

A Systemic View of the Roles and Responsibilities in the RTI Framework

Jessica Kukal Robinson

B.S., University of Missouri, 2010

M.Ed., University of Missouri, 2011

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James Robins, Ed.D.
Major Advisor

Phyllis Chase, Ed.D.

Jennifer Kephart, Ed.D.

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Abstract

General classroom instruction should be sufficient for 80% of students to experience success. The needs of the students unsuccessful with the core instruction often possess needs far greater than one teacher alone can address. To meet the vast needs of these students, schools have implemented the RTI framework to development systemic approaches to support the learning of all students. The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceived roles and responsibilities of teachers, interventionists and administrators in the RTI process in order to gain a systemic view of the RTI framework. Two of the three schools in this study used the RTI framework to implement math and reading interventions. One school implemented reading interventions only through RTI. This qualitative study utilized a phenomenological design. Data analysis revealed participants perceived providing quality instruction and tiered instruction as a part of the roles of teachers and interventionists in the RTI process. Data analysis also revealed participants perceived using assessment and data and collaborating with others as the responsibilities of teachers and interventionists in the RTI process. Data analysis revealed administrators also hold roles and responsibilities in the RTI process including establishing a positive school climate and culture that supports the RTI framework and building a systemic structure for collaboration. The results of this study were closely aligned to previous literature on the RTI framework. This study also addressed misconceptions on RTI found among the participants. Implications for action are provided.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Justin who has been by my side from my second year of teaching to the completion of my doctorate. Thank you, Justin, for your love, support and most importantly your patience as I completed this monumental task. I also dedicate this dissertation to my son, Jackson, whose smiles and hugs made for the best breaks from reading and writing. I will never forget your cheers and claps as I completed my final chapters. I hope you come to love learning as much as I do. This dissertation would not be possible if not for my parents. To my dad, for being my biggest cheerleader in life and in my career. You have been there to listen to every story, the good and the bad and everything in between. Your pride in me has kept me going through it all. To my mom, you instilled a love of reading from a young age. That love for the written word is such a big part of my drive and passion as an educator. To my forever friends, your encouragement and friendship is such a big part of my life. I am forever grateful to have you all by my side as we continue this journey of life together.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Educators, no matter the school or district, are all faced with the same question, *what happens when students do not learn what is taught?* Research shows students who are not meeting grade-level expectations in the area of reading by third grade are four times more likely to not graduate from high school on time than their peers who are proficient readers (Hernandez, 2012). Dufour and Marzano (2011) stated in the United States, 30% of those who do graduate require remediation when entering higher education, and the country has one of the highest rates of college dropouts in the world.

Helping every student meet academic success with the highest efficiency is a moral obligation of every educator (Dufour & Marzano, 2011). Researchers and education leaders have investigated multiple instructional models, strategies, and programs to find the response to the essential question, "how do we respond when students experience difficulty in their learning?" (Eaker & Keating, 2012). One framework widely used by schools and studied by researchers is the Response to Intervention, RTI, method. The premise of RTI is to support struggling students with interventions that are targeted and systemic as soon as the need for additional support is identified (Buffum et al., 2010). RTI can help distinguish the reason for low achievement as either poor instruction or the presence of a learning disability (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2007).

Although there are many different ways to implement RTI, researchers have found standard components exist (Brown-Chidsey et al., 2009; Buffum et al., 2010; Ehren, 2013; Jenkins et al., 2013; Turse & Albrecht, 2015). Within the various operational strategies and efforts, schools will find implementing RTI components

requires the expertise and cooperation of multiple staff members. Without the collaboration of staff and systemic school-wide approach, RTI will be ineffective (Dufour & Marzano, 2011).

This study examined the experiences of educators in a suburban school district to contribute to the current research of the implementation of RTI from a systemic view and the roles and responsibilities of teachers and interventionists in the RTI process. Chapter one will describe the background of the study and introduce the intervention method, RTI. A statement of the problem provides an overview of why schools implement RTI. A framework of the research is found within the purpose, significance, limitations, and delimitations of the study. The research question and terms applicable to the study are presented, along with a description of the research methods administered.

Background

The school district of this study will be known as District X. This district is located in the Midwest. District X is located in a suburban area. Table 1 shows the enrollment demographics of public schools in the state of the district. In the 2018-2019 school year, there were 614,714 students enrolled in public elementary schools (Kindergarten to grade 8) and 266,638 in public secondary schools (grades 9-12). The State Department of Education reported 50% of students received free and reduced-cost lunches and are identified as economically disadvantaged.

Table 1

2019 Public School State Demographics of School District X

	ES	SS	EconDis
<i>N</i>	614,714	266,638	440,676

Table 1 (continued)

Note. ES = Elementary Schools (Grades K-8); SS = Secondary Schools (Grades 9-12); EconDis = Economically Disadvantaged. Adapted from *2018-2019 Statistics of Missouri Public Schools*, by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2019. Retrieved from:

<https://dese.mo.gov/school-data>

District X has 11 elementary schools (kindergarten to grade 5), four middle schools (grades 6-8), and two high schools (grades 9-12). The district also contains an alternative high school that emphasizes project-based, problem-based, and professional-based learning experiences. Table 2 depicts the demographics of District X. District X had an enrollment of 11,617 students in the 2018-2019 school year. Sixty-seven-point-four percent of the district is white, and students of color make up almost 33% of the student population. The district estimates 7.6% of households in poverty and are identified as economically disadvantaged.

Table 2

Demographics of School District X

	W	B	H	A	NA	PI	MR	EconDis
<i>N</i>	7,830	1,429	1,173	407	46	93	639	883
<i>%</i>	67.4	12.3	10.1	3.5	0.4	0.8	5.5	7.7

Note. W = White; B = Black; H = Hispanic; A = Asian; MR = Multi-Racial; PR = Pacific Islander; NA = Native American; EconDis = Economically Disadvantaged. Adapted from *2018-2019*

Demographic & Enrollment Projects, by the Park Hill School District, 2019. Retrieved from:

https://www.parkhill.k12.mo.us/district_information/demographic_profile

Each of the 11 elementary schools in District X implements RTI in the area of reading with common components. These components include research-based instructional strategies through the use of a district-mandated curriculum and a tiered

intervention system with student identification based on data. The use of additional RTI components and the implementation of the elements is at the discretion of each school.

The elementary schools of District X all implement RTI in the area of reading. Table 3 outlines the percentage of all students scoring proficient or advanced in English Language Arts. State standardized assessment data from 2018 and 2019 for the state and district are displayed in the table. It shows both district and state data. In 2018, the percentage of students who scored proficient or advanced in the district was 58.9%, and in the state was 49.2%. The percentage of students who scored proficient or advanced in English Language Arts in 2019 in the district was 57.6% and in the state was 48.7%.

Table 3

Percentage Proficient or Advanced in English Language Arts

	District X	State
2018	58.9%	49.2%
2019	57.6%	48.7%

Note. Adapted from *Missouri Comprehensive Data System*, by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2020. Retrieved from https://apps.dese.mo.gov/MCDS/home.aspx?ID=_bk8100030083003300030003005300

Additionally, the district declared the 2019-2020 school year a pilot year for math intervention with a designated building math interventionist in two of the 11 elementary schools. Table 4 displays the percentage of all students scoring proficient or advanced in Mathematics. Standardized state assessment data from 2018 and 2019 can be viewed in Table 4 for the district and state. The percentage of students who scored proficient or advanced in 2018 in the district was 52.5% and in the state was 42.0%. In 2019, the

percentage of students who scored proficient or advanced in the district was 51.0%, and in the state was 41.9%.

Table 4

Percentage Proficient or Advanced in Mathematics

	District X	State
2018	52.5%	42.0%
2019	51.0%	41.9%

Note. Adapted from *Missouri Comprehensive Data System*, by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2020. Retrieved from

https://apps.dese.mo.gov/MCDS/home.aspx?ID=_bk8100030083003300030003005300

For this study, three schools in District X were studied. These schools will be known as School A, School B and School C. All three schools include students from grades kindergarten to 5th grade. School A has a population of 558 students. School B has a population of 475 students. School C has a population of 626 students.

Statement of the Problem

Researchers have found 80% of students in a school should be successful with general classroom instruction (Brown-Chidsey et al., 2009; Abbott & Wills, 2012), therefore it is possible that in a school, at least 20% of students may not be successful with general classroom instruction. Regardless of how skilled an individual teacher may be, the students in need of additional instruction are greater, and the needs far too varied for one teacher to address on his or her own (Eaker & Keating, 2012). RTI provides a framework for students' learning deficits to be identified and appropriate interventions put into place to foster student progress (Brown-Chidsey et al., 2009; Abbott & Wills, 2012).

To meet the vast needs of students not meeting grade-level expectations, many schools implementing tiered interventions issue a systemic, collaborative approach (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012; Ehren, 2013; Laster et al., 2012; Wixson, 2011; Yurkewecz & Wilson, 2012-2013). Collaboration in the RTI framework is a consistent theme throughout research (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012; Brown-Chidsey et al., 2009). However, research regarding the roles and responsibilities of the individual staff members (e.g., teachers, interventionists, administrators) involved in the RTI process and their contribution to RTI from a systemic view is limited (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012; Ehren, 2013; Wixson, 2011). This study investigated the roles and responsibilities of teachers and interventionists in RTI implementation and their contribution to RTI from a systemic view as perceived by administrators.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to describe the systemic tiered interventions by exploring the roles and responsibilities of staff members directly involved in the RTI process (i.e., teachers, interventionists, and administrators). More specifically, the perceptions of teachers and interventionists on their individual roles and responsibilities in the RTI process for providing reading and/or math interventions to students were explored. The understandings of administrators on the roles of teachers, interventionists and their own roles in the RTI framework was also explored to gain a systemic view of the RTI process.

Significance of the Study

The use of the RTI framework as an identification system for students with learning disabilities is supported by the federal government within Public Law 108-446

within IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act). Within education law, there are few details as to how to implement RTI (Wixson, 2011). The lack of direction was an intentional act to allow districts the flexibility to establish a structure that best meets the needs of individual communities (Ehren, 2013; Wixson, 2011). As a result, there is a need for research that supports the implementation of RTI in a variety of contexts that allows for both the study of particular elements of RTI and RTI as a system (Ehren, 2013; Fuchs, n.d., as cited in Sparks, 2015; Wixson, 2011). This study can be used as a guide by schools and districts to support the development and implementation of RTI as a system or to study individual components of RTI.

RTI is historically an intervention in the area of reading (Brown-Chidsey et al., 2009; Loewenberg, 2015; Mellard, 2017). However, schools have found that offering interventions in reading alone is not enough to meet the various needs of learners. The use of RTI to support the reading and literacy needs of students is well documented in research. Research is limited in the use of RTI for math instruction. This study will add to the limited research on the RTI as a system for math interventions.

Schools across the nation are investigating the use of Multi-Tiered Support Systems, MTSS, model for interventions (Dulaney et al., 2013; Samuels, 2016). This study contributes to research on the subject of MTSS. MTSS, like RTI, is a tiered approach to support the needs of students both academically and behaviorally. The standard RTI components examined within this study are also found within MTSS. As more districts move from the RTI model to the MTSS framework, this study will help support their efforts to develop a systemic approach to the effective execution of interventions and holistic supports for students.

Researchers Dulaney et al. (2013) identified teachers, administrators, specialists, and support staff as key facilitators in the MTSS framework. This study investigated the roles and perceptions of various staff members and their contributions to the success of students through the RTI process. Therefore, it applies to the work of educators engaged in MTSS and RTI models. Administrators at the building and district level can utilize this study as a resource and guide to provide clarity on the collaborative effort required when implementing systemic, tiered reading and math interventions for students.

Delimitations

Lunenburg and Irby (2008) considered delimitations as “self-imposed boundaries set by the researcher on the purpose and scope of the study” (p. 134). The following delimitations were implemented to establish the boundaries of the study:

1. The data were collected from one public school district in the Midwest.
2. The data were collected from the 2020-2021 school year.
3. The data were collected from teachers, interventionists and administrators who participated in the RTI process.
4. The data collection method was limited to individual interviews through video conferencing technology.

Assumptions

Assumptions are known as “postulates, premises, and prepositions that are accepted as operational for purposes of the research” (Lunenburg and Irby, 2008, p. 135). The following assumptions were in place to develop a thorough understanding of the study:

1. The assumption was made that participants provided truthful responses.

2. The assumption was made that the administrators who participated in the study were knowledgeable about the RTI framework.

Research Questions

The study utilized a central question. Creswell (2014) described a central question as "a broad question that asks for an exploration of the central phenomenon or concept in a study" (p. 139). The central research question used to guide this study was, "What is the systemic view of the RTI process?" This study also utilized five sub questions. Creswell (2014) stated sub questions are used to narrow the focus of the study while maintaining open questioning. The following sub questions were used to explore the roles and responsibilities of staff members and how each relates to the system of RTI:

RQ1. What are teachers' perceptions about their role in the RTI process?

RQ2. What are teachers' perceptions about their responsibilities in the RTI process?

RQ3. What are interventionists' perceptions about their role in the RTI process?

RQ4. What are interventionists' perceptions about their responsibilities in the RTI process?

RQ5. What are administrators' understandings of the entire RTI process?

Definition of Terms

Evidence Based Instruction. Evidence based instruction is instruction that is deemed effective based on student assessment results (Wixson, 2011).

Fidelity. Teaching with fidelity is to follow the resource or strategy exactly as outlined (Brown-Chidsey, 2009).

Instructional Coach. An instructional coach is a non-classroom teacher who is asked to evaluate issues of a school or district and to develop specific solutions to support the success of students and teachers (Wolpert-Gawron, 2016).

Intervention. Intervention is targeted instruction given to a student in addition to regular classroom instruction (Mesmer & Mesmer, 2008). It is specific to the individual student's current learning needs. Intervention is provided to only a select group of students (Brown-Chidsey et al., 2008).

Interventionist. An interventionist, or intervention specialist, provides "strategies and support to facilitate the Integration of At-Risk Supports (IARS) which focuses on effective instructional and behavioral practices related to the specific needs of each child, based on a Response to Intervention (RTI) framework" ("Park Hill School District Position Description," n.d.).

Instruction. Instruction is defined as to teach or direct. Instruction is provided to all students. It is the dominant model of the intervention supplied in schools (Brown-Chidsey et al., 2009).

Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS). MTSS can be classified as an umbrella term in which RTI and PBIS fall under (Mellard, 2017). The framework of MTSS involves tiered interventions with an emphasis on strong core instruction and support intensified to match the needs of students (Goodman, 2017). MTSS also encompasses "professional development, school climate, curriculum adoption, and alignment and leadership" (Mellard, 2017, p. 11).

Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS). PBIS is an evidence-based framework with three tiers used to improve and imbed data, systems, and practices that

impact student outcomes to help all students succeed in school (Center for Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2020).

Progress Monitor. Standardized assessments are given to students consistently to monitor the learning and effectiveness of instruction and interventions ("Park Hill School District's Response to Intervention Process Manual," n.d.). Progress monitoring should be specific to the concepts and skills of each student's particular interventions.

Universal Screening Process. Students who are at-risk or unable to meet learning expectations are identified through screening instruments given to all students ("Park Hill School District's Response to Intervention Process Manual," n.d.)

Response to Intervention (RTI). RTI can be defined as a framework of implementing high-quality instruction and interventions based on student needs (NASDSE, 2008 as cited in ("Park Hill School District's Response to Intervention Process Manual," n.d.). Students' progress is monitored frequently to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention and to determine if changes in instruction or goals are needed.

Tiered Instruction. Tiered instruction is instruction that changes in strength or intensity based on the characteristics of how students are grouped to receive instruction, amount of time instruction is given, progress as measured by assessment, and the format of the instruction (Brown-Chidsey et al., 2009).

Organization of the Study

This dissertation is composed of five chapters. Chapter one presented an introduction to the study, background information regarding the district and school in question, the purpose and significance of the study. The delimitations, assumptions,

definitions of terms of the research, and research questions are also found in chapter one. Chapter two encompasses a literature review of significant ideas, practices, and standard components of RTI utilized in the United States. Research regarding MTSS concludes the literature review in chapter two. Chapter three describes the methodology of the study, including the research design, selection procedures for participants, data collection methods, the role of the researcher, and limitations of the study. Chapter four outlines the qualitative analysis of the study results. In conclusion, chapter five depicts the significant findings of the study as well as implications for action and suggestions for further research.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

The Basis for RTI

Response to Intervention (RTI) increased in utilization across the nation in 2004 when the U.S. Department of Education introduced the Public Law 108-446 within IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act). As described by the law, the process of RTI is the response of a student who has participated in appropriate, scientific, and research-based interventions and is not making adequate progress; then, a learning disability may exist (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). This law allowed the use of the process of RTI to identify students as having specific learning disabilities (U.S. Department of Education, 2006).

Several events occurred leading up to the addition of RTI in federal law. These events include, but are not limited to, the challenges of using the discrepancy model for special education identification, the induction of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001, and a culmination of significant research of best practice for school and student improvement (Addison & Warger, 2011). Each event played a role in creating the need for change in educational policy and practice.

Before the addition of using intervention to qualify a student for special education, schools were forced to wait for students to fail before they could receive any support outside the classroom. The "wait to fail" method refers to the discrepancy model used to diagnose learning disabilities in the school setting. The discrepancy model asked schools to identify a discrepancy between a student's I.Q. and school achievement (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2007). This is known as the "wait to fail" model because the discrepancy did

not typically appear until late elementary, in third, fourth, or even fifth grade (Moats et al., n.d.; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2007). Moats et al. (n.d.) suggested this delayed identification resulted in schools dedicating more resources to testing than instruction and encouraged schools to retain students rather than teach them objectives outside the grade level content. Additionally, placement in special education (SPED) is seldom related to more effective instruction or more significant achievements for students with a learning disability (Moats et al., n.d.).

Research has shown the discrepancy model is not always an accurate diagnosis of a learning disability. Several studies on disabilities and reading development have shown there is no difference in the nature of the learning disability between students who have I.Q. discrepancies and those who do not (Fletcher et al., 2007, as cited in Moats et al., n.d.). Addison and Warger (2011) stated that one of the significant issues before RTI was that many students were misdiagnosed as disabled because they received no academic help until they had already failed repeatedly. It often takes years before a student's achievement levels fall far enough below their ability level as measured by their I.Q. (Preston et al., 2016).

Another concern that arose with the discrepancy model was the manner in which individual states interpreted the law. The U.S. Office of Education identified regulations for learning disability qualifications as if "the child has a severe discrepancy between achievement and intellectual ability" (U.S. Office of Education, 1977, p. 65083). One weakness of the regulations was the formula for determining a discrepancy was left up to each state. This resulted in wide variations of definitions and, in turn, an increase in the number of students who qualified for a learning disability (Preston et al., 2016).

Research has shown 17 different definitions of criteria in the United States used to qualify students with a learning disability (Ysseldyke et al., 1983). A study was conducted using any one of the 17 definitions of criteria to qualify students with a learning disability. Of the 248 general education students in the study, 85% qualified under one definition and 68% qualified under two or more definitions of criteria. The number of students identified as learning disabled doubled between 1975 and 2000 (Preston et al., 2016). The multiple definitions of criteria for qualifying under the discrepancy model among states contributed to the overidentification of students with a learning disability.

Misdiagnosis and overidentification were not the only problems that emerged with the discrepancy model. Statistics show there is an overrepresentation of minority students receiving SPED services or qualified as having a learning disability (Moats et al., n.d.). The National Research Council (2002) attributed this overrepresentation to factors such as biological and social/contextual differences that differ by race and economic status, the racial disproportion in the school experience, and racial bias in referral and assessment practices. It was recommended by the council to move the attention away from what a student cannot do and to focus on what changes can be made to the classroom environment and instructional strategies to foster success for all students.

Another critical component in the establishment of RTI was the adoption of the No Child Left Behind Act. In 2002, the Bush Administration put into effect a law to increase student achievement. This law worked to lessen the achievement gap between poor and minority students and those students with an economic advantage (Klein, 2015).

The law required all students to achieve proficiency on state assessments by the year 2013-2014. Not one state met this requirement, confirming the need for a framework to support low achieving students.

As states struggled to meet rigorous goals of the No Child Left Behind Act, school districts across the country developed new processes for evaluating data on student achievement. This was primarily due to the accountability requirements put into place by the law (as cited in Harrington et al., 2016). School districts began to look at data by individual students and student groupings. A change in instructional practices was required to meet the needs of all students, particularly those falling below proficiency.

The No Child Left Behind Act also directed schools to utilize research-based instruction as recommended by the report of the National Reading Panel (2000). In 2000, the National Reading Panel published a report outlining existing research for reading instruction. The panel's work began in 1997 in response to a request from Congress to establish best practices for teaching young children to read. The panel completed a meta-analysis of hundreds of experimental or quasi-experimental studies (Rickenbrode & Walsh, 2013; Addison & Warger, 2011). This study became highly significant to the research and development of RTI due to its emphasis on researched-based instruction (Addison & Warger, 2011).

Significant intervention studies also played a role in the development of RTI. The use of intervention to improve student achievement was not a new concept in education research. Studies by researchers Deno, Mirkin and Bergan appeared on the topics of academic and behavior interventions as early as 1977 (Addison & Warger, 2011). Heller,

Holtzmann, and Messick were credited with the conceptual roots of RTI in 1982 with interventions as the solution to over-identification of students with a learning disability (Preston et al., 2016). They claimed, "general education teachers should be responsible for providing multiple interventions to students who are struggling" (as cited in Preston et al., 2016, p. 175).

Finally, in 2000, a committee of stakeholders created by the Office of Special Education Programs sought ways to improve learning disability identification and eligibility criteria (Bradley & Danielson, 2004; Bradley et al., 2007, as cited in Preston et al., 2016). As suggested by the committee, RTI materialized as another route by which students were identified with a learning disability. In 2001, the National Research Center on Learning Disabilities researched RTI and began to circulate this information to states (Preston et al., 2016). The President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education then suggested the addition of using results-driven procedures and prevention models to IDEA law (President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education, 2002, as cited in Preston et al., 2016). These suggestions later appeared in the Reauthorization of IDEA (2004) along with Early Intervention Services and the use of RTI as an alternative to SPED identification from the discrepancy model (Addison & Warger, 2011; Preston et al., 2016).

The Purpose of RTI

Research presents varying definitions of the purpose of RTI. Moats et al. (n.d.) claimed the purpose of RTI was to find students who are at-risk and provide them with immediate intervention to prevent academic failure as opposed to waiting for students to fail. National Research Council (2002) stated that a child with poor performance should

receive additional attention and instruction from the classroom teacher through RTI before considering SPED services. Fuchs and Fuchs (2007) described the premise of RTI as "students who are identified as LD [learning disabled] when their response to validated interventions is dramatically inferior to that of peers" (p. 14). They explained that RTI could disclose the differences between low ability, a disability, and inferior instruction.

The Reauthorization of IDEA (2004) presented educators with an opportunity. Instead of waiting for students to show poor performance continuously, schools were encouraged to find ways to implement early intervention practices (Mellard, 2017). RTI helped avoid the wait-to-fail mentality as it provided specific and targeted instruction to all students as soon as they showed a need for intervention (Buffum, et al., 2010).

However, the addition of RTI to IDEA law to help identify students with disabilities was not the only reason why school districts adopted RTI into practice. East (2006) explained the goals of RTI as first "to deliver evidence-based interventions, and the second is to use students' responses to those interventions as a basis for determining instructional needs and intensity" (p. 1). Special education referral is then a product of those goals rather than the goal itself (East, 2006).

Identifying students who are struggling during the process of RTI helps support those students who are most at-risk for failure by receiving intense and focused instruction. Lose (2007) stated, "an intervention must show accelerative learning and steady progress over time on the part of the child or else it has failed" (p. 276). RTI provides the opportunity to be focused on the individual needs of students and how best to meet those needs as unique individuals (Turse & Albrecht, 2015). Providing every student with the instruction they need, when they need it, not only avoids the wait-to-fail

mentality, but it also impacts far more students than just those who qualify for SPED. Similarly, Buffum et al. (2010) stated the purpose of RTI was, "to systematically provide every student with the additional time and support needed to learn at high levels" (p. 14).

