing interventions to the lowest students, participants felt the other students in their class were being ignored. This was evident especially when a teacher had three students in tier one at-risk with each student needing a different intervention. When the teachers were informed that Success Maker could be used as an intervention, concern for time to give the intervention subsided. However, this concern arose again when students began to be placed on tier 2a. The first and second grade teachers began to think outside the box and devised a plan to collaborate and combine students needing the same intervention. Others chose to send intervention instructions home with their students so they could practice after school hours. However, there were some students whose parents did not help leading the participant to feel like time needed to be found for those students to practice during the school day.

The time spent in the PLC/RtI meetings looking at student graphs also became an issue with some participants. One participant stated, "I know what my students' graphs look like." Some participants felt that this time could be better spent on discussing

successful interventions they had used, how to find time to conduct interventions and progress monitoring, and how to be effective in the classroom.

The administration continued to see challenges with classroom dynamics. Aubrey stated, "The teachers have had challenges with some of our really low [students] being put in the regular education classroom. And the [students] have had some challenges there, too." Both the special education teachers and the general education teachers were beginning to see the benefit of collaborating with each other as well as accepting the special education teachers into the general education classroom.

Collaboration. Collaboration seemed to be about the same as compared to the year before full implementation of RtI. Collaboration was encouraged during the PLC/RtI meetings by the school psychologist once more students were moving into the second tier of the model. Teachers were encouraged to share the responsibility of providing interventions. Some participants noted that their grade levels were beginning to think outside the box and becoming creative in finding time to conduct interventions. One participant shared story time with another teacher; others talked about setting aside a specific time in the day when the entire grade level provided interventions so that they could share students. With each grade level having anywhere from six to seven sections, some were dividing into groups of three to pull from each other's classes to work with students. The PLC meetings were also seen as a form of collaboration as the grade levels spent this time discussing different ways of meeting students' needs.

The administration was aware of the collaboration taking place and was constantly encouraging the faculty to think of unique ways to share responsibilities. As noted in an administrator's journal entry concerning collaboration, there is "less my

student/your student attitude, more shared ownership. All students are receiving instruction and experiencing success." It was clearly evident the teachers at this school "want what's best for the [students]…they work together."

Concerns. Faculty expressed concerns in several areas. The first area was from an overall perspective of using RtI. Several participants wondered if the aimline was too low. Amy questioned the change in the aimline for nonsense word fluency. It was felt the aimline was so low that it made it too easy for students to get four consecutive data points above the line, thereby moving the student back to tier one. At the next PLC/RtI meeting, she received an answer to this question. She stated, "The district is not following DIBELS. [They] moved the goal from mid-year to end of year so more students would reach [the] goal." This answer caused her to wonder about fidelity and the impact on the RtI process. Fidelity will be addressed in Research Question 4.

DIBELS states that teachers should give three oral reading fluency probes with comprehension retelling following the reading. This process, however, was changed for the implementation year and had participants wondering why. As discussed before, this was a decision made by the administration in order to help the teachers with the many transitions taking place throughout the building. However, this decision led to false positive identification of some students requiring the teachers to provide interventions for the first four to six weeks of school. Teachers expressed concern for those who seemed to have an overabundance of tier one at-risk students. This was also due to the lack of conducting three probes.

The second area of concern was for the students. The participants felt that by using only select parts of DIBELS they were not seeing the complete picture of students'

strengths and weaknesses. Participants understood that DIBELS helped identify students at risk of not learning to read but "it doesn't tell me what to do next. [We] need some other form of assessment that tells where to start." Amy expressed this concern by saying,

> "[We should] not assume every child needs Say It, Move It. One size does not fit all…we were told that Say It, Move It is what the district recommends for first grade students who are at risk. Some may not be ready for that yet. Do we need to go back to rhyming or counting words in a sentence? We don't get help in identifying what is appropriate."

Participants claimed that they were in need of more interventions that met the specific needs of the students. The participants also wanted to know why they were not allowed to determine what intervention would best suit the needs of their students. Overall, the participants expressed two main frustrations: (1) Do I have the right intervention? (2) Do I have the time needed to be able to do the intervention well?

Finally, and perhaps the most debated concern, was over fluency and comprehension. The participants repeatedly stated the following, "Fluency precedes comprehension." During observation of one of the PLC/RtI meetings, several participants questioned why comprehension was not being addressed. The school psychologist informed the teachers that comprehension would probably be addressed in the future, but for the implementation year, fluency would be the targeted area. She also advised the teachers to consult the Florida Center for Reading Research for interventions concerning comprehension and that comprehension should be addressed during their core curriculum instruction. However, teachers with many years of experience still questioned the thought process behind not addressing comprehension. "It's all about fluency, even if they don't need fluency." Teachers felt like they were teaching to the test; progress

monitoring centered on how many words were read correctly. Some participants had students that could read every word correctly at the rate DIBELS required; but, when students were asked questions' concerning what was read, they could not answer the questions. As stated by one participant, "Fluency does not a reader make." Participants were content with using DIBELS as the universal screener to identify students at-risk and for progress monitoring; however, they expressed a desire for further assessments to be used in determining the specific problem of students reading skills so that appropriate interventions could be designed to meet those problems.

Success stories. Several participants related stories of success witnessed since the beginning of the year. Janet, Amy, Beth, and a member of the focus group all stated that they had seen growth in students with whom they had been working. Beth attributed the growth in her student to consistently providing extra support. Amy stated, "It is so exciting to see the growth many of my students have made." For Robyn, success was seen for two students who were dismissed from the resource program. "They have just, according to RtI, they are just taking way off. So it's been really good data for me to prove that they really don't need to be in special education anymore." The general education teacher for one of these students commented that this was the first time in her teaching career for this to happen. It was very exciting to see the students' growth from the data provided through progress monitoring.

Summary

From phase one to phase two, instructional changes were subtle. Participants did not see a dramatic change in their overall instruction, but they did begin to see the need for differentiated instruction through the use of small groups. Change occurred in the

amount of time needed to provide administration of the universal screener, interventions, and progress monitoring. The change of having students with specific learning disabilities in the general education classroom for longer periods of the day brought concern from the general education teacher, the special education teacher, and the administration. This change of the classroom dynamics found teachers having to provide materials for all levels of learners as well as their grades. Some participants worried that the students working at higher levels were being ignored while having to provide interventions. Some participants took advantage of this by collaborating with colleagues and the special education teachers. The administration continuously encouraged the faculty to find unique ways to meet the needs of the students as well as finding ways to provide time for interventions and progress monitoring. However, there were major concerns expressed from the faculty about the time needed to give interventions and progress monitor. Another area of major concern was the focus on fluency to the point that comprehension was left unaddressed. Finally, the concern of the inability to pinpoint the exact deficit of a student's reading skills and the inability to choose the intervention for that skill was a major point of concern.

Research Question 4

What kind of support does faculty receive in regard to resources, training, data collection, and data analysis?

Data for Research Question 4 identified seven themes: (1) professional development, (2) resources, (3) support, (4) collaboration, (5) fidelity, (6) data, and (7) concerns. Professional development is the advancement of skills or expertise on a regular basis through continued education. Opportunities for professional development were

provided for faculty on a regular basis. Resources are supplies and/or support that can be readily drawn upon when needed. Administration supplied resources for the interventions and progress monitoring; discussion concerning additional resources occurred near the end of the school year. Support is the ability to provide necessary needs to maintain change. Administration provided support by allowing faculty to give feedback, share successes, and give time for collaboration. Collaboration is working together to achieve a common goal. Collaboration occurred on a weekly basis through the PLC/RtI meetings. Fidelity is ensuring that faculty adheres to the detail of interventions with precision and rigor. Fidelity checks were done on a regular basis through the weekly PLC/RtI meetings and through the teacher intervention log. Data refers to the compilation of information gathered during assessment and progress monitoring. Student data were gathered each week and then analyzed during the bi-weekly RtI meetings. Faculty became adept at looking at a student's graphed data to determine what was needed for growth. Concerns are matters that pique a person's attention, interest, or care. Several concerns arose over the course of the implementation year including the appropriateness of interventions and the time required to administer interventions. Data supporting each theme are discussed.

Phase One

Professional Development. Professional development for RtI during phase one of the study consisted of several workshops conducted for the faculty as well as attending workshops outside of the district. The timeline of implementation mentioned in Chapter Four gives approximate dates of when professional development occurred. The district RtI coordinator came to the school to give the faculty an overview of RtI which gave the

teachers the "what it looks like…and why we're doing it." During the year prior to implementation, the establishment of professional learning communities occurred in each grade level. This meeting, referred to by the participants as Big Block meetings, was held once a week for one hour to allow the teachers to discuss the changes coming with the implementation of Response to Intervention. Mary Howard, author of *RtI from All Sides: What Every Teacher Needs to Know*, presented a workshop in the area which several teachers from the school attended. After attending this workshop, the teachers felt it would benefit the entire faculty to read her book and requested the administration buy one for each faculty member.

