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implementation at two elementary school in Southern California**

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Pepperdine University
Graduate School of Education and Psychology

SYSTEMS CHANGE: A STUDY OF RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION MODEL
IMPLEMENTATION AT TWO ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS
IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

by

Nancy Teola Barker

September 2011

Linda Purrington, Ed.D.—Dissertation Chairperson

This dissertation, written by

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under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my three sons. You have been my inspiration from the day you were born. Tyson, your passion for knowledge and wanting to make this world a better place was a constant reminder of why I began this journey in the first place. Daniel, your belief that anything is possible and dreams do come true inspired me to keep believing in myself and others. Colin, your quiet strength and thoughtful mind reminded me that sometimes we need to dig deeper to find the true meaning and understanding of what is in front of us.

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VITA

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative comparative study examined three core components of RtI² implementation at two purposefully selected elementary schools in one county in Southern California. The researcher interviewed principals, teachers, and support staff regarding leadership attributes, skills and behaviors perceived as critical, professional development opportunities needed for, and the new roles for teachers and support staff in the implementation of the RtI² model at their particular site.

The interviews revealed that the most critical behavior was a leader's knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Five additional leadership behaviors were identified to a lesser degree. Four of these behaviors were identified as "second-order" leadership behaviors that promote change. The fifth leadership behavior identified, but not considered a "second-order" change behavior, was the ability of the leader to use resources effectively. Prior and ongoing professional development and collaboration provide further support while maintaining the integrity of the implementation. Many staff members reported that their roles and responsibilities have changed with the implementation of RtI².

The study concluded that site leaders must be knowledgeable in curriculum, instruction, and assessment as well as leadership practices that promote change efforts. Professional development is necessary for the initial and continuous implementation of RtI² reform efforts. Collaboration through teams is critical to ensure integrity of implementation and to monitor student learning. New and expanding roles for all staff members will continue to grow and redefine over the course of RtI² implementation.

Resources, including staffing and release time, must be made available or adjusted for initial and continuous implementation of RtI².

The researcher recommends that site leaders have extensive knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment as they provide insights and resources to collaborative teams. Leadership development models should include leadership practices in leading change efforts. Professional development opportunities should include RtI² practices and procedures as well as instructional strategies for all learners. In order to ensure collaboration, school districts may need to reduce caseloads allowing support staff to collaborate more often with general education teachers. Schools and districts must also reallocate resources to provide the necessary support for additional staffing and release time for staff collaboration.

Chapter 1

The Problem

Public education has been under close scrutiny for the last several years. Reform efforts have focused on providing more qualified teachers in classrooms, as well as holding school districts accountable for meeting the needs of all children. Federal legislation has established outcomes, in addition to expected yearly progress. However, as each student is different, so is the structure of the organization in which they learn. As some schools are experiencing success with systematic models of reform, one may wonder what structures enable these schools to be successful, while others may fail.

A large-scale reform effort known as Response to Intervention (RTI) is becoming the focus of reform efforts in school districts across the nation in an effort to ensure that all students are making adequate academic progress. As RTI is a model rather than a specific program, districts are finding it difficult to implement the model with integrity at all school sites. Literature on successful school reform efforts has identified leadership, professional development, and the efficient use of human resources as critical to the successful implementation of change initiatives. However, in regards to the implementation of RTI, the model varies depending on the school site. In examining the attributes and skills of site leaders, the content and context of professional development, and how roles are re-defined to support reform efforts, educators can better understand how these entities inform a foundation for RTI-related change.

Background

Public Law 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children's Act, was signed into legislation in 1975. The purpose of this legislation was to provide "equal

access” to public education for all students with handicaps. The first area of focus was to identify students with disabilities. The second focus was to develop procedural safeguards. Parental consent forms, referral forms, placement permissions, and Individual Educational Program (IEPs) were thus developed. Over the next 25-30 years, teachers’, principals’, and special educators’ priorities were to identify and place those students who qualified for special education services. However, very little attention was given to student outcomes in special education programs. Also, focusing efforts on identifying students with a specific learning disability had an impact on general education programs. Although students with specific learning disabilities were identified as having difficulty learning in the general education classroom, they received the same curriculum and instructional strategies as students without specific learning disabilities. As these students made very little growth, general education teachers started to question their own ability to teach these children and referred them to special education services.

Due to the increased enrollment of students qualifying for special education and the lack of monitoring of student outcomes, national reform efforts began to focus on general education. Public education was in need of a system that monitored a student’s response to research-based interventions prior to referral for special education services. In 2004, Congress reauthorized the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA), which specified the changes in identification practices for student eligibility for special education services and placement. Prior to the reauthorization, eligibility was determined by a “discrepancy model.” The discrepancy model compared a student’s ability or intelligence to his/her level of achievement. A discrepancy occurred when a student was not achieving at the level that he/she was capable of achieving. The

reauthorization of IDEIA allowed for eligibility based on a student's response or lack of response to research-based interventions as an alternative means of identifying a learning disability. This model, known as RTI, provides services to students as early as possible. "In determining whether a child has a specific learning disability, a local educational agency may use a process that determines if the child responds to scientific, research-based intervention as a part of the evaluation procedures" (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act [IDEIA], 2004, Sec. 614.b.6.B).

RTI has emerged as a service delivery model that provides high quality instruction and intervention matched to the needs of the student. The RTI model includes frequent monitoring of student outcomes, uses learning rate and level of performance as a source of information to determine eligibility for specific learning disorders, and guides decisions about intensity of services based on a student's response to instruction and intervention across multiple tiers of support (Batsche et al., 2006). Several large-scale implementation models have utilized many of the principles of RTI. These models incorporate a tiered model of support in which teachers work with specialists to identify the most appropriate interventions. Several of these large-scale models have been successful in reducing the number of students referred to or placed in special education (Burns & Ysseldyke, 2005), as well as reducing the number of minority students identified with learning disabilities (Marston, Muyskens, Lau, & Canter, 2003).

The California Department of Education (CDE, 2008a) expanded the definition of RTI to Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI²) "to communicate the full spectrum of services from the general education class to supplemental or intensive instruction to meet the academic or behavioral needs of the student" (para. 1). In addition to the

expanded definition of a RTI model, the CDE outlined the core principles and components of an RtI² model (CDE, 2008a, 2009). According to the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE), “large-scale implementation of any reform effort requires an understanding of the core principles that guide the practice as well as the core components that define the practice” (Batsche et al., 2006, p. 19). The core principles of RtI² are as follows:

1. All children can learn when provided an effective instructional environment.
2. An effective instructional environment utilizes research-based, scientifically validated instruction/interventions.
3. Assessments are used for the purpose of screening, monitoring, and diagnosing individual student needs.
4. Early intervention ensures that students are provided support before students get too far behind their peers.
5. A multi-tiered approach allows for more intensive instruction based on student needs.
6. Student progress is routinely monitored and informs instruction.
7. Data from multiple sources are used to make decisions regarding student learning (CDE, 2008a, 2009).

The CDE (2009) acknowledges that there are multiple ways to implement RTI, however, RtI² is generally viewed as a three-tier approach that uses research-based instruction and interventions. Services may be intensified based on individual student needs. In Tier I, the focus is on the general education classroom. All students receive a research-based, scientifically validated curriculum. In Tier II, students who are not

responding to the targeted instruction provided in Tier I receive supplemental instruction in addition to the core instruction in Tier I. Students who fail to demonstrate substantial progress may be considered for more intensive interventions in Tier III. In Tier III, students receive more intensive interventions that may include more individualized attention, an increase in the number of intervention times per week, or a longer period of time for intervention. Interventions in both Tier II and Tier III depend on the school site resources and decisions made by the school staff.

As the three tiers provide the framework for RtI², CDE (2009) specifies the core components of RtI². The following core components are critical to the full implementation of a strong RtI² process:

1. High-quality classroom instruction
2. Research-based instruction
3. Universal screening
4. Continuous classroom progress monitoring
5. Research-based interventions
6. Progress monitoring during instruction and interventions
7. Fidelity of program implementation
8. Staff development and collaboration
9. Parent involvement
10. Specific learning disability determination

CDE (2009) emphasizes that implementation of RtI² requires that all staff members work together to provide a comprehensive program that benefits all students. CDE identified three critical elements necessary for implementation of an RtI² approach:

(a) strong leadership focused on RtI², (b) professional development opportunities targeting the core principles and core components of RtI² for all school staff, and (c) the development of new and expanding roles for all school staff in the implementation of RtI².

Overall, the implementation of large-scale efforts has redefined the manner in which schools utilize and implement support services (Ikeda & Gustafson, 2002). Although these models incorporate many of the principles of RTI, their results vary because the outcome depends on the integrity and fidelity of the implementation, types of interventions, allocation of resources, and types of professional development (Stepanek & Peixotto, 2009). If RTI is to be viewed as a valid and scientifically based method of identification, further studies on specific elements of implementation need to be conducted (Fuchs, Mock, Morgan & Young, 2003). The study of site leadership, the context in which professional development is delivered and sustained, and the utilization of support provided through new roles of RTI will be critical in the implementation of RTI, not only in California schools, but also in schools across the country.

According to the *National Implementation of Response to Intervention Research Summary*, the national RTI movement is still in the beginning stages even 3 years after the reauthorization of IDEIA and the addition of language to include RTI as an alternative means for identification and eligibility (Hoover, Baca, Wexler-Love, Saenz, 2008). Indeed, implementing any new initiative on a large scale tends to be difficult (Cohen, Fuhrman, & Mosher, 2007). Leadership is cited as one of the factors necessary for any large-scale reform effort, as noted by the CDE (2008a):

Leadership is critical to the implementation of RtI². To be effective, RtI² must harness and coordinate the full resources of the school, district, and community.

Administrators and their leadership teams, in collaboration with all teachers, have central roles in the planning, implementation, and successful day-to-day use of the RtI² approach. (para. 4)

Site leaders will be responsible for not only initiating but also sustaining change that will ensure the integrity of the RtI² process. The understanding of “change leadership” will be necessary as principals implement changes that require general education teachers and support staff to work together to ensure success for all students.

In addition to leadership, structures that support the implementation of school-wide reform are also necessary. Research on the examination of factors necessary for developing and sustaining RTI is needed to assist educators as they consider adoption of this approach. Although professional development training and ongoing support are critical to the implementation of any new initiative, limited professional training has been available for the implementation of RTI for teachers as well as site principals. As Tier I of the RTI model evaluates the effectiveness of instruction in the general education setting, many teachers feel inadequate in providing the adaptations necessary to support students who are performing significantly below their peers.

Some students who need additional support and are eligible for special education are neither being identified nor receiving services that accommodate their learning disabilities. Parents who suspect that their child may have a specific learning disability are often asked to wait until their child participates in leveled tiers of intervention in order to determine response or lack of response to the intervention. States and districts are holding schools more accountable in providing research-based programs and requiring the use of RTI methods to reduce the achievement gap for students performing

significantly below grade level expectations as well the use of RTI as a means of identification for specific learning disabilities.

RTI is a multi-tier service delivery model that requires special education and general education teachers to collaborate and develop interventions based on student needs (VanDerHeyden, Witt, & Barnett, 2005). Therefore, fidelity to the core program and integrity of the implementation is crucial to successful implementation (Hoover et al., 2008). The integrity of the implementation at district and school levels will play a major role in implementation on a national level (Jimerson, Burns, & VanDerHeyden, 2007). Although RTI may be a viable means of identifying students early and providing intervention support prior to eligibility for special education services, research is needed to evaluate all aspects of this model. This is true in California and particularly in Southern California.

Problem

Two elementary schools in one county in Southern California have been implementing RtI² for 3 years. Both schools have utilized universal screening methods to identify students who are not achieving grade level proficiency in language arts. In addition, both schools have implemented intervention programs to address the needs of students not achieving grade level proficiency in language arts. However, what has not been studied relative to RTI implementation at these two schools is the understanding and relationship of leadership, ongoing professional development, and the change in roles and responsibilities of staff members. Therefore, there is a need to investigate what leadership attributes and behaviors have helped move implementation efforts forward,

what professional development practices have assisted in the implementation of RTI, and how the implementation of RTI has changed staff roles and responsibilities.

Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative case study is threefold: (a) to identify the leadership attributes and skills of site principals that contribute to the implementation of RtI², (b) to examine professional development practices that contribute to the implementation of RtI², and (c) to examine how the new roles of general education teachers, special education teachers, and support staff (psychologists, speech pathologists) have contributed to the implementation of RtI² at two elementary schools in one county in Southern California.

Research Question

The following research question guided this study: What do principals, teachers, and support staff at two elementary schools in one county in Southern California perceive as contributing to the implementation of RtI² in regards to the following: (a) leadership attributes, skills, and practices; (b) professional development practices; and (c) new roles of general education teachers, special education teachers, and support staff (psychologists, speech pathologists, and any additional staff utilized for RtI² implementation)?

Importance of the Study

This research topic is not only important, but also timely as national and state efforts are being directed to school-wide reform efforts and expectations exist for all students to reach grade level proficiency in language arts and mathematics by 2012. Schools are not adequately meeting the needs of all students, specifically students with

disabilities, as reported in findings from the President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education (2002). In order to close the achievement gap for students with disabilities as well as reduce the number of minority students identified with specific learning disabilities, educators need to ensure that all students are provided with an opportunity to learn. One of the strongest factors linked to student achievement is the opportunity to learn (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). The RTI model supports this viewpoint by ensuring that all students have opportunities to learn with increased levels of support based on their needs. RTI provides frequent monitoring of student progress and adjustments based on a student's response.

As districts and schools across the nation are implementing RTI to provide support for students struggling academically and behaviorally as well as utilizing RTI as a means for identification of students with specific learning disabilities, principal's attributes and skills will be required to help the organization make the changes needed to implement this model and to implement it well in diverse settings. In addition, professional development regarding the structure of tiers, layers of support, research-based programs, progress monitoring, and screening practices are needed to implement in the classroom as well as school-wide. Schools will need to reallocate their existing resources to provide support for consultation, collaboration, and intervention programs.

Results of the study may help inform leadership training programs focusing on components of RtI² structures and leadership behaviors that move implementation forward. This study will also contribute to the existing body of literature on reform efforts and the efficacy of RtI² models at elementary schools.

Delimitations

This study was delimited to two elementary schools in one county in southern California that were recommended by members of the county RtI² Task Force and implemented RtI² for a minimum of 3 years. Additional criterion included participation in a state pilot program for the identification of students with specific learning disabilities or an increase in Academic Performance Index. Focus groups participating in study interviews were delimited to site principals, psychologists, speech pathologists, special education teachers, and general education teachers representing primary grade levels (kindergarten, first, second grade) and upper grade levels (third, fourth, fifth grade).

Limitations

One limitation to this study is the very nature of the data collection. As this study will involve a qualitative case study including interviews, interview data may involve interviewer bias in interpreting the respondents' answers. The researcher used member checking to ensure trustworthiness and to minimize researcher bias. The interview data and themes were reviewed by a professional colleague with expertise on school reform efforts and qualitative research methods to prevent researcher bias and increase research credibility.