The National Center on Response to Intervention defined a purpose of RTI that encompassed all students and teachers. The National Center on Response to Intervention (2010) stated in an Information Brief the purpose of RTI as follows:

The National Center on Response to Intervention (NCRTI) believes that comprehensive RTI implementation will contribute to more meaningful identification of learning and behavior problems, improve instructional quality, provide all students with the best opportunities to succeed in school, and assist with the identification of learning disabilities and other disabilities. (p. 1)

In essence, the goal of RTI is to implement a process that uses student data to drive the execution of high-quality instruction and provide interventions based on students' needs (Abbott & Wills, 2012). To accomplish all of these goals, a thorough understanding of the RTI framework is necessary.

Response to Intervention

Interventions are described by researchers Mesmer & Mesmer (2008) as targeted instruction given to a student in addition to regular classroom instruction and that is specific to the individual student's current learning needs. Interventions are designed to help prevent individuals who are not meeting grade-level standards from falling even farther behind and should ultimately help the student improve in academic performance in the targeted area (Mesmer & Mesmer, 2008). Mesmer & Mesmer (2008) also noted

that interventions for RTI should be implemented with complete fidelity and the progress of student performance should be methodically evaluated.

When evaluating RTI, the meaning of response must be clear. Educators must assess how students respond to general classroom instruction. Student response is measured by data collected through formal and informal assessments, observations, screening, and progress monitoring tools. Based on students' responses, growth, or lack of, instructional decisions must be made, and interventions put into place to support the students (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2007; Harn, 2017). Once an intervention is put into place, student's response is measured throughout the implementation of the intervention. Responses are cyclical. Teachers are continuously assessing the performance, or response, of students (García & Ortiz, 2008).

In order to evaluate a student's response to instruction and intervention with consistency, a systematic framework is required. Although RTI frameworks may look different depending on where it is implemented, the Nation Center on Response to Intervention (<http://www.rtisuccess.org>) shared that RTI models have standard components. Standard components of RTI programs include the use of assessment to monitor student progress, decisions based on data, a tiered instruction system, and the use of research-based instructional strategies.

Assessment and Data

Assessment and data collection are an integral part of any RTI process. Assessment is the driving force behind the response aspect of RTI (Abbott & Wills, 2012). Mesmer and Mesmer (2008) stated RTI is the process of combining assessment and interventions to provide immediate benefits to students by using data to inform if an

intervention is needed, what intervention is needed, and determine the effectiveness of the intervention. To determine if students are learning what is taught, and at the rate that is expected, data must be present.

Johnston (2011) explained that screening assessments are a tool for deciding what resources should be used to gain the most significant prevention level and to decrease costs. Student progress is closely monitored through the use of assessments at each tier of intervention to determine the need for the level of instructional intensity a student may need (Hughes & Dexter, 2011). Universal screenings, the assessments given to all students, and classroom-based assessments can be used to identify students who are not making expected progress academically (García & Ortiz, 2008).

Screening assessments must be specific and sensitive, accurately identifying students in need of support and those who do not need additional support (Johnston, 2011). Abbott and Wills (2012) suggested utilizing screening assessments that are school-wide, easy to give and score, as well as easy to convert into usable results that are accessible to many. Brown-Chidsey et al. (2009) stated that the purpose of data is to inform instruction; therefore, data that is easily accessible is necessary to tailor instruction as a response to student needs.

Teachers must comprehend the purpose of assessments used in order to choose the appropriate intervention for students based on the data (Spear-Swerling & Cheesman, 2011). Teachers demonstrate a vital role in identifying students who need additional support or interventions (García & Ortiz, 2008). Their knowledge extends past those who need intervention to possible causes of learning challenges, what kinds of interventions

are called for, and who would be best suited to support the student (García & Ortiz, 2008).

Once students have been identified as needing interventions, data is used to identify its effectiveness (Mesmer & Mesmer, 2008). Assessments and data collection must be ongoing since some students respond quickly to interventions, therefore allowing teachers to discontinue the intervention and then administer interventions to those with a greater need (Johnston, 2001). This collection of data can be referred to as progress monitoring. Students receiving interventions should be progress monitored continuously, as often as weekly or biweekly (Mesmer & Mesmer, 2008). Continuously using progress-monitoring and assessment data to plan and modify instruction, plays a significant role at all levels of the tiered instruction system in RTI (García & Ortiz, 2008).

Tiered Instruction System

A central component of RTI is the use of a tiered instruction system. Jenkins et al. (2013) stated that the amount of intervention intensity a student receives should be directly related to classroom performance in order to monitor the response to instructional intervention. The instructional intensity and intervention implementation variance creates the tiered instructional system (Brown-Chidsey et al., 2009). The RTI approach typically involves grouping students into three levels of instructional intensity. However, the number of tiers is dependent on the school and the model utilized (Brown-Chidsey et al., 2009). In reference to a three-tier system, Kuo (2014) identified tier one instruction as class-wide interventions also referred to as general classroom instruction and differentiated instruction. Tier two, Kuo (2014) stated, is a small group intervention. Tier

three can also be a small group intervention or may even result in an individual intervention (Kuo, 2014).

Tier one has been commonly referred to as classroom instruction that all students receive. Tier one is also known as universal or core instruction (Brown-Chidsey et al., 2009). Turse and Albrecht (2015) shared the importance of utilizing high-quality teaching using evidence-based instructional strategies when teaching to the entire class. Data should be collected following whole group instruction to determine how to differentiate instruction within the classroom to meet all students' needs. Brown-Chidsey et al. (2009) claimed differentiated instruction, teaching in a way to meet individual needs, often resulting in a change in the instructional delivery or product, is at the core of RTI. Throughout tier one instruction, data collection helps teachers decide the particular students who require tier two instruction (Turse & Albrecht, 2015).

Tier two instruction has been referred to as strategic or supplemental instruction (Brown-Chidsey et al., 2009). Turse and Albrecht (2015) described the purpose of tier two instruction as the need to administer a focused intervention or remediation within the general education classroom. This intervention often takes place in small groups. It is essential to state that these interventions are different from the instruction conducted in tier one and are based specifically on student needs (Brown-Chidsey et al., 2009; Buffum et al., 2010; Harn, 2017). Interventions at this level may include reteaching foundational skills and reteaching using an alternative format or materials (García & Ortiz, 2008).

Tier two instruction occurs for those students who need it (Brown-Chidsey et al., 2009). Throughout tier two instruction, the teacher monitors the student's progress. It is through the use of progress monitoring data that teachers can determine if an intervention

is successful (resulting in student growth) or if the need for tier three instruction is necessary (Brown-Chidsey et al., 2009; Buffum et al., 2010; Turse & Albrecht, 2015).

Tier three instruction provides the most intensive instruction of all three tiers (Turse & Albrecht, 2015). The instruction is given in addition to the core curriculum instruction that all students receive at tier one (Buffum et al., 2010). Tier three instruction is conducted frequently and can occur within and outside the general education classroom (Powers & Mandal, 2011).

Tier three interventions are highly centered on individual student needs. These interventions are focused and can be given by staff with greater expertise in the subject, such as reading specialists (Allington, 2013; Powers & Mandal, 2011). Due to the intensity and specificity of interventions required at this level of instruction, a problem-solving approach must be utilized (Buffum et al., 2010).

Problem analysis can be referred to as the consideration of student needs when determining the appropriateness of an intervention (García & Ortiz, 2008). The interventions implemented should be research-based and are often varied to meet students' multiple needs under this tier (Brown-Chidsey et al., 2009; Buffum et al., 2010; Mesmer & Mesmer, 2008). As a result of the varied interventions issued to meet the vast needs of students at the tier three level, no single instructional program will likely meet these needs (Allington, 2013; Buffum et al., 2010).

Across all three tiers, aligned instruction is critical to the success of RTI (Harn, 2017). The instruction must be high-quality and research-based (Buffum et al., 2010; Mesmer & Mesmer, 2008). Instruction plays a significant role in the implementation of RTI.

Implementation of Quality Instruction

Successful implementation of RTI is directly related to the instructional quality given in all three tiers (Denton et al., 2003; Harn, 2017; Mesmer & Mesmer, 2008; Turse & Albrecht, 2015). Buffum et al. (2010) declared that RTI is an ongoing process to improve not just student learning, but also teaching. They stated, "when a student struggles, we assume that we are not teaching him or her correctly" (Buffum et al., 2010, p. 13). This approach to improving teaching brings about a change in philosophy for many educators that all students can learn.

In order for all students to learn, it is the responsibility of educators to determine what students' needs are and how they learn best. Johnston (2011) identified instruction as the core of the problem in the RTI model. When instruction is emphasized, a student not making expected progress is viewed as a result of the instructional needs not being met, and therefore, instruction must be modified (Johnston, 2011).

If teachers are to modify instruction, they must have a thorough knowledge and expertise of best teaching practices to meet the needs of the students effectively. Allington (2013) described effective teachers as those who adapt instruction continuously until the best method for supporting the student is found. The research of Cunningham (2011) stated there is no single best instructional method of teaching phonics, which can be frustrating to those who desire a mandated approach for all to use (as cited in Allington, 2013, p. 522). Therefore, an extensive knowledge base of best practice is required of teachers to best meet the needs of learners.

When researching best practices for instruction and interventions, two core ideas can be identified (DuFour & Marzano, 2011; Spear-Swerling & Cheesman, 2011). One

approach emphasizes fidelity of curriculum and interventions based on scripted programs to achieve student success. Mesmer and Mesmer (2008) identified scripts as directions that teachers follow while teaching. Another approach is the use of responsive instruction. Scripted and student responsive instruction both have a place in the RTI framework.

In 2000, the National Reading Panel produced a study that encouraged delivering phonics instruction that is explicit and systematic to provide adequate instruction in the area of reading (Milosovic, 2007). Many school districts and administrators turned to the use of commercial scripted programs in order to deliver systematic instruction. Denton et al. (2003) stated the value of a scripted program lies within the explicit instructional sequences, outlining exactly what should be taught and when. Mesmer & Mesmer (2008) stated the directions in scripted programs are to be read verbatim throughout instruction. When utilizing a scripted program, fidelity is required; otherwise, student success may be linked to the program's inaccurate use rather than an inappropriate instructional method (Abbott & Wills, 2012; Brown-Chidsey et al., 2009; Johnston, 2011).

Within the research of Brown-Chidsey et al. (2009), there was a strong emphasis on implementing the curriculum with fidelity. Additionally, Brown-Chidsey et al. (2009) emphasized selecting a curriculum that is best matched to student needs. Intervention fidelity can be defined as teaching with accuracy to deliver instruction "exactly the way it was designed in the curriculum" (Brown-Chidsey et al., 2009, p. 40). Fidelity to the curriculum not only helps identify if a student's needs are accurately being met, but it also makes certain that all students are delivered the same research-based curriculum (Brown-Chidsey et al., 2009).

Brown-Chidsey et al. (2009) stated that the core curriculum matched to student needs was imperative for effective tier one instruction. Schools can determine whether or not a curriculum effectively meets students' needs by utilizing the tiered instructional model. According to this model, 80% of students should be successful with tier one or general classroom instruction (Abbott & Willis, 2012; Brown-Chidsey et al., 2009; Turse & Albrecht, 2015). If fewer students are successful with general classroom instruction, the core curriculum does not match the needs of students and should be reevaluated (Brown-Chidsey, 2009).

Buffum et al. (2010) argued that the goal of fidelity to a core instructional program, requiring teachers to teach the same lesson on the same day in order to follow the script, was not within the best interests of students' instructional needs. Since students do not all learn at the same rates, differentiation and flexible instructional timelines are essential to support student learning (Allington, 2013; Buffum et al., 2010; Johnston, 2011; Denton et al., 2003). Therefore, it is essential for school leaders and teachers to understand tiered instruction, instructional fidelity, responsive instruction, and the use of data to make instructional decisions (Spear-Swerling & Cheesman, 2011).

The quest for fidelity in tier one instruction is not obsolete. The core curriculum, the curriculum taught at tier one to all students in the general education classroom, "should be systematic in design and comprehensive in content" (Brown-Chidsey et al., 2009, p. 33). The idea of a systematic curriculum aligns with the report produced by the National Reading Panel in 2000. Turse and Albrecht (2015), claim it is the responsibility of teachers to implement research-based instructional strategies with fidelity to help identify those who have learning disabilities and those who simply need more instruction.

The effort of practicing fidelity lies within the responsibility to teach the curriculum thoroughly, so when a student experiences challenges, the learning deficits can easily be identified through assessment data and the appropriate supports put in place (Mesmer & Mesmer, 2008).

It is important to note that quality instruction does not mean merely teaching the core curriculum with fidelity, teachers must also be able to differentiate within their classrooms to meet students' needs (Buffum et al., 2010). Teachers should determine students' instructional needs by teaching the core curriculum, analyzing student needs through formal and informal assessments, and then making instructional decisions for the class and individuals to ensure the learning of all students (Brown-Chidsey et al., 2009). In order to do this, there must be flexibility within the schedule for teachers to reteach essential skills or provide enrichment when mastery has already been obtained (Buffum et al., 2010). Teachers must be responsive to student needs and adjust their instructional pace, presentation of curriculum, and, if necessary, the instructional materials to meet students' needs (Allington, 2013; Brown-Chidsey et al., 2009; Buffum et al., 2010).

Brown-Chidsey et al. (2009) stated 80% percent of students should be successful with the core curriculum, between 10% and 15% of students will require more instruction, and 5% may require SPED services. Additional instruction given in tier two and three becomes necessary for the 10% to 15% of students who do not qualify for SPED to succeed. The tier two and tier three instruction provided is in addition to the core curriculum and should never replace what a student receives in tier one (Buffum et al., 2010; Wixson, 2011). Yet, without this additional support, these students will fall farther and farther behind grade-level expectations.

Johnston (2011) stated that scripted programs do not work for struggling students. At the tier two and three instruction levels, student needs are varied; therefore, one single program is unlikely to provide teachers with all the tools needed for instruction (Allington, 2013; Buffum et al., 2010). Struggling students depend on teachers to be adaptive to their changing needs and to continuously respond to students' behaviors and learning (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012; Hattie, 2009 as cited in DuFour & Marzano, 2011; Johnston, 2011). This adaptation goes beyond following a prescribed script of instruction. Therefore, responsive instruction becomes imperative to supporting students beyond tier one.

Responsive instruction entails meeting the needs of students through differentiation. Brown-Chidsey et al. (2009) stated that differentiation involves providing multiple outlets for learning and different curricular experiences to meet various students' needs. Denton et al. (2003) stated, "effective teachers are able to identify struggling readers and modify the nature and intensity of instruction to address their needs" (p. 202).

Struggling learners require responsive instruction that is explicit and direct (Brown-Chidsey et al., 2009; Denton et al., 2003; Kearns & Fuchs, 2013). Teachers use assessment and progress monitoring data to determine the students who require explicit instruction. With explicit instruction, the teacher models the exact skills and concepts the student needs (Brown-Chidsey et al., 2009; Denton et al., 2003; Kearns & Fuchs, 2013).

Explicit instruction is not the same as scripted instruction (Denton et al., 2003). Scripted instruction is not responsive to student needs due to the idea that scripted instruction follows a set of prescribed directions for the teacher. Explicit instruction is given based on students' exact learning needs and changes based on student response and

is therefore a strong component of responsive teaching. Explicit instruction is necessary since one instructional approach, as often seen with scripted programs, does not meet the needs of all students (Denton et al., 2003).

Turse and Albrecht (2015), stated it is the responsibility of teachers to implement research-based instructional strategies, rather than programs, with fidelity to help identify those who have learning disabilities and those who simply need more instruction. Research-based instructional strategies should be used with all students, including those in need of intervention who should be taught with greater intensity (Mesmer & Mesmer, 2008; Spear-Swerling & Cheesman, 2011). Therefore, teachers must be knowledgeable about multiple research-based methods to meet the needs of all learners, particularly struggling students (Denton et al., 2003; Spear-Swerling & Cheesman, 2011).

Teachers and staff must have the necessary training, materials and instructional tools to fully utilize research-based instructional strategies with all students and their various needs (Abbott & Wills, 2012; DuFour & Marzano, 2011; García & Ortiz, 2008; Turse & Albrecht, 2015; Reinke et al., 2013; Wixson, 2011). Harn (2017) stated professional development should address critical areas such as decision making driven by data, use of research-based practices, behavior management for both whole group and small group instruction, and the implementation of explicit instruction. Johnston (2011) expressed the importance of professional development for each level of tiered instruction to develop teacher expertise. Teachers need to continuously improve and reflect upon their practices, which requires professional development and the use of a qualified coach whose skills are greater than the classroom teacher (Johnston, 2011; Reinke et al., 2013).

The Role of Staff in the RTI Framework

“RTI is the responsibility of each person in the school; school-wide RTI needs to be clear enough for all stakeholders to understand their own role and responsibility and what they can do to help students succeed” (Lee, 2017, p. 35). Abbott & Wills (2012) stated that every staff member should be involved in the intervention system. In order for interventions to be successful, the system should be tailored to the school's specific environment with clearly defined goals for all stakeholders (Abbott & Wills, 2012; Lee, 2017; Turse and Albrecht, 2015). Understanding the roles of individual staff members as well as how staff members work together is essential to understanding RTI at a systemic level.

RTI has matured and transformed since its appearance in schools to include the involvement of certified staff (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012; Ehren, 2013; Galloway & Lesaux, 2014). The RTI provision within special education law allows school districts to assign 15% of special education funds to provide general education interventions for students at-risk for learning disability identification (Ehren, 2013; Wixson, 2011). Schools have responded to this provision with the addition of staff members hired explicitly for providing interventions.

Interventionists and Specialists. "Reading specialists are conceptualized as instrumental to a reform effort focused on data-driven instruction and improvement at all levels" (as cited in Galloway & Lesaux, 2014, p. 518). Specialists, specifically reading specialists, have traditionally been trained to provide instruction and support to students in need of tier two and tier three interventions (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012; Brown-Chidsey et al., 2009; Galloway & Lesaux, 2014; García & Ortiz, 2008; Swanson et al., 2012). Specialists must work with struggling students the most as they are often the highest

trained staff in their designated certification area (Allington, 2013; Brown-Chidsey et al., 2009; Harn 2017; Wixson, 2011). For students with the greatest needs to make the greatest progress, they must work with the teachers with the greatest expertise (Allington, 2013; Bean & Lillenstein, 2012; Brown-Chidsey et al., 2009; Farstrup, 2007; Harn 2017; Wixson, 2011).

However, the role of a specialist, or interventionist, is continuously evolving to meet the needs of individual schools (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012; Galloway & Lesaux, 2014). Schools undergoing RTI-based literacy reform are beginning to utilize reading specialists for teacher support in addition to providing interventions to students (Farstrup, 2007; Galloway & Lesaux, 2014; Laster et al., 2014). A specialist acting as an RTI coach is one method to increase intervention implementation success by providing teachers the support they need to effectively utilize evidence-based instructional and intervention methods (Reinke et al., 2013).

The one of the challenges of utilizing the RTI framework effectively is the need for quality collaboration in regard to instruction. There may be a “fix-it” mentality where specialists are concerned (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012). This mentality occurs when teachers send tier two or three students to work with a specialist with the expectation of the specialist fixing the students’ learning deficits and then sending them back to the classroom (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012). However, the RTI framework requires a joint responsibility for students in which specialists and teachers collaboratively discuss student needs as identified through data and make decisions about instruction together (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012).

The addition of specialists and interventionists to schools provides an essential piece of the complex puzzle that is the RTI process (Ehren, 2013). Brown-Chidsey et al.

(2009) stated, "RTI methods suggest that teachers themselves work with their struggling students directly as a part of a team" (p. 8). Collaboration with staff members to support struggling students is just one part of the work a classroom teacher does to support all students through the RTI framework.

General Education Teachers. Instruction is a significant component of the RTI framework. A classroom teacher is responsible for instruction at all three tiers and for ensuring that instruction is research-based, practiced with fidelity, and differentiated to meet student needs (Brown-Chidsey et al., 2009). A teacher delivers whole group instruction, small group instruction, and individual instruction (Brown-Chidsey et al., 2009). Additionally, a teacher is responsible for using evidence-based instruction to support all learners (Spear-Swerling & Cheesman, 2011; Wixson, 2011).

To determine if the instruction is evidence-based and students are making expected progress, teachers must regularly assess and collect data on students (Brown-Chidsey, 2009; Garcia & Ortiz, 2008; Wixson, 2011; Yurkewecz & Wilson, 2012-2013). Teachers are responsible for making instructional changes based on data and implement the necessary interventions to students using a tiered instructional model (Brown-Chidsey, 2009; Spear-Swerling & Cheesman, 2011; Yurkewecz & Wilson, 2012-2013). Throughout this process, teachers collaborate with other staff members to continuously improve instruction within their own classrooms and as a school, and to seek additional support for students who are not responsive to instruction (Brown-Chidsey, 2009; Yurkewecz & Wilson, 2012-2013).

For RTI to be a collaborative and systemic process, teachers must see beyond their students and classrooms (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012; Ehren, 2013; Galloway & Lesaux, 2014; Yurkewecz & Wilson, 2012-2013). In order to do so, supportive and

knowledgeable leadership is a necessity. A universal response from teachers, when asked what role principals play in the RTI process, was leadership is essential to the success of RTI (Mellard et al., 2012).

Administrators. Administrators oversee the instructional capacity and culture of a building. Additionally, they manage schedules, collect, and distribute data, as well as foster collaboration among all staff members (Brown-Chidsey et al., 2009; DuFour & Marzano, 2011). All factors are fundamental in the RTI framework.

Administrators are tasked with facilitating the RTI process by providing the necessary professional development to increase teacher knowledge and expertise and the allocation of resources to support all aspects of the framework (Laster et al., 2014). Administrators must also ensure that data-driven and differentiated instruction occurs in every classroom to meet the needs of all students by being present in classrooms and data team meetings (Laster et al., 2014).

RTI provides principals the opportunity to proactively address problems and challenges for students and teachers regarding teaching and learning (Brown-Chidsey et al., 2009; Yurkewecz & Wilson, 2012-2013). The research of Yurkewecz & Wilson (2012-2013) stated the role of principals changes due to the collaborative approach of RTI. Principals have the opportunity to engage in professional conversations about teaching and learning as educators working as a team with the common goal of improving instruction, so all students' needs are met (Yurkewecz & Wilson, 2012-2013).

With the many components of RTI and the vast roles and responsibilities of stakeholders, administrators must be active with the implementation of RTI (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012; Laster et al., 2014). An emphasis on creating a school culture of collaboration and shared responsibility for all students must be present for school leaders

(Bean & Lillenstein, 2012; Brown-Chidsey et al., 2009; DuFour & Marzano, 2011; Laster et al., 2014; Yurkewecz & Wilson, 2012-2013). In order to implement RTI successfully, administrators must not only provide resources to educators, but they must also reform how teachers and staff view their roles and responsibilities in RTI in a way that views students and learning as a collaborative and systemic process (Buffum et al., 2010; DuFour & Marzano, 2011).

Collaboration

Definitions of RTI within research repeatedly described RTI as a systemic approach to address student needs and learning (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012; DuFour & Marzano, 2011; Ehren, 2012; Galloway & Lesaux, 2014; Harn, 2017; García & Ortiz, 2008; International Reading Association Commission on RTI, 2009; Laster et al., 2014; Turse & Albrecht, 2015). The term systemic is described by Merriam-Webster (n.d.) as, one of or relating to a system, pertaining to or affecting the body as a whole. RTI is a framework that is put in place to support the needs of all students from the general classroom instruction at tier one to the students receiving support from a specialist at tier three or students in need of special education services. This work cannot be completed alone by a single classroom teacher. RTI requires a collaborative, school-wide effort by all stakeholders.

The International Reading Association Commission on RTI (2009) stated educators who engage in the RTI process must take a collective responsibility for every student's learning and work collaboratively to ensure students' learning needs are met. Furthermore, a school climate should not only hold a shared responsibility for students but also hold the belief that all students can learn and have a commitment to creating equitable learning environments that support the learning of each student (García &

Ortiz, 2008). These beliefs serve as the foundation of an RTI system (García & Ortiz, 2008).