Also, during this time, two third grade teachers attended DIBELS training. The transition from Literacy First to DIBELS began at this time; the two teachers began holding half day training sessions with the faculty. Each faculty member also received a training book from DIBELS. Time was spent discussing the difference between providing modifications for students versus administering interventions. Teachers received training on interventions that would be used as well as how to conduct progress monitoring of students and the entering of data on their computers. After receiving this training, the faculty tried the interventions with several of their lowest students. Allison expressed that she would have liked more training on different fluency interventions other than the Cold/Hot Read. Laura stated a need to "have a little more [training as] we go into summer [to] let us study up, figure out how to manage the class while doing small group activities." Debbie stated that training and professional development would "continue as needed [and we] will [be prepared] to train new faculty" when the fall semester begins.

Resources. The district and the school psychologist provided resources for RtI. It was also reported that the PTO gave $50 per semester to every teacher to buy items for their classrooms. Administrators reported that each "grade level received $1,000 at the beginning of each year to purchase what they need." New faculty received funds from the PTO as well to help get their classrooms started. Faculty and administration participants discussed a desire to create a leveled reading resource room. A few participants expressed the desire for "more ideas and interventions." Debbie wanted to "create a kind of file box with two or three interventions for…areas they (students) need to work on" for each teacher. Each teacher was provided a timer and materials needed to conduct progress monitoring.

Support. Some participants felt a great deal of support from the administration while others felt they could have used more. Support from the administration was evident during Big Block meetings when questions were asked and answered in a timely manner. Caren agreed by saying "[The meetings support the teachers] because when teachers do have concerns they can come and express those concerns and talk about it." Participants saw the administration as being supportive in that they were constantly encouraged to ask questions and provide feedback on what had been done thus far. The administration provided professional development which helped support the teachers during the transition to RtI. Participants with previous experience felt that those without experience may need a little more support at the beginning. Laura thought it would be wonderful, in a perfect world, to "have a support person in every classroom." The administration felt they gave support to the teachers by providing professional development opportunities through various means. The district provided support by

providing funds for professional development, materials, and a school psychologist. Debbie stated she gave support by "just [trying] to be there if they need to talk. I think the only way we can get this down is by conversations and practice…"

Fidelity. The participants with previous experience understood the importance of fidelity at this point of the transition to RtI. Janet discussed fidelity in regard to record keeping of data being done in a timely matter. She knew she would be asked, "Why do you not have it (data) recorded?" if it was not available to look at. Amy also discussed the importance of making sure everyone was doing what was expected and as it was designed to be done. She felt that the "Big Block times [would be a] time to talk about what we're doing and what's happening in our groups." Fidelity will be discussed further in phase two.

Data. As with the fidelity portion of RtI, the data collection and analysis were not given as much emphasis in this phase of the study as in phase two. Participants were trained by the DIBELS trainers on the administration of DIBELS as the universal screener. The administration reported that the trainers were questioning why the district chose to give only certain portions of the DIBELS; this would remain a question through phase two and will be discussed in the phase two data section. The faculty received training on data collection and how to access the common share drive on their computers to input data collected. Further discussion of data collection and data analysis will follow.

Concerns. From the faculty participants, most concerns at this point were about the interventions they had received training on and were trying with several students in their classrooms. Janet tried the Cold/Hot Read with five of her students,

> "…two students were struggling with comprehension – not effective; three students (one struggling with fluency, one classified as ELL, and one just beginning to read) found success, graphed changes, students were excited. [Tried] Say It, Move It and found students grew bored – not for third grade."

Laura expressed concern over reading the same passage over and over (Cold/Hot Read). She did not see this as a method to read better and was afraid that her students were simply memorizing the words.

Both administrators addressed and expressed concern with the interventions. Aubrey stated,

> "All of our interventions are designed to build fluency beginning with kindergarten. Fluency is really the number one reason that kids can't pass that test (state criterion referenced test)…a lot of things go into fluency but if they can read fluently at the level of which they are suppose to, generally they can get enough questions right to pass that test. You have a few who have comprehension issues."

As discussed in the concern section of Research Question 3, Phase Two, fluency became the biggest concern of the faculty; students who were considered fluent continued to struggle with comprehension and were not being identified through the DIBELS screener. For Debbie the biggest concern was that only certain interventions were being prescribed despite the fact that may not be the area of skill deficit for the student. For the lower grades, the only intervention was Say It, Move It; for the upper grades, the only intervention was the Cold/Hot Read. This concern was also addressed in Research Question 3, Phase Two from both the faculty participants and the administration participants.

Phase Two

Professional Development. During phase two of the study, professional development consisted of a review of DIBELS, the PLC/RtI meetings, and interventions

designated for use in tier two. At the beginning of the 2011-2012 school year, the teachers reviewed how to administer the DIBELS screener and progress monitoring. The school psychologist spent a portion of each bi-weekly meeting going over different topics pertaining to RtI such as progress monitoring, the input of data, data analysis, and fidelity. This meeting also served as a time and place that questions from the faculty could be asked and answered. If a question was asked that required more research on the part of the school psychologist, faculty reported that she always followed up at the next meeting. As students moved into tier 2a, faculty received training on the intervention that was required to be given. For the most part, the intervention for students in the lower grades was Say It, Move It and the upper grades used the Cold/Hot Read. Confusion and concern arose over both of these interventions. Say It, Move It, as discussed previously, did not help every student and the teachers and students grew bored with doing the same thing over and over. It was at this point that the participants realized that this intervention could be done in a number of different ways. Directions for the Cold/Hot Read changed from the time it was introduced to the next school year with no apparent reasons given for the change.

Several participants felt the need for further professional development in the "meat and potatoes" of RtI. The need for more background concerning RtI as well as more ways to assess students was given as reasons for further professional development. As Amy stated, "I'm thinking that if we were trained to find out what it is that's wrong" in specific areas, more appropriate interventions could be found to meet the student's needs.

Aubrey and Debbie gave high praises for the school psychologist's excellent job in providing continuing professional development for the faculty. "I love this way. I think this continual little bit is [great]. It's like [it's] imbedded," said Aubrey. Both administrators agreed that professional development would need to remain a high priority as the school implements the remaining components of RtI. As new faculty members are hired, professional development in RtI will be of utmost importance.

Resources. As far as needed resources, the two most mentioned by faculty participants were leveled readers and time. Participants realized that the resource of time was not one that could be easily addressed and accepted the fact that time could not be added to the school day. Teachers shared resources throughout the school. The school psychologist and the administration were quick to provide any materials needed for the administering of interventions and progress monitoring. However, participants expressed a desire for a variety of interventions to use that were more appropriate to the specific needs of the students and to alleviate students becoming bored. The leveled readers were perhaps the most important resource requested. The participants knew that to fully provide differentiated reading instruction, a variety of leveled readers with multiple copies available would be of great benefit. The administration also noted the PTO provided funds each year to every teacher for materials to be purchased specifically for the classroom.

Support. The participants stated the PLC/RtI meetings were a wonderful source of support. At the meetings, participants received encouragement to share Really Terrific Ideas (RtI) with colleagues, the successes being seen with students, and receive feedback from the school psychologist. The school psychologist also provided support by

providing assessment and intervention materials, sending weekly reminders to faculty, and maintenance of student data. Amy said, "Everybody's supporting us as they can but they're still learning, too." Beth added, "[The] principal has been very good about if you need anything, just come to her." Robyn stated, "I feel like the administration [has] been real supportive. I think the PLC meetings have really helped a lot with giving us the information that we've needed."

Aubrey also felt that the weekly meetings provided the needed professional development and support the faculty required. She added that, if necessary, she would be willing to find the time for further meetings during the week if the teachers felt it was needed. Aubrey would write positive notes to the teachers, put little stickers on Success Maker reports, or put a candy bar in their mailbox "just to keep the morale up and to keep the teachers feeling good." She was very sympathetic to their needs wishing she could give them more time in their day and provide a third special education teacher that could be in the classroom.

Collaboration. As previously mentioned, the PLC/RtI meetings played a significant role in professional development and support as well as in collaboration. It was in these meetings that teachers could celebrate successes and find encouragement for continuing to work with struggling students. However, the time spent going over each student's graphed data was seen negatively for some while for others this was time well spent. Those feeling that it was unnecessary to go over every graph wanted more time to discuss what needed to be done specifically for each student.