Another limitation is the size of the sample in this study. This study was delimited to two elementary schools in one county in southern California, which in turn limits the ability to generalize results to other settings and populations.

Assumptions

This study used a qualitative case study methodology, which included interviews with site principals, teachers, and support personnel. The researcher assumed that participants were honest and knowledgeable about the process and procedures at the site.

Operational Definitions of Variables and Conceptual Definitions of Key Terms

Implementation: For the purpose of this study implementation will be defined as the use of an innovation and what it looks like in practice (Fullan & Pomfret, 1977).

Leadership attributes and skills: For the purpose of this study leadership attributes will be defined as the innate qualities that a leader brings to the position. Leadership skills will be defined as the essential competencies that a leader needs in order to be effective. The 21 leadership responsibilities of effective school leaders are found in *School leadership that works: From research to results* by Marzano et al. (2005). Effective leaders possess attributes and skills that enable them to effectively lead schools as well as lead major changes.

New staff roles: For the purpose of this study factors associated with the re-defining of staff roles will include: (a) the frequency of use of support staff (psychologists, speech pathologists, special education teachers, and any other specialists the school has hired for purposes of RTI implementation); and (b) types of support that were made available by support staff.

Professional development activities: Professional development is defined as any activity that is intended to improve or maintain attitudes, skills, knowledge, or performance of teachers and support personnel in current or future roles (Seyfarth, 2008). For the purpose of this study, factors associated with professional development will

include amount of release time for planning and collaboration, amount and type of consultation support from school personnel, and number and types of professional development opportunities in regards to the following: curriculum and instructional practices, universal screening practices, classroom monitoring practices, and alignment of research-based intervention methods.

Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI²): For the purpose of this study, RtI² will refer to the model of RTI specifically used in the state of California.

Response to Intervention (RTI): For the purpose of this study, RTI will be defined as follows:

Response to intervention integrates assessment and intervention within a multi-level prevention system to maximize student achievement and reduce behavior problems. With RTI, schools identify students at risk for poor learning outcomes, monitor student progress, provide evidence-based interventions and adjust the intensity and nature of those interventions depending on a student's responsiveness, and identify students with learning disabilities. (Batsche et al., 2006, p. 3)

RtI² implementation: For the purpose of this study, RtI² implementation will include: written documentation of multi-tier levels of support; researched-based intervention programs; consistent monitoring of student data; and delivery of more intensive services as needed.

Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. The first chapter provided a background and foundation for the study, offering a brief history of federal and state efforts to ensure that all students reach proficiency in language arts and mathematics. The emergence of a tiered model of support, known as RTI, was also discussed.

Chapter 2 provides a history of identification of students with disabilities and the rationale for alternative approaches to identification. A review of the research on large-scale reform efforts implementing RTI is discussed. Factors associated with large-scale reform efforts, including leadership, professional development, and the utilization of resources, specifically roles of teachers and support staff, are also discussed.

Chapter 3 outlines the methods used by the researcher in this study. This chapter includes the research questions, research design, discussion of human subjects, the procedures for data collection, and the instruments used in the study.

Chapter 4 reports the study's findings and identifies major themes that emerged from interviews with principals, support staff members, and teachers regarding leadership, professional development, and new staff roles in the implementation of RtI². Chapter 5, the final chapter, includes an interpretation of the findings, reports the conclusions drawn from the findings, and offers recommendations for policy and practice.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This chapter presents the review of the literature relevant to the identification and assessment of students with specific learning disabilities. The chapter begins with an introduction that presents the key concepts. This is followed by the literature on traditional methods of identification and then alternative methods, specifically, RTI, which is presented in detail. Then several large-scale implementation models are presented. California's Response to Intervention/Instruction, known as RtI², is defined with respect to CDE. Three key elements of RtI² implementation are discussed. The review then focuses on the literature on factors affecting systematic change efforts, specifically leadership, for which theories and theorists are presented. With this as background, the literature on school leadership and student achievement is discussed, with particular attention to Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning's balanced leadership framework, leadership as related to changes in school and RTI, and professional development as related to student achievement and RTI. The chapter concludes with a summary.

Introduction

The No Child Left Behind Act ([NCLB], 2008) mandated that, by the year 2014, all students would be proficient in language arts and mathematics. As a result of NCLB, educational reform efforts across the nation are focusing on improving the quality of educational practices for all students. In particular, districts and the schools within them started focusing their attention on subgroups that were failing academically, including minority students, English language learners, and students with disabilities, as evidenced

in consistently scoring below grade level. In an attempt to address the needs of students with disabilities, IDEIA (2004), a reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Educational Act, allowed for early intervention for students who were struggling academically and behaviorally. Additionally, under this act, students' lack of response to intervention could be used to determine eligibility for special education. This led the way to alternative approaches to identifying students with specific learning disabilities as well as offered a mechanism to provide a quality education for all students.

Traditional Methods of Identification of a Learning Disability

In an effort to ensure equal access to public education for all children, particularly students with handicaps, President Gerald Ford signed into law the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (Public Law 94-142). According to this act, identification of a learning disability was determined by the presence of “a severe discrepancy between achievement and intellectual ability” (U.S. Office of Education, 1977, p. G1082). For the next 30 years students were identified as having a learning disability if they showed a severe discrepancy between ability and achievement as well as a deficit in a psychological processing area that directly affected the ability to learn.

To determine ability to learn, in the 1980s, cognitive and neuropsychological assessments were developed. Several of these assessments also measure global intelligence (Hale, Kaufman, Naglieri, & Kavale, 2006). Researchers argued that a learning disability could be determined by examining cognitive processing strengths and deficits (Kavale, Kaufman, Naglier, & Hale, 2005). The notion of a discrepancy between ability or IQ and achievement formed the basis of the discrepancy model (Hale et al., 2006). For example, if a student demonstrated average intelligence yet performed 1-2

years below grade level in areas of achievement, a discrepancy would exist. Fletcher Coulter, Reschly, and Vaughn (2004) examined the reliability of identifying students with specific learning disabilities based on low reading achievement. Assessments were used to measure expected reading achievement as well as actual reading level. The 199 students were grouped based on ability, cognitive skills, language ability, and social/emotional developmental levels. Nine variables of cognitive and linguistic ability were identified that have shown a relationship with reading ability and disabilities. A multivariate profile analysis was used to determine whether the groups could be differentiated.

The results of the Fletcher et al.'s (2004) study indicated that there were no significant differences in terms of identification of a learning disability between children with impaired reading who met the ability-achievement discrepancy definition and children who met low reading achievement definition. The results thus indicated that the discrepancy model was not an accurate indicator of a specific learning disability. Fletcher et al. were able to demonstrate, however, that certain processing disorders were predictors of learning difficulties, such as the ability to distinguish between phonemes (sounds) in words.

Vellutino et al. (1996) conducted a longitudinal study evaluating the reading achievement of 1,407 children in kindergarten through grade 4. All students were administered a battery of psychological tests that evaluated cognitive abilities and reading skills, and two subgroups, poor and normal readers, were identified. The results of the study indicated that most students who were initially identified as poor readers were not “disabled” when provided small group intervention. Nevertheless, 12 out of 26 students

who received intensive support continued to score well below their peers. The results of this study indicate that small group instruction can be reasonably effective in determining which students can benefit from remedial effects and which cannot.

Francis, Shaywitz, Stuebing, Shaywitz, and Fletcher (1996) argue that children with learning disabilities have neuropsychological deficits rather than delays that prevent them from being able to learn. Francis, Fletcher, Stuebing, Lyon, and Shaywitz (2005) examined the validity of the discrepancy model in terms of identifying specific learning disabilities. Francis et al. (2005) found that by the time students who exhibited a discrepancy, such as two years behind their peers, and received remedial services, they were unable to catch up with their peers. They showed only minimal improvement and, thus, were kept in special education (Lyon, Fletcher, Shaywitz, Shaywitz, & Torgesen, 2001).

Donovan and Cross (2002) noted that students would fall further and further behind their peers as they waited to qualify for services. Students would generally fall two years behind their peers. The term “waiting to fail” has been used to describe an approach that identifies and provides support for students only after many years of failure. In addition to the “waiting to fail” requirement to receive services, minority students were being over-identified for specific learning disabilities, most likely as a result of factors such as lack of linguistic and cultural experiences rather than processing deficits. Donovan and Cross argue that the limited economic, cultural, and linguistic experiences of many minority students, rather than deficits in processing, may contribute to lack of reading achievement.

According to Fuchs, Fuchs, and Speece (2002), the identification process for a learning disability is more subjective than for other disabilities because, for a learning disability, there are no outward physical indicators. Identification also has been inconsistent largely due to the over-reliance on approaches that use the discrepancy between ability and achievement (Hale et al., 2006). Moreover, Francis et al. (2005) found that the results of the discrepancy approach were unstable over time. Data collected from the Connecticut Longitudinal Study demonstrated that 39% of children identified as having a learning disability in third grade changed group identification when tested again two years later. Thus, alternative identification methods have been sought.

Alternative Methods of Identification of a Learning Disability

As researchers became convinced that psychometric assessments were inadequate, alternative methods for assessing students with disabilities began to emerge (Francis et al., 2005). Identifying students early and providing intervention before they failed became known as the “treatment-oriented” approach. The treatment-oriented approach allowed teachers and support staff to monitor student learning as a basis for determining whether a treatment would be beneficial to the student (Fletcher et al., 2004). A treatment-oriented approach attempts to maximize learning effectiveness for all students in regular education and reserves judgment about special education until adaptations in the regular program are assessed and evidence supports the need for a special education program (Fuchs et al., 2002). This approach is based on the theory that a learning disability is characterized by a student’s lack of progress when provided treatment (Fuchs et al., 2002). As noted above, Vellutino et al. (1996) examined the effects of intervention treatment on poor achievers with and without learning disabilities

and found that students with learning disabilities were more resistant to intervention. The treatment-oriented approach proposed a “dual discrepancy,” defined as a student not only performing substantially below the level of peers but also demonstrating unresponsiveness to the instructional environment (Fuchs et al., 2002).

Research on alternative methods of identification (Bradley, Danielson, & Hallahan, 2002; Donovan & Cross, 2002; Lyon et al., 2001), as well as reports by the President’s Commission on Excellence in Special Education (2002), concluded that the discrepancy model is ineffective for identifying specific learning disabilities and suggested alternative methods. In this regard, VanDerHeyden et al. (2005) conducted a longitudinal study to examine students’ lack of response to an intervention as criterion for determining a specific learning disability. Participants included 182 students in grades 1 and 2, and students were screened using curriculum-based measures, state reading tests, and teacher identification. Decision rules were applied to screening data of select “at-risk” students. These students received standard interventions, totaling 5 to 9 sessions, and then all students were administered the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. In this way, VanDerHeyden et al. generated data used to determine the student’s intervention responsiveness.

The data indicated that, by the fourth intervention session, accurate decisions could be made about whether a student was likely to respond to intervention. A lack of response could then be used as a predictor of a deficit in processing and thus indicative of a specific learning disability. VanDerHeyden et al.’s (2005) findings support the President’s Commission on Excellence in Special Education’s (2002) recommendation for early identification and intervention through the use of research-based instruction and

RTI methods of screening, monitoring, and providing more intense intervention. The use of an RTI model is believed to simplify the assessment and identification process. The commission also placed emphasis on high academic standards for all students, accountability, yearly progress, teacher quality, and educational reforms based on scientifically rigorous research.

According to VanDerHeyden, Snyder, and Power (2006), the use of an RTI model enables teachers, psychologists, and administrators to identify students with learning disabilities by eliminating inadequate learning experiences as an explanation for lack of performance. Overall, RTI emerged as a process for identifying students with learning disabilities as well as a method of preventing long-term academic failure (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006).

The recommendations provided by the President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education (2002) became the driving force behind IDEIA, which specified changes in the identification practices for eligibility for special education services and placement. IDEIA (2004) allowed for a local educational agency to use a process that determines a student's lack of response to scientific, research-based interventions as an alternative means of identifying a learning disability. While IDEIA allows school personnel to use the RTI approach to identify students with learning disabilities, the RTI approach does not replace the discrepancy model of identification. Nevertheless, providing early intervention while monitoring a student's response, in addition to using cognitive methods to identify processing strengths and deficits, can enable accurate identification of children with learning disabilities (Hale et al., 2006).

RTI model. RTI is a treatment-oriented approach that integrates a continuum of programs and services for students experiencing academic and/or behavior difficulties (National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities [NJCLD], 2005). The RTI approach of Fuchs et al. (2002) consists of four phases of support for students who are falling academically behind their peers. The first phase involves assessment of the student's instructional environment to determine whether the environment is sufficiently meeting the student's needs. In the second phase, teachers and support staff identify areas of underperformance and monitor the student's rate of learning. The third phase includes evaluating and monitoring data to determine placement and services to support student learning. The final phase involves assessment for special education placement.

Additionally, Vaughn and Fuchs (2003) proposed a model that consists of three tiers. The first tier focuses on primary intervention in the general education program; the second tier involves interventions, consisting of intensive support based on increased time and low student-teacher ratio, for a fixed period of time; and the third tier concerns assessment for special education services.

Overall, the RTI approach includes scientific research-based instruction, the measurement of a student's response, or lack thereof, to instructional methods, and data to inform the decision making of the teachers, support staff, and administrator in regard more intensively remedial services (NJCLD, 2005). Although RTI is found in federal law as an alternative for identifying students with learning disabilities, many districts are uncertain about how to implement this practice. Consequently, a framework needed to be developed to help guide schools in developing and implementing an RTI approach (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). The RTI model is a treatment-oriented approach that integrates a

continuum of programs and services for students experiencing academic and/or behavior difficulties (NJCLD, 2005).

Large-Scale Implementation Models

Several large-scale implementation models utilize many of the principles of RTI. These include the Heartland Agency (Iowa) Model, Pennsylvania's Instructional Support Team Model, Minneapolis' Problem-Solving Model, and Ohio's Intervention-Based Assessment Model. In these models, teachers work with specialists to identify the most appropriate interventions.

Heartland Agency (Iowa) Model. The Heartland Model utilizes consultants who work directly with teachers to develop strategies in working with students who need additional support (Ikeda, Tilly, Stumme, Volmer, & Allison, 1996). The consultants may also work directly with students in the general educational setting. The foundation of this model includes the use of collaboration, problem-solving teams, systematic progress monitoring, and ongoing staff development. In this model, special education and general education teachers are taught to collaborate. Additionally, building assistance teams (BATs) are utilized to systematically intervene with all problems, and many of the problems are treated first in the general education setting. The model provides for the development of a plan that includes problem definition, solutions, and the evaluation of outcomes. The ongoing staff development focuses on collecting data and using it to identify problems and develop solutions.

Pennsylvania's Instructional Support Team Model. The Pennsylvania Instructional Support Team Model utilizes instructional support teams (ISTs) to guide pre-referral interventions (Kovaleski, Tucker, & Stevens, 1996). In this model,

consultants provide services that are focused on identifying the instructional needs of students rather than focusing on student deficits. Consultants provide support and problem-solving assistance for teachers, assist with identifying students who may require evaluation, as well as assist teachers in the classroom with students. Longitudinal data collected from the Pennsylvania Department of Education indicated that schools using the IST approach reduced special education referral rates by one-half to one-third of those of schools not using ISTs.