Schools that engage in a shared responsibility for the learning of students ensure the needs of learners are met through linked programs and services, no matter the label or classroom a student is assigned (García & Ortiz, 2008). “Deliberate and systemic coordination between programs and personnel provides opportunities for teachers to share their knowledge and expertise and to collaborate in planning and implementing instruction for individual students” (García & Ortiz, 2008, p. 29). Collaboration is imperative to a successful RTI framework for without consistent instruction and interventions across classrooms and grade levels, student growth may not reach its potential due to the possible presence of ineffective instructional practices (Spear-Swerling & Cheesman, 2011). Professional development that is school specific is key to creating a shared responsibility for students and fostering a school-wide commitment to quality instruction (García & Ortiz, 2008).

RTI requires teachers, specialists, and administrators to work together to support all learners (Abbott & Wills, 2012; Brown-Chidsey et al., 2009; Lee, 2017). The need for effective and purposeful collaboration has led many schools to implement a team approach to RTI (Abbott & Wills, 2012; Brown-Chidsey et al., 2009; Ehren, 2013; Farstrup, 2007; García & Ortiz, 2008; Marinak, 2011-2012, Turse & Albrecht, 2015; Wixson, 2011). A multidisciplinary team approach to RTI offers benefits to schools, particularly since students' learning needs are highly diverse (Turse & Albrecht, 2015). Teams can be made of a variety of personnel including administrators, general classroom teachers, special education teachers, counselors, school psychologists, social workers, specialists or interventionists and coaches (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012, Ehren, 2013;

Farstrup, 2007; Laster et al., 2014; Marinak, 2011-2012; Turse & Albrecht, 2015; Yurkewecz & Wilson, 2012-2013).

RTI teams come together with one goal: *how do we help students learn* (Turse & Albrecht, 2015). The topics and actions of the RTI team are dependent on how the school chooses to utilize the group. Turse & Albrecht (2015) described teams that collaborate to help struggling students, those in need of tier two or tier three instruction. Brown-Chidsey (2009) stated that teams might be made up of grade-level teachers working together to offer flexible grouping to support all students in the grade level and their current academic needs. García & Ortiz (2008) stated that teams should work to support the cultural and linguistic challenges students may face. Abbott & Wills (2012) described a school where the reading specialist and the RTI team reviewed interventions together and then choose the best interventions considering the school environment, philosophy, and needed level of intervention for students.

RTI teams, just like the RTI process itself, have transformed over the last decade (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012; Ehren, 2013). Researchers describe teams in which students and quality instruction are key topics (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012; Ehren, 2013; Farstrup, 2007; Laster et al., 2014; Yurkewecz & Wilson, 2012-2013). It has been stated that specialists should be working with students with the greatest needs because they have the greatest expertise in their certified subject area. Their expertise also places them in leadership positions on RTI teams (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012; Ehren, 2013; Farstrup, 2008; Galloway & Lesaux, 2014; Laster et al., 2014).

Collaboration within RTI brings about new challenges for staff members. Coaches and specialists are instructional experts and must learn to interact with teachers in new ways as they assume leadership roles in the framework (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012;

Ehren, 2013; Farstrup, 2008; Galloway & Lesaux, 2014; Laster et al., 2014).

Conversations are no longer just about shared students in tier two or three, these discussions and meetings instead become about best practices in instruction and interventions.

Before this shift, teachers were left on their own to determine the needs of students and to select instructional materials and interventions to meet these needs (Farstrup, 2007). Now, teachers, specialists, and coaches work together to provide appropriate instruction to all students (Farstrup, 2007). This change may leave coaches and specialists in a position to provide feedback to teachers, both positive and constructive (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012; Ehren, 2013; Galloway & Lesaux, 2014). Providing feedback to teachers can be a difficult skill for specialists as they enter this new role of leadership as an instructional expert (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012). Bean and Lillenstein (2012) stated the importance of utilizing the following three guidelines to deliver feedback: showing teachers respect and valuing their input, using data to support the feedback given and maintaining a focus on what is needed to help students learn.

The new role of specialists also changes the administrator's roles (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012). Administrators are tasked with creating and promoting norms for collaboration, supporting a risk-free environment, and establishing a shared responsibility and accountability for all students (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012). Establishing a climate and culture for effective implementation of RTI becomes a primary task for administrators (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012).

School climate and culture are central to a collaborative and systemic RTI framework. Teachers, administrators, specialists, coaches, counselors, and many more

staff members engage in challenging conversations daily. Colleagues openly discuss data, student performance, share, and reflect upon instructional methods and implementation, including challenges, shortfalls, and successes (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012; Ehren, 2013). Without these open discussions, reflection and support between staff members, RTI cannot help a school reach its fullest potential (Bean & Lillenstein; Ehren, 2013; Galloway & Lesaux, 2014).

The Challenges of RTI

A study released by the National Center for Education and Evaluation and Regional Assistance in 2015 showed negative results for the RTI framework (Sparks, 2015). The study examined 146 schools across 13 states involving over 20,000 students (Balu et al., 2015; Sparks, 2015). The schools used RTI for literacy by providing interventions to students reading just below grade according to fall benchmark assessments (Balu et al., 2015; Sparks, 2015). The authors of the study examined the spring test scores and found that first-grade students who were provided intervention services had lower spring reading scores than those who were just above the threshold for receiving services (Balu et al., 2015). There was no statistically significant impact between those who received reading interventions and those that did not with second and third grade students (Balu et al., 2015).

The schools examined in the study had been implementing RTI for at least three years (Sparks, 2015). All schools utilized major components of the RTI framework, including tiered instruction, universal screening, using data to assign students tier two or three interventions, and progress monitoring (Sparks, 2015). However, the researchers of

the study indicated that the schools did not always demonstrate a clear distinction between core instruction and interventions (Sparks, 2015).

Intervention experts expressed concerns about the lack of distinction between core instruction and interventions (Sparks, 2015). Out of the schools in the study, 67% of schools provided interventions during core instruction instead of in addition to it (Sparks, 2015). Wixson stated the importance of alignment between core instruction and interventions with core instruction hosting a broad range of required skills and interventions focusing on specific components in a different manner (as cited in Sparks, 2015). When there is little distinction between the two, students are likely to miss core instruction for the sake of interventions rather than receiving both and consequently be challenged to put the necessary skills together to progress as a learner (Wixson, n.d., as cited in Sparks, 2015).

In response to the 2015 study, Wixson also noted other concerns about the implementation of RTI in the study (as cited in Sparks, 2015). Wixson stated the negative results are likely from inaccurate or ineffective use of the screening tools and assessments used to identify students for interventions (as cited in Sparks, 2015). She also pointed to issues with the identification of appropriate interventions to use with students that likely resulted in the lack of student growth (as cited in Sparks, 2015).

The identification of appropriate interventions is not the only problem with poor implementation of RTI. Fuchs feared that RTI was being used as a substitute for special education services (as cited in Sparks, 2015). The result of this action would be students not receiving the services they need. Legal and ethical concerns are raised due to not correctly identifying students with learning disabilities due to poor RTI implementation

(Mellard, 2017). Mellard (2017) stated there are significant concerns if the schools implementing RTI without fidelity rely on RTI data to make disability determinations.

Additionally, there are few regulations on how students are identified for special education through RTI (Samuels, 2016). Research surveying 31 state directors of special education found significant variances in how special education identification occurs from intervention models (Samuels, 2016). In 2011, the U.S. Department of Education recognized the use of RTI as a delay or denial of special education (Samuels, 2016). Nevertheless, states do not have regulations or recommendations on how long a student receives RTI services before being evaluated for a learning disability or special education services (Samuels, 2016).

Fuchs & Fuchs (2007) stated that in order for schools to utilize an RTI framework for prevention and identification, the essential components of RTI must not be overlooked. Without high-quality implementation, evaluating student progress is really testing the highs and lows of the implementation process and not truly a reflection of students' responses to interventions (Mellard, 2017). Mellard (2017) stated that quality implementation occurs with strong leadership at the building level and specificity to the RTI framework.

Specificity to the RTI framework presents another challenge for school districts. Fuchs stated the complexity of the framework with all the moving parts makes RTI a difficult structure to put in place (as cited in Samuels, 2016). The RTI visual model is an example of the challenges districts have faced when implementing RTI. At the RTI framework formation, many schools and districts utilized a triangle to conceptualize the framework (Samuels, 2016). The triangle was split into three pieces to represent the three

tiers of instruction with the largest portion of the triangle representing the majority of students who only need general classroom instruction (tier one), progressing to the middle of the triangle where some students need additional interventions (tier two), to the top of the triangle representing the few students who need intensive interventions or further evaluation for special education (tier three) (Samuels, 2016).

School districts have found this image to be too simplistic to represent the complexity of interventions used to support all students (Samuels, 2016). Districts recognize MTSS, Multi-Tiered-Systems-of-Supports that include both behavior and academic interventions, including support for gifted students and English language learners (Samuels, 2016). The implementation components remain the same, continuing to build upon the complexity of the RTI framework (Samuels, 2016).

With the complex nature of RTI, it is not surprising that educators are experiencing psychological barriers with implementation. Warren & Robinson (2015) conducted research to determine the psychological impact educators have regarding RTI implementation. The researchers found that teachers felt they had a lack of training, limited knowledge in data-based decision-making and problem-solving processes, time constraints, and a lack of resources (Warren & Robinson, 2015). These factors resulted in barriers to successful RTI implementation (Warren & Robinson, 2015).

The feelings of inadequate resources and knowledge impacted teachers' efficacy beliefs (Warren & Robinson, 2015). Their perceived ability to engage students and deliver instruction was affected by feelings of anxiety and frustration (Warren & Robinson, 2015). Teachers who were resistant to change, lost interest when receiving new information, or failed to refer students for intervention due to the workload also

impacted the effectiveness of the RTI implementation (Warren & Robinson, 2015).

Warren & Robinson (2015) found that the psychosocial barriers among stakeholders can weaken RTI despite a strong framework.

The burden of yet another school initiative also brings about feelings of frustration leading to even more barriers to effective RTI implementation (Samuels, 2016). The goals of schools should be to ensure reform efforts and initiatives compliment the RTI framework (Samuels, 2016). Jose Castillo, a school psychologist with the Florida Problem Solving/Response to Intervention Project; stated his hopes for RTI to become second nature for educators and schools, to use data to inform instructional practices and provide quality and targeted instruction to meet the needs of all students and to not be just another school initiative (as cited in Samuels, 2016).

Summary

RTI implementation practices are vast and varied. These variances are purposeful to meet the ever-changing and greatly diversified needs of students, teachers and schools across the country. However, commonalities can be identified when studying effective RTI frameworks. The use of data and assessment, tiered interventions, quality instruction and collaboration are key components of the RTI process.

Chapter 3

Methods

This study was conducted to investigate the systemic view of the RTI framework. This chapter includes a description of the research design, setting, selection of participants, sampling procedures, and instruments. Additionally, this chapter will discuss data collection procedures, data analysis and synthesis, reliability, trustworthiness, the researcher's role, and limitations of the study.

Research Design

The research was a qualitative study. Qualitative research is used to provide insight into the experiences of groups of people or individuals (Creswell, 2009). This study applied a phenomenological design. Saldaña (2011) described phenomenology as the investigation of a phenomenon's essentials and essence to determine what it is and involves looking at nature and the meaning of things. Lunenburg & Irby (2008) labeled phenomena in this method of research as "basic information, actions, behaviors, and changes of phenomena" (p. 89-90). This study explored a systemic view of RTI by studying the perceptions of teachers, interventionists, and administrators on the roles and responsibilities in the RTI framework. As a result, the phenomena investigated in this study was a systemic view of RTI.

Setting

The study took place in an affluent, suburban public-school district in the Midwest. District X employed certified teachers in all 11 elementary schools known as interventionists for this study. These teachers provided reading or math intervention services to support students who qualify for additional instruction, tier three instruction,

outside of the general education classroom through the RTI framework. Students qualified for services by being identified through formal and informal assessment data as performing below grade-level expectations. Three schools (i.e., School A, School B, and School C) were selected to be a part of this study from District X.

School A utilized the RTI framework to provide reading interventions to qualifying students. The school employed two reading interventionists to provide tier three instruction. This instruction occurred outside of the general education classroom in a small group setting.

School B developed implementation practices to provide both reading and math interventions to students. The school contained two reading and one math interventionists to provide tier three instruction to qualifying students. The school also hosted a math studio classroom. As a math studio classroom, district teachers came to observe math lessons being taught. In addition to observing, visiting teachers also collaborated with the math studio teacher, the math interventionist and the building instructional coach regarding best teaching practices in the area of mathematics.

School C administered both reading and math interventions to students. The school utilized one reading and one math interventionists to provide tier three instruction to qualifying students. The reading interventionist was shared between School C and another school in District X.

School B and School C were the only two schools in District X that offered intervention services in both subject areas of reading and math. The other nine schools in the district provided reading intervention services through RTI. School B and School C

were chosen to gain a perspective of the RTI framework from teachers who specialize and provide intervention support in both math and reading.

School A was selected for the study due the similar demographics to School B and School C. Understanding the demographics, particularly the percentage of students who are economically disadvantaged, of the three schools was a vital piece in studying the systemic view of the RTI process. Table 5 represents the demographic statistics of each school. The students eligible for Free and Reduced-Price Lunch Program under the National School Lunch Act of 1946 are identified as economically disadvantaged.

Table 5

Demographics of School A, School B and School C

	W	B	H	A	NA	PI	MR	EconDis
<i>School A</i>	63%	19%	7%	3%	<1%	<1%	7%	34%
<i>School B</i>	59%	22%	11%	2%	0%	2%	4%	38%
<i>School C</i>	56%	18%	12%	7%	0%	<1%	7%	33%

Note. W = White; B = Black; H = Hispanic; A = Asian; MR = Multi-Racial; PI = Pacific Islander; NA = Native American; EconDis = Economically Disadvantaged. Adapted from *Common Core of Data* by the National Center for Education Statistics, 2020.

Retrieved from

https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/school_list.asp?Search=1&DistrictID=2923550

Research indicates a relationship between poverty and student achievement (Taylor, 2005). Taylor (2005) stated students who live in poverty are more likely to underachieve than their peers in all subject areas and consistently are the lowest scoring

group on standardized tests. Schools with higher populations of economically disadvantaged students are more likely to have higher populations of low achieving students. The RTI systems at the three schools in the study were presumably similar given the similar percentages of economically disadvantaged students and due to the idea that RTI is a framework used to support the learning of low achieving students.

Sampling Procedures

The population for the study consisted of educators who utilized the RTI framework. The sample was comprised of educators employed by District X. Purposeful sampling was used in an attempt to develop a thorough understanding of the individual perspectives of participants who were selected (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). To obtain a holistic view of the RTI framework, three subpopulations were selected: administrators, interventionists, and teachers.

The administrators were selected for the study using purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling is the selection of "a sample based on the researcher's experience of knowledge of the group to be sampled" (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008, p. 175). There were two administrators at each school. The lead administrators (principals) were contacted by email with an invitation to participate in the study from the Director of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment of District X. The Director of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment included the sampling procedures and purpose of the study as stated by the researcher in the Application to Conduct Research completed for District X (Appendix A). The three lead administrators agreed to participate in the study and to allow their interventionists and teachers to participate as well.

Following this agreement, the researcher contacted the six administrators at all three schools including both the principals and assistant principals. The administrators were contacted by email with a formal invitation to participate in the study (Appendix C and Appendix D). All six administrators participated in the study.

The staff members of School B were then selected using opportunistic sampling. Opportunistic sampling accounts for sampling opportunities that were not foreseen but arose during the study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Following the contact from the Director of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment in District X, the lead administrator of School B selected and contacted five staff members by email asking the individuals to participate in the study based on the participant needs indicated in the Application to Conduct Research and communicated through the Director of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment of District X. This administrator included the researcher's participation invitation in his email to the five staff members. The staff members selected by this administrator included the other administrator of School B (assistant principal), one reading interventionist, the math interventionist and two teachers. The researcher was included on this email communication (Appendix E). The staff members were then contacted by the researcher with an invitation to participate (Appendix D, Appendix F, and Appendix G). All the five staff members agreed to participate in the study.

The remaining interventionists from School A and School C were selected for the study using purposeful criterion sampling. The interventionists had to meet the criteria of being a certified teacher with a special certification in reading or math. School A had two reading interventionists. School C had one math interventionist and one reading interventionist. The interventionists from these schools were contacted by email with an

invitation to participate in the study (Appendix F). All the interventionists from School A and C participated in the study. The math interventionist and one reading interventionist from School B participated in the study. A total of six interventionists participated in the study.

The remaining teachers from School A and School C were selected through stratified purposeful sampling. Stratified purposeful sampling is an approach in which one sampling method is chosen and then other methods are added over time (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Initially, purposeful random sampling was selected by the researcher. Purposeful random sampling is a sequential sampling procedure used when the number of potential participants exceeds the number of participants that can be studied due to time and resources (Patton 2015, as cited in Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). There was a total of 21 full-time teachers at School A and 24 full-time teachers at School C.

All teachers at School C were sent an invitation to participate in the study (Appendix H). The lead administrator at School A included a statement inviting teachers to participate in the study in the weekly staff electronic newsletter (Appendix I). The emailed invitation and newsletter statement to teachers included a Google Form survey link for those interested in participating. The Google Form survey included the background, purpose of the study and the time commitment asked of participants (one half-hour interview through video conferencing methods) (Appendix J). After the introduction of the study, potential participants were asked three questions: would you be willing to participate in the study, and if yes, what is your first and last name, and what is the best method of contact? The Google Form survey was created to organize and to allow the researcher to randomly select volunteers from the survey responses.

After emailing the invitation to all the teachers from School C on two separate occasions over the course of a month and including a recruitment statement in the staff electronic newsletter after the second invitation was sent out, only one teacher volunteered to participate in the study. That teacher was contacted through email to arrange an interview. The researcher then used snowball sampling to select another teacher participant from School C. Snowball sampling is referred to as asking current participants to identify and refer other participants who have the same or similar characteristics and could be good sources for the study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019).

In this case, the math and reading interventionists were asked to share the names of teachers that might be willing to participate in the study. The math interventionist did not respond. The reading interventionist shared the names of three teachers. One teacher was randomly selected and contacted by email. After this teacher did not respond, a second name was randomly selected from the list and contacted. This participant elected to participate in the study.

The recruitment statement was posted in the electronic staff newsletter of School A for one month. No volunteers completed the Google Form survey during this time frame. The researcher then contacted one of the reading interventionists from School A asking if she knew of teachers who might be willing to participate in the study utilizing the snowball sampling method. The interventionist shared two names, both teachers were invited to participate through email, and both agreed to be part of the study. A total of six teachers from School A, School B and School C participated in the study.

The study also utilized intensity sampling. Lunenburg & Irby (2008) stated that intensity sampling is a selection of participants that support different research levels

within a study. One group of participants in the study was teachers from the general education classroom. Another group of participants was interventionists. Interventionists are certified teachers that teach only students who qualify for tier three instruction. This instruction occurs outside the general education classroom in a small group setting. The third group of participants included the administrators who oversaw the instructional capacity of each school. The use of all three groups as participants allowed the researcher to explore the different levels of the RTI framework.

Instruments

The researcher collected data through interviews to explore a systemic view of the RTI framework. Bloomberg & Volpe (2019) stated interviews for qualitative research are typically in-depth to capture the perceptions, attitudes, and emotions of the participant. Interviews were completed individually through video conferencing methods.

Interview Protocol. The researcher developed the interview questions based on the literature review regarding the RTI framework. The initial draft of the interview questions was reviewed and approved by an expert panel. This panel included the Director of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment from District X and members of the advisory committee from the Graduate School of Education at Baker University. Following the expert panel review, the researcher performed three mock interviews with an interventionist, a teacher, and an administrator. The mock interviews allowed the interviewer to test and refine the interview questions.

The teacher and interventionist participants were asked the same set of questions (Appendix K). The questions reflected the research sub questions; what are the perceptions about the role of teachers and interventionists in the RTI process and what

are the perceptions about the responsibilities of teachers and interventionists in the RTI process? There were four main open-ended questions. Each of the four questions was followed by prompting questions such as “can you give an example” or “how do you” to encourage the participant to elaborate their response further.

Additionally, there were follow-up questions included in the teacher and interventionist interview protocols. The use of the follow-up questions during each interview was optional. If the participant did not respond to the questions with topics similar to those present in previous literature, the researcher utilized the follow-up questions to further explore their perceptions on those topics. Each follow-up questions included a guide for the researcher to determine if the question should be posed to the participant.

The administrators were asked a different set of interview questions (Appendix L). The administrator questions sought to answer research question five, what are administrators’ understandings of the entire RTI process? The administrators were asked a minimum of eight open-ended questions. Each question had a prompting question to encourage the participant to elaborate on the question topics by asking the participant to provide examples and reasons. Follow-up questions were also included in the administrator interview protocol. Follow-up questions were only utilized if the responses of participants did not include topics found in previous literature of the systemic view of RTI.

The administrators were asked to describe their perceptions of the roles and responsibilities of teachers and interventionists in the RTI process. The administrators were also asked to describe their perceptions of their own role and responsibilities in the

RTI process. Finally, administrators were asked to describe the impact of school climate on the RTI framework.

The questions given to participants allowed the researcher to compare responses from the administrators to the teachers and interventionists. This allowed the researcher to gain an understanding of RTI from a systemic view by looking at the roles and responsibilities of three different populations of participants in the RTI framework. The questions also allowed the researcher to compare RTI in practice to theory.

Data Collection Procedures

The researcher received permission from Baker University to begin the study. An Institutional Review Board (IRB) request was completed through Baker University on October 28, 2020 (Appendix M). The IRB committee at Baker University approved the request on November 6, 2020 (Appendix N). The researcher also sought permission from District X to conduct the study with the completion of an Application to Conduct Research on November 4, 2020 (Appendix A). The Director of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment approved the Application to Conduct Research on November 20, 2020 (Appendix B).

After receiving approvals from District X and Baker University, the researcher contacted the head administrator of Schools A, B, and C through email (Appendix C). The researcher obtained contact information for each administrator on the website of District X. The first email to the administrators included the purpose of the study and a description of the potential participants for the study. An invitation to participate in the study was extended to each administrator.

Following the initial contact with the administrators of Schools A, B, and C, the researcher invited the interventionists to participate in the study (Appendix F). The researcher obtained the contact information from each school's website. The invitation included the background and purpose of the study.

The teachers in this study were invited to participate through emailed communication from their administrator (Appendix E), emailed communication from the researcher (Appendix G, Appendix H), or through electronic staff newsletter communications from their administrator (Appendix I). The researcher obtained the teacher's contact information from the administrators, interventionists, school websites, or from the teachers who volunteered via the Google Form survey. The various invitations included the background and purpose of the study.

After the participants agreed to be a part of the study and completed the consent form (Appendix O), individuals were contacted through email or phone to select an interview date and time. The interview times were agreed upon by the interviewees and the researcher. Interviews took place using video conferencing methods.

The interview protocol was followed to maintain standard interview procedures (Creswell, 2014). At the start of all interviews, a statement of purpose was read to the participants. The purpose statement included the purpose of the research and outlined what was to occur during the interview. Participants were then given the opportunity to ask the researcher questions.

The researcher followed the interview protocol. Remarks from the researcher were limited to probing questions or statements such as "tell me more." After each interview, a final thank-you statement was given to show appreciation for the

participant's time and information. All participants were interviewed one time. All interviews were video recorded. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and used for data analysis. Any tools and documents referenced during the interviews were electronically collected.

Data Analysis and Synthesis

Bloomberg & Volpe (2019) stated, “the process of data analysis begins with putting in place a plan to manage the large volume of data you collected and reducing it in a meaningful way” (p. 199). This study utilized qualitative data analysis. The data analysis involved searching for similarities and differences by coding and categorizing collected data (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008).

Following the collection of data, all interviews were transcribed verbatim by the program Happy Scribe. Happy Scribe is an internet-based program that produces text transcripts from video or audio recording. The researcher uploaded the video recordings of the interview and Happy Scribe then produced a text transcript. The researcher verified the accuracy of the transcript by comparing the video recording to the transcript text. Edits were made to the transcript where necessary.