Aubrey and Debbie reported they were beginning to see more collaboration taking place within grade levels. By turning ownership of the PLC/RtI meetings over to each

grade level, more collaboration was taking place. These participants also stated they would like to see more collaboration between the general education teachers and the special education teachers but realized this may be difficult with only two special education teachers for a school population of over 1,000 students. For some teachers, Aubrey stated, "I still feel like we're a little individualized in our ownership and I would like to see us as a grade level on those [students] (students on RtI)." Perhaps this is an area they will continue to work on throughout the remaining years of implementation.

Fidelity. Fidelity, in phase one, was not as fully addressed as in phase two perhaps because data was not being collected. During one of the first PLC/RtI meetings observed, the school psychologist addressed the issue of fidelity. Fidelity provides for better outcomes for students while helping teachers make better decisions. Fidelity was defined as the extent the RtI plan was carried out as intended. Fidelity of the intervention was defined as the student receiving the intervention for the duration and frequency indicated on the student's plan. Components of fidelity included the core curriculum, the screening and progress monitoring, the intervention plan, and the use of the collaborative team model for decision making. The administration monitored fidelity for Success Maker; they were able to monitor computer generated reports for each student which was then discussed at the weekly PLC meetings. Once a student moved to tier 2a, the school psychologist monitored fidelity within a given amount of time after the intervention began. Documentation of fidelity occurred at this tier by the teacher filling out a tier 2 intervention log which remained in the student's file. Janet felt that the PLC meetings were a good way to conduct fidelity checks by stating, "I believe it helps to know someone is checking on us." Amy reiterated this statement by saying, "[The] bi-weekly

meetings [are] helpful in that they make each of us accountable for doing progress monitoring."

Data. Collection of data for RtI occurred through the administration of DIBELS given to every student in the school. Upon completion, data from the screener were used to identify students as tier one (responding to the core curriculum) or tier one at-risk (not responding to the core curriculum). Once identified as tier one at-risk, a student began receiving intervention. In the case of this school, tier one at-risk intervention consisted of the use of a computer program, Success Maker. The use of this intervention was a source of concern for two participants (Janet and Amy) who had previous experience with RtI. In their previous experience, interventions were to be given by teachers only. Laura, who had no previous experience with RtI, had no problems using the computer program because she felt it provided scaffolded instruction.

After four days of intervention, progress monitoring occurred and the results were entered into an Excel program on the teacher's computer. This Excel program plotted the information on a graph. At each bi-weekly PLC/RtI meeting, each grade level went over their student's graphs and analyzed the information to make decisions regarding further instruction. This discussion was led by the school psychologist. After four weeks of graphed data, further analysis was conducted. Four consistent data points on a graph indicated a trend according to the district RtI manual. At this point, decisions could be made concerning the next step for a student – movement back to tier one, continuation of the intervention for another four weeks, or movement to tier 2a.

During analysis, participants voiced opinions concerning the appropriateness of the intervention or the lack of identification of students struggling with comprehension.

For example, one participant wrote in her journal about using Say It, Move It with an older student. She raised valid questions by asking, "How does this intervention help with fluency? How does this intervention transfer to progress monitoring when the student has to read a passage that is on grade level?" Amy, who worked with lower grade students voiced the same concern when she stated, "Students on tier 2a are all doing Say It, Move It, but [they] may not all be ready for that." In her previous experience with RtI, teachers used another assessment after giving the screener that helped determine the appropriate intervention to start with. Participants expressed several times, in interviews and journal entries, the desire to have more ownership in determining where the student's deficits were and the appropriate interventions to use for that specific deficit. Teachers were required to do the prescribed intervention determined by the district. They could choose to do supplemental interventions but had to document the prescribed intervention. When students moved back to tier one, some teachers chose to continue the intervention because of concern that the core curriculum was not enough to support the student's needs. Debbie asked an important question during her interview - "Is being so prescriptive dumbing down the curriculum and the profession?"

Summary

In summary, the faculty and administration found the PLC/RtI meetings as a good source of professional development and support. Within these meetings, faculty were held accountable for providing intervention time for the students as well as conducting progress monitoring. The meetings also provided time for collaborative decision making while analyzing student graphs. Some participants, however, felt that the time spent on data analysis could have been more wisely spent in discussing how to better assess

student deficits and determining more appropriate interventions to use with their students. As far as resources, the participants felt, for the most part, they were adequate. The two most requested resources were time and leveled readers. Both administrators discussed the same resources; work had begun by the end of the school year on providing a resource room that contained multiple copies of quality, leveled readers for the teachers to check out. Time will continue to be a resource that all teachers need regardless of implementing RtI.

Summary of Findings

The participants recognized that change in regard to implementation of RtI was a paradigm shift. This shift in thinking was important for all stakeholders to understand and embrace. Faculty were helped to accept this change by introducing and implementing changes incrementally. As with any change taking place, various setbacks as well as successes took place. Sometimes, the setbacks were due to difficult decisions that had to be made. The district allowed the administrators to make the decisions necessary that would help make RtI fit the culture of the school. Participants understood that the process of change may take several years to complete but all stakeholders were willing to invest the time and energy needed to continually evolve into a school that meets the needs of each student.

Changes in the administration were subtle. The administration provided ways for the faculty to give feedback anonymously. The faculty were empowered by the administration by giving them accountability for their students and for their weekly PLC meetings. The administration empathized with the needs the faculty presented to them by providing positive feedback along with small tangible incentives. The administration

allowed the faculty to have ample time to digest the changes that were occurring in order to make the changes fit their needs. By January, 2012, administration and faculty were beginning to realize they did not have to be rigid in the change process; they began to breathe easier and make RtI fit the needs of their student population. The administration was continually thinking about and planning for the coming years and the implementation of the remaining components of RtI.

The faculty saw the biggest change in the paradigm shift of thinking about their classroom. Every student's needs, including those with specific learning disabilities, were being met in the general education classroom. This brought about a change in the dynamics of the classroom. The teachers began to see the need for more differentiated instruction in order to meet this shift in dynamics. The teachers had to also consider the time required to administer the universal screener, interventions, and progress monitoring as well as teaching the core curriculum. More collaboration occurred between teammates and with special education teachers. The changes brought concerns about the dynamics of the classroom and how that would affect their method of teaching as well as meeting the specific needs of students identified as at-risk and delivering the appropriate intervention. The faculty did experience successes through this change. Students began to build fluency skills and with that came a rise in student confidence. Students were able to visibly see their progress through the data collected. At least two students were moved to a modified IEP which is rare for schools and teachers to see; their response to the interventions allowed this to occur.

Professional development was on-going throughout both phases of this study. This was seen as an integral part of the success of implementing change and will continue

to occur through the implementation of the remaining components as well as when new faculty are hired. Professional development would occur in the school as well as through other means. The school psychologist provided much of the professional development in relation to assessment, progress monitoring, data collection and analysis. She also conducted fidelity checks through the bi-weekly RtI meetings and observation of tier 2a interventions. The administration offered an open-door policy to the faculty for questions and feedback. Resources were provided as needed. Constant positive feedback and small incentives were utilized to keep the faculty going. Teachers voiced concern for a resource room containing multiple copies of leveled readers to which the administration is working diligently to meet that need. The goal of having a school that is constantly working toward high student achievement and high teacher effectiveness is being furthered by the implementation of Response to Intervention.

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

"As educators, we face a difficult challenge
to meet the needs of all of our students.
RtI does help in the process." (Research participant)

Summary of Research Questions and Methodology

The final chapter of this study provides a summary of the research questions and methodology, as well as a discussion of the findings, the role of the researcher and reflection, limitations of the study, and recommendations for further research regarding school change in relation to the implementation of Response to Intervention. The researcher chose to use qualitative case study as the methodology. This methodology was chosen because it provided an "explanation as well as exploration" (Barone, 2011, p. 22) of change in regard to RtI from the perspectives of one elementary school's administration and faculty. This method provided an avenue for the voices of the administration and faculty to be heard concerning how change affected their practices, their classrooms, and their school. The case study consisted of two phases: phase one occurred the year prior to RtI implementation with phase two occurring the year of RtI implementation.

Participants for this case study consisted of two administrators, one counselor, one school psychologist, one special education teacher, and ten teachers (one teacher from each grade level, first grade through fifth grade, as well as a focus group of one grade level). Data sources consisted of interviews, journal entries, observations of PLC/RtI meetings as well as interventions administered to students, and various artifacts

including the RtI district manual. Face-to-face, audio-taped individual interviews were held with each participant except the school psychologist and the focus group. The focus group interview required a transcriptionist be present as all but one of the group requested not to be audio-taped or quoted directly. Five of the six focus group participants declined an individual interview. Data analysis consisted of open, line-by-line coding to determine patterns which led to over-arching themes between both phases of the study as well as the participants.

The research questions for this study were

1. How does one elementary school implement change in regard to Response to Intervention?
2. What types of changes occur with the administration?
3. What types of changes occur with the faculty?
4. What kind of support does faculty receive in regard to resources, training, data collection, and data analysis?