Minneapolis' Problem-Solving Model. The Minneapolis' Problem-Solving Model was implemented in the entire Minneapolis Public School System (MPSS) for over 10 years (Lau et al., 2006). This problem-solving model (PSM) expanded the role of the school psychologist as an instructional consultant as well as provided mental health services and acted as "change agents." PSM provides interventions and instructional modifications to support "at-risk" students, thereby reducing the need for special education. PSM uses an intervention plan that has a series of steps. The team defines and analyzes the problem, develops a hypothesis, and establishes appropriate interventions; monitors student progress on an ongoing basis and evaluates the effectiveness of the interventions; and, if needed, continues to make adjustments. Statewide data indicates that identification of students with specific learning disabilities has remained stable (7% for a 10-year period) despite an increase in the number of "at-risk" students.

Ohio's Intervention-Based Assessment Model. Intervention-based assessments (IBA) were used in a statewide sample of schools in Ohio (Burns & Ysseldyke, 2005). Multidisciplinary teams were used to identify interventions that would reduce the number

of students evaluated for special education. Although IBA addressed a large number of “at-risk” students as well as reduced the number of students eligible for special education, a number of factors negatively influenced implementation. McNamara and Hollinger (2003) determined that teacher resistance was due to lack of skill or knowledge; lack of resources to maintain interventions in the general education classroom; and the belief that special education would fix problems outside of the general education.

Large-scale models in general. Several of these large-scale models have been successful in reducing the number of students referred to or placed in special education (Burns & Ysseldyke, 2005) as well as reducing the number of minority students identified with learning disabilities (Marston et al., 2003). No empirical research to date has established the relationship between RTI and outcomes from these large-scale models perhaps because RTI is complex and involves more than a single activity but rather a series of interrelated procedures and decisions (Stepanek & Peixotto, 2009). Research has, however, focused on individual components of RTI rather than the entire process (VanDerHeyden, Wit, & Gilbertson, 2007).

Overall, the implementation of these large-scale efforts has redefined the manner in which schools utilize and implement support services (Ikeda & Gustafson, 2002). Although these models incorporate many of the principles of RTI, their results vary because the outcome is dependent on the integrity and fidelity of the implementation, types of interventions, allocation of resources, and types of professional development (Stepanek & Peixotto, 2009). If RTI is to be viewed as a valid and scientifically based method of identification, further studies on specific elements of implementation need to be conducted (Fuchs et al., 2003).

Implementation of RTI in California

According to a report issued by the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance in August 2008, California was in the early stages of RTI development and state officials were developing a working definition of the RTI process (Harr-Robins, Shambaugh, & Parrish, 2009). Although CDE did not mandate RTI, CDE provided training to schools through the general education improvement process. For example, the Riverside County Achievement Team (RCAT), developed in 1999, began to provide trainings “infused” with RTI in 2004. The trainings included components of RTI models, such as: (a) early screening; (b) identifying students at risk for reading failure; (c) using research-based programs; (d) monitoring student progress; and (e) referring students for further assessment and possible eligibility for specific learning disability if they did not respond to intervention. Implementation of RTI was monitored by looking at student outcomes, outcomes for students with disabilities, graduation rates, dropout rates, and parent participation.

In November 2008, the CDE expanded the notion of RTI to RtI². “RtI² is meant to communicate the full spectrum of instruction, from general core, to supplemental or intensive, to meet the academic and behavioral needs of students” (CDE, 2008, para. 1). California’s RtI² allows districts to use RTI as an alternative to the IQ-discrepancy model for determining specific learning disability. Expected outcomes for schools implementing RtI² include earlier support for students needing academic and behavioral interventions; a greater number of students making adequate yearly progress in reading; fewer student referrals for assessment; fewer minority students placed in special

education; and more accurate identification of students with specific learning disabilities (Elliot & Batsche, 2006).

In addition to the expanded definition of a RTI model, CDE outlined the core principles and core components of RtI² model (CDE, 2008a, 2009). According to NASDSE, “large-scale implementation of any reform effort requires an understanding of the core principles that guide the practice as well as the core components that define the practice” (Batsche et al., 2006, p. 19). The core principles that guide RTI are supported by research that demonstrates the effectiveness of RTI practices. The core principles developed by the NASDSE have been useful for developing policy for state level policy and implementation as well as the basis of the core principles of RtI² as outlined by the CDE (2009). The common principles of RtI² provide the framework to ensure that all children are provided with an effective instructional environment. For example, teaching staff determine the most appropriate instructional materials and strategies to ensure student learning.

In addition to the core principles identified by the NASDSE (Batsche et al., 2006) and CDE (2008a), NASDSE also included the use of a problem-solving method to make decisions with a multi-tier model as a core principle. According to the NASDSE, the problem-solving method requires addressing four interrelated questions, such as: identifying the problem; identifying why it is happening; identifying what can be done; and evaluating if the intervention worked. Although CDE does not include problem solving as a core principle, problem-solving logic is used in data-based decision making which both NASDSE and CDE identify as core principles. The use of a problem-solving method is not only a core RTI principle but also considered one of three essential

components for implementation of RTI (Batsche et al., 2006). The NASDSE also identifies multiple tiers of intervention service delivery and utilizing an integrated data collection/assessment system to inform decisions at each tier as essential to RTI implementation. The three essential components as described by the NASDSE are embedded in the core components of RtI². CDE (2009) describes RtI² as a

multistep process of providing high-quality, research-based instruction and interventions at varying levels of intensity for students who struggle with learning and behavior. The interventions are matched to student need, and progress is closely monitored at each level of intervention to make decisions about further instruction or interventions or both. (p. 1)

CDE provides a model of tiered support and identifies core components for RtI² implementation.

Tiered system of support. The CDE (2009) acknowledges that there are multiple ways to implement RTI; however, RtI² is “generally viewed as a three-tier approach that uses research-based instruction” and interventions. Services may be intensified based on individual student needs. In Tier I, the focus is on the general education classroom. All students receive a research-based, scientifically validated curriculum. Students are routinely monitored through the use of universal screening measures to determine each student’s level of proficiency in academic areas. Students who may not be performing as well as their peers may receive small group instruction and/or may be considered for more intensive interventions at Tier II.

In Tier II, students who are not responding to the targeted instruction provided in Tier I, receive supplemental instruction in addition to the core instruction in Tier I. The school team may utilize a problem-solving approach to develop a plan specifically for that a student who is not achieving proficiency. School teams may also use a standard

treatment protocol which provides interventions in a systematic manner with all students who have similar needs. The standard treatment approach utilizes interventions that are generally highly structured and are likely to producing positive results for most students. For example, students who are not achieving a determined benchmark may be recommended to participate in a research based intervention program for a period of time. Tier II is considered more strategic and targeted on short-term interventions. Students, who make desired growth, may be discontinued. Some students may show progress, however may still need additional support. Students who make little progress may be considered for more intensive interventions in Tier III.

Tier III provides interventions with increased intensity. In Tier III, students receive a greater degree of intensive interventions. These may include an increase in the number of times per week, longer period of time for intervention, or lower student-teacher ratio. Students in fourth grade and above may receive approved intervention programs in place of core curriculum as approved by the State Board of Education. Interventions in both Tier II and Tier III depend on the school site resources and decisions made by problem solving teams or standard treatment protocols.

As the three tiers provide the framework, CDE (2009) specifies the core components of RtI². CDE identified 10 core components that are critical to the full implementation of a strong RtI² process:

1. High-quality classroom instruction
2. Research-based instruction
3. Universal screening
4. Continuous classroom progress monitoring

5. Research-based interventions
6. Progress monitoring during instruction and interventions
7. Fidelity of program implementation
8. Staff development and collaboration
9. Parent involvement
10. Specific learning disability determination

Three Core Components of RtI² Implementation

CDE (2009) emphasizes that “a cohesive RtI² process integrates resources from general education, categorical programs, and special education into a comprehensive system of core instruction and interventions to benefit every student” (p. vi). The RtI² approach to instruction and intervention “requires school staff members to collaborate as a team to analyze data and target instruction based on student need” (CDE, 2009, p. vi). CDE identified three critical elements necessary for implementation of an RtI² approach, including strong leadership focused on RtI²; professional development opportunities targeting the core principles and core components of RtI² for all school staff; and the development of new and expanding roles for all school staff in the implementation of RtI².

Leadership and RtI². CDE (2008a) cites leadership as critical to the implementation of RtI². To be effective, principals will be responsible for developing site teams to interpret data and analyze how well students are responding to instruction and intervention. In addition, CDE cites that the site principal will take an active role in supporting the RtI² through providing the following: professional development opportunities; universal screening and frequent progress monitoring; and providing

support for assessment and instruction. Principals will also be responsible for ensuring that a process is in place to allocate staff resources to meet the needs of students. In addition, principals will need to ensure that all teachers are using research-based materials and are committed to “fidelity of core instruction.” The principal as well as the site leadership team will be responsible to developing and utilizing a protocol for the assessment of fidelity and integrity of the RTI process.

The site principal needs to ensure that adequate time is allocated for the planning, implementation, and review of RtI² process. Strong focused leadership will be critical in ensuring that the core principles and core components of RtI² are not only in place but embraced by the school community. CDE (2008a) cites leadership as critical to the implementation RtI² and outlines the responsibilities of the site principal in the process, such as providing professional development to meet the needs of staff in regards to beliefs, attitudes, and skills; however, the importance of “change leadership” in the context of school reform efforts is not only less clear but overlooked.

Professional development and RtI². CDE (2008a) states that successful implementation of RtI² depends on the ability of all school staff to use RtI² practices “reliably and with fidelity.” Successful implementation will depend on the quality of both the pre-service and in-service professional development models used to translate research into practice. In a tiered model, teachers should be using a variety of instructional strategies and progress monitor as part of their instructional planning. Professional development opportunities should be focused on ongoing assessments and identified student needs. Teachers will need to examine their own current practices and acquire new instructional strategies and practices to ensure “high quality” instruction. In

addition, professional development for all school staff need to focus on RtI² processes, procedures and practices. CDE (2008a) cites that the key aspects of RtI² professional development may include researched-based practices; targeted instruction based on student need; screening tools to identify students who may need additional support; progress-monitoring processes and procedures; intervention strategies and programs for students needing academic and/or behavior support; the use of problem-solving teams or standard treatment protocol methods to facilitate decisions based on data.

All support staff should have the opportunity to participate in professional development activities that are ongoing and job-embedded. CDE (2008a) outlines the content of professional development, such as the importance of universal screening tools for identifying students who need support; however, the context of *how* professional development occurs and becomes embedded in instructional practices is less clear.

Redefining staff roles in RtI² implementation. CDE (2008a) recognizes the all school staff members will play important roles in the implementation of RtI². RtI² requires a shift in how teachers and support staff conduct assessment and intervention practices for struggling students as well as students with disabilities. These new roles may include team leaders, data specialists, diagnosticians, and intervention specialist.

General education teachers. As schools implement RtI² principles and core components, general education teachers will be involved in supporting the learning for all students. Universal screening and progress monitoring will allow teachers to identify students who may need early intervention. Collaboration through site level teams will help to identify specific student needs using data to make decisions that guide instruction. Teams will use that data for strategic intervention student grouping. Teams will also

individual data as a measure of a student's pattern of response to those interventions. CDE (2008a) cites the role of general education teachers in RtI² is to provide a quality standards-based instruction program with fidelity and support for students at Tier I and Tier II utilizing core curriculum components and research-based supplemental materials based on student needs.

Special education teachers. Special education teachers have a background in working with students who may require support to be successful in the general education setting. RtI² allows special educators to work with colleagues and students in a variety of settings. Special educators will use their specialized knowledge and skills to help individualize instruction to meet the needs of students. As a provider of specialized instruction that supports standards-based instruction, CDE (2008a) cites the role of special education teachers in RtI² to include the following: provide standards-based instruction; participate and collaborate in site and grade level teams to help identify student needs and share progress monitoring data; provide consultation and intervention for students "at risk" in Tier I and Tier II; and communicate and collaborate with parents regarding student progress at each tier.

Speech-language pathologists. Speech-language pathologists (SLPs) can provide needed support to students in both the general education and special education setting. RtI² allows SLPs to include in their practice, the prevention and identification of at-risk students who could benefit from speech and language support. SLPs' knowledge of the normal development of speech and language skills will be crucial when assisting student with academic challenges in literacy as well as behavioral difficulties. According to CDE (2008a), speech-language pathologists can provide direct and indirect services through

assisting in pre-referral intervention, participating in school site teams for identifying students needing additional support in speech-language; collaborating with colleagues; and providing direct support to students needing intensive services. In addition, SLPs may provide training on the role that language plays across the curriculum, the relationship of language to learning, and the connection between oral and written language.

Psychologists. Psychologists can support RtI² and enhance learning for all students from school-wide program design to specific intervention programs. Psychologists become effective members of site teams as they have knowledge of child development, social and emotional development and the principles of learning. In addition, according to CDE (2008a), psychologist can assist with site teams in the following: implementation of RtI² practices including research-based intervention programs, progress monitoring practices, problem solving teams, evaluation of instructional programs, and assessment procedures. Psychologists are also responsible for the planning and conducting of comprehensive evaluations to determine eligibility for special education services.

Reading specialist/coaches. Reading intervention specialist/ coaches have unique skills that can support RtI² and enhance learning for all students from school-wide program design to specific intervention programs. Reading intervention specialists/coaches will contribute to school teams as they offer direct support to students as well as indirect support through consultation.

School counselors. School counselors can enhance the RtI² process and they have ongoing relationships with teachers, students, support staff, and parents. School

counselors could help facilitate the RtI² process as they have knowledge of child development and effective behavior strategies as well as possessing skills in collaboration and problem solving.

Paraeducators. Paraeducators will assist general and special education teachers in providing supplement and specialized instruction to students. Under the direction of teachers or support staff, paraeducators may provide support of research-based interventions to students in small groups or one-on-one. They may be required to perform classroom observations in order to provide data for decision making teams.

CDE (2009) describe the importance of organizational change and site leadership, focused and ongoing professional development and new and expanding roles of all staff members as critical to the full implementation of a strong RtI² process. The remainder of this literature review will address the historical, theatrical, and empirical research relating to leadership, change leadership, and leadership for the implementation of RTI.

Literature addressing the theories and empirical studies on effective professional development practices and content and context of professional development essential to the core components of RTI will be explored. The final portion of the literature review will describe the expanding roles of general education teachers, special education support staff, psychologists, speech pathologists, and paraprofessionals.

Systematic Change Efforts

Despite growing empirical support for early academic and behavioral interventions, research pertaining to the systematic change needed to implement RTI is limited (Glover, DiPerna, & Vaughn, 2007). Glover and DiPerna (2007), however, identified five core components of the implementation of RTI at the site level: (a) tiered

layers of support; (b) decision making of teachers, support staff, and psychologists in regard to the most appropriate level of support; (c) interventions targeting the student's identified areas of need; (d) integrity of interventions and processes within the model; and (e) ensuring that teachers and support staff have a strong understanding of the model and participate in decisions regarding student identification and support.