After the transcripts were completed and verified by the researcher. Participants were emailed a copy of their transcripts in order to complete a member check. After member checks were completed, the researcher uploaded the transcripts to MAXQDA. MAXQDA is a software program for analyzing data in qualitative and mixed-methods research. This program helps researchers electronically code, collect, sort, and analyze the appearance of themes within data.

Once uploaded to MAXQDA, the transcriptions were then tagged with descriptors about the participant such as administrator, teacher, interventionist. These descriptors allowed the researcher to compare and contrast the responses from different groups of participants for analysis. The researcher then read the transcripts to identify common themes and significant statements to explore a systemic view of RTI.

During this process, the researcher recorded analytic memos. Saldaña (2016) described the purpose of analytic memo writing as a reflection on the researcher's coding processes and choices, themes, inquiry, patterns and categories that could lead to a theory about the data. The researcher used memos to track thoughts and ideas about the data, emerging patterns and themes, as well as to monitor for potential bias (Mason, 2002, as cited in Saldaña, 2016; Saldaña, 2016).

The researcher then engaged in the coding cycle process. A code within the realms of a qualitative study "is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of a language-based or visual data" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 4). Saldaña (2016) describes the process of analyzing qualitative data as cyclical as the researcher is continuously comparing data, codes, and categories.

Within the first cycle of coding, the researcher coded the data using provisional and holistic coding. Provisional coding can be identified as a predetermined list of codes developed from anticipated responses from participants and themes in the data (Saldaña, 2016). The provisional codes were developed from the study's literature review to match the common components of the RTI framework as described in current research. The

following provisional codes were utilized: tiered instruction, researched-based instruction, use of assessment and data, and collaboration.

Using the provisional codes, the researcher holistically coded the interview data. Holistic coding is described as studying the basic themes and issues of the data as a whole as opposed to line-by-line analysis (Saldaña, 2016). In this case, the basic themes and issues of the data were the provisional codes predetermined from the review of literature and interview questions.

The researcher then reread the data and coded line by line using elaborative coding. Elaborative coding is a top-down coding method where the researcher begins with theoretical constructs from existing studies or research (Saldaña, 2016). For this study, the data were first coded using provisional codes for general themes. Then subcodes were applied to the themes that emerged in the first cycle to elaborate on the themes under the provisional codes.

Finally, the researcher engaged in third cycle coding. Within this cycle of coding, the researcher utilized values coding to code data that fell outside the provisional codes and their subcodes. Values coding is referred to as coding data that reflects the values, beliefs and attitudes of participants illustrating their perspectives (Saldaña, 2016). The researcher coded the beliefs, values and attitudes that appeared around the participants' experiences and perspectives regarding the RTI framework.

Following the three cycles of coding, the research engaged in code mapping. Code mapping allows the researcher to view codes, organize the codes into the categories, and then construct themes (Brown, 1999 as cited in Saldaña, 2016). The researcher studied the codes and organized the codes into categories using the MAXQDA

program. The researcher listed themes and patterns that emerged from the codes and categories.

The themes from participants were studied to answer the central research question, "What is the systemic view of the RTI process?" To do so, the researcher compared the themes in two ways. First, the researcher compared the data from each participant subgroup to literature. Then the researcher compared the themes from the three groups of participants, specifically examining how the themes from the administrator data compared to the themed data of the teachers and interventionists. The study's findings were reported in chapter four.

Reliability and Trustworthiness

Bloomberg & Volpe (2019) stated research is valid when "it clearly reflects the world being described" (p. 202). To ensure the reliability of the study, the researcher standardized data collection through the creation of data collection protocols. During the data collection process, the researcher documented all aspects of participants' interviews with notes, memos and reflections following the conclusion of the interview.

Additionally, several strategies were used to support the trustworthiness of the study.

These strategies addressed the credibility, transferability confirmability, and dependability of the study.

Bloomberg & Volpe (2019) referred to credibility as to whether the perceptions of the study's participants align with the researcher's representation of them. To support the credibility of the study, the research participants were provided the opportunity for a member check after interviews had been transcribed. A member check allowed participants to make changes to the interview transcript if they believed there was

incorrect information present (Creswell, 2014). Revisions were made to the interview transcriptions, if necessary, using participant feedback from the member check.

The researcher also worked to ensure the study's transferability. Bloomberg & Volpe (2019) described transferability as the relation between the context utilized in the study and other contexts as determined by the reader. In an effort to increase the transferability of the study, the participant subpopulations were from three different schools with similar populations of students and similar practices of RTI framework. In addition, the researcher utilized purposeful sampling of the participants of the study and described how and why each group was selected. The study included a thorough description of the setting to provide specific details of the context of the study.

Confirmability was addressed by the researcher to increase the study's trustworthiness. Bloomberg & Volpe (2019) said, "confirmability is concerned with establishing that the researcher's findings and interpretations are clearly derived from the data, requiring the researcher to demonstrate how conclusions have been reached" (p.204). The researcher engaged in analytic memo writing during the initial exploration of data to support the confirmability of the study. These memos were coded during data analysis and utilized to provide insight to the researcher's thoughts and ideas about the data. Memos were also used to help the researcher reflect and monitor for potential bias (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019).

Additionally, the researcher provided an audit trail to support the confirmability and dependability of the study. Bloomberg & Volpe (2019) stated in order to obtain dependability, the researcher must ensure that the research process is clearly documented, logical, and traceable. A clear record of interview transcripts, notes taken after

interviews, analytic memos, data analysis protocol and a code book were maintained by the researcher. The code book was a method used to ensure coding reliability. The code book included the name, descriptions, inclusion criteria and data examples for each code used for data analysis. Details of how the codes were developed, application of the codes to the data were also included in the study.

Researcher's Role

As the researcher, my professional experiences with the RTI framework have led to an extensive knowledge base on the subject. This prior knowledge may have influenced the interpretation of the data, but the research conducted also allowed me to be open to new insights. I was a classroom teacher who utilized the components of the RTI framework daily. I taught in four different districts ranging from a district with two elementary schools to a district with as many as 19 elementary schools.

Each of the schools and districts I have taught in identified and addressed the needs of struggling learners in different ways. RTI is a framework that should be used in a way that best meets the needs of struggling students. Therefore, RTI can look different depending on the needs of each school and district. My experiences helped me to understand the need for differences in RTI execution among schools and districts.

In one district, I experienced success with RTI over a period of six years. I worked with two different interventionists who used responsive instruction with tier three students. The tier three students qualified for additional instruction and interventions from an interventionist outside of the general education classroom. Students qualified for interventions due to low proficiencies, as demonstrated from formal and informal data under the RTI framework. Working with these two interventionists, we had 29 out of 34

students who qualified for RTI services dismissed from services by the end of that same year.

My past roles and the success I experienced may have influenced what was perceived during interviews. It may have also shaped the interpretation of the data. I had a preconceived notion that student-responsive instruction, consistent use of data to make instructional decisions, and ongoing collaboration between staff members are imperative to successful RTI implementation as a result of my personal experiences. Consequently, I was particularly mindful of interview responses regarding those components of RTI. As I performed the data analysis, I read the interview transcripts several times, looking for emerging themes beyond the core components. I reread participant responses several times to look beyond my bias and thoroughly evaluate the study's data.

Limitations

A study's limitations can be described as factors outside of the researcher's control and may impact the interpretation of the results (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008).

The study had the following limitations:

1. District X, compared to other school districts, has lower percentages of students of color and low socioeconomic status. Therefore, the results of this study should not be generalized to schools with different demographic settings.
2. The interviews were conducted following the 2019-2020 school year. In the 2020-2021 school year, the staff of District X began the implementation of MTSS. The recent professional development on MTSS may have impacted the responses of staff about RTI and academic intervention processes.

Summary

The perceptions of the roles and responsibilities of teachers, interventionists, and administrators were explored in this study. Participants were chosen purposefully, who met specific criteria. Data were collected through interviews. Data analysis and synthesis were conducted following the transcription of the interviews. Data were then analyzed by the researcher leading to an interpretation of the data.

Chapter 4

Results

The primary purpose of this study was to describe systemic tiered interventions by exploring the roles and responsibilities of staff members directly involved in the RTI process. The researcher used a phenomenological design to examine the perceptions of teachers, interventionists, and administrators. The central research question, "What is the systemic view of the RTI process?" as well as five sub questions led the research investigation.

The participant groups were analyzed separately for each of the research sub questions. The participant groups were then analyzed and compared as a whole to answer the central research question. Common themes emerged from the interview data from each group. The themes providing quality instruction, providing tiered instruction, being a team member, using data and assessment, and collaborating with others emerged from the interviews of all three participant groups. All names reported were pseudonyms.

Findings Related to Research Sub Question 1

The first sub question was about teachers' perceptions on their role in the RTI process. Two themes emerged from the teacher interview data, which were providing quality instruction and providing tiered instruction. See Table 6 for a summary of the results of teachers' interview.

Table 6*Summary of Qualitative Results for Teachers*

Coded Themes and Categories	N
RQ1 What are teachers' perceptions on their role in the RTI process?	
Theme 1 Providing Quality Instruction	
Category 1.1 Using Programs and Resources	6
Category 1.2 Applying Research-Based Instruction	5
Category 1.3 Incorporating Differentiated Instruction for all Students	4
Theme 2 Providing Tiered Instruction	
Category 2.1 Identifying Students for Intervention	6
Category 2.2 Providing Tier One Instruction	3
Category 2.3 Providing Intervention in the Classroom	6
RQ2 What are teachers' perceptions on their responsibilities in the RTI process?	
Theme 1 Using Data and Assessment	
Category 1.1 Using Assessments and Data Benchmarks	6
Category 1.2 Using Data to Inform Instruction	6
Category 1.3 Using Data to Monitor Student Progress	5
Category 1.4 Participating in Collaborative Discussions Rooted in Data	3
Theme 2 Collaborating with Others	
Category 2.1 Collaborating with Interventionists	6
Category 2.2 Collaborating with Instructional Coaches	5
Category 2.3 Collaborating with Administrators	5
Category 2.4 Collaborating with Grade Level Teams	6
Category 2.5 Collaborating with Teachers in Other Grades	6
Category 2.6 Collaborating with Counselor and Social Worker	6
Category 2.7 Participating in the Systemic Structures for Collaboration	6

Note. RTI = Response to Intervention. N = the number of teacher participants mentioning the category.

Total sample included 6 teachers.

Theme 1: Providing Quality Instruction

All six teachers reported that one of their roles in the RTI process was to provide quality instruction. Within this theme, three categories emerged. The categories included using programs and resources, applying research-based instruction, and incorporating differentiated instruction for all students.

Category 1.1: Using Programs and Resources. All six teachers reported using multiple programs and various resources to provide quality instruction. For example, Kelly stated, "District X curriculum has been written for us. That's based in Lucy

Calkins' Units of Study.” Teachers also described using professional development resources as illustrated by June when she stated, “we are intentional on professional development to make sure it's matching those state standards, because we are able to do that, it does give us a plethora of options.”

Category 1.2: Applying Research-Based Instruction. Five teachers shared how they applied research-based instruction as a part of their role in providing quality instruction. June shared, “all of our curriculum is research based.” While other participants noted applying research-based instructional strategies such as invitational groups, number routines or talks to develop mathematical thinking skills, the workshop model, and small group instruction.

Category 1.3: Incorporating Differentiated Instruction for all Students. Four teachers also reported incorporating differentiated instruction for all students. These teachers described ways they differentiated or provided modifications to their tier one instruction, instruction that all students received. For example, they used guided reading and provided manipulatives and drawing pictures to support mathematical processes during tier one instruction. Anna said, “I [meet with] all of them, even my tier one kids,” when describing meeting with all students for differentiated reading instruction in guided reading groups.

Theme 2: Providing Tiered Instruction

Another theme that emerged was providing tiered instruction. Within this theme, three categories emerged. The categories were identifying students for intervention, providing tier one instruction, and providing intervention in the classroom.

Category 2.1: Identifying Students for Intervention. All six teachers described identifying students for intervention as a part of their role in providing tiered instruction in the RTI process. June identified this process as a part of her role when she stated, “I’m monitoring students so that I can get the intervention team and the MTSS-A (Multi-Tiered System of Support- Academic) team involved once we start getting to that tier two and tier three level.” All teachers reported using data to identify students who are in need of additional instruction at the tier two or three level. For example, Kelly stated, “We test those [students] using the running records. Then we take that information and take it to RTI to help identify what tier those students need to be in.”

Category 2.2: Providing Tier One Instruction. Half of the teachers noted providing tier one instruction as a part of their role in the RTI process. For example, Sadie stated, “tier one. . . should be eighty percent of my class if we’re looking at the research. So that’s just like my typical instruction.” June also shared a similar idea, “as a teacher, I’m at the tier one level, obviously, because I am teaching all students.”

Category 2.3: Proving Intervention in the Classroom. All teachers identified providing intervention in the classroom as a part of their role. The teachers described the additional instruction given to students as an intervention for those at the tier two or tier three level. For example, Kennedy stated, “the tier two students, we pull them into small groups, and we work with them kind of on an as needed basis.” Sadie recognized the intervention in the classroom as in addition to what students at the tier three level will receive while working with an interventionist. She stated, “they’re [tier three students] going to a double, triple dip because they’ll hear the big instruction, then the small group with their pullout teacher and then again with me.”

Findings Related to Research Sub Question 2

Research sub question two inquired teachers' perceptions about their responsibilities in the RTI process. There were two themes, using data and assessment and collaborating with others, emerged from the interviews.

Theme 1: Using Data and Assessment

All six teachers described using assessment and data and collaborating with others. Within this theme there were four categories, including using assessment and data benchmarks, using data to inform instruction, using data to monitor student progress, and participating in collaborative discussions rooted in data.

Category 1.1: Using Assessment and Data Benchmarks. All teachers described one of their responsibilities in the RTI process was using assessment and data benchmarks. June stated, "it's my job to make sure I'm monitoring data. . . and I'm going back through and making sure that my students are meeting those benchmarks." Similarly, Kennedy shared, "in reading and math, it's also based off NWEA [growth and proficiency assessment], which is our district test that we give, and that data also determines their placement".

Category 1.2: Using Data to Inform Instruction. All teachers described how they regularly used data and assessments to inform their instruction. Teachers shared how data and both formal and informal assessments were used to identify the needs of students, form small instructional groups and determine future instructional topics both new and those that may need to be retaught. Kennedy stated,

And not only just like those assessments, but the daily check-ins, if I can tell that my class did not do well. . . then I'll take another day doing that. So, I will change

my instruction on a daily basis based off that, just data that I'm getting from that day.

Similarly, Sadie explained, “the assessment data kind of helps me know where to go [with instruction] and what skills are missing and what skills are in place.”

Category 1.3: Using Data to Monitor Student Progress. Five teachers reported using data to monitor how students were responding to all levels of instruction as one of their responsibilities in the RTI framework. Kelly described her responsibility as “monitoring their progress in the classroom, using benchmarks that our RTI person gives us, our interventionist gives us, and also my own benchmarks as well.”

Category 1.4: Participating in Collaborative Discussions Rooted in Data. Half of the teachers shared they participated in collaborative discussions rooted in data as a responsibility of theirs in the RTI framework. Although various names and occurrences of the meetings were shared by three teachers, they all noted that the meetings occurred on a regular basis and they were rooted in data rich discussions. For example, Anna shared,

Once a month, where we meet with all administration and the interventionists and we just go over the kids that we are considered our tier three and our tier two kids.

We talk about [data], we bring data like our running records, our words their way.

. . We bounce off ideas with each other about how to support those low kids.

A similar idea was shared by Kennedy, “these CTF [Collaborative Team Facilitator] meetings are more data focused and figuring out what to do with those specific tiers of students and how we can best meet their needs in the classroom.”

Theme 2: Collaborating with Others.

The theme, collaborating with others also emerged regarding responsibilities. Teachers were asked in their interviews to share who they collaborated with on a regular basis to support students through the RTI process. They shared the various staff members (e.g., interventionists, administrators, instructional coaches) with whom they collaborated with as well as the systemic structures of collaboration in which they participated in.

Category 2.1: Collaborating with Interventionists. All teachers spoke throughout their interviews about the collaboration that occurred between themselves and their schools' interventionists in regard to the RTI framework. This collaboration occurred both formally and informally as seen when Anna stated,

We have required time; we have to meet during planning time to meet with our interventionists, and a lot of times I just go to them and I say, hey, this is a student I'm really struggling with. I've tried these strategies. What can I do?

All teachers spoke about collaboration with their interventionists as times to communicate the needs and progress of students. The teachers also described the professional development and instructional support they received through this collaboration. For instance, Kelly said, "I collaborate with my. . . interventionist too and ask for what materials . . . I could benefit from reading or how can I sharpen my knowledge about a certain skill or a certain way to teach someone."

Category 2.2: Collaborating with Instructional Coaches. All teachers described collaborating with the instructional coaches regarding the RTI process. Five of them noted the instructional support they received from their building instructional coach. For example, June said,

Our instructional coaches come to those [MTSS-A meetings] and our instructional coach in reading also provides something called a pit stop. So, you can attend a pit stop and get some, just some reading tips, some different things that they're learning about, obviously, to enhance the curriculum that we're teaching.

Another teacher described collaboration with the instructional coach as a time to “unpack data” from the district standardized assessment to find which kids are struggling and which kids are in need of enrichment. One of the teachers stated she did not collaborate regularly with the instructional coach stating the instructional coach mainly worked with new teachers.

Category 2.3: Collaborating with Administrators. Collaborating with administrators was another category that emerged. Five of the teacher participants stated their principal and assistant principal were a part of meetings around the RTI process. For example, Kennedy shared, “they [administrators] participate in our CTF meetings. They also will kind of just touch in with us on a daily basis and they'll also join us on our grade level meetings.”

Category 2.4: Collaborating with Grade Level teams. All six teachers described collaborating with grade level teams when asked who they collaborate with on a regular basis to support students through RTI. Teachers reported collaboration both formal, in weekly grade level meetings, and informal, through email and in-person conversations throughout the school day. For example, Kelly said, “I meet with my, my grade level weekly and I mean, in an official meeting, but I feel like I meet with them every day outside the room asking certain questions.”

Category 2.5: Collaborating with Teachers in Other Grades. Teachers were asked if they collaborated with vertical teams, the grade level teams above and below their current grade level, and all of them reported informal collaboration with teachers outside their grade level. For example, Kennedy said,

I'll also go to the third grade teachers or fifth grade teachers just to see what I could do to either help those kids that are still below grade level, maybe it's a third-grade concept they need to work on, or how can I challenge those higher kids to get ready for fifth grade.

Teachers reported taking it upon themselves to collaborate with teachers in other grades to support students who are performing below or above grade level expectations.

Category 2.6: Collaborating with the Counselor and Social Worker. All teachers mentioned the collaboration between themselves and their schools' counselor and social worker. The teachers shared that collaboration with the counselor and social worker occurred when students have specific needs such as behavioral or situations in their home life that may require extra support from these staff members. For example, Kelly said, "I do collaborate. . . about different students, if they have different needs, like an emotional need."

Category 2.7: Participating in the Systemic Structures for Collaboration. A common trend among all the responses from teachers about their responsibilities in the RTI framework was participating in the systemic structure for collaboration. The systemic structures for collaboration are considered the structured meetings set for all staff members by the building administrator. These meetings are structured in the sense

that they occur on a consistent basis, with an agenda for discussion, and with dictated participants.

All teachers spoke of the meetings and teams they participated in around RTI. The occurrence of the meetings varied by participant, but they all reported consistently meeting as formal teams to collaborate around intervention. For example, Sadie shared “we always have a once-a-month MTSS meeting, which is typically all those RTI kids”. Kelly also said,

Every month we have formal collaboration where we meet in the conference room at our plan time and we go over those students and what they need and also their growth, hopefully, or if they haven't made growth and what are we going to do for those students.

All participants described the purpose of the meetings as to identify the needs of students, to make instructional plans and to put supports in place to help students succeed at the different tiers of instruction. These meetings were attended by various staff members, but the teams remained consistent throughout the year. For example, administrators, a grade level teacher team, and the interventionists were most commonly in attendance for meetings around the RTI process.

Findings Related to Research Sub Question 3

Sub question three of the study regarded the interventionists' perceptions on their role in the RTI framework. Three themes emerged from the interviews, providing quality instruction, providing tiered instruction and being a team member. See Table 7 for a summary of the results of interventionists' interview.

Table 7*Summary of Qualitative Results for Interventionists*

Coded Themes and Categories	N
RQ4 What are interventionists' perceptions on their role in the RTI process?	
Theme 1 Providing Quality Instruction	
Category 1.1 Using Programs and Resources	5
Category 1.2 Applying Research-Based Instruction	3
Theme 2 Providing Tiered Instruction	
Category 2.1 Identifying Students for Intervention	6
Category 2.2 Providing Tier Three Instruction	6
Category 2.3 Supporting Instruction in the Classroom	6
Category 2.4 Supporting the SPED Referral Process	3
Theme 3 Being a Team Member	
Category 3.1 Participating as a Team Member and Facilitator	6
RQ4 What are interventionists' perceptions on their responsibilities in the RTI process?	
Theme 1 Using Data and Assessment	
Category 1.1 Using Assessments and Data Benchmarks	4
Category 1.2 Using Data to Inform Instruction	6
Category 1.3 Using Data to Monitor Student Progress	6
Category 1.4 Participating in Collaborative Discussions Rooted in Data	5
Category 1.5 Collecting and Managing Data	6
Theme 2 Collaboration with Others	
Category 2.1 Collaborating with Teachers	6
Category 2.2 Collaborating with English Language Development (ELD) Teachers	4
Category 2.3 Collaborating with the Special Education (SPED) Department	6
Category 2.4 Collaborating with Administrators	4
Category 2.5 Collaborating with Other Interventionists	6
Category 2.6 Collaborating with Counselor and Social Worker	5
Category 2.7 Participating in the Systemic Structure for Collaboration	6

Note. RTI = Response to Intervention. N = the number of interventionist participants mentioning the category. Total sample included 6 interventionists.

Theme 1: Providing Quality Instruction

Similar with the responses from the teachers, the theme providing quality instruction also emerged from the responses from the interventionists. The two categories nested within the theme were using programs and resources and applying researched-based instruction.

Category 1.1: Using Quality Instruction. Five of the interventionists described the use of programs and resources to provide quality instruction in their role in the RTI process. The reading interventionists shared, “we use LLI [Leveled Literacy Intervention system], Fountas and Pinnell, if we use Pathways, if we use Orton-Gillingham, we're starting to be trained in LETRS [Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling program].” Julie, a math interventionist, said, “the Bridges intervention program is what I'm using, and it has a lot of the research and resources that support best practices for students who are struggling.”

Category 1.2: Applying Research-Based Instruction. Half of the interventionists shared their experience using research-based instruction in their role that the district resources they used were research based. For example, Addy stated, “everything that we do is very systematic, very research-based.” Judy also emphasized the importance of continuing her own professional development on research-based strategies. She stated, “I [continue] to read and keep myself educated so that we are using research based [instruction] and going to conferences and continuing my own professional development.”

Theme 2: Providing Tiered Instruction

All six interventionists spoke about their role in providing instruction for both students and teachers at the various instructional tiers. Four categories emerged, including identifying students for intervention, providing tier three instruction, supporting instruction in the classroom and supporting the special education (SPED) referral process.

Category 2.1: Identifying Students for Intervention. All six interventionists spoke about identifying students for intervention as a part of their role in the RTI process.

The interventionists described identifying students for intervention as a collaborative process with grade level teams of teachers. Together, they look at data from district assessments and benchmarks, program screeners and anecdotal information to identify the needs of students, using meeting times to group students by intervention level and instructional need. For example, Julie stated, “we’re using data and we’re using observational notes to determine if students are at the right level of intervention and receiving the right intervention.”

Category 2.2: Providing Tier Three Instruction. All six interventionists described working directly with students at the tier three level, the students in need of the most intensive instructional support. For example, Karen stated, “my role is to then meet with those students who are level tier three. . . working on whatever their targeted instruction is based off of the data we collect from F&P [reading running record assessment] and NWEA [assessment].”