Results and Discussion

This case study looked at change in one elementary school in regard to the implementation of Response to Intervention. This change occurred due to a top-down decision that RtI would be a means by which students are identified as needing greater support than the core curriculum gives. RtI would also be used in conjunction with IQ discrepancy to identify students with specific learning disabilities. Changes such as this affect all stakeholders involved in schools. An element of trust must be established between stakeholders when implementing change. This trust can be established by

keeping lines of communication open and allowing for feedback to be given that lets the stakeholders make the changes their own.

Changes Experienced in Regard to Theoretical Framework

Change occurred in this school from the inside, the inside-out, and the outside-in. From the inside, change occurred in the classroom, in the grade levels, and in the school. In the classroom, teachers were becoming more intentional (Putnam, Smith, & Cassady, 2009) by recognizing the need for more differentiated instruction. Teachers changed from asking, "How is my class doing?" to "How is each student doing?" Teachers experienced a change in their classroom dynamics as students with IEP's were now expected to remain in the classroom during core curriculum instruction. This change challenged the teachers as well as the students.

Grade levels were formed into professional learning communities and began working more cohesively as a team. While a few of the faculty continued to work in isolation, the majority were finding ways to creatively collaborate to "work smarter, not harder" as stated by one participant. Teachers were always learning from each other and sharing ideas in which they found success. Administration, general education teachers, and special education teachers began to collaborate more with each other.

The changes across the school led to the school being "re-cultured." The school began working toward the idea of one population of students instead of two – the general education students and the special education students. The idea of all students belonging to all teachers was formed through the weekly professional learning community meetings. PLC meetings were a key ingredient for providing time for collaboration,

professional development, and data analysis. Administration empowered the faculty to take ownership of the PLC meetings. Through the PLC meetings, data were continually analyzed which led to instructional changes leading to increased student achievement for learners who were struggling.

Changes experienced from the inside-out came in the form of professional development and support from the Parent Teacher Organization. Professional development was continuously taking place through the PLC/RtI meetings. The school psychologist presented various elements of RtI during the bi-weekly PLC/RtI meetings. Two DIBELS trainers, as well as faculty with previous experience, were always available when questions arose concerning the universal screener, progress monitoring, or interventions. The district and administration provided time and funds to attend workshops when available. Sources of information included books and web sites, and the PTO provided funds to teachers to purchase any needed materials. Faculty realized the need to further understand RtI and actively sought information from outside sources. Administration focused on deepening the understanding of the changes occurring rather than trying to do too much at one time. Celebrations occurred for successes and when setbacks happened, they were analyzed to determine the next appropriate steps.

The outside-in change came from the top-down decision to implement RtI. However, the district allowed the school to tweak the district RtI model to fit the culture and needs of this particular school. Collaboration among other elementary schools in the district also took place. Teachers from schools across the district provided professional development so that this school could learn what to do as well as what not to do.

The changes this school experienced led to a paradigm shift in three distinct areas. First, teachers no longer looked at their classes as one unit. They began to consider the specific needs of each student. Secondly, teachers, through RtI, were beginning to identify students needing extra support earlier; therefore, interventions were begun earlier. This extra and sometimes intensive support system either led to success in integrating the students back into the core curriculum or earlier identification of specific learning disabilities. Lastly, teachers became responsible for all students with and without specific learning disabilities by providing instruction in the core curriculum, appropriate interventions, and grades for the students.

Implementing RtI

In regard to implementing RtI, the implementation took place in phases as recommended (Burns & Ysseldyke, 2005; Lembke, et al., 2010; Palenchar & Boyer, 2008; Shepherd & Salembier, 2010). One full year before full implementation, faculty were introduced to RtI and began training for the universal screener, progress monitoring, and administration of interventions. Teachers were given the tools needed to assess students, interpret the results of the assessment, and an opportunity to engage in problem-solving (Sansoti & Noltemeyer, 2008) during the implementation year.

Both administrators played an important role in the implementation. Administrators provided support, materials, and time each week to collaborate as a team in PLC/RtI meetings (Murawski & Hughes, 2009; Sansoti & Noltemeyer, 2008; Shepherd & Salembier, 2010; Stuart & Rinaldi, 2009). They sought feedback from the faculty to make the RtI model fit the culture and needs of their school (Kratochwill, et al., 2007; Sansoti & Noltemeyer, 2008). The faculty experienced responsibility and

accountability by being in charge of their PLC meetings. The establishment of goals and timelines allowed an easy transition for the change to RtI. Administrators were continually looking toward the future and planning for the implementation of the remaining components as well as the best way to sustain the implemented model (Burns & Ysseldyke, 2005).

Professional development took place during the bi-weekly RtI meetings which centered on the elements of RtI as well as data collection, data analysis, and fidelity. Administrators planned for professional development in regard to new employees as well as sustaining professional development for current faculty. Professional development in the coming years will focus on the behavior component of RtI as well as the math component (Kratochwill, et al., 2007; Noell & Gansle, 2009; Richards, et al., 2007; Sansoti & Noltemeyer, 2008; Shepherd & Salembier, 2010).

The administration encouraged collaboration horizontally through grade level PLC meetings. More collaboration was beginning to take place between the general education teachers and the special education teachers. However, more collaboration should be encouraged among other specialists as well as vertically between grade levels (Mahdavi & Beebe-Frankenberger, 2009; Murawski & Hughes, 2009; Richards, et al., 2007; Shepherd & Salembier, 2010; Stuart & Rinaldi, 2009). Grade levels were beginning to think outside the box and find unique ways to provide time for each other to conduct assessments, administer interventions, and progress monitor students.

Fidelity is perhaps an area that should be given more attention. Administration conducted fidelity checks for students on Success Maker through computer generated reports. The school psychologist made fidelity checks once students moved to tier 2a.

Also, teachers began to fill out intervention logs when students moved to tier 2a. It is imperative that faculty members understand the importance of delivering the intervention to the student in the manner in which it was developed. Otherwise, the integrity of RtI is placed in danger (Bianco, 2010). It is recommended that the school psychologist receive help in conducting fidelity observations from other specialists within the school and that the fidelity checks occur on a regular basis.

Concerns in Regard to Response to Intervention

Three major concerns arose from the results of this study: (1) the time requirement needed to provide RtI effectively, (2) the appropriateness of interventions, and (3) the demands placed upon the school psychologist. Time is a precious commodity in today's classroom. Demands on the teacher and the student are at an all time high. The administration at this school worked diligently to provide schedules that allowed time for PLC meetings and collaboration; however, time was the number one resource that both administration and faculty felt was needed. Teachers have an enormous amount of curriculum to cover and have very little time to re-teach concepts. Besides giving benchmark assessments, now they must give a screener to identify students who are struggling with reading. Once identified, the students must be provided with extra support and interventions. Progress monitoring must be conducted with every student receiving intervention. While the participants in this study wanted to see all their students succeed, many expressed guilt in having to provide interventions to only the lowest students in their class. Many participants felt that the remaining students were missing out on instruction that would benefit them. Teachers need time during the day to provide constructivist centered learning that engages all the students in the class and

leads to greater achievement levels for all. This makes one wonder – does the school day need to be extended in order to meet all the demands on teachers and students?

Secondly, the appropriateness of the interventions was identified as a major concern from all the participants. The district chose to focus on reading for the initial implementation of RtI. This is an understandable choice as 80% of students referred to special education are referred because of reading problems (Lyon, 1995 as cited in Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). The ability to read is the cornerstone of being successful in school. Therefore, it is very important that all children learn to not only be able to recognize words but to also comprehend the words read. The emphasis for the beginning phase of RtI in literacy centered on the construct of fluency. From the researcher's perspective, the school district's definition of fluency was defined by the DIBELS universal screener oral reading fluency measures. It is, therefore, important that the definition of fluency be considered by all stakeholders as this will have an impact on both the assessments and interventions used in RtI.

According to the National Reading Panel's sub-report, fluency is defined as word recognition that frees the cognitive resources of a reader in order to make meaning of what is read. Fluency is the reader's ability to recognize words quickly and effortlessly in order to make meaning of the text. Fluency is developmental and incremental. Fluency develops from reading practice; therefore, guided reading and oral reading has a positive impact on word recognition, fluency, and comprehension.

> Teachers need to know that word recognition accuracy is not the end point of reading instruction (NRP, p. 3-3); although accuracy in word recognition is, indeed, an important reading milestone, accuracy is not enough to ensure fluency – and without fluency, comprehension might be impeded (NRP, p. 3-8, retrieved June 23, 2012).

Unfortunately, since the National Reading Panel's report was published, the definition of fluency has been narrowed to simply how fast a person reads a passage. In fact, there are components to fluency that need to be considered when listening to a student read a specific passage. Certainly accuracy, automaticity, and prosody should also be considered as a part of the definition of fluency and should also be considered during reading assessment.