Much of the literature on developing and maintaining a new initiative focuses on the theoretical level (Glover & DiPerna, 2007). For example, Adelman and Taylor (1997) developed a model for school reform based on organizational change and restructuring efforts. The “scale-up” model that they proposed has four phases: consensus building, implementation, institutionalization, and ongoing support. Adelman and Taylor also identified a number of key implementation components, including leadership, allocation of resources, and ongoing professional development.

Leadership

Leadership has been cited as the most critical element of the successful implementation of any new reform effort (Cotton, 2003; Marzano et al., 2005). Although research pertaining specifically to leadership in RTI models is limited, theories on effective leadership started appearing approximately 30 years ago. Prominent leadership theories and theorists have been influential in the guidance of school leaders (Marzano et al., 2005).

Leadership theories. Burns (1978), who is considered the founder of modern leadership theory, developed the concept of leaders who “induce” followers to act for certain goals that are consistent with the values and motivation of the organization. More specifically, Burns identified two types of leadership: transactional and transformational

leadership. In transactional leadership, the status quo is maintained through a “give-and-take” relationship, whereas in transformational leadership, one sees the development of relationships that stimulate followers to become leaders in creating change.

Transformational leadership transforms an organization and produces results beyond initial expectations (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978).

Bass (1985, 1990) further developed the concept of transformational leadership by identifying four factors: (a) transformational leaders see followers as individuals who need personal attention; (b) transformational leaders intellectually stimulate followers to think of new ways to solve old problems; (c) transformational leaders communicate high expectations and inspire others to achieve those expectations; and (d) transformational leaders maintain influence by modeling behavior through exemplary personal achievements and high moral character. Bass and Avolio (1994) call these the “Four I’s” of transformational leadership (individual consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation and idealized influence), and they became the foundation for the transformational model of school leadership proposed by Leithwood (1994), as discussed later.

Another prominent leadership theory, referred to as total quality management (TQM), was first proposed by Deming (1986). The TQM framework was developed after World War II in an effort to improve products and services for Japan’s manufacturing base as well as for firms, such as Ford and Xerox, in the United States (Sosik & Dionne, 1997). Deming’s 14 principles of quality management are organized into five basic factors that specifically define the actions of an effective leader (Waldman, 1993). In this model, the ability of the leader to stimulate change is defined as “change

agency” (Sosik & Dionne, 1997). In the TQM model, leaders analyze the organization’s need for change and eliminate structures that work against the change. Teamwork is fundamental in the TQM organization, and leaders not only understand the importance of teams, but they also provide the necessary resources and support for effective teams.

Deming (1986) refers to the importance of a leader’s ability to “invite” continuous improvement. Leaders keep the goals of the organization alive by keeping goals at the forefront of followers’ minds. Sosik and Dionne (1997) refer another basic factor of the model as “trust building.” The leader establishes trust by respecting and instilling faith into followers by modeling integrity, honesty, and openness. Deming identified the articulation of long-term goals and the elimination of short-term goals as fundamental in moving an organization forward. Deming believes that an effective leader not only establishes long-term goals but also participates in their implementation. Deming was not opposed to short-term goals but rather advocated for goals that included process and long-term perspective.

The theory of situational leadership has also influenced and guided leadership practices today. Situational leadership is associated with the work of Hersey and Blanchard. The “life cycle theory” of leadership was first introduced in the late 1960s (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969). During the mid 1970s, the theory was renamed “situational leadership” (Hersey & Blanchard, 1977). Situational leadership is grounded in the theory that there is no “best” leadership style. Hersey and Blanchard (1977) propose that the most effective leaders adapt their leadership styles to the “maturity” of the group. The maturity of the individual/group is based on the individual/group’s capacity to set high

standards, their motivation in achieving those standards, and the education/experience of the individual/group required to achieve those goals.

Hersey and Blanchard (1977) identified four leadership behavior types, which they refer to as S1, S2, S3, and S4. Telling (S1) is characterized in one-way communication. The leader defines the role of the individual/group and describes what needs to be done to accomplish the task. When the leader provides socioemotional support and allows the individual/group to buy into the process, the leader is utilizing selling (S2) behavior. When the leader provides fewer task behaviors while maintaining high relationship behavior, shared decision-making or participating (S3) behaviors become evident. When the process and responsibility for the task have been passed on to the individual or group, with the leader monitoring progress, the leader demonstrates delegating (S4) behaviors. The maturity levels of the individual/group can vary between M1 (low maturity; lack of skills; unwilling to take responsibility) to M4 (high maturity; experienced at task; willing to take responsibility). Effective leaders are experts in adapting their behaviors according to the task and maturity of the group.

Leadership theorists. A number of prominent theorists have influenced leadership by developing notions of effective leadership. Bennis (2003) proposed that effective leaders must be able to engage others in the creation of a shared vision and must have a strong sense of purpose, confidence, and moral code. Importantly, leaders must be able to adapt to change.

Collins (2001), best known for his theories on “good to great,” identified level 1 leaders to level 6 leaders that move companies from “good to great.” Collins noted that while Level 6 leaders are charismatic, Level 5 leaders “build enduring greatness” (p. 20).

Level 5 leaders are often overlooked because they are more interested in the company than they are in promoting themselves. These leaders show great humility and do what matters most in the company. They focus not only on the organization's performance but also on developing other leaders.

Covey (1989) described seven behaviors that generate positive results. Covey frames the behaviors as directives, such as "be proactive" or "begin with the end in mind." These seven behaviors comprise principle-centered leadership (Covey, 1992). Covey emphasizes the need for leaders to have high morals and demonstrate them in their day-to-day actions.

Elmore (2000) and Spillane and colleagues (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001, 2003; Spillane & Sherer, 2004) proposed the concept of distributed leadership. Distributive leaders understand how skills and knowledge from one individual may complement another, and how the strengths of some can be shared with others. Elmore believes that distributed leadership is critical when focused on large-scale education improvement, particularly in existing institutional structures. Spillane et al. (2001, 2003) and Spillane and Sherer (2004) define distributed leadership as a group of leaders and followers who periodically changes roles depending on the task. Leadership functions can be spread out or "stretched out" through a number of leaders. Spillane et al. (2003) refer to "collaborative distribution" as occurring when the actions of one leader provide the basis of actions for another. "Collective distribution" occurs when leaders and followers complete tasks independently, and "coordinated distribution" occurs when leaders and followers complete tasks sequentially.

Heifetz and Linsky (2002a) identified three types of situations in which leaders may need to adapt their leadership behavior. Type I situations, which are generally day-to-day, are resolved with traditional solutions. Type II situations require the leader to provide resources that help followers identify new ways to address the problem. Type III situations cannot be resolved within the organization's existing beliefs and values. For this type of situation, the leader needs to create conflict that facilitates new beliefs and values that can exist within the new system.

Fullan (2001) proposed that successful leaders have five core mind-sets that enable them to be effective leaders. Effective leaders demonstrate a moral purpose, understand change process, build relationships, develop a strong knowledge base, and possess the ability to bring it all together, which Fullan describes as "coherence-making." Fullan's theory of leadership addresses effective leadership and has become most notable in the areas of "change process" and leadership for change.

Change Leadership

In a review of the theoretical literature on leadership and the adoption of new ideas, change is not always of the same magnitude or level (Fullan, 2001; Heifetz, 1994; Marzano et al., 2005). Some changes require a different way of thinking such as general education teachers providing services for students with special needs within the general education environment. These changes require a different way of thinking that affect the organization in every aspect. Other changes such as changing the school schedule are very minimal as they do not require a fundamental shift in the way teachers may provide services to students with special needs. Various terms have been used to identify the extent or magnitude of change.

Marzano (2003) uses the term “first-order” change to describe changes that are incremental and do not involve a break from the past. “Second-order” change involves innovations or changes in values and beliefs that require a new way of thinking and need a leader whose responsibilities promote second-order change. These changes may be in conflict with prevailing values and norms. Such changes are complex and nonlinear as well as affect every element aspect of the system. Notably, new knowledge and skills are required by the stakeholders to implement the change, and solutions to problems are not easily apparent.

As noted above, Heifetz (1994) uses the terms Type I, Type II, and Type III to identify the extent or magnitude of change. Types I and II problems can be defined and traditional solutions can be utilized; they are understood as first-order changes. Type III problems, in comparison, may have no easy solution and require a different way of thinking; they can be considered second-order changes.

Argyris and Schon (1974) developed the concept of “single-loop” versus “double-loop” learning. They contend that people have a mental map for how to act in certain situations. To Argyris and Schon, learning involves the detection and correction of a problem. When something does not work, people will look for another strategy within the goals, values, and rules of the organization. This is referred to as “single-loop” learning. When a problem is corrected in ways that change the underlying norms and policies of an organization, “double-loop” learning occurs (Smith, 2001a, 2001b). “Double-loop” learning involves a shift in thinking and a break with past practices, as seen in Marzano’s (2003) second-order change. Understanding the extent or magnitude of change enables leaders to focus on strategies that allow for change sustainability.

Fullan (2005), who defined sustainability as the ability of an organization to consistently improve while maintaining values and moral purpose, identified eight elements for the “sustainability” of change. The first element of sustainability in a school is “raising the bar” for all students while closing the achievement gap. Fullan believes that treating all people with respect and changing the social environment for the better will sustain needed change. The second element is a focus on changing contexts at all levels, which leads to the building of relationships. Leaders need to become more “purposeful” in interactions between and among the individuals in the organization.

Gladwell (2000) refers to this phenomenon of continuous small things or events finally tipping the scales for change as a “tipping point.” The third element of sustainability is lateral capacity building, which is based on the premise that individuals learn best from each other if there are opportunities for meaningful exchanges. By creating a critical mass of educators who learn from each other, these educators begin to function as change agents (Dufour & Eaker, 1998). The fourth element of sustainability is the group collaboration around common problems and the generation of practices that is shared and inherently creates accountability for all members. Notably, deep and continuous learning sustains an organization as it moves through the change process encompasses the fifth element. This element is the recognition of what is not working. Here, it is important to use data to make continuous improvements and to develop a culture of deep learning at all levels. This becomes a shift from thinking in terms of complaints to thinking in terms of commitment to change (Kegan & Lahey, 2001). The sixth element includes a commitment both to short-term and long-term goals to sustain the change. Frequent monitoring of goals keeps an organization focused and energized.

The seventh element of sustainability is characterized by Loehr and Schwartz (2003) as a shift from the old paradigm to a new paradigm, such as from managing time to managing energy, from avoiding stress to seeking stress, or from providing rewards to increasing performance to finding purpose to improve performance. The eighth and final element for sustainability requires that the organization is “laced” with leaders. Leaders are trained to think in larger terms and are committed to changing the system. Fullan (2005) explained that the key to changing systems is to develop more “systems thinkers.” These leaders utilize strategies that create change not only in the environment but also in the individuals within that environment. When a leader can create that kind of change, he or she can change the system itself.

To examine the role of leadership in reform efforts, Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, and Meyerson (2005) conducted a series of in-depth case analyses of eight leadership programs and tracked the participants into the schools that they led. Their results indicated that effective school leaders bring about changes through their influence on other people and on school processes. Their analysis also identified three critical functions of a principal’s job: knowing how to support teachers, optimizing the curriculum for student growth, and developing the ability to transform the organization in meeting the needs of all students.

School Leadership and Student Achievement

Strong, focused school site leadership plays a major role in setting direction, developing people, and redesigning the organization (Kearney, 2010). Hallinger and Heck (1998) maintain that a site leader not only has a direct effect on student achievement but also an indirect effect when he or she provides support to teachers.

Leithwood, Seashore-Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) believe that leadership is strongly related to student achievement. They argue that strong leadership follows classroom instruction as having the most impact among school-related factors. In this regard, Leithwood et al. noted, however, the lack of documented reports of troubled schools making dramatic improvements in student achievement without a talented and skilled leader.

An analysis of over 34,000 online survey responses, representing 90% of North Carolina schools, by the Southeast Center for Teaching Quality (2004), determined that leadership was the greatest predictor of a school's ability to make "adequate yearly progress" as defined by NCLB. Further, the extent to which the school leader can influence student achievement was demonstrated in a comprehensive, systematic, quantitative review of 69 studies, which spanned a period of 23 years, conducted by Marzano et al. (2005). Marzano et al. not only demonstrated a strong correlation (.25) between leadership behaviors and student achievement, but they also identified 21 leadership responsibilities and practices that have a direct impact on student learning.

Through analyzing 81 research articles spanning a 20-year period, Cotton (2003) identified 25 categories of principal behavior that positively affect student achievement. The studies were drawn primarily from the United States and focused on students with significantly low socioeconomic status as well as minority students. Cotton concluded that principals had a more "indirect" effect on student achievement, through providing support to teachers, than a more "direct" effect through interactions with students in or outside the classroom. Both Cotton and Marzano et al. (2005) concluded that there is a strong relationship between principal behavior and student achievement.

School leadership standards and practices. The role of the principal as an instructional leader has become recognized as a crucial aspect in increasing student achievement. In 1994, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) formed the Council's Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) to partner with major educational organizations, practitioners, and policymakers to develop and publish a document that would serve as a model of what school leaders should know and understand (relevant knowledge), what they should do (performance), and what they should believe and value (disposition; Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSSO], 1996). An examination of the ISLLC standards as well as the findings on principal leadership and student achievement conducted by Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning led policy leaders and educational experts to request research-based guidance to support the ISLLC standards for school leaders. The findings on principal leadership and student achievement resulted in the development of McREL's balanced leadership framework (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). The framework, which adds insight into and support of ISLLC standards, identifies specific leadership responsibilities and practices that improve student achievement.

The ISLLC Standards for School Leaders present six standards for effective school leadership. Each of the standards concerns indicators of relevant knowledge, dispositions, and performance required for the school leader. In an effort to have the standards be consistent with empirical research on educational leadership and student achievement, they were updated in 2008, based on 83 empirical and 47 sources of knowledge references that support the original standards (CCSSO, 2008).

In addition to the use of empirical research to support the standards, the revised ISLLC standards uses the term “function” to define each standard. “Functions” describe actions that leaders take to address the standard. A leader who exhibits the exemplary behavior of a standard should demonstrate each of the functions. The six leadership standards of the ISLLC represent different qualities that research has identified as crucial to effective leadership and improved school achievement.

The first standard involves effective leaders promoting and evaluating processes and programs that support the school vision. The second standard concerns being the “stewardship” of a vision of learning; the educational leader needs to advocate and nurture a school culture that supports student learning and professional development. The third standard addresses the school leader’s focus on the safe and orderly management of the organization and the utilization of resources. The fourth standard concerns the school leader’s efforts to collaborate with the faculty and the community in responding to specific interests and needs. The fifth standard involves the educational leader’s commitment to ethical behavior and advocacy for moral and social justice. The sixth leadership standard addresses the school leader’s understanding of policy and laws and the decisions that reflect them. As noted above, the revision of the standards was based on Waters et al.’s (2003) research, which became the basis for the balanced leadership framework.