Category 2.3: Supporting Instruction in the Classroom. All six interventionists stated that supporting instruction in the classroom was also a part of their role in the RTI process. For example, Addy stated, “I often train them [teachers] on different district initiatives or just something new that [they] want to do that we're focusing on.” Interventionists also described supporting teachers with their instruction at the various tiers. Karen described this support as, “we support our tier two students by collaborating with the teachers, getting them resources.”

Category 2.4: Supporting the SPED Referral Process. Half of the interventionists reported supporting the SPED referral process was a part of their role in the RTI framework. Julie stated, “we may decide [we] might need to look at some special

ed testing for that student because they're not making progress, the progress that we would expect.”

Theme 3: Being a Team Member

The third theme that emerged from interventionists’ responses regarding their role in the RTI process was being a team member. One category, participating as a team member and facilitator, emerged in this theme.

Category 3.1: Participating as a Team Member and Facilitator. Six of the interventionists described their roles as a team member or facilitator. For example, Hannah shared “I facilitate the meetings and so we have monthly meetings with classroom teachers”. Kerri noted her facilitation was specific to her role as the math interventionist when she stated, “I am the one who leads the discussions on math.”

Findings Related to Research Sub Question 4

Research sub question four regarded the interventionists’ perceptions about their responsibilities in the RTI process. To explore this question the researcher asked interventionists, what kinds of responsibilities do they usually have in their schools’ RTI process? Two themes emerged for this research sub question.

Theme 1: Using Assessment and Data

The theme of using assessment and data was seen throughout all six interventionists’ responses. Within this theme, five categories surfaced to describe the responsibilities of interventionists. The five categories were using assessments and data benchmarks, using data to inform instruction, using data to monitor student progress, participating in collaborative discussions rooted in data and collecting and managing data.

Category 1.1: Using Assessment and Data Benchmarks. Four interventionists described using assessments and benchmarks as a part of their responsibilities in the RTI process. For example, Judy said,

Some of our assessments are more broad, such as doing running records that tell us a lot about readers. However, we also use DIBELS [Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills assessment program] to look at exactly what that intervention focus is.

Interventionists also used assessments and benchmarks to determine in what level of intervention students should be placed. For example, Kerri stated, “we look at NWEA scores and that's kind of our big screener. . . and we put them [students] into three categories.”

Category 1.2: Using Data to Inform Instruction. All interventionists described using data to inform instruction. For example, Karen shared, “I do a lot of taking our NWEA data. . . [and if students] don't understand text structures, well [then] we're going to work on text structures.” Interventionists also described using data to identify the instructional needs of students. Julie shared “there's some data analysis, part of its kind of making sure the right kids are identified, digging into those reports as far as what are their gaps in their skills and what they need”.

Category 1.3: Using Data to Monitor Student Progress. All interventionists reported they used data to monitor student progress as they described the importance of knowing students' gaps and understandings to best meet their instructional needs. Hannah stated, “[we] monitor those students to make sure that they are making progress with it, with that intervention.”

Category 1.4: Participating in Collaborative Discussion Rooted in Data. As interventionists work to understand students' needs, they participate in collaborative discussions rooted in data. For example, Judy stated,

We have our MTSS [Multi-Tiered System of Support], grade level team meetings with teachers, where we're looking at what interventions are being [done], what the intervention focus is, how that's going, how teachers know and really using just data to, to drive those decisions.

Five interventionists mentioned working collaboratively in formal and informal settings to determine students' needs and progress by studying data.

Category 1.5: Collecting and Managing Data. All interventionists described collecting and managing data as one of their responsibilities. For example, Addy stated, "we have something called a dashboard, and we keep track of all the students' information in both reading and math." Interventionists shared that prior to meeting in teams, they were responsible for collecting student data from teachers to aid in their collaborative discussions. Hannah described this responsibility when she said, "prior to our meeting, we make sure that the data is all complete from classroom teachers for myself and the other interventionist."

Theme 2: Collaborating with Others

All six participants reported collaborating with others around the RTI framework. Seven categories nested under this theme. These categories included collaborating with teachers, English Language Development (ELD) teachers, the Special Education (SPED) department, administrators, other interventionists, the counselor and social worker, and participating in the systemic structure for collaboration.

Category 2.1.: Collaborating with Teachers. All six participants spoke about collaborating with teachers throughout their interviews. For example, Julie stated,

At our team meetings, when all the teachers are together collaborating on what's working for you and your students, what's not working, what obstacles are you having, as we're having those discussions, we're a collaborative force to come together and say, here are some more resources for you.

This collaboration occurred both formally, in structured meetings, and informally as teachers talked with interventionists about the needs of particular students as well as their instructional needs as a teacher.

Category 2.2: Collaborating with English Language Development (ELD) Teachers. Four interventionists described collaborating with ELD teachers as a part of their responsibilities in the RTI framework. Kerri shared,

I collaborate a lot with ELD, [I] make sure that I know who is identified as ELDs, that I can tailor my lessons and make sure that I'm fitting their needs and anything that I need to be working on with them, or if for any reason I've identified any student who is tier two or tier three and I can't meet with them, I will collaborate with the ELD teachers.

The interventionists noted they collaborated with the ELD teachers about shared students through RTI or MTSS meetings.

Category 2.3: Collaborating with the SPED Department. All interventionists shared experiences in which they collaborated with SPED teachers to support RTI. Kerri stated, "I [collaborate with] anyone in the SPED department, our SPED teachers or special education teachers regularly, our speech pathologist, because she works with a lot

of my students and we talk about that math vocabulary that she works on.” Three of the interventionists also described working with SPED teachers to discover more resources that may help support students receiving interventions.

Category 2.4: Collaborating with the Administrators. The interventionists also described collaborating with administrators as a part of their responsibilities in the RTI process. For instance, Julie stated,

The administrators are part of all of those meetings that I've mentioned. They are there to provide support as far as giving encouragement. . .of what's working, what's not working, giving us more of the building view. . . or to provide some background information about a family or a student.

Four interventionists mentioned regularly collaborating with the administrators.

Category 2.5: Collaborating with Other Interventionists. All six interventionists described collaborating with other interventionists. For example, Karen said, “The other interventionist and I, we collaborate daily, all the time, on these students.” Julie also described this collaboration as, “I think the other interventionist, [in regard to] people that I collaborate with, not necessarily because we have shared needs. . . we collaborate as far as what's working with different students.”

Category 2.6: Collaborating with the Counselor and Social Worker. Five interventionists described collaborating with the counselor and social worker. Interventionists, like teachers, stated this collaboration occurred only when a student’s needs warranted their support, when the needs of a student were beyond academic. For example, Karen said “between our counselor and maybe our social worker, there is some

collaboration if we see that a student's basic needs are not being met and that's influencing their attendance.”

Category 2.7: Participating in the Systemic Structure for Collaboration. All of the interventionists reported participating in the systemic structure for collaboration as one of their responsibilities in the RTI process. Kerri described this systemic structure as, “we have meetings every six weeks, big RTI meetings every six weeks to talk about all those students who have been identified as tier two and tier three, to talk about how their progress is going.” All other interventionists also described participating in their building-wide structured meeting times in which they collaborated with grade level teachers and other staff members such as administrators and the ELD and SPED departments to support the RTI process.

Findings Related to Research Sub Question 5

In an effort to answer the central research question, what is the systemic view of the RTI process, research sub question five, what are administrators’ understandings of the entire RTI process, was asked. This question sought to investigate what the administrators understood the roles and responsibilities of teachers and interventionists to be as well as what they believed to be their own roles and responsibilities in the RTI process. Seven themes emerged from the administrator interviews. See Table 8 for a summary of the results of administrators’ interview.

Table 8*Summary of Qualitative Results for Administrators*

Coded Themes and Categories	N
RQ5 What are administrators' understandings of the entire RTI process?	
Theme 1 Providing Quality Instruction	
Category 1.1 Using Programs and Resources	6
Category 1.2 Applying Research-Based Instruction	6
Category 1.3 Incorporating Differentiated Instruction for all Students	4
Theme 2 Providing Tiered Instruction	
Category 2.1 Identifying Students for Intervention	6
Category 2.2 Teachers Provide Tier One Instruction	4
Category 2.3 Teachers Provide Intervention in the Classroom	6
Category 2.4 Interventionists Provide Tier Three Instruction	6
Category 2.5 Interventionists Support Instruction in the Classroom	5
Theme 3 Being a Team Member	
Category 3.1 Teachers and Interventionists as Team Members	6
Theme 4 Using Data and Assessment	
Category 4.1 Using Assessments and Data Benchmarks	6
Category 4.2 Using Data to Inform Instruction	5
Category 4.3 Using Data to Monitor Student Progress	5
Category 4.4 Participating in Collaborative Discussions Rooted in Data	4
Category 4.5 Interventionists Collect and Manage Data	3
Theme 5 Collaboration with all the Parties Involved	
Category 5.1 Collaboration Between Teachers and Interventionists	6
Category 5.2 Collaboration with Instructional Coaches	3
Category 5.3 Collaborating with the Special Education (SPED) Department	5
Category 5.4 Collaboration Among Grade Level Teams	4
Category 5.5 Collaborating with the Counselor and Social Worker	3
Category 5.6 Collaboration with other Staff Members	3
Category 5.7 Participating in Collaboration as an Administrator	6
Category 5.8 Building a Systemic Structure for Collaboration	4
Theme 6 Administrators' Roles and Responsibilities in the RTI Process	
Category 6.1 Participating in Reflective Practices	6
Category 6.2 Being an Instructional Leader	3
Category 6.3 Providing Support	6
Category 6.4 Providing Resources and Professional Development (PD)	4
Category 6.5 Ensuring Fidelity	4
Category 6.6 Completing Scheduling Tasks	3
Category 6.7 Providing Direction	5
Theme 7 Establishing a Positive School Climate and Culture to Support the RTI Process	
Category 7.1 The Impact of School Climate on RTI	6
Category 7.2 Creating a Safe Environment for All	4
Category 7.3 Supporting and Building a Collaborative Mindset	5

Note. RTI = Response to Intervention. N = the number of administrator participants mentioning the category. Total sample included 6 administrators.

Theme 1: Providing Quality Instruction

Administrators were asked to describe the role of a teacher and of an interventionist in the RTI process. The theme of providing quality instruction emerged, which aligned with the responses from the teachers and interventionists. The three categories included in this theme were using programs and resources, applying research-based instruction, and incorporating differentiated instruction for students.

Category 1.1: Using Programs and Resources. All six administrators shared that a role of a teacher and interventionist in the RTI process is using programs and resources to provide quality instruction. All six of the administrators noted the instructional resources interventionists should be using within their role in the RTI process. For example, Lincoln stated,

She [the math interventionist] is trained in multiple different programs that we have in District X. It's called Bridges, it's one. On the reading level, we have Pathways; we also use Orton-Gillingham, so multiple different programs and the knowledge that needs to take place from the interventions.

Four of the administrators stated teachers should be implementing the district curriculum with fidelity as an instructional resource for tier one. For instance, Molly shared “quality instruction in tier one [for a teacher] would be implementing our district wide curriculum with fidelity.”

Category 1.2: Applying Research-Based Instruction. All six administrators stated they believed the teachers and interventionists should be applying research-based instruction in the RTI process. Administrators described interventionists providing

research-based instructional strategies to teachers to support intervention in the classroom. For example, Alex stated,

The first piece on the tier one, tier two level is our, our interventionists truly provide that next best strategy for our teachers. So, they're, they're pulling from their bag of research based instructional practices, their resources that they have, and they're saying, you know, if a student is having this misconception about this content, try this.

The administrators also noted teachers and interventionists should be using best practices with students in providing interventions.

Category 1.3: Incorporating Differentiated Instruction for Students. Four of the administrators described the incorporation of differentiated instruction for students as a part of providing quality instruction. Regan shared, “I feel like that's the most important part of RTI is just differentiating the instruction to meet the students' needs.”

Theme 2: Providing Tiered Instruction

When asked about the roles of teachers and interventionists in the RTI process, all six administrators reported both staff members provide different levels of tiered instruction to students. Six categories nested under this theme, including identifying students for intervention, teachers providing tier one instruction, teachers providing intervention in the classroom, interventionists providing tier three instruction, interventionists supporting instruction in the classroom, and supporting the SPED referral process.

Category 2.1: Identifying Students for Intervention. Identifying students for intervention was a role that all administrators claimed teachers and interventionists play

in the RTI process. All six administrators stated one of the roles of a teacher was to identify students who are not performing on grade level and are in need of additional instruction. For example, Dana stated,

I also expect the teacher to be able to gather that data so that it's accessible and that they are able to use that data then to communicate when the needs of the student maybe expand beyond that classroom tier one, tier two level of interventions and instruction.

Three of the administrators believed it is also within the interventionist's role to identify students for intervention. Lauren stated,

I think it's their [interventionists'] responsibility to be able to communicate with teachers and collect data and be able to help them sort out data and say, oh, this is, look at this, this is this is a kiddo that is showing us that they have needs in this area, and then creating that schedule so that they can service those kiddos and give them the interventions that they need.

The administrators believed that not only should teachers and interventionists be identifying students for intervention, but they should also be able to clearly communicate the need for additional instruction as identified through data.

Category 2.2: Teachers Provide Tier One Instruction. Four of the administrators reported a part of a teacher's role is to provide tier one instruction to all students. For example, Alex stated, "they [teachers] need to be giving the quality tier one instruction and all that goes with that, understanding the standards on the curriculum and scope and sequence, priority standards, all of that actually tier one stuff."

Category 2.3: Teachers Provide Intervention in the Classroom. All six administrators stated teachers should be providing intervention in the classroom. Dana stated, “we want the teacher to, to implement those tier two strategies, the different things that are happening for the student there, whether it's small group intervention, additional time and practice with different skills or concepts.”

Category 2.4: Interventionists Provide Tier Three Instruction. All administrators reported interventionists provided tier three instruction as a part of their role in the RTI process. For example, Regan shared, “the role of the interventionist is to provide that tier three support to students, so less students that need more assistance, and being able to identify their needs as far as instructional.”

Category 2.5: Interventionists Support Instruction in the Classroom. Five administrators reported it was also the role of the interventionists to support instruction in the classroom. For example, Alex said “our teachers also collaborate with our interventionists to understand truly what tools they need in their toolbox.” Similarly, Lincoln stated, “our interventionists have monthly meetings with our classroom teachers to give them strategies and resources to help them be successful in their tier two groups and their tier one instruction.”

Theme 3: Being a Team Member

Being a team member was another theme to emerge from the six administrator responses about the roles of teachers and interventionists in the RTI process. The one category nested under this theme was teachers and interventionists as team members.

Category 3.1: Teachers and Interventionists as Team Members. All administrators described different roles on teams for teachers and interventionists. Three

of the administrators noted the role of an interventionist as a team member was to lead or facilitate the RTI meetings. For example, Regan stated, “we have it set up so that our reading interventionists help to coordinate our RTI meetings and run those.” While two administrators stated it was the expectation for teachers to collaborate as a team member during meetings. Dana said, “I think that they [teachers] have to participate as a team member.”

Theme 4: Using Data and Assessment

Using data and assessment emerged as another theme from the six administrators’ interview responses. Within this theme, the five categories that emerged were using assessments and data benchmarks, using data to inform instruction, using data to monitor student progress, participating in collaborative discussions rooted in data, and interventionists collect and manage data.

Category 4.1: Using Assessment and Data Benchmarks. The category of assessments and data benchmarks emerged from all six of the administrators’ interviews. Five administrators reported the use of assessments and data benchmarks as a responsibility of the teacher. For example, Molly stated, “it should also be in a formalized process to say what does this child know in comparison to benchmark expectations for where the child should be.” Three of the administrators described how interventionists use assessment to discover student needs and progress. Dana shared “there are times when they [interventionists] need to do further assessments.”

Category 4.2: Using Data to Inform Instruction. Five administrators stated they expected teachers to use data to inform their instruction to best meet the needs of students. For example, Molly stated, “[teachers] use their awareness of how the student is

performing to guide their instruction. And that, again, is for tier one, tier two and three.” Four of those administrators also described how interventionists should also be using data to inform their instruction by matching student needs with the appropriate grouping and to deliver the appropriate interventions to students. Lincoln described, “they [interventionists] create the data charts that we look at and really devise the groups based on the needs of the kids, what the data is telling us.”

Category 4.3: Using Data to Monitor Student Progress. Five administrators shared that they expected teachers to use assessment data to monitor students’ responses to instruction and interventions. For example, Regan stated, “it’s also their [teachers] role and responsibility to progress monitor their students through different forms of assessment so that we can monitor where their students are at and what their needs are.” Two of the five administrators also stated they believed interventionists should be using data to monitor students’ progress with interventions.

Category 4.4: Participating Collaborative Discussions Rooted in Data. Four administrators described participating in collaborative discussions rooted in data in order to best meet the needs of students. The administrators noted these data-rich conversations occurred during structured team meeting times. For example, Lincoln stated,

Specifically, around RTI, we use a PLC [Professional Learning Community] model and so we are interested in data, we’re talking about data, not so much about pre- and post-assessments that happen, but do we understand the priority standards? Do we understand what exactly is the state asking us to teach these kids? And once we find that information out and truly understand that direction,

then that's where those pre- and post-assessments come in, that's when the data conversations come in.

Similarly, Lauren said, “our conversations are surrounded in data and that we're looking at that information to make decisions that are best for individual kiddos.”

Category 4.5: Interventionists Collect and Manage Data. Half of the administrators shared the expectation that interventionists collect and manage data. For example, Molly stated, “they [interventionists] should have an awareness of where every single child in the building falls with regard to their tiered level. So, a lot of that is some data management.”

Theme 5: Collaboration with all the Parties Involved

Collaboration with all parties involved was another theme to emerge from the administrators' interview responses in regard to who collaborates regularly to support the RTI process. The categories emerged were similar to the categories within the teacher and interventionist interviews. The eight categories nested under the theme were collaboration between teachers and interventionists, collaborating with the instructional coaches, collaborating with the SPED department, collaboration among grade level teams, collaborating with the counselor and social worker, collaboration with other staff members, participating in collaboration as an administrator, and building a systemic structure for collaboration.

Category 5.1: Collaboration Between Teachers and Interventionists.

Collaboration between teachers and interventionists was described by all six administrators. Administrators shared that not only did the teachers and interventionists collaborate about students, but they also collaborated in terms of learning new

instructional strategies and resources. For example, Alex stated, “our teachers also collaborate with our interventionists to understand truly what tools they need in their toolbox.”

Category 5.2: Collaborating with Instructional Coaches. Half of the administrators reported collaborating with the instructional coaches in the RTI process. For example, Regan stated,

It's the teacher's role to bring students up that they have concerns of and also to partner with the support staff like reading interventionists and instructional coach in order to be able to learn and grow as far as what services they can provide at that tier two level and different services within the classroom.

The three administrators all noted the instructional support coaches provided to teachers. Two administrators also described how they, along with the interventionists, collaborated with the instructional coaches by studying student data and teacher feedback in order to plan and provide instructional support to teachers.

Category 5.3: Collaborating with the SPED Department. Five administrators also described the collaboration that occurs with the SPED department in the RTI process. Dana noted the involvement of the SPED team in the RTI process when she said,

We have a few special education teachers who are also part of those same meetings so that our team is made up of teachers, interventionists, special educators, administrators, and we're all putting all of our expertise together to make decisions for students.

Lincoln described the collaboration between the interventionists and SPED when he said, “the way they [interventionists] run it here, the other piece is the communication with our special education team.”

Category 5.4: Collaboration Among Grade Level Teams. Four administrators provided examples of the collaboration among grade level teams in the RTI process. For example, Dana stated, “I would expect that the teaching team collaborates together. . . so that teachers are supporting one another with those ideas and for intervention or differentiation.”

Category 5.5: Collaborating with the Counselor and Social Worker. Three administrators also reported collaborating with the counselor and social worker. For example, Alex shared,

We also work at a tier one level as a whole group, as a full staff counselor, social worker specials team around how do we provide quality tier one instruction around behavior just so that we don't lose sight of the whole student.

Like the teachers and interventionists, the three administrators noted collaboration with the counselor and social worker occurred when looking at students from a whole child perspective, looking at needs beyond simply academics.

Category 5.6: Collaborating with other Staff Members. Three administrators reported collaborating with other staff members (e.g., specials teachers, behavior specialist) during their interviews. For example, Lauren stated, “our whole care team, which would be me and our social worker, our counselor, a principal and a recovery room interventionist, and then we also invite Addison, who’s our behavior specialist in the district.”

Category 5.7: Participating in Collaboration as Administrators. All six administrators spoke of their role in participating in collaboration as administrators. The administrators described being a part of teams and meetings to support the RTI process. For example, Dana shared, “I think it's important that I'm a part of those conversations because it's always important that I'm aware of exactly what students are needing extra support.”

Category 5.8: Building a Systemic Structure for Collaboration. All six administrators described their building-wide system for collaboration for their staff members throughout their interviews. For example, Dana shared, “every week our teachers meet as teams to collaborate and part of that is discussing student needs and planning for that curriculum piece.” The time frames in which meetings were held varied by school, but all administrators shared meetings that were consistently scheduled. For example, Lincoln said, “our interventionists have monthly meetings with our classroom teachers to give them strategies and resources to help them be successful in their tier two groups and their tier one instruction.” All administrators also made statements regarding the specific purpose for the meeting. For example, Molly said, “I think it's between four and six times a year that we have collaboration meetings and they have been specifically with the process of RTI.”

Theme 6: Administrators' Roles and Responsibilities in the RTI Process

The administrators were also asked to describe their roles and responsibilities in the RTI process. The seven categories nested under this theme were participating in reflective practices, being an instructional leader, providing support, providing resources

and professional development, ensuring fidelity, completing scheduling tasks, and providing direction.

Category 6.1: Participating in Reflective Practices. All of the administrators gave examples of ways they participated in reflective practices as the school's leader. For example, Alex said,

Just trying to constantly reflect on whether the system was working, whether it's working for the teachers, whether it's working for the students, whether the communication is working for the parents. What are our gaps? What are holes? Because at the end of the day. . . we want to constantly be giving all of the students what they need in terms of instruction. And so, when we find out that we're not fulfilling that for a specific student, we need to then go back to our systems and our procedures and say, what is it that we're currently missing?

The administrators were continuously posing questions, reflecting upon their current systems, and working to ensure their RTI frameworks were continuing to support all students.

Category 6.2: Being an Instructional Leader. The second category that emerged was being an instructional leader. For example, Molly stated,

We've used Jan Richardson as our guiding framework for guided reading. I have to know what Jan Richardson is saying. I have to have an awareness of that so that I can make sure that our students, our teachers have what they need to complete it and then also are doing it.

Half of the administrators made statements regarding the importance of continuing their own professional development and learning in order to support best practices within their school.

Category 6.3: Providing Support. The category providing support emerged from the theme of the administrators' roles and responsibilities in the RTI process. For instance, Regan said,

Being able to reach out to the teachers and the reading interventionist and instructional coach to see what ways that I can help support and change and modify what we're doing so that they feel like they're supported, and the needs of the students are being met.

All six administrators shared examples of the ways they provided support to their staff to help meet the needs of students.

Category 6.4: Providing Resources and Professional Development (PD).

Another category that emerged from the administrator interviews was providing resources and professional development. For example, Dana stated,

Maybe that support looks like additional resources and materials. . . even as simple as manipulatives that they don't have that can be purchased and that's how I can be supportive, but it also might mean additional training for the teachers. Maybe they would like to attend workshops or conferences that give them additional skills to not only work with students, but perhaps even support of teachers by providing PD for teachers or simple techniques that can be applied in the regular classroom.

Four administrators stated it was their responsibility to provide resources and professional development to support the RTI process, including both physical such as supplies, and mental, such as continuing professional development.