> The current implementation of fluency instruction in many classrooms is often driven by assessments that build upon an incomplete conceptualization of the construct and can lead to both inappropriate instruction and a serious misconception of this essential characteristic of skilled reading (Kuhn, Schwanenflugel, & Meisinger, 2010).

On more than one occasion during this research, teachers were informed that fluency preceded comprehension and if a student was able to read fluently, he would be able to comprehend and pass the reading portion of the state criterion referenced test. This comment was questioned several times by the participants. Teachers had students reading at the recommended benchmark who could not pass a test or retell what had been read. Also, all the interventions focused solely on fluency (reading quickly) rather than specifically identifying the problem area. The participants requested further diagnostic assessments, once students were identified, that gave a more complete picture of the student's reading abilities (Dorn & Henderson, 2010) thereby leading to appropriate interventions designed for the identified skill deficit. It is important that the school create a definition of fluency that all can agree upon. This definition needs to be based on current research regarding fluency. Too much reliance on reading fast leads to poor comprehension and a generation of word callers rather than readers. Without an

appropriate definition, there is likely to be a misinterpretation of data (Howard, 2009; Paris, 2010) which would lead to inappropriate interventions being given to students. As cautioned earlier by Reynolds and Shaywitz (2009), if RtI is not used appropriately, we will "watch our student's fail."

Lastly, the role of the school psychologist needs to be carefully considered in the implementation of RtI. All the participants felt that the school psychologist was more than helpful in providing professional development, keeping up with reports, and providing material. However, one school psychologist in a school with over 1,000 students was a huge responsibility to undertake. This was an enormous task for one person. If she had to serve approximately 20% of the students, that means she was responsible for approximately 240 students. Ideally, a team of specialists should work together to provide the support needed by the faculty when implementing RtI. Many school psychologists do not have experience in the classroom which can be a detriment when providing professional development. Richard Allington recently provided the following comment in Reading Today (April, May 2012) which addresses this concern:

> In too many schools, the reading specialists are not leading the RtI effort as envisioned by those who developed the concept initially. But it is reading specialists who have the expertise necessary to provide the intensive high-quality reading instruction that some kids need for success. RtI was envisioned as "general education initiative" for providing the sort of intensive reading lessons a few kids need. Somehow, this emphasis on the prevention component of the RtI law has been too often overlooked. It seems time to reclaim RtI from those who have too little expertise in reading development, instruction, or assessment. This means we need to increase our support for the classroom teacher. This can be done by expanding what is taught in teacher education programs to emphasize reading instruction, expanding the use of reading specialists in schools, and by focusing more time on instruction.

Recommendations in Regard to Response to Intervention

Listed below are recommendations to consider when change is required in regard to implementing Response to Intervention in a school.

- Learn from the mistakes made during implementation and use the mistakes to move forward. Celebrate successes on a regular basis. Provide incentives to keep morale up. In this case study this was accomplished by providing time to celebrate successes, rejuvenate through social gatherings, (i.e. faculty lunch from a local restaurant provided), and encouragement through hand-written notes and stickers on reports.
- Keep communication lines open. When decisions are made, inform everyone involved as to why a particular decision was made. Establish a way to give and receive feedback that encourages everyone involved. Faculty need to be empowered to make decisions as well as give constructive feedback to the administration without the fear of retribution. Establish trust among all involved. At the research site, faculty provided constructive feedback through anonymous surveys. Trust was established by giving grade levels the ability to create the agendas for their PLC/RtI meetings.
- Learn to collaborate with colleagues vertically (across grade levels and with specialists) and horizontally (within the grade level). Each grade level needs to have a clear picture of what was expected from the previous grade level as well as what is expected from the next grade level. While the administration felt there was a great deal of collaboration occurring within grade levels, it was noted that there was a lack of collaboration across grade levels and between the general

education teacher and the special education teacher. Efforts to bridge this gap would take place in the coming years.

- Clearly define for the faculty the approach being used with the adopted RtI model. A clear definition will help the faculty understand the importance of making decisions as a team if using the problem solving approach in data analysis. Provide professional development that addresses the importance of using the problem solving approach and why standard treatment protocol is sometimes necessary to use (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2007).
- Consider both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis (Howard, 2009). When peaks and valleys are seen in progress monitoring, the teacher can provide insight as to what occurred when progress monitoring was conducted. Consideration of a child's family life, physical problems, or the difficulty of the particular passage given for progress monitoring needs to be discussed when making decisions. During data analysis in RtI meetings, faculty noted that when a student's data point dipped, the progress monitoring passage was particularly difficult. Faculty also discussed anything that may have been going on in a student's home life that could have an effect on their work at school.
- Provide clear definitions in regard to literacy and what is being assessed. Do not limit assessment to one particular construct of literacy. Provide multiple assessments designed to show the areas of concern for each student identified as at-risk. A major concern of the participants was that only fluency was being assessed. Some students were fluent but were not able to comprehend. Comprehension was left out of the assessment. Several participants stated that

they felt a variety of assessments were needed so that more appropriate interventions could be administered to the students.

- Just as RtI is not a one-size-fits-all model, the interventions should not be one-size-fits-all. The point of RtI is to provide differentiated instruction that meets the needs of each student. Requiring all students to receive interventions for fluency does not meet the specific needs of students. It is important to find the strengths and weaknesses of each and every student and tailor the intervention to the specific identified problem area (Howard, 2009; Kuhn, Schwanenflugel, & Meisinger, 2010).
- RtI should be for all students, not just the lowest in the class. Some students needing support will not be identified through the universal screener that is used. It is important that teachers continue to support and provide quality instruction to the students who are capable of performing on grade level as well as those who are performing above grade level. This recommendation addresses a concern stated by several participants. They sometimes felt as if the other students in the classroom were being ignored in order to work with the students in need of intervention.
- Continue to seek ways to provide teachers the time for professional development, collaboration, and the administration of interventions and progress monitoring. Encourage teachers to think outside the box in these areas as well as in providing differentiated instruction that is constructivist centered. The administration encouraged the faculty to think outside the box in relation to finding time to administer interventions. Faculty was encouraged to "work smarter, not harder."

- Provide a team of specialists that the faculty can find support and resources through. A reading specialist should be provided for reading instruction, a math specialist for math instruction, and counselors and school psychologists for behavioral problems. Provide time for special education teachers to be in classrooms on a regular basis to provide classroom support for students with specific learning disabilities (Allington, 2012).
- Provide new faculty with as much professional development (Kratochwill, et al., 2007) and support as existing faculty. Continue to provide professional development for current faculty in order to sustain the model and keep abreast of recent research. The administration planned to continue the professional development currently in existence as well as providing the necessary professional development for new faculty.
- Pre-service teachers should be exposed to and allowed to observe faculty administer interventions and progress monitoring. Allow pre-service teachers to be a part of the PLC meetings so they are able to witness the analysis of collected data and how decisions are made collaboratively. This is an area that needs to be addressed in the research on Response to Intervention. To the researcher's knowledge, no research has been conducted in the area of pre-service teacher's knowledge of RtI. However, from personal conversations with area principals, the researcher was advised that pre-service teachers need extensive knowledge concerning RtI, what it looks like, and what it means to the general education teacher. Pre-service teachers need experience with giving assessments,

conducting progress monitoring, collecting data, and analyzing data in order to plan their day to day instruction.

Role of the Researcher and Reflection

As a researcher and practicing educator, the role of reflection is extremely useful in discovering areas of needed practice. As a researcher, it was discovered that research is a time consuming and, often times, messy construct. One cannot hurry through research; all aspects of the research require adequate time. The researcher's personality dictated that all interviews needed to be completed before data analysis could be started. This proved to be a hindrance to the research; analysis could, and should, have begun as soon as one interview was transcribed.

As the participants discussed the issue of not enough time to do what was expected, the researcher discovered timing was an issue as well. Conducting and writing research cannot be rushed. Having to deal with a time constraint in finishing this research led to many hours of agonizing work and reflection. One cannot put time limits when writing up the many hours of research without experiencing a few meltdowns. A lesson learned from this researcher is to provide oneself with a plethora of hours and days to adequately disseminate, analyze, and write.

As an educator, the research conducted has been invaluable in understanding the underpinnings of Response to Intervention as well as how to prepare the nation's future teachers. Having the responsibility of helping prepare future teachers, the researcher has determined that pre-service teachers need a strong knowledge base of why Response to Intervention is necessary for determining the specific needs of each of their future students. Pre-service teachers need to be adept at providing differentiated instruction,

knowledgeable of various assessments that can help in differentiated instruction, and be able to determine the appropriate intervention during differentiated instruction. It is the researchers hope that as her practicum students and student teachers enter their field experiences that they will be allowed to experience all aspects of RtI under the guidance of a highly qualified teacher.