McREL’s balanced leadership framework. To determine the relationship between principal leadership and student achievement, McREL conducted two separate studies, a meta-analysis and a factor analysis (Marzano et al., 2005). The 2001 meta-analysis began with over 5,000 studies that reported a relationship between principal

behavior and student achievement. Based on the quality of the design, rigor, reliability, and relevance to the topic of leadership and achievement, 69 studies, spanning 23 years (1978-2001), were selected. The 69 studies had similar characteristics: the dependent variable was student achievement, the independent variable was leadership, and both student achievement and leadership were quantitatively measured and standardized. The 69 studies included more than 14,000 teacher ratings of 2,802 principals and over 1.4 million student achievement scores. The findings indicated a statistically significant correlation of .25 between leadership and student achievement. In addition to the correlation between leadership and student achievement, the study identified 21 leadership responsibilities that were statistically significantly correlated to student achievement and which comprised 66 practices or behaviors.

Following the meta-analysis, a factor analysis was conducted to determine what, if any, correlation existed between the 21 leadership responsibilities identified in the meta-analysis. To conduct this analysis, McREL collected data from over 700 principals by using an online survey with 92 items measuring principal behavior in terms of the 21 responsibilities. The factor analysis indicated that there were no statistically significant inter-correlations between the responsibilities and that each responsibility was distinct enough not to combine or eliminate it from the list of 21 responsibilities. Thus, the findings indicated strong construct validity (Marzano et al., 2005). Marzano et al. found that, of these 21 responsibilities, seven were second-order changes and, as such, the most important for leaders who were interested in dramatic or deep change.

Leadership responsibilities for first-order change. Marzano et al. (2005) defined first-order changes as leadership responsibilities that are consistent with

prevailing values and norms, are extension of the past, and often occur in increments.

Changes are implemented with existing knowledge and skills by outside experts, and the impact on others is minimal. Changes occur within existing paradigms and can be problem-solution oriented and easily solved. To some degree, all 21 leadership responsibilities are important for first-order change, but 14 are identified as primarily first-order changes. Each responsibility, as described by Marzano et al., is presented below.

1. *Culture* is the by-product of people working together and can have a positive or negative effect on the community. An effective leader fosters a culture that positively influences teachers and in turn influences students.
2. *Involvement of curriculum, instruction, and assessment* refers to the leader's ability to be involved in curriculum, instruction, and assessment at the classroom level. This responsibility is critical to instructional leadership practices.
3. *Focus* refers to the leader's ability to establish clear goals and keeps those goals at the forefront. An effective leader establishes goals for curriculum, instruction, and assessment and expects that all students will meet them.
4. *Order* is the extent to which a leader sets clear boundaries and rules for both teachers and students. An effective leader establishes routines for the running of the school. The leader provides and reinforces the structures, rules, and procedures for both students and staff.
5. *Affirmation* is the extent to which a leader will recognize individual or community celebrations as well as recognize failures. An effective leader is able to balance

the school's successes and failures. Effective leaders systematically recognize and celebrate teacher and student accomplishments.

6. *Communication* refers to the extent that the leader establishes strong lines of communication with teachers and students. An effective leader is easily accessible to teachers and allows for opportunities for teachers to communicate with each other.
7. *Input* allows for the school leader to involve teachers in the design and implementation of decisions that affect them. Effective leaders provide opportunities for staff to develop school policies and provide input into important decisions.
8. *Relationships* can be central to many of the other responsibilities and refer to the leader's ability to demonstrate an awareness of the personal lives of teachers and staff. An effective leader is aware of the personal needs of teachers and acknowledges significant events in their lives.
9. *Resources* refer to the leader's ability to provide professional development and needed materials necessary for teachers to fulfill their required duties. An effective leader ensures that teachers have staff development opportunities that enhance their teaching as well as the required materials and equipment.
10. *Contingent rewards* refer to the leader's ability to recognize individual accomplishments. An effective leader will use hard work and results as a basis for recognition.
11. *Situational awareness* requires that the leader is aware of details and undercurrents regarding the functioning of the school. The leader uses this

information to address current and potential problems. An effective leader can predict what could go wrong and is aware of informal networks. The leader is aware of issues that might not have surfaced but could create discord as well as anticipates and acts proactively to counter the situation.

12. *Outreach* refers to the ability of the leader to advocate for the school to parents, community members, and the district office. An effective leader communicates with people both inside and outside the school.

13. *Visibility* refers to the degree that a leader has contact and interactions with teachers, students, and parents and is often associated with instructional leadership. Effective leaders use classroom visitations as a springboard for discussions on effective classroom instructional practices.

14. *Discipline* refers to the ability of the leader to keep distractions away from the classroom. An effective leader will protect teachers from issues that would detract from instructional time or focus.

Leadership responsibilities for second-order change. The goals of NCLB require that school leaders have a strong understanding of change and know how to effectively bring it about (Waters & Grubb, 2004). Marzano et al. (2005) identified leadership responsibilities that are significantly correlated with second-order change. Second-order changes included a shift in thinking or a break with the past and are in conflict with prevailing norms and values. The changes can be complex and generally occur outside of the existing paradigms. Second-order changes require teachers to acquire new knowledge and skills. McREL's factor analysis indicated that seven

leadership responsibilities were positively correlated with second-order change. Each responsibility, as described by Marzano et al., is described below.

1. *Knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment* refers to the extent of the leader's knowledge of best practices. This responsibility differs from the responsibility of involvement of *curriculum, instruction, and assessment* in that this focus is more on the acquisition and cultivation of knowledge. An effective leader continually provides conceptual guidance regarding effective practices in this area.
2. *Optimizer* refers to the ability of the leader to inspire others and become the driving force behind implementation efforts. An effective leader displays a positive attitude and inspires teachers to go beyond previous expectations. Effective leaders are the driving force behind major changes.
3. *Intellectual stimulation* refers to the leader's ability to keep staff informed on all of the most current theories and practices regarding school effectiveness. An effective leader provides opportunities for teachers to engage in meaningful discussions regarding latest research and practices.
4. *Change agent* refers to the leader's ability to create change, and a leader with this quality is not afraid to challenge the status quo. The leader is willing to consider new and better ways of doing things.
5. *Monitor and evaluate* refers to the ability of the leader to provide feedback and to monitor the effectiveness of school practices and their impact on student achievement. An effective leader not only monitors the effectiveness of the

school's curriculum and instruction but also is aware of the practices related to student achievement.

6. *Flexibility* refers to the ability of the leader to adapt his or her leadership behavior to the current situation. An effective leader is comfortable being direct or nondirective, as the situation warrants. An effective leader also allows for contrary opinions and is comfortable making changes.
7. *Ideals and beliefs* refer to the leader's ability to articulate ideals and beliefs about schools, teaching, and learning. An effective leader demonstrates behaviors that are consistent with those beliefs.

The results of McREL's factor analysis suggests that, when principals undertake change initiative, the school staff seem to be less clear with the school vision (culture). The principal may also seem less accessible to teachers and support staff (communication). Teachers also may feel that they have less influence than they had prior to the change initiative on the day-to-day operations (input), and they may feel that things are less predictable (order) as prior to the change. Understanding the negative impact that change efforts have on culture, communication, input, and order allows leaders to more successfully fulfill those responsibilities, which will increase the likelihood of second-order change initiatives. Marzano et al. (2005) recommended that leaders use leadership teams to distribute some of the leadership responsibilities. While the school leader may focus on the leadership responsibilities that promote change efforts, the leadership team focuses on maintaining a positive culture, establishing clear lines of communication, soliciting opportunities for staff input, anticipating changes, and providing structure to the organization.

Leadership and RTI. Burns and Ysseldyke (2005) argue that implementation of RTI is a fundamental system change that requires significant leadership. Other researchers have noted that principals play a major role in the implementation of RTI (Burns & Gibbons, 2008; Hall, 2008; Mellard & Johnson, 2008). Burns and Ysseldyke believe that strong leadership, particularly a commitment to a shared vision and literacy, is needed throughout the implementation and is critical to sustaining RTI practices. A leader not only needs buy-in from the teachers and community but also needs to keep the RTI efforts moving forward. Marston et al. (2003) and Mellard and Johnson (2008) believe that site leaders should establish a culture of vision and collaboration as well as identify additional responsibilities, such as organizing and ensuring high quality professional development, maintaining reasonable caseloads, and providing sufficient resources, as critical aspects of RTI implementation. In addition, principals should be responsible for developing school-based teams to monitor the fidelity of RTI. These teams will be critical in providing support and direction in the areas of professional development.

Professional Development

Sykes (1996) stated that professional development for K-12 educators is “the most serious unsolved problem for policy and practice in American education today” (p. 465). Notably, any reform or restructure effort emphasizes the importance of professional development to bring about the needed change (Guskey, 1994). Little (1999) described effective professional development as a focus on and responsibility for student learning and outcomes through the use of a professional community inside and outside the classroom. Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1996) defined professional

development as “deepening teachers’ understanding about the teaching/learning process and the students they teach” (p. 203). They also described effective professional development that involves teachers as both learners and teachers and that allows for the uncertainties of assuming both roles. Fullan (1991) noted all the “formal and informal” learning opportunities that teachers experience throughout their careers as integral to professional development. In an effort to ensure quality professional development, the National Staff Development Council (2001) put forth recommendations for professional development.

The National Staff Development Council identified and recommended three factors to consider in quality professional development: (a) the “content” of professional development should be research-based in teaching and learning; (b) the “process” of professional development should include reflection and dialogue; and (c) the “context” of professional development should occur throughout the school day. The National Science Foundation ([NSF], 1997) further described the “content” as the “what” of professional development. The new knowledge and skills are the foundation of academic content and pedagogical processes. The “process” of professional development is the “how” of professional development. Process variables include how the activities are planned, organized, carried out, and followed up. The “context” of professional development includes the “when,” “where,” and “why” of professional development. The context of professional development addresses the nature of the system in which change will occur. Weiss and Pasley (2006) additionally noted that quality professional development needs to be intensive and provided with follow-up and support to have any impact on teaching practices.

The need for intensive and ongoing support was evident in a large-scale effort, Local Systemic Change (LSC) through the Teacher Enhancement Program, initiated by NSF, to improve instruction in science, math, and technology. The chief goal of the project was to encourage large-scale reform in teaching practices by providing high-quality professional development. Over a period of five years, LSC had reached over 70,000 elementary and secondary teachers servicing 2 million students in 4,000 schools. Nearly half of the schools were in urban areas with just over half of the students from minority groups. Each teacher participated in a minimum of 130 hours of professional development over the course of the project. Weiss and Pasley (2006) concluded that a minimum of 30 hours of professional development was needed to have an impact on teaching. An additional impact was seen after 80 hours of professional development. The results of the LSC evaluation findings indicated that, if professional development is to have any impact, it must include clear goals and be delivered over time by well-trained providers. In addition, professional development activities must develop teacher's content and pedagogical knowledge and be aligned with district curriculum and assessment guidelines for student achievement.

In an effort to examine both formal (workshops, courses, conferences) and informal (collaboration, peer observation, mentoring) professional development, Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson, and Orphanos (2009) reviewed the research on teacher professional development and student achievement as well as the availability of professional learning opportunities in the United States and other high-achieving nations. The availability of professional development and support for teacher learning was

examined through the data from the 2003-2004 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) by the National Center for Education Statistics.

The results indicated that 90% of teachers reported participating in formal training, and 70% reported participating in regularly scheduled collaboration meetings. Fewer teachers (63%) reported peer observations, while only 46% were involved in mentoring and coaching. The findings indicated that, while teachers are participating in “content focused” workshops and training, the length and quality of most of these trainings are a “one-shot” model of professional development. Most training was conducted in less than 16 hours, which has been shown to be ineffective in generating a change in teachers’ instructional practice and in student achievement. In addition, fewer than 50% of teachers found their professional development useful. The data also indicated that, when compared to high-achieving countries, the United States is significantly behind in providing professional learning opportunities that have been demonstrated to be most effective in raising student achievement, including observations to other classrooms and schools, teachers working together to address areas of concern, and regularly scheduled collaboration meetings on instruction and curriculum issues (Wei et al., 2009).

Professional development and student achievement. Teacher professional development has been cited as the key to student achievement (Leithwood et al., 2004; Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss & Shapley 2007). In the current educational policy environment, priority is being placed on improving student achievement as well as teaching quality and teaching effectiveness (Wei et al., 2009). Nevertheless, professional development does not always lead to professional learning (Easton, 2008; Fullan, 2007).

Fullan (2007) argues that external approaches to professional learning do not bring about changes in the classroom or improve student achievement because they are not specific enough or sustained over a long enough period of time to create the necessary changes. Easton noted that the most powerful learning occurs when professional development takes place during the teacher's work day, begins with teachers' assessment of what their students need, and uses student outcomes and student achievement as a measure of student learning.

In an effort to determine the effect of teacher professional development on student achievement, Yoon et al. (2007) reviewed more than 1,300 studies identified as addressing the relationship between teacher professional development and student achievement. Of the 1,300 studies, only nine met the criteria established by What Works Clearinghouse evidence standards: validity and reliability of outcome measures, characteristics relevant to equating group, effectiveness of professional development across groups, measurement of post-intervention effects, a definition of attrition, no confounding of teacher and intervention effects, and statistical properties important for computing accurate effect size. All nine studies, ranging from 1986 to 2003, focused on elementary school teachers and students, and six were published in peer-review journals. Five studies were randomized controlled trials that met evidence standards without reservation, while four studies met evidence standards with reservations. Four of the studies focused on student achievement in reading and English/language arts, while two focused on mathematics and two on mathematics and reading.

A review of the evidence on how teacher professional development affects student achievement indicated that teachers who participate in an average of 49 hours of

quality professional development can increase their students' achievement by about 21 percentile points. Studies in which teachers received more than 14 hours of professional development showed a positive and significant effect on student achievement. Three studies, which involved less than 14 hours of professional development, showed no statistically significant effect on student achievement. However, the fact that only nine studies met the standards to be included in the study was of concern. The lack of rigorous studies that directly assess the effect of teacher professional development on student achievement in reading and English/language arts, mathematics, and science is an indication of the lack of quality professional development (Yoon et al., 2007).

Yoon et al. (2007) support the need for improving teacher professional development methods and delivery. Further, there appears to be a gap in translating research to practice (Blank & de las Alas, 2009). In 2006, CCSSO was awarded a grant from NSF to conduct a meta-analysis study regarding the effects of teacher professional development on student learning. The two-year study, using research from 1990 to 2009, was designed to determine whether the findings were consistent in terms of the relationship between teacher professional development and student achievement gains in K-12 mathematics or science (Blank & de las Alas, 2009). The study design used four steps: identification and collection of potential studies, determination of the eligibility of the study and coding process, data analysis, and dissemination of the results. In the initial pre-screening, 416 reports were identified. After a review of their abstracts, 342 reports were eliminated because they were deemed irrelevant based on previous screening criteria. The remaining 74 reports were coded by trained coders. The coding and review process yielded 16 documents to be included in the meta-analysis.