Category 6.5: Ensuring Fidelity. Four administrators reported ensuring fidelity of instructional programs (e.g., the district curriculum) and interventions given to students as one of their roles and responsibilities. Regan stated it was her responsibility to “participate and observe and oversee the fidelity of what we're doing and making sure that we're following through.” Similarly, Dana shared, “making sure that they are implemented with fidelity so that it's not just a random try this try that kind of concept, but that the interventionist is actually very focused in what they are actually doing with our students.” Administrators also spoke about fidelity to the system of RTI, that tiered interventions, data collection, and collaboration were occurring how and when they were expected to be.

Category 6.6: Completing Scheduling Tasks. Three administrations shared completing scheduling tasks to ensure time was allotted for the execution of the RTI framework from the collaborative conversations to analyzing data to the occurrence of interventions in and out of the classroom as a part of their responsibilities in the RTI process. For example, Lincoln stated, “one thing that I do is carve out time for RTI conversations.”

Category 6.7: Providing Direction. Five of the administrators described providing direction as a part of their role and responsibilities in the RTI framework. Being able to see the big picture allowed the administrators to view the RTI framework systemically, to develop processes that include the roles and responsibilities of many

individuals working to support the needs of all students. For example, Regan stated, “my role and responsibility, is to kind of to be able to see the big picture and how we can better use that time and support the classroom teacher.” Lincoln also shared it was this view that helped “give a direction and a vision for the team.”

Theme 7: Establishing a Positive School Climate and Culture to Support the RTI

Process

The administrators were asked to describe their perceptions on the impact school climate can have on the RTI process, if they felt their school climate supported the RTI framework and to provide examples of ways the climate did or did not support the RTI process. One theme, establishing a positive school climate and culture to support the RTI process, emerged with three categories nested under it. The three categories were the impact of school climate on RTI, creating a safe environment for all, and supporting and building a collaborative mindset.

Category 7.1: The Impact of School Climate on RTI. All six administrators spoke about the impact of the school climate on RTI. For example, Regan stated, “the relationships and climate among my staff is the most important thing in seeing that our RTI process can run the way it should to support students.” The administrators also noted the importance of making RTI a part of the school climate and culture. Lincoln shared, “when your climate is that we differentiate for our children in every subject area, then RTI is a part of, is a part of the community and the culture.”

Category 7.2: Creating a Safe Environment for All. Four administrators spoke about supporting the RTI process by creating a safe environment for all. The safe environment the administrators spoke of referred to a place where both teachers and

students felt their school was a place to make mistakes and ask for help. This was exhibited when Molly stated the importance of, “creating an opportunity for vulnerability [for teachers] and asking those questions and a safety net in not knowing is a big part of what we do.”

Category 7.3: Supporting and Building a Collaborative Mindset. Five administrators spoke about supporting and building a collaborative mindset to support the RTI process. The administrators shared this collaborative mindset involved believing it is everyone’s responsibility to support the growth of students. This idea was illustrated by Lauren when she stated,

It's all for one and one for all and it's never a that's your kid or that's your class or that's your line or that's your job. No, it's our kids. It's our line. It's our building. It's all of us. And so, I feel like that's something that just bleeds all the way across on all the different tiers and levels.

This sentiment was echoed by Molly, “when we have an all-hands-on deck and everyone's going to help every kid be successful and reach their highest potential, that drives school climate.”

Findings Related to the Central Research Question

The central question of the study explored the systemic view of the RTI process. To help answer this question, the researcher explored the participants’ beliefs regarding who the RTI system should support, and one theme about RTI as a support system emerged. Additionally, the researcher compared the data across all three participant groups for commonalities regarding the roles and responsibilities of teachers and interventionists in the RTI process to gain a systemic view. The themes quality

instruction, tiered instruction, team member, data and assessment, and collaboration emerged from this comparison. See Table 9 for a summary of the results for central research question.

Table 9

Summary of Qualitative Results for Central Research Question

Coded Themes and Categories	N		
Central Question What is the systemic view of the RTI process?			
Theme 1 RTI as a Support System			
Category 1.1 All Groups Believed RTI Supports all Students	(A) 6	(T) 5	(I) 3
Category 1.2 All Groups Believed RTI Supports Teachers	(A) 3	(T) 3	(I) 3
Category 1.3 Administrators and Interventionists Believed RTI Begins with Tier One Instruction	(A) 6		(I) 2
Theme 2 Quality Instruction			
Category 2.1 All Groups Identified Using Programs and Resources as a Teacher's and Interventionist's Role in the RTI Process	(A) 6	(T) 6	(I) 5
Category 2.2 All Groups Identified Applying Research-Based Instruction as a Teacher's and Interventionist's Role in the RTI Process	(A) 6	(T) 5	(I) 3
Category 2.3 Administrators and Teachers Identified Incorporating Differentiated Instruction for all Students as a Teacher's Role in the RTI Process	(A) 4	(T) 4	
Theme 3 Tiered Instruction			
Category 3.1 I All Groups Identified Classifying Students for Intervention as a Teacher's and Interventionist's Role in the RTI Process	(A) 6	(T) 6	(I) 6
Category 3.2 Administrators and Teachers Identified Providing Tier One Instruction as a Teacher's Role in the RTI Process	(A) 4	(T) 3	
Category 3.3 Administrators and Teachers Identified Providing Intervention in the Classroom as a Teacher's Role in the RTI Process	(A) 6	(T) 3	
Category 3.4 Administrators and Interventionists Identified Providing Tier Three Instruction as an Interventionist's Role in the RTI Process	(A) 6		(I) 6
Category 3.5 Administrators and Interventionists Identified Supporting Instruction in the Classroom as an Interventionist's Role in the RTI Process	(A) 5		(I) 6
Theme 4 Team Member			
Category 4.1 Administrators and Interventionists Identified Being a Team Member as a Teacher's and Interventionist's Role in the RTI Process	(A) 6		(I) 6
Theme 5 Data and Assessment			
Category 5.1 All Groups Identified Using Assessments and Data Benchmarks as a Teacher's and Interventionist's Responsibility in the RTI Process	(A) 6	(T) 6	(I) 4
Category 5.2 All Groups Identified Using Data to Inform Instruction as a Teacher's and Interventionist's Responsibility in the RTI Process	(A) 5	(T) 6	(I) 6

Table 9 (continued)

Category 5.3 All Groups Identified Using Data to Monitor Student Progress as a Teacher's and Interventionist's Responsibility in the RTI Process	(A) 5	(T) 5	(I) 6
Category 5.4 All Groups Identified Participating in Collaborative Discussions Rooted in Data as a Teacher's and Interventionist's Responsibility in the RTI Process	(A) 4	(T) 3	(I) 5
Category 5.5 Administrators and Interventionists Identified Collecting and Managing Data as an Interventionist's Responsibility in the RTI Process	(A) 3		(I) 6
Theme 6 Collaboration			
Category 6.1 All Groups Identified Participating in the Systemic Structure for Collaboration as a Teacher's and Interventionist's Responsibility in the RTI Process	(A) 4	(T) 6	(I) 6
Category 6.2 All Groups Identified Collaboration Between the Teacher and the Interventionist as a Teacher's and Interventionist's Responsibility in the RTI Process	(A) 6	(T) 6	(I) 6
Category 6.3 All Groups Identified Collaboration Between the Administrators, the Teachers and the Interventionists as a Responsibility in the RTI Process	(A) 6	(T) 5	(I) 4
Category 6.4 Administrators and Teachers Identified Collaboration with Instructional Coaches as a Teacher's Responsibility in the RTI Process	(A) 3	(T) 5	
Category 6.5 Administrators and Teachers Identified Collaborating with their Grade Level Team as a Teacher's Responsibility in the RTI Process	(A) 4	(T) 6	
Category 6.6 Administrators and Interventionists Identified Collaborating with the SPED Department as an Interventionist's Responsibility in the RTI Process	(A) 5		(I) 6

Note. RTI = Response to Intervention. N = the number of participants mentioning the category in a specific group. Administrators (A), Teachers (T), Interventionists (I). Total sample included 6 administrators, 6 teachers, and 6 interventionists.

Theme 1: RTI as a Support System

All groups of participants were asked to describe who they believed the RTI framework should support. One theme, RTI as a support system, emerged. The three categories nested under this theme were RTI supports all students, RTI supports teachers, and RTI begins with tier one instruction.

Category 1.1: All Groups Believed RTI Supports all Students. All groups stated they believed RTI supports all students through the different tiers of instruction. For example, Julie (interventionist) stated, “tier one is everybody's instruction, tier two and then tier three and just making sure. . . the right kids are in the right tier level of

intervention and are getting the right levels of support.” Participants also shared that in addition to supporting all students starting at the tier one level, RTI supports the students that are at-risk of failure, the students that are not successful with tier one.

Category 1.2: All Groups Believed RTI Supports Teachers. All groups stated they felt teachers are supported through the RTI framework. For example, Anna (teacher) shared, “I feel like the RTI process helps me, especially this year. It's really been helpful for that block of time they've given us to know that that's the time I work with the kids.” The participants also noted the instructional support from a professional development perspective and the support they receive from each other by collaborating through the framework.

Category 1.3: Administrators and Interventionists Believed RTI Begins with Tier One Instruction. Two groups, administrators and interventionists specifically noted the importance of strong tier one instruction. For example, Dana (administrator) stated,

When I think about the definition of RTI, it tends to be the students that aren't being successful with the traditional or the general education curriculum. But. . . I think that RTI process, MTSS process, really applies to all students. And I think a big part of that is making sure that we are true to our tier one curriculum and that all students are getting that quality education from the get-go, that they are all receiving what all students should receive as far as the best instructional day. That includes all best practices, strategies that we know are successful for students.

The two groups spoke of strong tier one instruction reducing the number of students who need tier two and tier three support. For example, Addy (interventionist) mentioned “tier

one needs to be incredibly strong. . . I don't know that it always is, and if it is, then I don't think we'd have as many [tier] two. . . and three kids.”

To answer the central research question, the researcher compared the themes and categories from the existing data from the three groups and the research sub questions. Since this comparison was made with data previous shared in the findings related to the sub research questions, the researcher only reported the findings of the common themes and categories to develop a systemic view of the roles and responsibilities of teachers’ and interventionists’ in the RTI framework. The researcher did not include direct quotes to support categories previously identified in the findings related to the research sub questions.

Theme 2: Quality Instruction

The researcher compared the responses from the three groups of participants regarding the roles of teachers and interventionists in the RTI process. One role that emerged from the interviews was quality instruction. All groups agreed teachers and interventionists used programs and resources and applied research-based instruction as a part of their role in the RTI process. Additionally, the administrators and teachers mentioned teachers incorporated differentiated instruction for all students as within their role in the RTI process.

Theme 3: Tiered Instruction

Another theme that emerged about the role of teachers and interventionists in the RTI process was tiered instruction. All groups agreed the role of teachers and interventionists included identifying students for intervention. Both administrators and teachers described providing tier one instruction and intervention in the classroom as one

role of a teacher in the RTI process. While administrators and interventionists agreed the role of an interventionist includes providing tier three instruction to students and supporting instruction in the classroom.

Theme 4: Team Member

Administrators described the role of a teacher and an interventionist in the RTI process was to be a team member. Interventionists also identified this as one of their roles in the RTI process.

Theme 5: Data and Assessment

One main responsibility of teachers and interventionists shared by all groups was data and assessment. Specifically, all groups mentioned using assessments and data benchmarks to inform instruction and monitor student progress. All groups also described participating in collaborative discussions rooted in data as a responsibility of teachers and interventionists. Additionally, administrators and interventionists noted a responsibility of interventionists in RTI was collecting and managing student data.

Theme 6: Collaboration

Another responsibility, collaboration, emerged from all groups. All groups shared that teachers and interventionists were not only responsible for participating in their schools' systemic structures for collaboration, but also responsible for collaborating with each other and with administrators in the RTI process. Furthermore, administrators and teachers agreed teachers were also responsible for collaborating with instructional coaches and their grade level teammates. While interventionists were responsible for collaborating with the SPED department, as stated by both administrators and interventionists.

Summary

The central research question, what is the systemic view of the RTI process, was investigated by interviewing teachers, interventionists and administrators about their roles and responsibilities in the RTI process. All groups agreed quality instruction, tiered instruction, assessment and data, and collaboration were the main roles and responsibilities of teachers and interventionists in the RTI process. Additionally, all groups agreed RTI is a support system for all students and teachers. An interpretation of the findings as compared to current literature as well as implications for action and recommendations for further research are addressed in chapter five.

Chapter 5

Interpretation and Recommendations

Schools throughout the country provide tiered interventions with a systemic, collaborative approach to support the various needs and learning deficits of students (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012; Ehren, 2013; Laster et al., 2012; Wixson, 2011; Yurkewecz & Wilson, 2012-2013). This study was conducted to explore a systemic view of RTI by exploring the roles and responsibilities of teachers and interventionists, as well as administrators' perceptions of the entire RTI process. Chapter five is comprised of a study summary, an overview of the problem, a restatement of the purpose and research questions, a review of the methodology and findings related to literature as aligned to the rationale behind this study. Furthermore, chapter five provides a conclusion to the study with implications for action, recommendations for future research and concluding remarks formulated from the researcher's interpretation of the data.

Study Summary

The use of the RTI framework became a frequent endeavor for schools across the United States with the introduction of the Public Law 108-446 within IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) by the U.S. Department of Education in 2004. RTI presented the opportunity for schools to address the needs of students not making expected progress. School districts have since discovered a collaborative and data-focused system is required for RTI frameworks to meet the ever-evolving needs of learners.

Overview of the Problem. Researchers have often stated 80% of students in a school should be successful with general classroom instruction (Abbott & Willis, 2012;

Brown-Chidsey et al., 2009; Turse & Albrecht, 2015). The remaining 20% of students may require additional instruction, intervention or even special education services. To provide the additional instruction needed to address learning deficits, and to determine which students truly need special education services to support learning disabilities, many schools have implemented a systemic approach of tiered interventions through RTI (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012; Ehren, 2013; Laster et al., 2012; Wixson, 2011; Yurkewecz & Wilson, 2012-2013).

The RTI framework should be constantly evolving to best meet the vast needs of students and schools. Yet, there is limited research regarding the specific roles and responsibilities of the teachers, interventionists, and administrators within the RTI framework (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012; Ehren, 2013; Wixson, 2011). Investigating the roles and responsibilities of these individuals in the RTI framework and their contribution to RTI will help support schools as they endeavor to build and refine a systemic approach to RTI implementation.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions. The purpose of this study was to describe the systemic tiered interventions through the investigation of the perceptions of teachers and interventionists on their individual roles and responsibilities in the RTI process. Additionally, this study explored the understandings of administrators on the roles of teachers, interventionists and their own roles in the RTI process to produce a systemic view of the framework. The central research question of this study was, "what is the systemic view of the RTI process?" The following sub questions (RQ) were also used to support the central question:

RQ1. What are teachers' perceptions about their role in the RTI process?

RQ2. What are teachers' perceptions about their responsibilities in the RTI process?

RQ3. What are interventionists' perceptions about their role in the RTI process?

RQ4. What are interventionists' perceptions about their responsibilities in the RTI process?

RQ5. What are administrators' understandings of the entire RTI process?

Review of the Methodology. The researcher conducted a phenomenological study to investigate the roles and responsibilities of staff members to gain a systemic perspective of the RTI process. The participants of the study were teachers, interventionists, and administrators from three schools in District X. The participants engaged in individual interviews conducted through video conferencing. All interviews were video recorded, transcribed and sent to participants for a member check. Interview transcripts and analytic memos were coded using the MAXQDA program. The researcher completed three cycles of coding and code mapping to reveal common themes and categories for each of the research sub questions and the central research question.

Major Findings. The major findings of the study correlated with each of the research sub questions. Additionally, the major findings from the research sub questions and coded data corresponded to the central research question. The findings portrayed a small sample of participants from District X and should not be generalized to represent the entire district.

The first research sub question asked, *what are teachers' perceptions on their role in the RTI process?* It was found that teachers believed their role in the RTI process was to provide quality instruction by using programs and resources, applying research-based

instruction, and incorporating differentiated instruction for all students. It was also found that teachers believed their role in the RTI process was to provide tiered instruction to students in the classroom by identifying students for intervention, providing tier one instruction, and providing intervention in the classroom.

The second research sub question asked, *what are teachers' perceptions on their responsibilities in the RTI process?* It was found that teachers believed their responsibilities in the RTI process involved using assessment and data benchmarks to inform instruction, monitor student progress, and to participate in collaborative discussions rooted in data. It was found that teachers believed their responsibilities in the RTI process also included collaborating with others. For example, teachers collaborated with interventionists, instructional coaches, administrators, grade level teams, teachers in other grades, counselors, and social workers. Teachers also collaborated by participating in the systemic structure for collaboration for their school.

The third research sub question asked, *what are interventionists' perceptions on their role in the RTI process?* It was found that interventionists believed their role in the RTI process was to provide quality instruction to teachers and students by using programs and resources and applying research-based instruction. It was also found that interventionists believed their role in the RTI process was to provide tiered instruction by identifying students for intervention, providing tier three instruction, supporting instruction in the classroom, and supporting the SPED referral process. Finally, it was found that interventionists believed their role in the RTI process was to be a team member by participating on teams and acting as a meeting facilitator.

The fourth research sub question asked, *what are interventionists' perceptions on their responsibilities in the RTI process?* It was found that interventionists believed their responsibilities in the RTI process involved using assessment and data benchmarks to inform instruction, monitor student progress, and to participate in collaborative discussions rooted in data. Additionally, interventionists collected and managed data as a part of their responsibilities with using data and assessment in the RTI process. It was also found that interventionists believed their responsibilities in the RTI process included collaborating with others. The interventionists shared examples of ways they collaborated with teachers, the ELD department, the SPED department, administrators, other interventionists, counselors and social workers, and by participating in the systemic structure for collaboration for their school.

The fifth research sub question asked, *what are administrators' understandings of the entire RTI process?* It was found that administrators believed the role of teachers and interventionists in the RTI process was to provide quality instruction, to provide tiered instruction, and to be a team member. Administrators also believed the responsibilities of teachers and interventionists in the RTI process included using assessments and data and to continuously collaborate with others. Additionally, administrators believed they held roles and responsibilities in the RTI process such as participating in reflective practices, being an instructional leader, providing support, providing resources and professional development, ensuring fidelity, completing scheduling tasks and providing direction. Finally, it was found that administrators believed a positive school climate and culture that supports the RTI process should be established.

The central research question for the study was, *what is the systemic view of the RTI process?* To answer this question, the researcher asked participants to describe who they think the RTI framework supports. It was found that administrators, teachers, and interventionists viewed RTI as a support system for all students and teachers. Additionally, it was found that administrators believed RTI began with tier one instruction.

To answer the central research question, the researcher also compared the interview responses of the teachers and interventionists to the corresponding interview responses from the administrators about the roles and responsibilities in the RTI process. It was found that administrators, teachers, and interventionists all believed the role of the teacher and the interventionist in the RTI process was to provide quality instruction and tiered instruction to students. It was also found that administrators, teachers, and interventionists all believed the responsibilities of the teacher and the interventionist in the RTI process were to use assessment and data and to collaborate with others.

Findings Related to the Literature

Abbott and Wills (2012) explain the goal of RTI is to execute high quality instruction and to issue need-based student interventions through a framework that is rooted in data analysis. The execution of such a framework involves many moving parts in order to fully meet the needs of all students within a school. Successful RTI frameworks are specific to a school's environment with objectives that are clearly defined for all participants (Abbott & Wills, 2012; Lee, 2017; Turse and Albrecht, 2015).

Research Sub Question 1. Research sub question one sought to discover the specific role a teacher plays in the RTI process. The teachers in this study shared their

roles revolved around providing quality instruction and providing tier instruction. Both themes were also present in literature regarding the roles of a teacher in RTI.

Successful implementation of RTI is explicitly tied to the instructional quality provided in all three tiers (Denton et al., 2003; Harn, 2017; Mesmer & Mesmer, 2008; Turse & Albrecht, 2015). A classroom teacher plays a vital role in the implementation of quality instruction as they are responsible for all three tiers and for ensuring that instruction is research-based, evidence-based, practiced with fidelity, and differentiated to meet the needs of students (Brown-Chidsey et al., 2009; Spear-Swerling & Cheesman, 2011; Wixson, 2011). Teachers in this study shared that they used programs and resources that were research-based within their role of providing quality instruction. Four of the teachers noted using differentiated instruction by providing small group instruction such as guided reading groups. Three of those teachers specifically noted meeting with all students showing their differentiated instruction was a part of their tier one instruction echoing the idea of best practices for quality instruction as presented in literature.

The tiered instruction system within RTI is created by changing the instructional intensity and intervention implementation to meet the needs of students. (Brown-Chidsey et al., 2009). The teachers of this study claimed providing tiered instruction was one of their roles in the RTI process. García & Ortiz (2008) described teachers as demonstrating a vital role in identifying students who need additional support or interventions. The teachers interviewed described identifying students for intervention mirroring findings within literature.

All teachers in the study stated they provided intervention in the classroom. However, responses varied according to participants on which level of intervention was

provided by the classroom teacher. Five teachers stated they were responsible for their tier two and tier three students. Yet, three of those teachers said they only meet with their tier three students three times a week. One of those teachers explained she only met with those students a few times a week because they were also receiving interventions from the interventionist. One teacher stated, “if they, the tier three kids are in here, I also pull them back.” Another teacher said, “even though I’m not personally working with my tier three students because they’re being pulled out each day, I still try to touch in with them and see how they’re doing.” The sixth teacher in the group of the participants shared that providing tier one and tier two instruction was her role while working with tier three students was the reading interventionist’s role.

This is referred to as the “fix-it” mentality that is not uncommon within RTI frameworks (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012). This mentality is seen when teachers have the expectation of tier two or three students to work with a specialist, the specialist fixes the students’ learning deficits, and then the specialist sends them back to their classroom (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012). Literature demonstrates classroom teachers should be providing all three tiers of instruction. Therefore, there should be a joint responsibility for students in which specialists and teachers collaboratively work together to support the needs of students at all levels of instruction (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012; Brown-Chidsey et al., 2009).

Research Sub Question 2. Research sub question two asked teachers to identify their responsibilities in the RTI process. All teachers in the study named using data and assessment and collaboration as part of their responsibilities. Both themes were also seen consistently throughout research.

Teachers need to regularly assess and collect data on students in order to determine if their instruction is evidence-based and to monitor if students are making expected progress (Brown-Chidsey, 2009; García & Ortiz, 2008; Mesmer & Mesmer, 2008; Wixson, 2011; Yurkewecz & Wilson, 2012-2013). Teachers are then responsible for making instructional changes based on their collected data with all levels of instruction (Brown-Chidsey, 2009; García & Ortiz, 2008; Spear-Swerling & Cheesman, 2011; Yurkewecz & Wilson, 2012-2013). This study was congruent to ideas presented in literature as it showed teachers used assessment and data benchmarks to inform instruction and to monitor student progress. Research also indicated that students receiving interventions should be progress monitored continuously (García & Ortiz, 2008; Mesmer & Mesmer, 2008). While teachers within this study did not discuss the frequency in which they progress monitored, they did note the occurrence of participating in collaborative discussions rooted in student data on a regular basis.

The RTI framework requires the collaboration of teachers with other staff members to continuously improve their teaching and to pursue additional support for students who are not responsive to the different levels of instruction (Brown-Chidsey, 2009; Yurkewecz & Wilson, 2012-2013). This study showed teachers collaborated with a multitude of staff members to support students. They noted working with interventionists, administrators, instructional coaches, grade level teams, teachers in other grade levels as well as the school counselor and school social worker.

Warren & Robinson (2015) found that teachers implementing RTI described feeling that they had a lack of training, time constraints, and a lack of resources and limited knowledge in data-based decision-making. However, teachers within this study described in great detail the amount of time spent collaborating over data and identifying

student needs within their schools' systemic structures for collaboration. They also described the instructional strategies and the multitude of resources available for instructional support provided by both the school district and their schools' interventionists.

Research Sub Question 3. Research sub question three investigated the role of interventionists in the RTI process. Within literature, the role of an interventionist is also identified as a specialist. The themes providing quality instruction, providing tiered instruction, and being a team member were present within this study as well as with literature.