Limitations of Study

The researcher recognizes limitations to this case study. The research may be difficult to replicate for several reasons. This case study is a bounded case in which one elementary school within one district is participating. Response to Intervention is not a one-size-fits-all model. Each school must decide how to meet the needs of their students by remaining flexible and open to change (Lembke, 2010). Because of the variance of RtI models, even within school districts, case studies of schools implementing RtI will all look different. However, other schools may benefit from the research gathered through this study to determine what is needed to implement RtI successfully.

Another limitation to consider is the willingness of faculty to participate. Although the faculty was assured that there would be no repercussions from participating, all but one of the focus group declined an individual interview, did not want to be audio-taped during the group interview, or be quoted directly. On more than one occasion, a participant asked how her comments would be used in the research. The researcher assured each person that anonymity would take place in the writing with only the participant's assigned number given during the writing of this dissertation. The researcher assumed that the participants would answer interview questions and journal prompts honestly and not give answers that the researcher was expecting to hear.

A final limitation seen by the researcher is the fact that the researcher's job as a university assistant professor and practicum supervisor requires constant communication with faculty and administration in the research site. As discussed in the previously, the researcher places practicum students at this site and must observe the pre-service teacher candidates teach lessons. A possibility exists that the researcher and the participant of the study had a previous relationship that may affect the outcome of interview questions and journal prompts.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should be conducted in regard to the implementation of Response to Intervention. First, this study was conducted during the year preceding implementation and the first full year of implementation. As the remaining components of RtI are added at this school, research could continue which would document fully the changes that occurred over the four to five years required to implement RtI. It would be interesting to see what further changes are made to the model as well as how the teachers and school adjusts to the "re-culturing."

This study followed one elementary school in regard to changing to RtI. It may be interesting to compare schools within the district as RtI is implemented. Furthermore, it would be interesting to compare the implementation of RtI among districts within a state as well as from state to state.

Finally, RtI is designed to be a fluid model meaning students move from one tier to another depending on how they respond to interventions. A study looking at how often students move from tier to tier and the effects that may occur by moving between tiers may provide insight on the effectiveness of Response to Intervention.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocols – Phase One and Phase Two

Introduction

Thank you for your time and willingness to participate. As you know, I am interested in researching the implementation of Response to Intervention in your school. I am specifically interested in the changes that are occurring with you, your reading specialist, and your faculty. If the questions are general and abstract, you may volunteer any detail you wish. Please do not use any student names in your answers. You also have the option of declining to answer any of the questions. Do you have any questions before we start?

Interview Questions for Administrator

1. How did you identify students needing intervention before implementing Response to Intervention?
2. Describe the Response to Intervention model your school will be using.
3. What assessments will be used to determine students needing Tier Two or Tier Three interventions?
4. What interventions will your faculty be using?
5. How do you think Response to Intervention will help the teachers? The reading specialist? The students?
6. What type of training are your teachers receiving before implementation?
7. Describe the support your faculty will have during implementation?
8. What kind of impact do you feel this will have on your faculty, your students, and your school?
9. How are parents involved in this process?

Interview Questions for Faculty

1. How did you identify struggling students before the implementation of Response to Intervention?
2. How do you feel about implementing Response to Intervention?
3. Discuss any apprehension you feel towards implementing Response to Intervention.
4. Describe the training you have received concerning the implementation of Response to Intervention.
5. Do you feel Response to Intervention will help you in teaching your struggling students? How?

6. Do you feel Response to Intervention will help your struggling students? How do you think it will help?
7. Describe how you feel when you work with struggling students.
8. How has your instruction changed since the implementation of Response to Intervention?
9. Do you feel you have the support you need to use Response to Intervention effectively?
10. Are parents involved in the process? How are they involved?

Closing

Now that we are done, do you have any questions you'd like to ask me about this research project? If you want to contact me later, here is my contact information. I may need to contact you later for additional questions or clarification. Can I also have your follow-up contact information? I will contact you at a later date to schedule another final interview for this research.

Appendix B: Focus Group Interview Protocol

Introduction

Thank you for your time and willingness to participate. As you know, I am interested in researching the implementation of Response to Intervention in your school. I am specifically interested in the changes that are occurring with you, your reading specialist, and your faculty. If the questions are general and abstract, you may volunteer any detail you wish. Please do not use any student names in your answers. You also have the option of declining to answer any of the questions. Do you have any questions before we start?

Interview Questions for Focus Group

Initial Interview

1. Describe the training you have received concerning Response to Intervention.
2. Do you feel you are prepared for RtI after receiving this training? Why or why not?
3. What type of resources have you been given to use as interventions?
4. Do you feel that you have adequate resources? Why or why not?
5. Do you feel that you are prepared to implement the interventions you have been given? Why or why not?
6. What type of support do you have in implementing RtI? Is it adequate? Why or why not?
7. Describe how you feel about RtI and the implementation.
8. How do you think RtI will affect your teaching?
9. How do you think RtI will affect your daily schedule?
10. How do you think RtI will help your students?

Concluding Interview

1. How has RtI affected your school?
2. How has RtI affected your daily schedule?
3. How has RtI affected your teaching?
4. What benefits have you seen since the implementation of RtI?
5. In your opinion, is RtI effective in identifying struggling students? Are struggling students receiving the help they need to succeed in school?

Closing

Now that we are done, do you have any questions you'd like to ask me about this research project? If you want to contact me later, here is my contact information. I may need to contact you later for additional questions or clarification. Can I also have your follow-up contact information? I will contact you at a later date to schedule another final interview for this research.

Appendix C: Journal Prompts

Journal Prompts for Faculty

1. What interventions have you used this month?
2. Do you find the bi-weekly RtI meetings helpful? If so, how are they helpful? If not, why?
3. Do you feel progress monitoring is giving an adequate picture of the students' growth or lack of growth?
4. How has your instruction changed over the course of this year? Has the implementation of RtI made you change your method of instruction?
5. Have you received adequate support, resources, and training over the past 2 years of implementing RtI?

Journal Prompts for Administration

1. How has RtI affected the way you lead your faculty?
2. What have you done to support the faculty throughout the implementation process?
3. What kinds of changes have you seen in your faculty in regards to the type of instruction they give?
4. Do you feel you have effectively implemented RtI?
5. Describe ways that you keep your faculty motivated to accept the changes that were necessary for RtI to be implemented.

Appendix D: Parent Notification Letter

Parent Notification of Tier 2 Supports

Date: 3/29/2012

Dear Parent/ Guardian,

Re:

Our school is currently using a model of educational support called Response to Intervention (RtI). Under this instructional model, 3 levels (called "tiers") of educational support and intervention are provided to students based on their instructional needs. Our school-based instructional team (RtI Team) uses data collected from brief screening assessments to determine the appropriate tier for each student. Tier 1 refers to core instruction and curriculum provided to all students. Tier 2 refers to an additional level of support which involves a formal intervention plan written in conjunction with the child's teacher and the RtI team. Tier 3 refers to the most intensive supports available in the school.

Screening and progress monitoring data has indicated that your student might benefit from Tier 2 supports in addition to Tier 1 instruction. An intervention plan has been developed to assist your child in the area of **reading fluency**. As part of the Tier 2 intervention plan, the team will collect frequent data (progress monitoring) to measure your student's growth in relation to the intervention.

The effectiveness of the RtI Team's plan will be monitored and communicated to you. Every 4 weeks a graph of your child's progress monitoring data will be available for you. For many children, Tier 2 interventions are sufficient to resolve skill difficulties. Other children may require additional resources. Your child will not be identified for Tier 3 support without your notification. Should you have any questions feel free to contact your child's teacher or the RtI Team Coordinator.