Blank and de las Alas (2009) found that six studies utilized randomized control trials (RCTs), such as random assignments of teachers to treatment groups. The other ten studies utilized quasi-experimental designs (QED) that relied on comparable groups of teachers and students. Ten of the studies covered elementary grades 1-6, seven studies concerned grades 7-8, and three studies focused on the high school level. Additionally, 11 of the 16 studies utilized nationally known assessments or standardized assessments to measure student achievement. The remaining five studies used assessments specific to the professional development initiative and evaluation. The number of teachers included in the studies ranged from three teachers in one study to 87 in another, while the number of students assessed varied from 63 to 936.

The meta-analysis of studies of teacher professional development programs in mathematics and science found that the 16 studies reported significant effects of teacher professional development on student achievement. The studies reported student achievement gains for a treatment group as compared to a control group. One key finding in the meta-analysis was the evidence of multiple follow-up activities as well as the active learning methods used by the teachers. Effective follow-up activities included coaching, mentoring, internships, professional networks, and study groups (Blank & de las Alas, 2009).

The 16 studies produced strong evidence that active methods of teacher learning were utilized, including leading instruction, discussions with peers, observing other teachers, and developing assessments and professional networks. Another key finding was that quality professional development programs focus on helping teachers improve knowledge of how students learn, how to effectively teach a subject, and how to make the

connection between content and appropriate pedagogy. Overall, the results of this meta-analysis indicate that there is a significant relationship between quality professional development and student achievement as well as that a scientific research design can be utilized efficiently to measure the effects of teacher development on student achievement (Blank & de las Alas, 2009).

Professional development and NCLB. The focus on effective professional development program also has been sparked by the need to meet the achievement goals mandated by NCLB. NCLB established five criteria for considering professional development to be of high quality. The first criterion is that professional development is intensive, content-focused, and conducted over a period time, which will ensure that it has a positive and lasting effect on classroom instruction and teacher performance. The second criterion is the alignment of state academic content standards and assessments. Additional criteria include increasing a teacher's understanding of the subjects he or she teaches as well as advancing a teacher's understanding of research-based instructional practices. The final criterion is that professional development should be consistently evaluated for teacher effectiveness and student achievement.

According to the National Research Council (2006), many teachers express dissatisfaction with the professional development offered through their districts. Further, teachers insist that the most effective professional development opportunities that they experienced were self-initiated. Unfortunately, many professional development programs are ineffective in providing high-quality training as well as ongoing professional support as teachers attempt to implement new curricula or pedagogies (Borko, 2004).

According to Hirsh (2009), Director of the National Staff Development Council (NSDC), too few teachers are provided quality professional development. Recognizing the need for all educators to receive high-quality professional development, NSDC is seeking legislative amendments to the definition of professional development as outlined in NCLB. The key points in NSDC's definition of professional development include all teachers, specialist, administrators taking responsibility for the learning of all students, professional learning that occurs daily, continuous cycle of improvement, on-the-job-coaching, assessment of professional development practices, and support provided from inside and outside of the school. Hirsh believes that professional development should influence a teacher's instructional practices as well as improve student achievement. The new definition describes professional learning as occurring during the day for all teachers. Changing the definition of professional development, however, is not enough to alter classroom practices. Changes will occur only when school systems alter their own understanding of quality professional development and recognize the inequity in teaching quality across classrooms, schools, and districts.

NSDC (2009) sees professional development as practices that foster collective responsibility for student learning that is aligned with rigorous state student standards and conducted by teachers, principals, coaches, mentors, master teachers, and/or teacher leaders. Hirsh (2009) noted that conducting professional development in teams creates an environment of shared responsibility. Further, according to Newman (1994), a learning community can be described as teachers, principals, and support staff taking responsibility for a shared vision and collaborating to achieve that vision. Lockwood (1995) noted that, in a learning community, teachers work together in teams and make

shared decisions. Moreover, teachers are active participants in their own professional development and continually refine their knowledge and teaching skills.

Professional development practices should occur several times per week among teams comprised of teachers, principals, and other instructional staff members (NSDC, 2009). When student achievement is a priority, then schools will carve out time for teachers to participate in professional development opportunities that improve student outcomes (Hirsh, 2009).

NSDC (2009) believes that professional development practices should encourage a continuous cycle of improvement that evaluates student outcomes; defines learning goals based on analysis of data; and achieves goals by implementing research-based instructional strategies and on-going assessments that improve instructional effectiveness and student achievement. Hirsh (2009) argues that although most schools believe in continuous improvement, it is difficult for schools to put into actual practice. An excellent example of the process of continuous improvement is seen in recognition of businesses that compete for the Baldrige Award. The Baldrige Award recognizes businesses that strive for continuous improvement through analyzing performance data, sets realistic goals, and establishes a plan to achieve those goals.

Professional development practices provide mentoring or support to teachers that allow for the transfer of new information and instructional strategies to the classroom (NSDC, 2009). On-going support enables teachers to make the new information and strategies part of their daily routine (Joyce & Showers, 2002). Odden et al. (2007) conducted a case study of schools in Wisconsin to evaluate the costs of programs, such as classes with fewer than 20 students, and the direct effect on student achievement. After a

five-year period, Odden et al. concluded that classroom-based coaches provided greater benefits and are more cost effective in raising student achievement than are innovations such as smaller class sizes or full-day kindergartens.

NSDC (2009) indicated that professional development should be regularly assessed in terms of achieving learning goals, improving teaching, and improving learning for all students. Continually assessing student learning through the use of formative assessment requires that teachers have technical knowledge and use it effectively (Hirsh, 2009). Schmoker (2002) indicated, that when teachers work in teams on a regular basis to design, adapt, and assess instructional strategies, the result is increased student achievement. Hirsh also feels that professional development must include the use of ongoing assessments of students' learning to determine instructional practices. Evaluating teacher practice and student outcomes produce strategies that lead to sustained improvement. Fullan (2000) believes that successful schools are places where teachers regularly assess student work and adjust their instructional practices to improve student achievement. Importantly, to develop the needed knowledge and skills required for changes to existing teaching practices, teachers need to be able to critically assess their own current practice (McDiarmid, 1995).

NSDC (2009) recognizes that, occasionally, schools may need additional assistance to provide necessary training or support. In this regard, King and Newmann (2000) encourage teachers and principals to seek assistance from outside the school because the interaction and exchange of ideas inside and outside can promote overall student achievement. Additionally, King and Newmann found that teachers are more likely to learn and use new practices when they collaborate with teachers outside of their

classrooms and schools as well as to utilize external support such as researchers or program developers. When teachers interact and exchange information frequently with outside sources, they form a true learning community and experience continuous improvement (Brandt, 2003).

Professional development and RTI. Hoover et al. (2008) describe RTI as a large-scale reform effort that affects the educational opportunities for all students in all schools across the nation. Hoover et al. maintain that, although the language of RTI was introduced into law in 2004, the RTI movement is still in the beginning stages. Nevertheless, all states are either in the process of implementing RTI or have established a process for meeting the needs of struggling students.

Kurns and Tilly (2008) developed site-level blueprints for the implementation of RTI, based on the previous definitional and policy document published by the NASDSE (Batsche et al., 2006). Kurns and Tilly contend that the implementation of RTI proceeds through three stages, similar to other large-scale reform efforts such as those described by Adelman and Taylor (1997). Adelman and Taylor proposed that, for any school reform to be successful, models must be replicated on a large scale. Professional development activities must be designed at each major developmental stage: orientation or consensus building, building of a knowledge foundation, and continuing education to maintain and enhance the reform efforts.

Kurns and Tilly (2008) stated that one of the key lessons learned from any large-scale reform effort is that the change must be driven by principles and practice. However, as noted earlier, in the implementation of RTI, the blueprints refer to “functions” rather than “practices.” “Functions” allow for sites to select practices

consistent with the principles while maintaining the integrity of the model and establishing staff buy-in. In the implementation of RTI, consensus building includes the communication of RTI concepts and principles. The “whys” of RTI are taught and embraced. The second phase of implementation includes the site’s implementation of the components of RTI. At this stage gaps between the model and the current practices are identified, and strategies are developed to address those gaps. The third phase in RTI implementation involves supporting, stabilizing, and institutionalizing RTI. It is at this stage that RTI practices become a part of “business as usual.”

Core components of RTI professional development. Batsche et al. (2006) propose that the success of RTI implementation will depend largely on the quality of professional development. Successful professional development requires that three components are addressed: current beliefs and attitudes of teachers, the development of a knowledge base for RTI, and the providing of opportunities for teachers and support staff to practice the skills required for the implementation.

Batsche et al. (2006) believe that educators will embrace the philosophy of RTI if teachers focus on student outcomes and believe that they have the necessary skills and support to implement RTI practices. Professional development also must include a strong knowledge base that ensures that teachers have a strong understanding of the model and can transfer this knowledge into practice. Batsche et al. stated that the foundation should include an understanding of the differences between the traditional identification for Specific Learning Disabilities and RTI, the differences between responders and non-responders to intervention, the relationship of problem solving to determine the type of services within the context of RTI, the range of interventions (Tier

I, Tier II, Tier III), the role that assessment plays in determining instructional quality, the need for a range of research-based practices in both general and special education programs, the impact of RTI on placement outcomes, the role of progress monitoring in RTI, and the importance of decisions based on student data.

Batsche et al. (2005) noted that the final aspect of professional development includes opportunities for teachers, psychologists, speech therapists, and principals to practice the skills necessary for RTI implementation. Importantly, articulating the link between a knowledge base and skills is an ongoing aspect of professional development. Skills necessary for RTI implementation include using tools to assess instructional quality, using data to judge instructional quality and individual students' level of risk, and making accurate decisions for more intensive services or placement based on data

Brown-Chidsey and Steege (2005) provide recommendations for professional development that emphasize three essential elements: scheduling, teacher learning outcomes, and indicators of RTI mastery. Brown-Chidsey and Steege recommend that training for RTI should occur over a number of sessions. The first session may be the longest and includes a complete overview of RTI. Further sessions would cover more details, such as how to identify students or how to choose effective instructional methods. Additionally, curriculum and benchmark training would address the teacher's focus on student learning outcomes. Finally, teachers will need to have a measurement of RTI implementation integrity.

Successful implementation is multifaceted and not only includes knowledge of research-based interventions, screening, assessment, and progress monitoring but also a

high degree of program integrity and support from teachers, psychologists, and support staff (Kratochwill, Clements, & Kalymon, 2007).

Overall, Burns and Ysseldyke (2005) believe that professional learning and ongoing collaboration are critical in sustaining RTI practices. Adelman and Taylor (1997) suggest that, by increasing the knowledge and skill level of each person in the organization, reform efforts move forward and institutionalize the change. Hoover et al. (2008) suggest that, while current training emphasizes knowledge and skills, more attention should be given to the allocation of resources and the role of educators in the RTI process.

Allocation and Use of Resources

Arnold, Simms, and Wilber (1999) stated that successful reform efforts require restructuring the allocation and use of existing resources. Maximizing the use of staff expertise, investing in professional development, and providing time for collaboration contributes to initial and continuous school-wide reform efforts. Elmore (2000) noted that those who have a higher degree of knowledge, skill, and competence should be expected to spend a portion of their time engaged in improvement practices in the classroom. Elmore referred to the “distribution of leadership” as building the capacity of the school by drawing on the expertise of staff members within the organization.

Miles and Darling-Hammond (1998) noted the importance of utilizing the talents of staff members in a case study of five high-performing schools. They identified key principles of resource allocation that the schools shared, including flexible student grouping, longer and varied blocks of time, common planning time for teachers, and redefining staff roles and work schedules.

RTI and redefining staff roles. As RTI is becoming more prevalent, the shift in the roles, responsibilities, and skills of the teachers and support staff will be considerably different from what was required in the past (Ahearn, 2003; Johnson, Mellard, Fuchs, & McKnight, 2006; Mellard & Johnson, 2008). Mastropieri and Scruggs (2005) discussed the lack of clarity regarding the changing roles of general education and special education teachers through the implementation process of RTI. Not only are the roles of general education teachers unclear, but the responsibilities of special education teachers and psychologists are even more unclear. Teacher motivation and willingness to embrace the change will be critical in the implementation process.

As a result of RTI, classroom teachers may be expected to provide more small-group or individual interventions for students not achieving in the general education classroom (Johnson et al., 2006; Mellard & Johnson, 2008). Classroom teachers also will be required to take a more active role in administering universal screenings, conducting progress monitoring, collecting student data and work samples, analyzing the data, and modifying instructional practices based on student outcomes (Marston et al., 2003; Mellard & Johnson, 2008). Teachers will be expected to collaborate with other general and special education teachers, speech therapists, and psychologists and often break down traditional staff roles (Mellard & Johnson, 2008). Gerber (2005) stated that implementing RTI effectively may be limited to the teacher's skills, knowledge, and motivation to address the needs of students in the general education setting. Gerber recommends starting small and developing concepts that focus on developing the ability of teachers within schools to respond effectively to students' needs. Allington and Cunningham (2002) stated that those most successful comprehensive school reform

efforts start small and suggested starting with a single classroom and building the reform efforts, as successful school change efforts, especially those that are school-wide, take time.

Special education teachers may experience some shift in their roles and how they provide support to their students (Cummings, Atkins, Allison, & Cole, 2008; Mellard & Johnson, 2008). They may be required to spend more time in the general education classroom, observing and providing support to the general education teacher (Cummings et al., 2008). Special education teachers also may be required to assist with problem-solving teams, universal screening measures, data systems, analyzing data, and intervention plans in the general education setting (Cummings et al., 2008; Mellard & Johnson, 2008).

School psychologists also may experience a shift in their roles, as they will be expected to spend more time with teachers in the classroom or collaborating with teachers in developing academic or behavior plans to assist students in the general education setting (Johnson et al., 2006; Marston et al., 2003). However, psychologists may find that they are not evaluating as many students for specific learning disabilities (Marston et al., 2003).

SLPs can expect to become more active in collaborating with teachers as well as integrating goals for speech and language into reading. Through working directly with students, SLPs can reduce the number of inappropriate referrals for assessments. Moore-Brown, Montgomery, Bielinski, and Shubin (2005) conducted a pre-test/post-test pilot study, with no control group, in 10 elementary schools in an urban area during the 2002-2003 school year. Students who were identified as performing at least two years below

grade level participated in 45 hours of intensive instruction focusing on five areas of reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, fluency, and comprehension. The findings indicated that all students receiving intensive instruction made significant reading progress. Only 8 of the 123 students required special education service two years later. The conducting of the study prevented older elementary students (many of whom were English learners) from being identified or labeled as having a specific learning disability and placed in special education.

Summary

The literature presented concerned issues relevant to the identification of students with specific disabilities. Empirical studies indicate that the traditional method of identification, the IQ-discrepancy model, is not an effective identification tool. A treatment-oriented approach, RTI, as an alternative model, was presented. Federal legislation, which allows for an agency to use a student's lack of response to scientific, research-based interventions as an alternative to identification for specific learning disabilities was discussed. The core components of the RTI model and the tiered levels of support were described. Because RTI implementation is still in the beginning stages, the literature on the factors necessary in systems change efforts was presented. The literature also included theories of leadership related to reform efforts. Finally, research on effective professional development practices was discussed as well as literature on re-defining staff roles and responsibilities as critical in supporting systematic change efforts.