Traditionally, the role of a specialist has been to provide instruction to tier two and tier three students (Allington, 2013; Bean & Lillenstein, 2012; Brown-Chidsey et al., 2009; Farstrup, 2007; Galloway & Lesaux, 2014; García & Ortiz, Harn 2017; 2008; Swanson et al., 2012; Wixson, 2011). This traditional use of a specialist was due to the idea that they are often the highest trained staff in their specialized certification area and students at those tiers require intensive and specific instruction, instruction in which the specialists are the most qualified to provide (Allington, 2013; Bean & Lillenstein, 2012; Brown-Chidsey et al., 2009; Farstrup, 2007; Galloway & Lesaux, 2014; García & Ortiz, Harn 2017; 2008; Swanson et al., 2012; Wixson, 2011). This notion was also presented within the interventionists' roles in the RTI process in this study. All interventionists stated their role was to provide tier three instruction.

Reinke et al. (2014) described a specialist acting as an RTI coach as a way to increase the success of intervention implementation. With the specialist acting as a coach, teachers are provided the support they need to effectively utilize evidence-based instruction and intervention methods (Reinke et al., 2013). A specialist acting as a coach

was also seen within the role of the interventionists in this study. The interventionists stated they supported classroom teachers with their instruction and interventions. For example, interventionists described providing resources to classroom teachers including, but not limited to, lists of intervention strategies to implement with students.

The formation of teams that collaborate around the needs of students and quality instruction to support the RTI process was a notion seen throughout literature (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012; Ehren, 2013; Farstrup, 2007; Laster et al., 2014; Yurkewecz & Wilson, 2012-2013). The expertise of interventionists put them in a unique position of leadership on RTI teams (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012; Ehren, 2013; Farstrup, 2008; Galloway & Lesaux, 2014; Laster et al., 2014). All six interventionists in the study described the ways in which they participated in the RTI process as a team member and facilitator, often leading the discussions on their subject area of expertise.

Research Sub Question 4. Research sub question four asked interventionists to identify their responsibilities within the RTI process. The themes using assessment and data and collaborating with others emerged within the interview data. While these two themes appeared to repeat in literature, they were not specific to the responsibilities of the interventionists.

The responsibilities of interventionists are continuously evolving as the role of the interventionists themselves evolves (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012; Galloway & Lesaux, 2014). Brown-Chidsey et al. (2009) stated, "RTI methods suggest that teachers themselves work with their struggling students directly as a part of a team" (p. 8). Interventionists are seen as a key component of this team to support struggling students. This study suggested, as a part of RTI teams, the responsibilities of interventionists were

to use assessment and data and to collaborate with others to best meet the needs of students.

Research Sub Question 5. Research sub question five explored administrators' view of the entire RTI process. Seven themes were present within the administrators' interview data. The seven themes were consistent with current literature on the RTI framework.

Successful RTI implementation relies on administrators to create a collaborative and systemic process by transforming how teachers and staff perceive their roles and responsibilities in the RTI framework (Buffum et al., 2010 as cited in DuFour & Marzano, 2011). Within their interviews, administrators described the roles and responsibilities of teachers and interventionists in the RTI process as providing quality and tiered instruction, being a team member, using assessment and data, and collaborating with others. All of these themes were present throughout literature on the RTI framework. Administrators in the study also identified their roles and responsibilities, many of which were parallel to existing literature on how administrators should be involved in the RTI process.

Administrators manage and support the instructional capacity of a school. Within their role, they are responsible for creating and managing schedules, data collection and distribution as well as fostering the collaboration among many staff members (Brown-Chidsey et al., 2009; DuFour & Marzano, 2011). Research indicated that administrators are also responsible for supporting the RTI process by providing professional development to increase teachers' instructional proficiencies and resources to support the common components of the framework (Laster et al., 2014). The administrators in the study described all of these responsibilities within their interview responses. All six

administrators also described ways in which they participated in reflective practices to ensure their building's RTI framework was continuously working to best meet the needs of students.

The system of RTI compels teachers, specialists, and administrators to be a collaborative force in order to support all learners (Abbott & Wills, 2012; Brown-Chidsey et al., 2009; Lee, 2017). As a result, many schools utilize a team approach to foster effective and purposeful collaboration (Abbott & Wills, 2012; Brown-Chidsey et al., 2009; Ehren, 2013; Farstrup, 2007; García & Ortiz, 2008; Marinak, 2011/2012, Turse & Albrecht, 2015; Wixson, 2011). The administrators in this study described the systemic structures for collaboration in which they built to support effective and purposeful collaboration among the staff members involved in the RTI process. Their systemic structures involved teams meeting at regular intervals to discuss the needs of both students and teachers as identified through data. Additionally, these meetings presented opportunities for teams to create plans of support for both teachers and students and to monitor student progress.

Administrators are responsible for monitoring that the needs of students are being met through data-driven and differentiated instruction by being present in classrooms and data team meetings (Laster et al., 2014). The administrators in this study all described participating in the meetings around RTI within their systemic structures for collaboration. The administrators in this study also claimed insuring fidelity as one of their responsibilities in the RTI process. They were able to identify the ways in which both teachers and interventionists used quality instruction including the use of program and resources, research-based instruction and differentiated instruction. Three of the administrators also noted they were responsible for being an instructional leader by

maintaining a knowledge of best practices and how to support quality instruction in the classroom.

School administrators are also charged with the task of creating a school culture of collaboration and shared responsibility for all students (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012; Brown-Chidsey et al., 2009; DuFour & Marzano, 2011; Laster et al., 2014; Yurkewecz & Wilson, 2012-2013). All six administrators expressed an understanding of the importance school climate and culture play when implementing the RTI framework. Five of the administrators in this study described the ways they supported and built a collaborative mindset around RTI.

Within the RTI framework, colleagues dissect data, evaluate student performance, and reflect upon both successful and unsuccessful instructional methods and implementation (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012; Ehren, 2013). Such overt discussions are a necessity for productive RTI frameworks and require individual reflection and support between staff members (Bean & Lillenstein; Ehren, 2013; Galloway & Lesaux, 2014). The administrators in this study provided examples of establishing a positive school climate and culture that supported the RTI process. Administrators described creating an environment where both students and staff felt safe to take risks and carried a growth mindset.

Central Research Question. The central research question of this study asked, *what is the systemic view of the RTI process?* To explore this question, the researcher compared the themes and categories of the administrator data to those of the teacher and interventionist data. The themes of the administrator, teacher and interventionist data were consistent with the findings in literature. Additionally, the researcher also analyzed the responses of all participants when they were asked to share who they believe the RTI

framework supports and why to help answer the central research question. The theme RTI as a support system ran parallel to themes found around the literature regarding the systemic view of RTI.

In order to best meet the needs of individual students, purposeful and systemic coordination between programs and school staff should be in place to allow the sharing of expertise and to collaborate in the planning and implementation of tiered interventions (García & Ortiz, 2008). RTI is a framework that supports the needs of all students from the core instruction at Tier 1 to the students receiving additional support from a specialist at tier 3 (Brown-Chidsey et al., 2009). The participants in the study agreed that RTI is a framework that supports all students. The participants also stated they believed the RTI process supported teachers, echoing the ideas presented by Brown-Chidsey et al. (2009) of the village support system teachers receive when working within the RTI framework.

Conclusions

This study investigated the systemic view of the RTI process by exploring the roles and responsibilities of teachers, interventionists and administrators. The common components of the RTI framework, quality instruction, tiered instruction, assessment and data and collaboration as identified through the review of literature were all present within the interview responses of the study's participants. Studying the individual roles and responsibilities of staff members involved in the RTI process (as seen in this study with the teachers, interventionists, and administrators) will help other schools implementing the RTI framework to develop a perspective of how the common components of the framework can be implemented systemically.

Additionally, this study explored the perceptions of administrators, teachers and interventionists of two schools that provided reading and math interventions and one

school that only provided reading interventions. There were no differences among the themes and categories of the roles and responsibilities of reading interventionists and math interventionists nor were there any differences among the themes and categories of the teachers and administrators who participated in RTI systems around math and reading and those who only had reading interventions. The themes of the participants were aligned to literature regardless of the subject area of the intervention. Therefore, this study can be seen as a guide to support a school or district who plans to implement RTI around math or reading.

Implications for Action. The responses heard from participants regarding their roles and responsibilities in the RTI framework aligned closely with the common RTI components found in literature. However, within the interview responses there were also misconceptions regarding RTI as a systemic process, a process that encompasses all students and staff. These misconceptions included viewing RTI as an intervention time rather than a systemic framework, the role of the classroom teacher in providing tier one instruction and the use of differentiated instruction. Recognizing the misconceptions discovered in this study allowed for a greater understanding of the implications for action.

Among the twelve teachers and interventionists, five of them referred to RTI as time where tier two and three students received interventions. This was an overarching misconception throughout their interviews particularly when studying RTI from a systemic view. The RTI process is a framework to support the systemic use of assessment to drive quality and tiered instruction maintained through collaboration. All participants in the framework should understand this includes all levels of instruction. RTI is not

simply an intervention rather it is a system to improve teaching and learning (Buffum et al., 2010). This lack of understanding of the systemic view of RTI was also prevalent when asking teachers to identify their role in the RTI process.

As research indicates, teachers provide tier one, tier two and tier three quality instruction (Brown-Chidsey et al., 2009). It is important to note that only half of the teacher participants stated providing tier one instruction was a part of their role in the RTI process. Only one of those three teachers initially spoke of providing tier one instruction when asked about her role in the RTI framework while the other two teachers did so within their responses to subsequent questions. Research repeatedly calls for instructional quality at all three tiers in order for successful implementation of RTI (Denton et al., 2003; Harn, 2017; Mesmer & Mesmer, 2008; Turse & Albrecht, 2015). However, not all teachers viewed providing tier one instruction as a part of their role in the RTI process.

The view of a teacher's role was also seen with some of the administrator responses. One administrator stated, "I feel like it's the teacher's role to bring students up that they have concerns of," when asked about the role of a teacher in the RTI process. She immediately spoke to the role a teacher plays for students in the tier two and three level and did not identify the teacher's role to first provide quality tier one instruction. This administrator was one of two who did not identify providing tier one instruction as the role of a teacher. When looking at the systemic view of RTI, seven of the 18 participants (39% of the administrators, teachers and interventionists in this study) primarily referred to RTI as tier two or tier three intervention.

The systemic view of RTI includes all levels of instruction. Therefore, it is necessary for tier one instruction to be a focus of participants implementing RTI.

Research indicates 80% of students should be at the tier one level (Abbott & Willis, 2012; Brown-Chidsey et al., 2009; Turse & Albrecht, 2015). Research also indicates if tier one instruction is not strong, with less than 80% of students at tier one, then the RTI system will be overloaded with too many students in need of intervention (Brown-Chidsey et al., 2009).

Eight participants in this study also noted the importance of tier one instruction during their interviews. One interventionist stated it was within her role to help “teachers with tier one instruction . . . so that we don't have kids fall into a tier two, tier three category when it's not necessarily needed, they just really need a strong tier one instruction.” It should be highlighted that all six administrators emphasized strong tier one instruction in the RTI framework. Two of the interventionists also expressed this opinion while none of the teachers specified the importance of strong tier one instruction.

It is necessary for teachers understand RTI begins with tier one instruction as they are the frontline for ensuring quality tier one instruction is provided to every student. To build this understanding, schools should place an emphasis on a strong tier one curriculum throughout curriculum-related professional development. This will require a shift in mindset when presenting and participating in this realm of training. As teachers engage in curriculum related professional development, trainers and curriculum experts will need to include language such as tier one and core instruction. Administrators and teachers alike will also need to be vigilant in monitoring that 80% of students are successful with this instruction. If that statistic is untrue, there will need to be changes to the core curriculum (Brown-Chidsey et al., 2009).

Administrators should also need to be vigilant in holding teachers accountable to presenting tier one curriculum to all students. Sparks (2015) noted the concerns that arise about the lack of distinction between core instruction and interventions. Within his study, Sparks (2015) described 67% of participating schools provided interventions during core instruction rather than in addition to it. It is necessary for teachers to understand that their role in the RTI process begins with providing quality tier one instruction to all students and administrators will need to provide the time and resources for teachers to do so.

As teachers engage in the quest to provide quality tier one instruction to all students, they should provide differentiated instruction within their core instruction. Differentiated instruction is teaching and presenting concepts in different ways to meet the individual needs of learners (Allan & Goddard, 2010; Brown-Chidsey et al., 2009). It is at the core of RTI as it helps teachers truly identify who is missing foundational skills and therefore in need of intervention (Allan & Goddard, 2010; Brown-Chidsey et al., 2009).

Four administrators and four teachers in this study noted the use of differentiated instruction for all students. Three of the interventionists also spoke to the use of differentiated instruction by teachers in the classroom, however, all three referred to the differentiated instruction as interventions, presenting the idea of a misconception of what an intervention is and what differentiated instruction is. All parties involved in the RTI process will need to understand the difference between differentiated instruction and intervention and the place both hold in the RTI framework.

Schools working to implement RTI effectively, should provide professional development regarding the use of differentiated instruction at the tier one level. Teachers should understand how to differentiate for students of all abilities, why it is a part of tier

one instruction and how it differs from intervention. Administrators need an understanding of differentiation in order to hold teachers accountable and to support the use of this instructional strategy. The use of instructional coaches and if time, and resources allow, the interventionists, can also play a key role in providing differentiated instruction to the core curriculum.

Differentiated instruction occurs at the tier one level for two purposes. Firstly, differentiation should occur for all students (Allan & Goddard, 2010; What Works Clearinghouse, 2013). Secondly, differentiated instruction is at the tier one level because it occurs around the core curriculum, around tier one content (Levy, 2008). Teachers should understand how to identify student needs through formal and informal assessments and make instructional decisions (sometimes very quickly) as to what students need to be successful and progress to mastery with that concept. Differentiated instruction, like RTI, requires the continual use of assessment and data to inform instruction and monitor student progress.

Students at the tier two and three level should be a part of tier one instruction in order to put the necessary skills developed at each level together to progress as a learner (Wixson, n.d., as cited in Sparks, 2015). Therefore, it is necessary that students at the tier two and three levels do not leave the classroom for additional support or interventions during the presentation of tier one curriculum (Buffum et al., 2010; Wixson, 2011). This includes participating in differentiated instruction. Differentiated instruction lends itself to the support of struggling learners since this instructional strategy is rooted in meeting students' strengths and needs by allowing students many ways to learn content, process information, and to demonstrate understandings (Allan & Goddard, 2010; Levy, 2008).

As teachers offer differentiated instruction and analyze formal and informal data, they may determine that a student is not successful with the tier one instruction because that student is missing foundational skills. Students then move from differentiated instruction at tier one to also receiving intervention at the tier two or three level (Allan & Goddard, 2010; What Works Clearinghouse, n.d.). At this point, students may begin to participate in additional interventions at the systemic level outside their general education classroom.

Without these structures in place, students can only progress so far. If teachers do not provide differentiated instruction, the intervention system may be unnecessarily overpopulated and RTI resources will not be put to the best use. School leaders should therefore provide professional development to their staff regarding the use of differentiated instruction at the tier one level. Teachers should observe differentiated instruction in action in a variety of classrooms as a part of their professional development. This will require administrators to be present in classrooms and working alongside the instruction coaches or trainers to recognize when differentiated instruction is done well and to serve as a model for other teachers.

Additionally, school leaders need to account for time within the school day for teachers to provide this instruction. Differentiated instruction should not be viewed as something additional for teachers, but rather a part of best practices regarding tier one instruction (Allan & Goddard, 2010; What Works Clearinghouse, 2013). This mindset should be present within the language of curriculum related professional development as well as within RTI meetings and processes.

Recommendations for Future Research. The roles and responsibilities of a teacher in the RTI process are documented throughout research. However, the roles and

responsibilities of an interventionist within the RTI framework are limited, particularly around the utilization of interventionists to support intervention implementation and quality instruction in the classroom. Future research should be conducted to explore the changing roles and responsibilities of interventionists in the RTI process.

Quality instruction and data and assessment have been identified as core components of the RTI framework. Within this study, participants noted collaboration with the building instructional coach to support quality instruction and the analysis of data, two common components of the RTI framework. Further research is recommended to study how the roles and responsibilities of an instructional coach can impact and support the RTI process.

Special education funds can be used to staff interventionists and instructional coaches due to the RTI provision within special education law that states school districts are able to dedicate 15% of special education funds to provide general education interventions for students at-risk for learning disability identification (Ehren, 2013; Wixson, 2011). While both the interventionists and instructional coaches can support the RTI process through the different tiers of instruction, further research in both areas is needed to provide schools with the necessary information if schools are looking to increase RTI productivity with the addition of either role to their staff with these funds. Further research would also support school districts in re-examining the ways in which these individuals can support the RTI process and therefore the needs of all students.

Concluding Remarks. The needs of students are ever-changing. It is important that schools develop systemic approaches to meet the vast instructional needs of students so individuals at all levels of instruction can progress and grow. Successful implementation of the RTI framework includes providing quality instruction, providing

tiered instruction, using assessment and data and collaborating with others. These core components of RTI support all students, not simply those who are struggling, but it requires the work of many educators within a systemic framework.

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Appendices

Appendix A. Application to Conduct Research in District X

Application to Conduct Research in [REDACTED]

Name Jessica Kukal Robinson	Organization Baker University	Department K-12 Educational Leadership		
Address [REDACTED]		City [REDACTED]	State [REDACTED]	Zip Code [REDACTED]
Phone Number [REDACTED]	Fax Number	E-mail JessicaAKukal@stu.bakeru.edu		

1) Title and purpose of study:

A Systemic View of The Roles and Responsibilities in the RTI Framework

The main purpose of this study is to describe systemic tiered interventions through the use of the RTI framework by exploring the perceptions of teachers and interventionists on their individual roles and responsibilities in the RTI process for providing reading and/or math interventions to students. The understandings of administrators on the roles of teachers, interventionists and their own roles in the RTI framework will also be explored to gain a systemic view of the RTI process.

2) Timeline:

November 2020 to March 2021

3) Benefits to the district: How will this study benefit the [REDACTED] School District?

A systematic response to supporting struggling learners as well as the collaboration among [REDACTED] Employees during the RTI process will serve as a model for other school districts to follow and consult when using the RTI framework.

4) Research Design Summary: Give specific information on the methods to be used during the course of the study. Please include your research questions, instruments, sampling and data collection methodologies, and proposed analyses. Samples of instruments may include survey questions, observation forms, and interview questions. Finally, describe any tasks students or staff will be asked to complete. Describe procedures you will use to secure and acknowledge informed consent of all participants, including active or passive consent. If passive, please provide a rationale. Please attach copies of any letters. Outline how subjects will be identified and criteria used for recruitment, who will make the initial contact with subjects, and whether or not inducements will be used to secure participation.

Research Questions:

Central Research Question:

What is the systemic view of the RTI process?

Sub Questions:

RQ1. What are teachers' perceptions about their role in the RTI process?

RQ2. What are teachers' perceptions about their responsibilities in the RTI process?

RQ3. What are interventionists' perceptions about their role in the RTI process?

RQ4. What are interventionists' perceptions about their responsibilities in the RTI process?

RQ5. What are administrators' understandings of the entire RTI process?

Instruments:

- Individual Interviews

Sampling Methodologies:

- Administrators: Purposeful Sampling- All administrators at the selected schools will be asked to participate in the study.
- Teachers: Criterion and Random Sampling- Must meet the criteria of being a general education classroom teacher (K-5th grade), a random selection of participants will be chosen from the group of volunteers
- Interventionists (Reading and Math Specialists): Criterion Sampling- Interventionists in the area of reading or math who work full time at a single school
- Inducements will not be given to secure participation in the study.

Data Collection:

- Interviews will take place through video conferencing methods (Zoom). An [interview protocol](#) will be followed throughout the duration of the interview. Participants will be asked a minimum of 4 questions and a maximum of 8 questions with the potential for follow-up questions. All interviews will be video recorded and used for data analysis.
 - o [Interview questions](#) have been viewed by an expert panel and will undergo revisions if necessary following mock interviews.

Proposed Analyses:

- Recorded interview responses will be transcribed. Themes among interview responses and memos recorded by the researcher will be identified using the program MAXQDA. Data will be sorted into categories based on themes that emerge from interview responses.

Consent Procedures and Participant Tasks:

- Administrators and interventionists will be invited to participate in the study

through email ([draft](#)) by the researcher. Administrators can email the invitation (created by the researcher, [draft can be found on page 3](#)) to their staff. The purpose of the study and details of participation (one 15-to-30-minute interview via video conferencing methods) will be included in the invitation. Volunteers will be asked to sign a [consent form](#) in order to participate.

- Participants will participate in one individual interview lasting no more than 30 to 45 minutes. An [interview protocol](#) will be followed throughout all interviews. I will state the purpose of the study and outline the format of the interview at the start of the interview. I will ask four questions to the teachers and interventionists and if needed, any variation of the follow-up questions. The administrators will be asked eight questions with the potential for follow-up questions. After each interview, each participant will have the opportunity to perform a member check. Responses will be revised if participants feel the data does not accurately describe their perceptions. All participants and any references to other individuals during interview responses will be given pseudonyms in the study.
- Participants will not be offered any inducements to participate in the study.

5) Assurance of anonymity of [REDACTED] students & staff

Pseudonyms will be given to the district, schools and participants ([REDACTED] staff) and used throughout the study and written dissertation. Raw data will only be shared with my research committee. All electronic data contained within the study will be password protected on my home computer. Only I have the password to this computer and its contents.

6) Risks of the research

There are no risks to students, staff, or the district. Participation in the study is voluntary. Participants may withdraw from the study at any point in the research process.

7) District involvement: What request are you making of the [REDACTED] School District and the Director of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment? Specify numbers of students and staff to be involved, length of time, and time line for completion of your investigation.

Total Participants: 18 staff members (6 from each subgroup)

Length of time: 15-30 minutes video interviews with each individual and the option for a member check

Timeline: November 2020 to March 2021

Additional District Involvement:

- Participation from the Director of Assessment, Director of Special Education

Services and Director of Elementary Education by reviewing the interview questions and offering feedback to help refine the interview questions

8) Funding Sources

No funds are needed.

9) IRB approval: If applicable, give the date and copy of IRB approval letter, or application if IRB review is in process. [REDACTED] School District will not allow study to begin until we have an approval letter on file.

Appendix C. Administrator Invitation to Participate (Principal)

Participant Name,

My name is Jessica Robinson. I am a former [REDACTED] kindergarten teacher and am currently working on my dissertation to complete my doctorate in Educational Leadership with Baker University. I'd like to thank you for allowing me to work with you and your staff for my research study. My dissertation topic is the systemic view of the RTI framework. I am seeking administrators, interventionists (math and reading specialists), and teachers to participate in the study to help me gain an understanding of a school wide implementation of RTI.

If you choose to participate in the study as an administrator, you will have a single 20–25-minute Zoom interview scheduled at your convenience. You will have 8 questions about the RTI process and your roles and responsibilities and those your teachers have with RTI. Following the interview, you will have the opportunity to review your responses. If you have any questions or would like to participate, please let me know. I will also be reaching out to your assistant principal to participate in the study as well.

As Dr. [REDACTED] may have already discussed with you, I would also like to interview general education teachers from your building as well as the math and reading specialists. Those interviews will last no more than 20 minutes and take place on Zoom. Would you like to contact those staff members or would you like me to? I have invitations already drafted (similar to this one) that you are welcome to send on or add to your staff newsletter. I am more than happy to make those contacts but it is completely up to you.

There are more challenges than ever right now for educators, especially our leaders, and I truly appreciate all you do for your teachers and students. Thank you again and I look forward to talking with you soon.

Jessica Robinson
[REDACTED] School District
Baker K-12 Leadership DED
Cohort 18

Appendix D. Administrator Invitation to Participate (Assistant Principal)

██████████

I hope this email finds you well and you and your staff are getting settled into distance learning!

I have been working to complete my doctorate in Educational Leadership with Baker University for the last few years and am on to the final hurdle of my dissertation. █████ has graciously agreed to allow █████ to be a part of my research study. The study will explore a systemic view of the RTI framework. I am seeking administrators, interventionists (math and reading specialists), and teachers to participate in the study to help me gain an understanding of a school wide implementation of RTI.