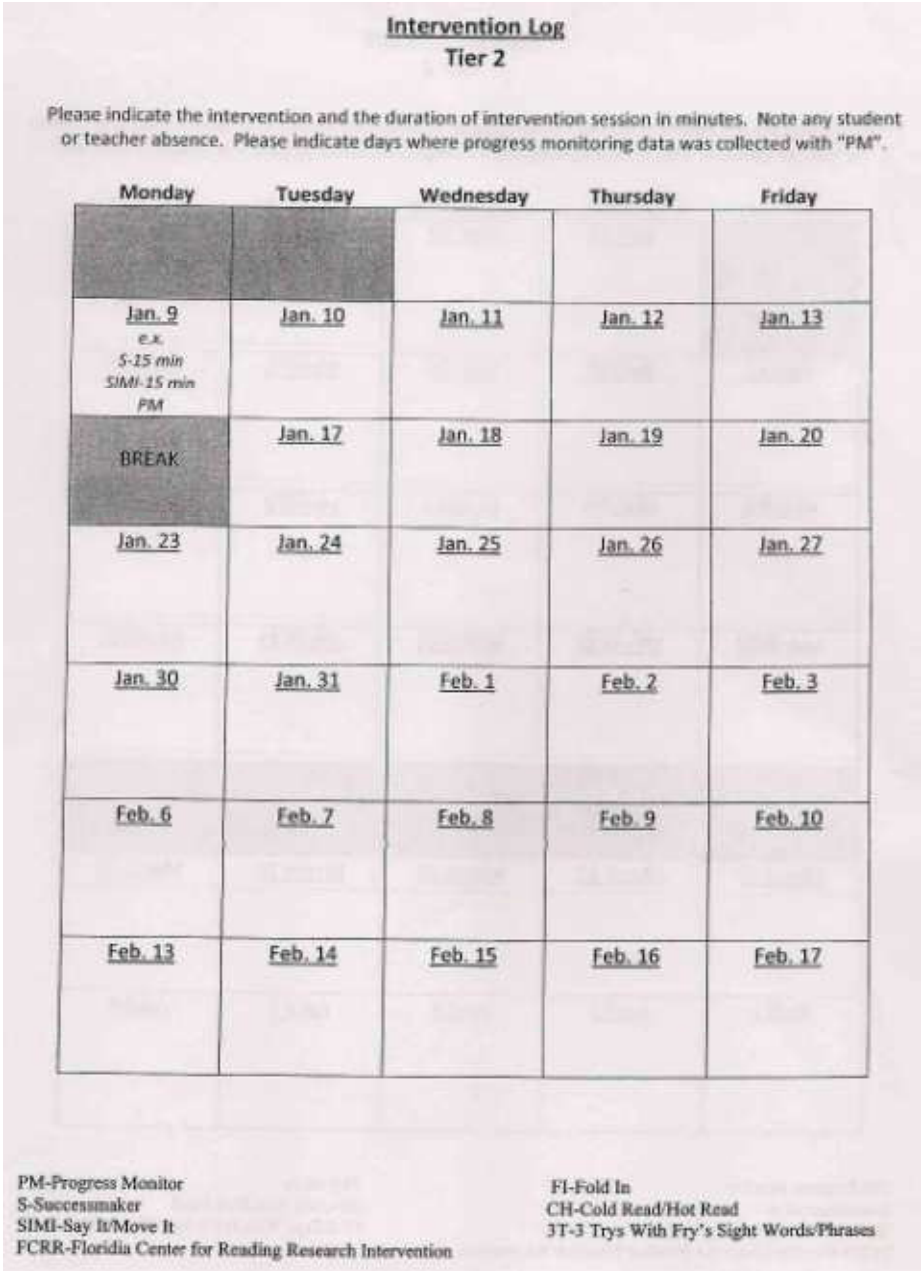
Sincerely,

Classroom Teacher _____

RtI Team Coordinator _____

Administrator _____

Appendix E: Tier 2 Intervention Log Sheet



Intervention Log
Tier 2

Please indicate the intervention and the duration of intervention session in minutes. Note any student or teacher absence. Please indicate days where progress monitoring data was collected with "PM".

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Jan. 9 *e.x.* *5-15 min* *SIMI-15 min* *PM*	Jan. 10	Jan. 11	Jan. 12	Jan. 13
BREAK	Jan. 17	Jan. 18	Jan. 19	Jan. 20
Jan. 23	Jan. 24	Jan. 25	Jan. 26	Jan. 27
Jan. 30	Jan. 31	Feb. 1	Feb. 2	Feb. 3
Feb. 6	Feb. 7	Feb. 8	Feb. 9	Feb. 10
Feb. 13	Feb. 14	Feb. 15	Feb. 16	Feb. 17

PM-Progress Monitor
S-Successmaker
SIMI-Say It/Move It
FCRR-Floridia Center for Reading Research Intervention

FI-Fold In
CH-Cold Read/Hot Read
3T-3 Trys With Fry's Sight Words/Phrases

Appendix F: Observation Protocol for Interventions

Date of Observation_____ Participant #_____

Tier 1 Students	Tier 2 Students	Tier 3 Students	Intervention Given	Duration of Intervention

Appendix G: Informed Consent Form

701-A-1

University of Oklahoma
Institutional Review Board
Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Project Title: Response to Intervention: Initiating a School's Change
Principal Investigator: Rhonda Morris
Department: Instructional Leadership and Academic Curriculum/Reading

You are being asked to volunteer for this research study. This study is being conducted at Cross Timbers Elementary School, Edmond, OK. You were selected as a possible participant because of the implementation of Response to Intervention in your school.

Please read this form and ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to take part in this study.

Purpose of the Research Study

The purpose of this study is to gain knowledge of how administrators, faculty, and reading specialists view the implementation of Response to Intervention (RtI) into their school. Response to Intervention is considered to be a process to successfully identify struggling students and provide interventions before considering placement into special education. Although federally mandated, the implementation and model is left to the discretion of each state and sometimes to each school district. This case study will focus on how the administrator, faculty, and specialists adapt to the changes that come about with the implementation of Response to Intervention. Through the participant's narratives and interviews, insight into implementing Response to Intervention will be discovered.

Number of Participants

About 15-20 people will take part in this study.

Procedures

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following:

1. Participate in two interviews conducted in early September, 2011 and late March/early April, 2012. These interviews will be focus group interviews and/or personal interviews. Each interview will be audio taped and transcribed. After transcription, the interview will be reviewed by the interviewee for clarification. Each interview will last approximately one hour and will consist of, but not limited to, ten questions. Each interview will take place in the school (teacher's classroom, lounge, office, etc.) during non-instructional times (before or after school).

2. Participants will keep a journal (provided by researcher) in which they will reflect upon their feelings toward the implementation of Response to Intervention. Participants may also reflect upon the successes/failures they experience in relation to the implementation. It is requested that participants make a minimum

APPROVED APPROVAL
NOV 03 2011 SEP 22 2012
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of two journal entries per month, September, 2011 through April, 2012. Journal entries should require no more than 30 minutes of each participant's time.

3. Participants will allow the principal investigator to observe the professional learning community meetings held weekly. Observations will occur weekly or as needed. Participants will acknowledge that the principal investigator will not participate in the meetings but will only make observations, collect field notes, and make transcriptions of the field notes available to the participants for clarification.

4. Participants will allow the principal investigator to observe in their classroom while giving interventions and progress monitoring once students have been identified as needing Tier 2 interventions. Observations will occur as deemed necessary. Observations will be of the intervention being given and the progress monitoring done by the participant.

Length of Participation

Participation in this study will occur from September, 2011 through April, 2012. Participants will be interviewed two times during the study. Each interview will last approximately one hour and will consist of, but not limited to, ten questions. Interviews will take place at the school during non-instructional times. Participants will also be asked to keep a reflective journal making a minimum of two journal entries per month during the collection of data. Each entry should take no more than 30 minutes of their time. Reflections will center upon their feelings toward the implementation of Response to Intervention and any successes/failures they may experience.

This study has the following risks:
Participants may perceive a risk of economic loss or job loss associated with participating in this research. Each participant is assured that no monetary loss or job loss will occur by participating. All participants will remain anonymous and will be referred to through the use of a pseudonym, letter, or number. Participants have the right to deny being audio-taped during interviews but may still participate in the interviews. During interviews, no names will be used; in transcriptions, all names will be omitted. At the conclusion of collection of data, participants will be asked if they would like a copy of the data or if they prefer the data to be destroyed. If participants choose not to be audio-taped, a note-taker will be present who has no affiliation with the University of Oklahoma or Cross Timbers Elementary. The note-taker will not have any access to any other data collected and will not transcribe the notes taken during the interview.

Benefits of being in the study are none.

Confidentiality
In published reports, there will be no information included that will make it possible to identify you without your permission. Research records will be stored securely and only approved researchers will have access to the records.

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There are organizations that may inspect and/or copy your research records for quality assurance and data analysis. These organizations include members of the principal investigators doctoral committee, Dr. Priscilla Griffith (advisor), and the OU Institutional Review Board.

Compensation

You will be reimbursed for your time and participation in this study. Reimbursement will be in the form of a $10 Panera gift card which will be delivered at the end of the study or if the participant chooses to stop participating before the end of the study

Voluntary Nature of the Study

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you withdraw or decline participation, you will not be penalized or lose benefits or services unrelated to the study. If you decide to participate, you may decline to answer any question and may choose to withdraw at any time.