Chapter 3

Methodology

This chapter describes the research design and rationale; sampling methods, sample, and participants; data collection, setting, and procedures; instrumentation and procedures; and analytical techniques. This study examined the implementation of the RtI² framework at two elementary schools in one county in Southern California. These schools were purposively selected and studied using qualitative methods to examine the structures that affect school-wide implementation of a RtI² model. The principals, support staff, and teachers participated in semi-structured interviews. This study helps contribute to the understanding of the implementation of RtI² models at local levels for one county in Southern California.

Statement of the Problem

As RTI implementation is still continuing to evolve across the nation, evidence of successful models is lacking in regards to tangible outcomes such as Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for students with disabilities or the number of students qualifying for special educational services. Success of any large-scale reform effort will depend on leadership, professional development opportunities, and the use of staff in new roles. The integrity of RTI implementation at district and school levels will play a major role in the implementation of RTI on a national level.

Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative case study is threefold: (a) to identify the leadership attributes and skills of site principals that contribute to the implementation of RtI²; (b) to examine the professional development practices that contribute to the

implementation of RtI²; and (c) to examine how the new roles of general education teachers, special education teachers, and support staff (psychologists, speech pathologists) have contributed to the implementation of RtI² at two elementary schools in one county in Southern California.

Research Question

The following research question guided this study: What do principals, teachers, and support staff in two elementary schools in one county in Southern California perceive as contributing to the implementation of RtI² in regards to the following: (a) leadership attributes, skills, and practices; (b) professional development practices; and (c) new roles of general education teachers, special education teachers, and support staff (psychologists, speech pathologists, and any additional staff utilized for RtI² implementation)?

Study Design

This study used a qualitative comparative case study design in order to identify the various key components that have contributed to the successful implementation of RtI² at two purposefully selected elementary school sites. The researcher interviewed principals, teachers, and support staff regarding site leadership behaviors, professional development opportunities, and new roles for teachers and support staff in the implementation of the RtI² model at their particular site. Data were collected during the 2010-2011 academic school year. Interviews with principals, teachers, and support staff took place at the school site during the school year.

Rationale for Design

Implementation of the RTI model is a reform effort that is increasing across the nation as school districts establish policies and procedures for school reform efforts to meet the needs of all students. According to a National Adoption Survey on Response to Intervention developed by the Council of Administrators (CASE), National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASOSE), and American Association of School Administrators (AASA), RTI adoption and implementation levels have continued to rise over the past 2 years. The impact of the RTI movement on student achievement is difficult to determine as it was reported that 80% of districts do not yet have enough data to determine if RTI leads to an improvement in AYP. Of the districts with data (14%), more than half of them reported improvement in AYP. In studying the impact of RTI in reducing the number of referrals to special education, 9% of respondents indicated referrals decreased by 50%. Another 21% of respondents indicated a reduction by 10-49%.

RTI is a framework in which schools respond to the academic and behavioral needs of their students and provide appropriate intervention and services. As each school is unique, so is the manner in which a school will define the process and establish a protocol for monitoring and providing support for students who do not make adequate progress. In studying implementation questions in regards to reform, qualitative case study methods are often used as they elicit empirical support for key components necessary for school improvement such as leadership, professional development, and the availability of resources (Datnow, 2005; Datnow & Park, 2008). As with school reforms, top-down decisions or lack of buy-in from the stakeholders results in resistance. A

multitude of factors contribute to successful school reform. A study of the interaction of these factors is necessary to overcome obstacles and increase the likelihood that similar efforts will have similar results.

Case study design is often used in qualitative research when the purpose of the study is to examine the “interaction of significant factors characteristic of the phenomenon” (Merriam, 1998, p. 29). The purpose of qualitative research is to gain an in-depth understanding and perspective from purposively selected participants.

Qualitative research is often recommended for new areas of research or well-researched areas where in-depth information is needed (Patten, 2005). Because RTI implementation is a growing reform effort, limited research has been done. RTI encompasses many factors necessary for implementation. Through case study design, the process and the interaction of factors are more easily identified and studied.

Phenomenon

Elements of successful RTI implementation include a number of key components necessary for improved student outcomes. These include evidence-based instruction for all students in each tier; differentiated instruction that allows for intervention immediately rather than “waiting to fail”; increasing the level of intervention; frequent psychometrically-sound assessment at each level, including screening, progress monitoring, and diagnostic feedback; informed decisions based on data; leadership at all levels; and ongoing professional development. Due to the large number of variables involved in studying reform and implementation, case studies have proven to be difficult and complex (Gross, Giacuinta, & Bernstein, 1971). As the schools in this study are

located within the same county, many of those variables should remain constant throughout the study.

Analysis Unit

In this study, the process or reform effort of implementation of the RtI² model is being examined. Conclusions will be drawn about factors that aide or hinder the implementation of this model.

Data Sources in Qualitative Research

Creswell (2009) describes several key factors that are used in qualitative research. Qualitative researchers collect data in the natural setting where participants are involved in the issue: for the purpose of this study, in the schools' reform efforts. This method will allow the researcher to gather data by interviewing teachers, principals, and support staff. Qualitative researchers are also able to conduct inductive data analysis by building patterns, categories, and themes as the information gathered becomes increasingly complex. During the process, the researcher remains focused on learning the meaning of the issue being studied, rather than what meaning the researcher brings to the study. As the researcher begins to learn more about the issue, phases of the process may change or shift as the study continues. Researchers will view their study through a theoretical lens organized around social, political, or historical context.

In this study, the historical and political aspects of providing all students with equal access to a free appropriate public education, regardless of disabilities, ethnicity, or native language, make this study applicable to many schools for both historical and political reasons. In qualitative research, the researcher interprets the findings based on interviews, observations, and documents. It is difficult for researchers to separate

themselves as they bring their own perceptions and interpretations to the research process. For these reasons, many methods will be utilized to ensure validity and reliability of the study. Qualitative researchers also try to develop a holistic impression of the issue under investigation. They report multiple perspectives, identify many factors, and attempt to present the “big picture” of the process or central phenomenon.

Sample

For the purpose of this study, the researcher used nonprobability (purposive) sampling, choosing two research sites purposefully. The selected sites met the following absolute criteria: elementary school in one county in southern California, minimum of 3 years of RtI² implementation, and recommended by members of the county RtI² Task Force. Additional criteria that were used to narrow the possibilities to two selected sites included: participation in the state pilot program to determine eligibility for specific learning disabilities, and/or an increase in Academic Performance Index (API). Schools that are participating in the state pilot program are required to self-evaluate their level of RtI² implementation (Appendix A). In order to be selected as a pilot school, a minimum floor of implementation was required in all identified core components. As a selected pilot school, eligibility for specific learning disabilities can be determined based on lack of response to intervention through a model of RtI². Another indicator of RtI² implementation is the API.

According to CDE (2008b), the API measures the academic achievement performance and growth of California schools. Individual student performance is averaged across all students in a particular school in order to calculate a school-wide API score. These scores are also calculated for subgroups that have either 50 students with

valid test scores who make up at least 15% of the total score or at least 100 students with valid test scores. API scores for subgroups can measure achievement gaps between different subgroups. API scores do not track individual student progress but rather provide a snapshot of a school's achievement results from year to year. RtI² outcomes include not only a reduction in the number of students eligible for special education but also a greater number of students making adequate yearly progress in achievement. API measures the achievement performance and growth of California schools.

The researcher asked the county RtI² Task Force Chair for a list of schools that have been implementing RtI² as evidenced in the County RtI² Self Assessment Tool (Appendix A). As the list contained some schools that are currently participating in a state pilot program using RtI² to determine eligibility for Specific Learning Disabilities, the researcher ranked those schools in order of increased API growth over the last 3 years and identified this grouping as Group A.

The researcher then ranked the non-participating pilot schools in order of increased API growth over the last 3 years and identified this grouping as Group B. The researcher hoped to involve schools that are participating in the pilot program as they are required to have a minimum to be considered in RtI² implementation. However, not all schools were aware of the pilot program, so they could be in full implementation and demonstrating outcomes, such as increasing student performance. The researcher developed a list of schools (Group A) based on participating schools in the pilot program with the top schools with the greatest growth in API.

The second grouping (Group B) was comprised of schools that are not participating in the pilot program, with the schools demonstrating the greatest growth in

API at the top of the list for that grouping. The third grouping (Group C) was comprised of schools that were not identified by the Task Force Chair, however, these schools were currently participating the state pilot program using RtI² to determine eligibility for Specific Learning Disabilities. These schools were ranked within this group (Group C), with the schools demonstrating the greatest growth in API at the top of the list for that grouping. As the researcher was only able to secure superintendent and principal permission from one school from Group B, the researcher requested Pepperdine Institutional Review Board modification to include additional schools recommended by members of the RtI² Task Force. Two members of the RtI² Task Force identified an additional school as meeting the following absolute criteria: elementary school in one county in southern California; minimum of 3 years of RtI² implementation; and recommended by members of the county RtI² Task Force. This school was added to the list in another grouping (Group D).

The researcher was unable to secure approval for the first three schools on the rank order list. The fourth school on the ranked order list received superintendent and principal approval, as well as from support staff and teachers. School four on the list became part of the study and is referred to as “School A.” The researcher was unable to secure approvals for the next six schools on the rank order list. School 11 on the ranked order list received superintendent and principal approval, as well as from support staff and teachers. School 11 on the list became part of the study and is referred to as “School B.”

School A is a mid-size elementary school located in Southern California. Ninety-seven percent of the students are Hispanic or Latino. Majority of the students participate

in the free or reduced lunch program. Eighty-three percent of the students are English learners. Five percent of the population receives special education services.

School B is a mid-size elementary school located in Southern California. Eighty-eight percent of the students are Hispanic or Latino. The majority of the students participate in free or reduced lunch program. Sixty-six percent of the students are English learners. Five percent of the population receives special education services.

Table 1 presents the ranking and selection of schools for the study.

Table 1

Ranking and Selection of Schools

Name of School	Elementary School in one County in Southern California	Implemented RtI ² for Minimum of 3 years	School Recommended by RtI ² Chair or Members of Task Force	Schools Currently Piloting for SLD	Increase in API
Group A					
School 1	X	X	X	X	X
School 2	X	X	X	X	X
School 3	X	X	X	X	
Group B					
School 4	X	X	X		X
School 5	X	X	X		X
School 6	X	X	X		
School 7	X	X	X		
Group C					
School 8	X	X		X	X
School 9	X	X		X	
School 10	X	X		X	
Group D					
School 11	X	X	X		

Note. Schools 4 and 11 were included in study and are referred to as School A and School B, respectively. SLD refers to “Specific Learning Disability.” API refers to “Academic Performance Index.”

The researcher contacted the school district superintendents of the top two ranked identified schools from Group A for permission to interview the principal, support staff (psychologist, speech pathologist), special education teachers, and general education teachers (Appendix B). Once permission was received from the district superintendent, the researcher contacted the principal of the identified school by email to invite his/her school to participate in the study (Appendix C) and included a copy of Informed Consent Form (Appendix D). The researcher shared the purpose of the study and explained why the particular site was chosen. The researcher described the purpose of the interviews, delineated the amount of time involved, and assured the confidentiality of all responses. The researcher shared that the interviews would be held during mutually convenient times for the participants, and would not be disruptive to the school program. The results of the study would be shared following the study. Pseudonyms or codes would be used to protect participants' identities. Tape recordings and transcribed materials would be locked and secured.

Next, the researcher followed up with an email to determine the principal's willingness to participate as well as answer any additional questions (Appendix E). The researcher shared that the school site selection was dependent upon the consent of principal and support staff (psychologist, speech pathologist, and special education teachers) to participate in the study. If either or both of these two groups of subjects did not consent to participate, then the researcher was not able to include that school in the study and would need to go to the next school on the list of possible schools. In addition, the researcher needed six general education teachers, one of which could be an intervention general education teacher. As the implementation of RtI² requires that

psychologists, speech pathologists, and special education teachers re-define their roles, these individuals also provide necessary support and consultation. If any of the support staff members chose not to participate, or the researcher was unable to secure six general education teachers, the researcher contacted the next school on the rank order list until the researcher received tentative approval from the principal, psychologist, speech pathologist, and special education teachers of a selected school.

Due to the current budget conditions, the researcher had difficulty securing permission from the superintendent, principal, and/or participants in the top two ranked selected schools. Superintendents or principals were concerned about the strained relations between the district and teacher unions. Many teacher unions were advocating for teachers to not work beyond their normal workday. This situation resulted in superintendents and/or principals being hesitant about asking support staff and teachers to participate in the study. The researcher secured superintendent permission of school one, however, the site principal declined to participate due to a number of factors.

The researcher then contacted and visited with the assistant superintendent of schools two and three on the rank order list, both of which were in the same district. The assistant superintendent of schools two and three on the rank order list agreed to participate given several stipulations that made it difficult for the researcher to conduct the study. These stipulations included the agreement that the principal was not to assist in any way and all interviews must be held after contract hours. The researcher then contacted the superintendent of school four on the rank order list. The superintendent readily agreed to participate in the study.

Once permission was received from the district superintendent, the researcher contacted the principal of the identified school by email to invite him/her to participate in the study (Appendix C) and included a copy of the Informed Consent Form (Appendix D). The researcher shared the purpose of the study and explained why the particular site was chosen. The researcher described the purpose of the interviews, time involved, and assure the confidentiality of the responses. The researcher shared that the interviews would be held during mutually convenient times for the participants, and would not be disruptive to the school program. The results of the study would be shared following the study. Pseudonyms or codes would be used and tape recordings and transcribed materials would be locked and secured to protect participants' identities.

Next, the researcher followed-up with an email to determine the principal's willingness to participate as well as answer any additional questions (Appendix E). The researcher shared that the school site selection was dependent upon the consent of principal and support staff (psychologist, speech pathologist, and special education teachers) to participate in the study. The researcher scheduled a meeting with the site principal of school four to discuss the study, interview protocol, consent forms, and selection of participants.

The site principal agreed to participate and asked to distribute cover letters (Appendix F) and consent forms (Appendix D) to participants personally as it would be easier for the participants. The principal was also concerned that teachers were asked to participate beyond the instructional day. The principal asked for volunteers representing each grade level. Numbers were assigned to the participants, so participants' numbers could be randomly pulled from a hat. However, the researcher secured the exact number

of participants needed for the study. Both the principal and researcher developed an interview schedule that was convenient for the participants. The researcher was available for any questions regarding the participant's informed consent (Appendix D). If the identified participant agreed, an appointment time was scheduled. The researcher collected signed consent forms prior to the interviews. The researcher was able to secure the participation of school four's principal, support staff, and general education teachers.

The researcher then contacted the superintendent of school five and secured superintendent permission. The site principal agreed to participate in the study and secured all support staff permissions. However, the researcher had difficulty securing six general education teachers to participate. The researcher then contacted the superintendent of school six and secured permission. The site principal agreed to participate and secured all support staff permissions. However, general education teacher participation was very limited. The researcher contacted superintendent of school seven but was unable to secure permission to conduct the study.