I would like to interview you as your school's assistant principal. If you choose to participate in the study as an administrator, you will have a single 20–25-minute Zoom interview scheduled at your convenience. You will have 8 questions about the RTI process and your roles and responsibilities and those your staff have with RTI. Following the interview, you will have the opportunity to review your responses.

If you have any questions or would like to participate, please let me know. I look forward to talking with you soon!

Jessica Robinson
██████████ School District
Baker K-12 Leadership DED
Cohort 18

Appendix E. School B Participant Recruitment Email Communication

Team,

I have selected you to complete a short interview with Jessica Kukal regarding RTI processes at [REDACTED]. She will be reaching out soon to give you more information however I wanted to extend my appreciation for helping Jessica obtain this large professional goal.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

From: Jessica A Kukal <JessicaAKukal@stu.bakeru.edu>

Sent: Monday, November 30, 2020 10:29 AM

To: [REDACTED]

Subject: RTI Research Study

[REDACTED]

My name is Jessica Robinson. I am a former [REDACTED] kindergarten teacher, and I am currently working on my dissertation to complete my doctorate in Educational Leadership with Baker University. I'd like to thank you for allowing me to work with you and your staff for my research study. My dissertation topic is the systemic view of the RTI framework. I am seeking administrators, interventionists (math and reading specialists), and teachers to participate in the study to help me gain an understanding of a school wide implementation of RTI.

As Dr. Courtney may have already discussed with you, I would like to interview general education teachers from your building as well as the math and reading specialists. Those interviews will last no more than 20 minutes and take place on Zoom. I would also like to interview you and your assistant principal. If you choose to participate in the study as an administrator, you will have a single 20–25-minute Zoom interview scheduled at your convenience. You will have 8 questions about the RTI process and your roles and responsibilities and those your teachers have with RTI. Following the interview, you will have the opportunity to review your responses. If you have any questions or would like to participate, please let me know.

There are more challenges than ever right now for educators, especially our leaders, and I truly appreciate all you do for your teachers and students. Thank you again and I look forward to talking with you soon.

Jessica Robinson

[REDACTED] School District

Baker K-12 Leadership DED

Cohort 18

Appendix F. Interventionist Invitation to Participate

██████████

I hope this email finds you well and you are getting settled into distance learning!

I have been working to complete my doctorate in Educational Leadership with Baker University for the last few years and am on to the final hurdle of my dissertation. ██████ has graciously agreed to allow ██████ to be a part of my research study. The study will explore a systemic view of the RTI framework. I am seeking administrators, interventionists (math and reading specialists), and teachers to participate in the study to help me gain an understanding of a school wide implementation of RTI.

I would like to interview you as your school's math interventionist. If you choose to participate in the study, you will have a single 15–20-minute Zoom interview scheduled at your convenience. You will have 4 questions about the RTI process and your roles and responsibilities with RTI. Following the interview, you will have the opportunity to review your responses.

If you have any questions or would like to participate, please let me know. I look forward to talking with you soon!

Jessica Robinson
██████████ School District
Baker K-12 Leadership DED
Cohort 18

Appendix G. School B Teacher Invitation to Participate

██████████

I hope this email finds you well and you are getting settled into distance learning!

I have been working to complete my doctorate in Educational Leadership with Baker University for the last few years and am on to the final hurdle of my dissertation. █████ has graciously agreed to allow █████ to be a part of my research study. The study will explore a systemic view of the RTI framework. I am seeking administrators, interventionists (math and reading specialists), and teachers to participate in the study to help me gain an understanding of a school wide implementation of RTI.

I would like to interview you as classroom teacher. If you choose to participate in the study, you will have a single 15–20-minute Zoom interview scheduled at your convenience. You will have 4 questions about the RTI process and your roles and responsibilities with RTI. Following the interview, you will have the opportunity to review your responses.

If you have any questions or would like to participate, please let me know. I look forward to talking with you soon!

Jessica Robinson
██████████ School District
Baker K-12 Leadership DED
Cohort 18

██████████

My name is Jessica Robinson, and I am a former ██████████ Kindergarten teacher. I have been working to complete my doctorate in Educational Leadership with Baker University for the last few years and am on to the final hurdle of my dissertation. Dr. ██████ has graciously agreed to allow ██████████ to be a part of my research study. The study will explore a systemic view of the RTI framework. I am interviewing administrators, interventionists (math and reading specialists), and teachers to participate in the study to help me gain an understanding of a school wide implementation of RTI.

I am looking for volunteers to participate in my study. If you choose to participate, you will have a single 15-20-minute Zoom interview scheduled at your convenience. You will have 4 questions about the RTI process and your roles and responsibilities with RTI. Following the interview, you will have the opportunity to review your responses.

If you are interested in participating, please fill out this short (less than a minute) [questionnaire](#). If you have any questions, please let me know.

I look forward to talking with you soon! Best of luck with week two of distance learning!

Jessica Robinson
██████████ School District
Baker K-12 Leadership DED
Cohort 18

Kindergarten through 5th grade teachers are needed to participate in a study about school wide implementation of RTI. Participants will have a single 15–20-minute Zoom interview with 4 questions about their roles and responsibilities in the RTI process. If you are interested in volunteering for this study, please complete this [1 minute survey](#).

If you have any questions or would like to learn more, please contact [Jessica Robinson](#), JessicaAKukal@stu.bakeru.edu

RTI Research Study

The purpose of this study is to describe RTI from a school wide view by exploring the perceptions of teachers, interventionists and administrators on the individual roles and responsibilities in the RTI process for providing reading and/or math interventions to students. Teachers, interventionists (math and reading specialists) and administrators from three schools in the district will be asked to participate.

If you choose to participate in the study, you will have a single 15-20-minute video interview scheduled at your convenience. You will have 4 questions about your roles and responsibilities with the RTI process. Interviews will be recorded for data collection. Following the interview, you will have the opportunity to review your responses.

*** Required**

Would you be willing to participate in the study? *

What is your first and last name? *

What is the best way to contact you to set up an interview time? If necessary, please provide your phone or alternate email address. *

Opening Statement

Thank you for participating in a research study exploring the systemic view of the RTI process. The interview session will take approximately 15-20 minutes. The session will be video recorded, and the contents will only be accessible to myself and my research committee.

You will be assigned a pseudonym. There will be no identifiable information used within this study. Please speak candidly about your experiences. You may decline to answer any question at any time. Following the interview, you will be given the opportunity to review your responses. You may make any changes to your responses if you feel your perceptions are not accurately represented. You may also discontinue your participation in the study for any reason at any time.

If you wish to no longer participate in the study at any time, I will not use any portion of your interview session within the study. Do you have any questions or concerns before we begin?

Teacher Interview Questions

Central Research Question: What is the systemic view of the RTI process?

RQ1. What are teachers' perceptions about their role in the RTI process?

1. As a teacher, what kind of role or part do you usually play in your school's RTI process?

If the participant needs an example of roles state:

For example, general education teacher, data team member, or identifying students in need of support.

- a. Can you give an example of what you did in that role?

*Follow-up Question. If the participant does not describe **tiered instruction** (i.e., **Tier 1, Tier 2, Tier 3**) to Q1 then ask:*

How do you use tiered instruction, Tier 1, Tier 2, Tier 3, regularly in your role in the RTI process?

*Follow-up Question. If the participant does not describe **research-based instruction** to Q1 then ask:*

As a teacher, how do you use research-based instruction regularly in your role?

RQ2. What are teachers' perceptions about their responsibilities in the RTI process?

2. As a teacher, what kinds of responsibilities do you usually have in your school's RTI process?

a. Can you give me an example of how you carried out that responsibility?

If the participant has already described some of the responsibilities in response to Q1, then ask:

You discussed some of your responsibilities already, but can you describe any other responsibilities you usually have in the RTI process?

*Follow-up Question. If the participant does not describe **assessment and data** to Q2 then ask:*

Do you use assessment and data regularly with the RTI framework?

If yes, can you give an example?

If no, why do you not use assessment and data on a regular basis?

*Follow-up Question. If the participant does not describe **instruction** to Q2 then ask:*

Does assessment and data impact your instruction? If yes, how so?

3. As a teacher, who do you think the RTI framework supports?
 - a. How do you support the needs of those students?

Follow-up Questions. If the participant only describes one group of students in the answer to Q3 then ask:

Why do you think RTI supports those students?

Why does RTI not support other groups of students?

4. When you support these students, who do you collaborate with regularly?
 - a. How do you collaborate with other staff members regularly? For example, do you meet individually, as a team, weekly, every quarter?

Follow-up Question. If the participant does not describe the individuals bolded below then ask:

Do you collaborate with the **interventionists** on a regular basis to support these students? Why or why not?

Do you collaborate with **your grade level teams**, on a regular basis to support these students? Why or why not?

Do you collaborate with the **teachers outside your grade level** on a regular basis to support these students? Why or why not?

Do you collaborate with **an instructional coach** on a regular basis to support these students? Why or why not?

Do you collaborate with the **administrators** on a regular basis to support these students? Why or why not?

Do you collaborate with the **counselor** on a regular basis to support these students? Why or why not?

Do you collaborate with the **social worker** on a regular basis to support these students? Why or why not?

b. Why do you collaborate with those staff members on a regular basis?

Interventionist Interview Questions

Central Research Question: What is the systemic view of the RTI process?

RQ1. What are interventionists' perceptions about their role in the RTI process?

1. As an interventionist, what kind of role or part do you usually play in your school's RTI process?

If the participant needs an example of roles state:

For example, Tier 3 reading or math teacher, data team member, or support general classroom instruction.

a. Can you give an example of what you did in that role?

*Follow-up Question. If the participant does not describe **tiered instruction** (i.e., **Tier 1, Tier 2, Tier 3**) to Q1 then ask:*

How do you use tiered instruction, Tier 1, Tier 2, Tier 3, regularly in your role in the RTI process?

*Follow-up Question. If the participant does not describe **research-based instruction** to Q1 then ask:*

As an interventionist, how do you use research-based instruction regularly in your role?

RQ2. What are interventionists' perceptions about their responsibilities in the RTI process?

2. As an interventionist, what kinds of responsibilities do you usually have in your school's RTI process?

a. Can you give me an example of how you carried out that responsibility?

If the participant has already described some of the responsibilities in response to Q1, then ask:

You discussed some of your responsibilities already, but can you describe any other responsibilities you usually have in the RTI process?

*Follow-up Question. If the participant does not describe **assessment and data** to Q1, then ask:*

Do you use assessment and data regularly with the RTI framework?

If yes, can you give an example?

If no, why do you not use assessment and data on a regular basis?

*Follow-up Question. If the participant does not describe **instruction** to Q2 then ask:*

Does assessment and data impact your instruction? If yes, how so?

3. As an interventionist, who do you think the RTI framework supports?

a. How do you support the needs of those students?

Follow-up Question. If the participant only describes one group of students in the answer to Q3 then ask:

Why do you think RTI supports those students?

Why does RTI not support other groups of students?

4. When you support these students, who do you collaborate with regularly?
 - a. How do you collaborate with other staff members regularly? For example, do you meet individually, as a team, weekly, every quarter?

Follow-up Question. If the participant does not describe the individuals bolded below then ask:

Do you collaborate with **teachers** on a regular basis to support these students? Why or why not?

Do you collaborate with the **administrators** on a regular basis to support these students? Why or why not?

Do you collaborate with the **counselor** on a regular basis to support these students? Why or why not?

Do you collaborate with the **social worker** on a regular basis to support these students? Why or why not?

Do you collaborate with **grade level teams**, on a regular basis to support these students? Why or why not?

Do you collaborate with **vertical teams** on a regular basis to support these students? Why or why not?

Closing Statement

This concludes our interview. You will be given the opportunity to review your interview transcript in two weeks to ensure your responses accurately describe your perceptions. Thank you for taking the time to help me explore a systemic view of RTI.

Appendix L. Administrator Interview Protocol

Opening Statement

Thank you for participating in a research study exploring the systemic view of the RTI process. The interview session will take approximately 20-25-minutes. The session will be video recorded, and the contents will only be accessible to myself and my research committee.

You will be assigned a pseudonym. There will be no identifiable information used within this study. Please speak candidly about your experiences. You may decline to answer any question at any time. Following the interview, you will be given the opportunity to review your responses. You may make any changes to your responses if you feel your perceptions are not accurately represented. You may also discontinue your participation in the study for any reason at any time.

If you wish to no longer participate in the study at any time, I will not use any portion of your interview session within the study. Do you have any questions or concerns before we begin?

Administrators Interview Questions

Central Research Question: What is the systemic view of the RTI process?

RQ5. What are administrators' understandings of the entire RTI process?

1. As an administrator, how would you describe the role of a teacher in the RTI process?
 - a. Can you give examples of how a teacher performed that role?
2. As an administrator, how would you describe the responsibilities of a teacher in the RTI process?
 - a. Can you give me an example of how a teacher carried out that responsibility?

If the participant has already described some of the responsibilities in response to Q1, then ask:

You discussed some of the responsibilities of a teacher already, but can you describe any other responsibilities a teacher has in the RTI process?

Follow-up Questions. If the participant does not describe the topics bolded below in Q2 then ask:

How should teachers regularly use **tiered instruction** in the RTI process?

How should teachers regularly use **data and assessment** in the RTI process?

How should teachers regularly use **quality instruction** in the RTI process?

3. As an administrator, how would you describe the role of an interventionist in the RTI process?
 - a. Can you give examples of how an interventionist performed that role?
4. As an administrator, how would you describe the responsibilities of an interventionist in the RTI process?
 - a. Can you give me an example of how an interventionist carried out that responsibility?

If the participant has already described some of the responsibilities in response to Q1, then ask:

You discussed some of the responsibilities of an interventionist already, but can you describe any other responsibilities an interventionist has in the RTI process?

Follow-up Questions. If the participant does not describe the topics bolded below in Q4 then ask:

How should interventionists regularly use **tiered instruction** in the RTI process?

How should interventionists regularly use **data and assessment** in the RTI process?

How should interventionists regularly use **quality instruction** in the RTI process?

5. As an administrator, how would you describe your role or part in the RTI process?
 - a. Can you give an example of what you did in that role?
6. As an administrator, what kinds of responsibilities do you usually have in your school's RTI process?
 - a. Can you give me an example of how you carried out that responsibility?
7. As an administrator, who do you think the RTI framework should support?
 - a. How are the needs of those students met?

Follow-up Question. If the participant only describes one group of students in the answer to Q3 then ask:

Why do you think RTI supports those students?

Why does RTI not support other groups of students?

8. As an administrator, what are your perceptions on the impact school culture can have on the RTI process?
 - a. Do you feel your school culture supports the RTI framework?

- i. *If yes*, can you give examples of ways you support RTI with your school culture? *If no*, why not?
- b. Does your school culture support regular collaboration among staff members in the RTI process? Why or why not?
 - i. Who collaborates regularly to support students through the RTI process?

Closing Statement

This concludes our interview. You will be given the opportunity to review your interview transcript in two weeks to ensure your responses accurately describe your perceptions. Thank you for taking the time to help me explore a systemic view of RTI.

Appendix M. Application to Conduct Research for Baker University



IRB Request

Date 10/20/20

IRB Protocol Number _____ (IRB use only)

I. Research Investigator(s) (students must list faculty sponsor)

Department(s) Graduate Ed

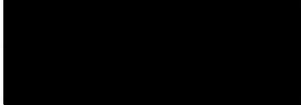
Name	Signature	
1. <u>Jessica Robinson</u>	 <small>Digitally signed by Jessica Robinson Date: 2020.10.28 10:24:52 -05'00'</small>	Principal Investigator
2. <u>Dr. James Robins</u>		<input type="checkbox"/> Check if faculty sponsor
3. <u>Dr. Li Chen-Bouck</u>	 <small>Li Chen-Bouck 2020.10.27 14:43:26 -05'00'</small>	<input type="checkbox"/> Check if faculty sponsor
4. _____		<input type="checkbox"/> Check if faculty sponsor

Principal investigator contact information

Note: When submitting your finalized, signed form to the IRB, please ensure that you cc all investigators and faculty sponsors using their official Baker University (or respective organization's) email addresses.

Phone 

Email JessicaAKukal@stu.bakeru.edu

Address 

Faculty sponsor contact information

Phone 

Email jrobins@bakeru.edu

Expected Category of Review: Exempt Expedited Full Renewal

II. Protocol Title

A Systemic View of The Roles and Responsibilities in the RTI Framework

III. Summary:

The following questions must be answered. Be specific about exactly what participants will experience and about the protections that have been included to safeguard participants from harm.

A. In a sentence or two, please describe the background and purpose of the research.

The main purpose of this study is to describe systemic tiered RTI interventions by exploring the perceptions of teachers and interventionists on their individual roles and responsibilities in the RTI process for providing reading and/or math interventions to students. The understandings of administrators on the roles of teachers, interventionists and their own roles in the RTI framework will also be explored to gain a systemic view of the RTI process. The subjects of the study will be from three schools in an affluent suburban district that implement the RTI framework

B. Briefly describe each condition, manipulation, or archival data set to be included within the study.

There is no archival data involved in the study. There are no manipulations involved in the study. The condition of the study will be voluntary individual interviews.

IV. Protocol Details

A. What measures or observations will be taken in the study? If any questionnaire or other instruments are used, provide a brief description and attach a copy.

Individual video interviews will be held with a minimum of 6 teachers, 6 interventionists and 6 administrators. All participants will be volunteers. Interviews will follow an [interview protocol](#) and a prescribed set of [questions](#) (attached). Subjects will be asked to describe their roles and responsibilities in the RTI process including how data, assessment, quality instruction, collaboration and school culture impacts student support within the framework.

B. Will the subjects encounter the risk of psychological, social, physical, or legal risk? If so, please describe the nature of the risk and any measures designed to mitigate that risk.

The subjects of the study will not encounter psychological, social, physical or legal risk. Prior to conducting interviews with subjects, the researcher will hold mock interviews in an effort to maximize the amenity of the participants.

C. Will any stress to subjects be involved? If so, please describe.

Every attempt will be made to minimize the level of stress to the participants and maintain confidentiality throughout the duration of the study. All participants will be given a pseudonym and will have the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any point in time.

D. Will the subjects be deceived or misled in any way? If so, include an outline or script of the debriefing.

The subjects of the study will not be misled in any way. Subjects will have the opportunity for a member check to review their interview responses and make changes to the interview transcript if they believe there is incorrect information present.

E. Will there be a request for information which subjects might consider to be personal or sensitive? If so, please include a description.

The subjects will not be asked to reveal any personal or sensitive information. An [interview script](#) will be followed throughout the duration of the interview. The interview script has been reviewed by an expert panel and will be tested through mock interviews. Every attempt has been made to remove discomfort for the subjects.

F. Will the subjects be presented with materials which might be considered to be offensive, threatening, or degrading? If so, please describe.

The subjects will not be presented with materials which might be considered offensive, threatening or degrading.

G. Approximately how much time will be demanded of each subject?

Subjects will participate in one interview lasting from 30 minutes to 45 minutes. They will also have the opportunity to perform a 15 minute to 30 minute member check following their interview.

H. Who will be the subjects in this study? How will they be solicited or contacted? Provide an outline or script of the information which will be provided to subjects prior to their volunteering to participate. Include a copy of any written solicitation as well as an outline of any oral solicitation.

The subjects of the study will be teachers, interventionists and administrators from one district.

The procedure for participant selection for administrators will be purposeful sampling from three schools in the district. The administrators will be contacted by email with [an invitation](#) to participate in the study (attached).

The interventionists will be selected through purposeful criterion sampling. Interventionists must meet the criteria +

I. What steps will be taken to insure that each subject's participation is voluntary? What if any inducements will be offered to the subjects for their participation?

Subjects will be invited to participate in the study through email. Only those who express an interest will be contacted by the researchers. Participating in the study will not be a condition of employment or a requirement made by a superior. All subjects will agree to the interview protocol and have the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time. No inducements will be offered for participation.

J. How will you insure that the subjects give their consent prior to participating? Will a written consent form be used? If so, include the form. If not, explain why not.

A written consent form will be given to subjects prior to participating in interviews. Subjects will sign the consent form before proceeding to interviews. An interview protocol will be stated at the start of each interview. Subjects will be given the opportunity to ask questions, perform a member check on their interview transcripts and withdraw from the study.

K. Will any aspect of the data be made a part of any permanent record that can be identified with the subject? If so, please explain the necessity.

No aspect of the data will be made a part of any permanent record that can be identified with the subject. Confidentiality of the subjects will be maintained with the use of pseudonyms throughout the duration of the study.

L. Will the fact that a subject did or did not participate in a specific experiment or study be made part of any permanent record available to a supervisor, teacher, or employer? If so, explain.

Participation or lack of participation in the study will be not made a part of any permanent record available to the supervisor, teacher or employer.

M. What steps will be taken to insure the confidentiality of the data? Where will it be stored? How long will it be stored? What will be done with the data after the study is completed?

The data will be stored on the researcher's computer and will be password protected. The data will only be available to the researcher's dissertation defense committee. The data will be deleted after 5 years.

N. If there are any risks involved in the study, are there any offsetting benefits that might accrue to either the subjects or society?

There are no risks involved in the study or offsetting benefits that might accrue to either the subjects or society.

O. Will any data from files or archival data be used? If so, please describe.

There will be no data from files or archival data used.

Appendix N. Research Approval Letter for Baker University



Baker University Institutional Review Board

November 6th, 2020

Dear Jessica Kukal and Jim Robins,

The Baker University IRB has reviewed your renewal application for project #BU2018-34 and approved it under Full Status Review. Your project now has IRB number #BU2020-38. As described, the project complies with all the requirements and policies established by the University for protection of animal subjects in research. Unless renewed, approval lapses one year after approval date.

Please be aware of the following:

1. Any significant change in the research protocol as described should be reviewed by this Committee prior to altering the project.
2. Notify the IRB about any new investigators not named in original application.
3. When signed consent documents are required, the primary investigator must retain the signed consent documents of the research activity.
4. If this is a funded project, keep a copy of this approval letter with your proposal/grant file.
5. If the results of the research are used to prepare papers for publication or oral presentation at professional conferences, manuscripts or abstracts are requested for IRB as part of the project record.

Please inform this Committee or myself when this project is terminated or completed. As noted above, you must also provide IRB with an annual status report and receive approval for maintaining your status. If you have any questions, please contact me at npoell@bakeru.edu or 785.594.4582.

Sincerely,

Nathan Poell, MLS
Chair, Baker University IRB

Baker University IRB Committee
Sara Crump, PhD
Nick Harris
Christa Manson, PhD
Susan Rogers, PhD

Appendix O. Consent to Participate

Research Title: A Systemic View of The Roles and Responsibilities in the RTI Framework

Researcher: Jessica Kukal Robinson

Advisor: Dr. James Robins
 School of Education
 Baker University
 8001 College Blvd.
 Overland Park, KS 66210
jrobins@bakeru.edu

My name is Jessica Robinson, and I am a doctoral student at Baker University. I am conducting research on a systemic view of RTI. I am interviewing teachers, interventionists, and administrators and their perceptions on the roles and responsibilities in the RTI process.

You will be asked 4-10 questions about your perceptions on the RTI process including but not limited to your role and responsibilities with RTI, how you use data, assessments, quality instruction, and collaboration to support students. You may decline to answer any question at any time. You may also discontinue your participation in the study for any reason at any time.

All personally identifiable information will be kept confidential. You will be given a pseudonym for the purpose of the study. Interview transcripts will be password protected and only my designated researcher advisor and analyst will have access to the raw data. You will have the opportunity to perform a member check in which you will be able to review your interview transcript to ensure your data accurately describes your perceptions.

Consent to Participate:

I understand that my participation in this research study is completely voluntary. I also understand that I am able to discontinue my participation within this study at any time for any reason. I understand that the principal researcher can be contacted at JessicaAKukal@stu.bakeru.edu should I have any questions or wish to discontinue my participation.

I have read and understand the above statement. By signing, I agree to participate in the research study. The Baker University Institutional Review Board approved this study on November 6, 2020 and will expire on November 6, 2021 unless renewal is obtained by the review board.

Participant Signature _____ **Date** _____