Waivers of Elements of Confidentiality

Your name will not be linked with your responses unless you specifically agree to be identified. Please select one of the following options

_____ I consent to being quoted directly.

_____ I do not consent to being quoted directly.

_____ I consent to having my name reported with quoted material.

_____ I do not consent to having my name reported with quoted material

Audio Recording of Study Activities

To assist with accurate recording of participant responses, interviews may be recorded on an audio recording device. You have the right to refuse to allow such recording without penalty. If you choose to not be recorded, you may still participate in the interview. If participants choose not to be audio-taped, a note-taker will be present who has no affiliation with the University of Oklahoma or Cross Timbers Elementary. The note-taker will not have any access to any other data collected and will not transcribe the notes taken during the interview. The note-taker will sign a confidentiality agreement.
Please select one of the following options.

I consent to audio recording. ___ Yes ___ No.

Contacts and Questions

If you have concerns or complaints about the research, the researcher(s) conducting this study can be contacted at 405-735-3035 (home), 918-284-6919 (cell), 405-425-

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5447 (office), or rhonda.morris@oc.edu. You may also contact Dr. Priscilla Griffith, research advisor, at pgriffith@ou.edu or 405-325-2524 (office).

Contact the researcher(s) if you have questions or if you have experienced a research-related injury.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, concerns, or complaints about the research and wish to talk to someone other than individuals on the research team or if you cannot reach the research team, you may contact the University of Oklahoma – Norman Campus Institutional Review Board (OU-NC IRB) at 405-325-8110 or irb@ou.edu.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records. If you are not given a copy of this consent form, please request one.

Statement of Consent

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received satisfactory answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature Date

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Appendix H: Demographic Information Sheet

Demographic Information Questionnaire

1. How many students are currently enrolled in your school?_____
2. What percentage of the student body is classified as needing services in special education? _____
3. What percentage of the student body is in need of Response to Intervention?_____
4. What percentage of the student body qualify for the free/reduced lunch program?_____
5. What percentage of the student body falls into the following ethnic categories?
    a. Caucasian _____
    b. African American_____
    c. Hispanic_____
    d. Asian_____
    e. Native American_____
    f. Other_____
6. What percentage of the student body falls into the following socio-economic categories based on family income?
    a. $20,000-$35,000 _____
    b. $35,000-$50,000_____
    c. $50,000-$75,000_____
    d. Above $75,000_____
7. Describe the community environment surrounding the school.

Appendix I: Student Data Graph

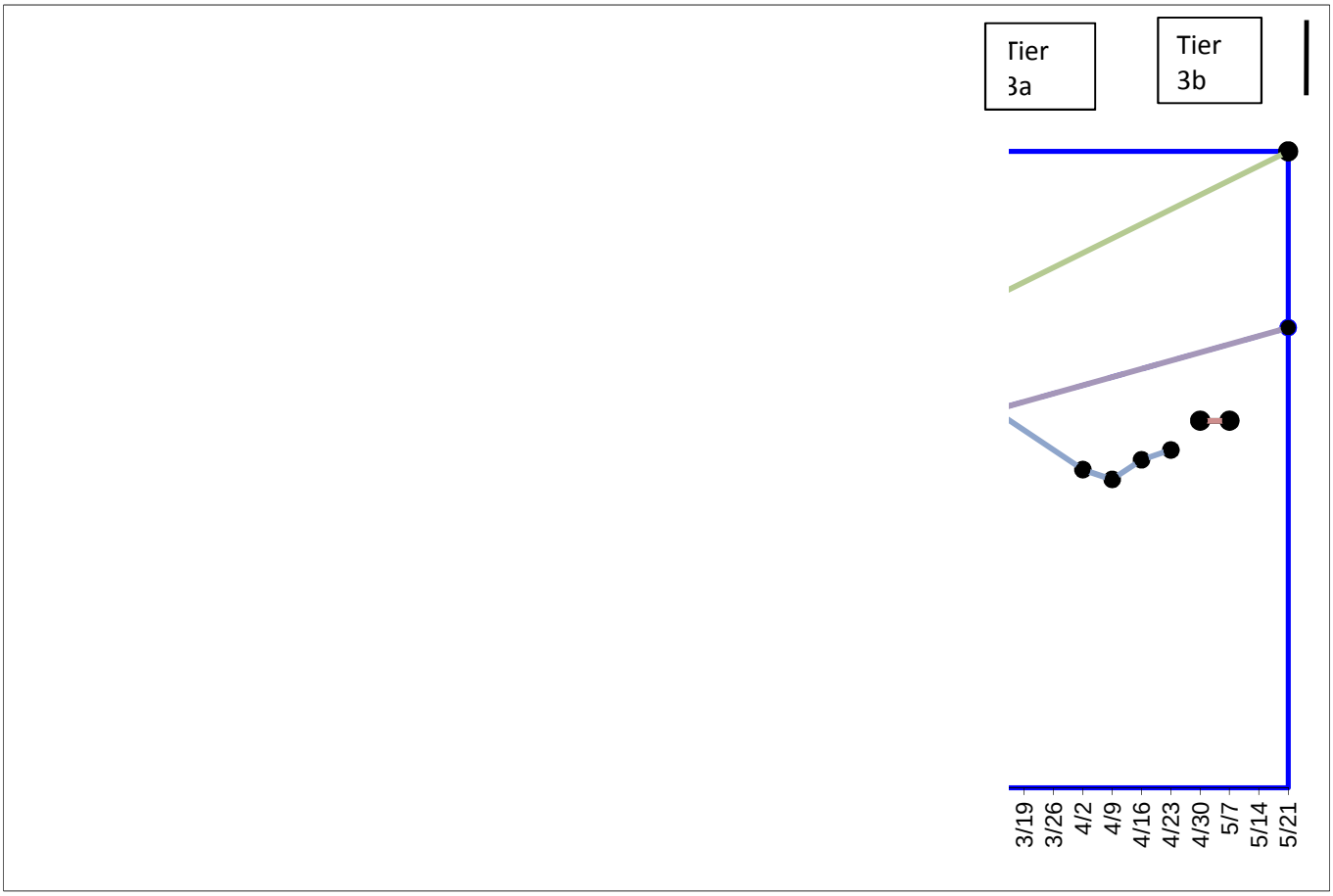
School **Assessment:** DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency- WCPM

Grade 4 **Teacher:**

	Tier 1 At Risk	Tier 2a	Tier 2b	Tier 3	Aimline	Notes
8/15/2011						
8/22/2011						
8/29/2011						
9/5/2011	25					
9/12/2011						
9/19/2011						
9/26/2011	37					Tier 1 at-risk
10/3/2011	49					
10/10/2011	44					
10/17/2011						
10/24/2011	48					
10/31/2011						
11/7/2011	47			47	47	
11/14/2011		60				Tier 2a
11/21/2011		56				
11/28/2011		56				
12/5/2011		61				
12/12/2011		40				
12/19/2011						Break
12/26/2011						Winter Break

1/2/2012					
1/9/2012	67				
1/16/2012	49				
1/23/2012					
1/30/2012	63				
2/6/2012	68				
2/13/2012	48				
2/20/2012					
2/27/2012	59				
3/5/2012	60				
3/12/2012	77				
3/19/2012					Spring Break
3/26/2012					
4/2/2012	65				
4/9/2012	63				
4/16/2012	67				
4/23/2012	69				
4/30/2012		75			
5/7/2012		75			
5/14/2012					
5/21/2012			130	94	

Tier 1 At-Risk Intervention/ Notes: Successmaker reading 4x per week/15 min


Tier 3a
Tier 3b
3/19
3/26
4/2
4/9
4/16
4/23
4/30
5/7
5/14
5/21

Appendix J: Fry's Phrases

Fry Instant Phrases

The words in these phrases come from Dr. Edward Fry's Instant Word List (High Frequency Words). According to Fry, the first 300 words in the list represent about 67% of all the words students encounter in their reading.

First 100 Words/Phrases

The people
Who will make it?
He called me.
When would you go?
One or two
Come and get it.
This is a good day.
Now and then
Not now
So there you are.
We were here
One more time
Into the water
Up in the air
Each of us
If we were older
It may fall down.
From my room
Give them to me.
An angry cat
This is my cat.
Two of us
See the water
When will we go?
Number two
Go down
A long way to go
Write it down
You and I
We had their dog.
No way
How long are they?
How many words?
Can you see?
But not me
Look for some people.
Out of the water
Have you seen it?
We like to write.
It's about time
She said to go
He has it.
There was an old man
With his mom
It's been a long time.
Then we will go.
May I go first?
That dog is big.
Did you see it?
As big as the first
How did they get it?
More people
All or some
When did the
By the water
What will they do?
What did they say?
A number of people
More than the other
Part of the time
Sit down.
Go find her
I like him.
A long time
Could you go?
All day long
The other people
Which way?
What are these?
It's no use
At your house
Will you be good?
Now is the time
Write your name.
Get on the bus.
The first word
But not for me
From here to there
Look up
Did you like it?