The researcher contacted the next three schools on the list and was unable to secure permission as superintendents and principals were concerned with end-of-year activities and asking teachers to take on additional roles. The researcher then contacted addition members of the RtI² Task Force for additional schools that have been implementing RtI² for at least 3 years. Two members of the RtI² Task Force recommended school 11. As school 11 was recommended by other members of the RtI² Task Force, the researcher submitted a modification to the Pepperdine Institutional Review Board to include "Members of the RtI² Task Force." The modification was approved, allowing the researcher to continue with the study. The researcher contacted

the superintendent of school 11 and received permission to conduct the study (Appendix G). The superintendent readily agreed.

Once permission was received from the district superintendent, the researcher contacted the principal of the identified school by email and invited them to participate in the study (Appendix H) and included a copy of Informed Consent Form (Appendix I). The researcher shared the purpose of the study and explained why the particular site was chosen. The researcher described the purpose of the interviews, explained the amount of time involved, and assured the confidentiality of the responses. The researcher shared that the interviews would be held during mutually convenient times for the participants, and would not be disruptive to the school program. The results of the study would be shared following the study. Pseudonyms or codes would be used and tape recordings and transcribed materials would be locked and secured to protect participant confidentiality.

Next, the researcher followed up with an email to determine the principal's willingness to participate as well as answer any additional questions (Appendix E). The researcher shared that the school site selection was dependent upon the consent of principal and support staff (psychologist, speech pathologist, and special education teachers) to participate in the study. The researcher scheduled a meeting with the site principal of school 11 on the list to discuss the study, interview protocol, consent forms and selection of participants. The site principal agreed to participate and asked to distribute consent forms to participants personally as it would be easier for the participants. The principal was also concerned that teachers were asked to participate beyond the instructional day. The principal asked for volunteers representing the grade levels. Numbers were assigned to the participants, so numbers could be randomly pulled

from a hat. However, the researcher secured the exact number of participants needed for the study.

Both the principal and researcher developed a schedule that was convenient for the participants. The researcher gave the participants a cover letter (Appendix J) and informed consent forms (Appendix I). The researcher made herself available for any questions regarding the participants' informed consent (Appendix I). If the identified participant agreed, an appointment time was scheduled. The researcher collected signed consent forms prior to the interviews. The researcher was able to secure the participation of school 11's principal, support staff, and general education teachers.

Qualitative data were collected from principals, teachers, and support staff involved with the RtI² implementation at both sites. Interviews were the primary source of data as they allow for an in-depth explanation of questions pertaining to reform efforts, such as the implementation of RtI². A total of 10 participants were selected from each school. Participation was purely voluntary. Interviews were conducted on site, as that was the natural setting for the reform. Interviews were individually scheduled and planned at a convenient time for the participant. Each interview lasted approximately 45-60 minutes and was tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Participants were given interview questions (Appendix K) prior to the interview. An interview protocol was utilized (Appendices L & M) for opening and concluding the interview, including a final statement thanking the participant and acknowledging their time. Interviews were semi-structured with predetermined questions to elicit specific information from the interviewees (Appendix K). The predetermined questions followed an open-ended format to allow for further clarification. The researcher audio recorded

each interview as well as taking hand written notes in the event that the recording equipment failed. The researcher sent a thank you card to all participants thanking them for their participation (Appendix N).

Human Subjects

Ten participants, including six classroom teachers, three support staff, and one principal, from each site were included in the data collection for a total of 20 participants. The number of years in the current position was noted, but was not used to limit participation. The principal and support staff from each site were selected by census in that they are the sole administrators occupying these roles in each school. As mentioned in the previous section, if the principal and/or the support staff did not want to participate, the researcher did not use that school for the study. The researcher attempted to recruit general education teachers who would participate based on the ratio of primary teachers to upper grade teachers. For example if two-thirds of the staff were comprised of primary teachers (K-2), then two-thirds of the teachers selected were primary teachers.

Volunteers were solicited and all identified participants were assigned a number in case of multiple volunteers at a grade level. The researcher planned to pick random numbers until six teachers agreed to participate. However, the number of volunteers did not surpass the number of participants needed. The total participants in the study included two site principals, two psychologists, two speech pathologists, two special education teachers, and 12 general education teachers from one county in Southern California. Two of the 12 general education teachers were classroom teachers providing intervention support.

As these teachers worked mainly with the primary teachers, the intervention teachers were considered to be primary teachers in the ratio of primary teachers to upper grade teachers. School A has 26 general education teachers, with 19 primary and seven upper grade teachers. Two upper grade teachers and four primary grade teachers were recruited for the study, totaling six general education teachers. School B has 24 general education teachers, with 18 primary and six upper grade teachers. Two upper grade teachers and four primary grade teachers were recruited for the study, totaling six general education teachers. The question relating to years in one's teaching position was used for general subject description purposes and not for a unit of analysis. The years in teaching for general education teachers for School A ranged from 5-35 years with the average being 15.16 years. The years in teaching for general education teachers for School B ranged from 5-30 years with the average being 15.5 years.

The support staff comprising of psychologists, speech pathologists, and special education teachers ranged in experience from 12-32 years at School A, and from 4-15 years at School B. The principal at School A had 20 years of classroom teaching experience with an additional 15 years as site principal. The principal at School B had 26 years of classroom teaching experience with an additional 5 years as site principal.

Human Subjects Considerations

Prior to the study, permission was obtained from the Pepperdine University Institutional Review Board (IRB) to protect the rights of human participants. This research study was conducted in accordance with the U.S. Code of Federal Regulations, DHHS (CFR), Title 45 Part 46 (45 CFR 46), titled Protection of Human Subjects, and Parts 160 and 164.

The researcher applied to the IRB for an exempt review process. This study presented minimal risk to the participants. The researcher made every effort to make the participants feel comfortable. Participants were reminded that they could end the interview at any time. A completed application was submitted to the Pepperdine IRB for approval. IRB approval was granted on January 6, 2011. A Request for Modification was submitted to the Pepperdine IRB for approval. Approval was granted on May 25, 2011 to continue with study with modifications. The modification included the use of “Members of the RtI² Task Force” in addition to “RtI² Task Force Chair.”

As part of the IRB process, the researcher asked participating district superintendents or designees for permission to recruit participants. The researcher used a letter of permission from the superintendent when contacting local schools (Appendix B; Appendix G). Once district approval was received, the researcher contacted designated principals via email and letter to share the purpose of the study and determine their willingness to participate (Appendices C & H) and distribute the study’s Informed Consent Form (Appendices D & I). The researcher followed up with an email to answer any questions (Appendix E) and review informed consent for participation in research activities with the principal (Appendices D & I). Before any information was obtained, the researcher discussed the consent thoroughly with each participant. In accordance with Pepperdine University requirements, the researcher provided a letter (Appendices F & J) meeting requirements for the written statement regarding the research. In addition, the informed consent form was provided to all participants requesting their participation in the study (Appendices D & I). Any potential risk to the participants was minimal and was discussed in the informed consent form.

Individual responses elicited during the interviews was tape recorded with the participant's permission by using a audio recorder and transcribed later in a written document. The document was available only to the researcher and coders. The collected data from the interviews were confidential and the participants' privacy was respected. The researcher met participants face-to-face and used codes only known to the researcher to organize the information so that the identity of the participants was confidential and no names were revealed. As it may have been necessary for the researcher to make contact with the participants due to the nature of the study, such as the name of the principal, psychologist, speech pathologist, special education teacher, and/or primary and upper grade teachers, the researcher used School Site A or School Site B and then position such as P (principal), PS (psychologist), SP (speech pathologist), SE (special education teacher), and then PT (primary teacher), UT (upper grade teacher), or IT (intervention teacher). Therefore a primary teacher at school site A was indicated as such APT when data collection began.

For the purpose of transcribing the interviews, the same procedure was employed. The researcher reported and analyzed the data by school and by position within the school as well as when comparing across schools. The researcher ensured that the data could not be connected to specific individuals. All data will be kept confidential and secured in a locked cabinet in the researcher's home office. Data will be destroyed using a paper shredder after 3 years.

Instrumentation

The instrumentation used for this qualitative study included semi-structured interviews with principals, support staff (psychologists, speech pathologists, special

education teachers) and general education teachers. The interview instrument consisted of nine interview questions (Appendix K). The open-ended questions were utilized to gather information regarding leadership skills and behaviors, professional development practices, and the re-defining of staff roles in the implementation of RtI² at that particular site. The interview questions were created based on a thorough review of literature of factors contributing to school reform efforts and the implementation of RtI². Factors contributing to reform efforts became the basis for the following themes found in the literature review in Chapter 2: leadership; professional development; and the re-allocation of resources, including human resources. Each of these themes was used to develop the interview questions used in this study. Table 2 presents the relationship between the literature themes and interview questions.

According to Creswell (2009), each research design has advantages and limitations. It is important for the researcher to identify these advantages and limitations and establish procedures to ensure reliability. Advantages to using interviews as a primary data source include gathering information that cannot be directly observed; participants' ability to provide historical background information; and researcher control over the questions. Limitations to using interviews in qualitative data collection include the fact that information is filtered through the eyes of the interviewees; the setting is other than the natural setting such as the classroom or team meeting; the researcher's presence may bias the response of the interviewee; and not all people may be articulate in an interview setting.

Table 2

Relationship between the Literature Themes and the Interview Questions

Leadership Theme	Interview Question	Cited Research
Second Order leadership is necessary to initiate and sustain “change” efforts	L.1. What attributes and skills do you think would be crucial in a site leader for the successful implementation of RtI ² ?	Argyris & Schon, 1974; Burns & Gibbons, 2008; Burns & Ysseldyke, 2005; Elmore, 2000;
Provides guidance regarding effective practices in curriculum, instruction, and assessment	L.2. What type of behaviors did you observe in your principal that may have helped or hindered RtI ² implementation efforts?	Fullan, 2005; Hall, 2008; Heifetz, 1994; Marzano, 2003;
Displays a positive attitude and inspires others to go beyond previous expectations and becomes the driving force behind implementation efforts		Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Mellard & Johnson, 2008; Waters & Grub, 2004
Provides opportunities for teachers and support staff to engage in meaningful discussions on the most current theories and practices regarding school effectiveness		
Displays a willingness to challenge the status quota and consider new and better ways of doing things		
Provides feedback to monitor the effectiveness of curriculum and instruction as related to student achievement		
Displays the ability to be flexible and adapt leadership behavior to current situation resulting in direct or nondirective behaviors		
Articulates ideals and beliefs about schools, teaching, and learning and demonstrates behaviors consistent with those beliefs		

(table continues)

Professional Development Practices Theme	Interview Question	Cited Research
Initial and continuous implementation of reform efforts include professional development, collaboration, coaching	P.D.3. What training did you receive prior to the initial implementation? Was it helpful?	Batsche et al., 2005; Blank & de las Alas, 2009; Burns & Ysseldyke, 2005;
	P.D.4. What continues to be the focus of professional development? What areas were most effective? What areas still need to be addressed?	Hirsh, 2009; Marzano, 2003; McREL, 2000; National Commission of Excellence in Education, 1983;
	P.D.5. What type of ongoing support is in place to maintain integrity of the implementation? Who provides that support?	National Research Council, 2006; National Staff Development Council, 2009; No Child Left Behind Act, 2008; Wei et al., 2009
	P.D.6. How do staff members work collaboratively to monitor student learning and implement interventions?	
Re-defining Staff Roles and Responsibilities Theme	Interview Question	Cited Research
New and expanding roles will require a shift in how teachers and support staff conduct assessment and intervention practices for struggling students as well as students with disabilities	S.R.7. What job responsibilities have been restructured to provide the necessary support? Please explain.	Ahearn, 2003; CDE, 2008a; Elmore, 2000; Ikeda & Gustafson, 2002; Johnson, Mellard, Fuchs, & McKnight, 2006; Mellard & Johnson, 2008;
	S.R.8. Have you received any training or support from special education staff or other support staff members? What type of training? Did you find it helpful?	Miles & Darling-Hammond, 1998; Simms & Wilbur, 1999
	S.R.9. What additional resources, such as staffing, release time, materials, was made available or adjusted to assist in the implementation?	

For the purpose of this study no current instruments were available to address the research questions. Therefore, a set of pre-determined interview questions were developed (Appendix K). The warm-up interview question elicited demographic

information, such as: present position in the school, years of work experience in that position, and years at current job setting. The first set of interview questions addressed leadership attributes or skills that helped or hindered the process of implementation. The next series of questions addressed professional development activities that were provided prior to implementation, ongoing professional development, and collaboration opportunities. The final series of questions addressed the re-defining of job responsibilities (including teachers and support staff), any additional staffing that may have contributed to implementation, and the types of support that general education teachers may have received from support staff.

Threats to Internal Validity

Threats to internal validity included the social desirability factor. This refers to the participant's perception of the importance or lack of importance of factors contributing to implementation. Another threat relates to participants' fear that administration would find out about individual responses, even though confidentiality of responses was ensured.

Reliability and Validity

Qualitative reliability ensures that the researcher's approach is consistent across different researchers and different projects. The researcher employed a number of procedures to ensure reliability, such as checking transcripts to ensure they did not contain obvious mistakes during transcription, and making sure that that no change in definition of codes took place during the coding process. Qualitative validity ensures that the researcher checks for the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures. Multiple strategies of validity must be created to ensure accuracy of the findings

(Creswell, 2009). The interview data and themes were reviewed by a professional colleague with expertise on school reform efforts and qualitative research methods to prevent researcher bias and increase research credibility. The researcher may use member checking to determine accuracy by conducting a follow-up interview with participants in the study and allowing them an opportunity to comment on the findings (Appendix M).

Nonresponse and Handling Nonresponse

The researcher picked two additional random numbers in case a selected teacher was sick during the data collection period. As the principal and support staff play critical roles in RtI² implementation, the researcher made arrangements to conduct a Skype interview in case those individuals were not present during the data collection period.

Expert Review

The researcher developed the interview protocol personally. Because the interview protocol is a new instrument, expert review was utilized to validate the content and organization of the instrumentation prior to its use with participants. The researcher sent a letter to three key experts asking them to help validate the content and organization of the instrument (Appendix O). Once the identified key experts agreed to participate, the researcher sent a copy of the Interview Protocol (Appendices L & M) Interview Questions (Appendix K), Key Expert Letter (Appendix P), and Key Expert Response Form (Appendix Q). The researcher asked them to read the interview questions for content and clarity. The researcher asked if any other questions needed to be added. In addition, the researcher asked if the interview questions related to the research question being asked. The researcher made adjustments to the interview questions accordingly.

Two key experts were involved in RtI² implementation at the state, county, and district levels. One key expert was a site-based administrator who has had success with RtI² implementation. Two key experts have published articles or studies in peer-reviewed journal and/or have spoken at national, state, county, or district level conferences on leadership, professional development, or the implementation of RtI². All key experts confirmed that the research questions were clear and related to the research questions being asked.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted to test the instrument and see if the interview instructions were clear, if questions made sense to subject-like respondents, and if the time proposed for interviews was appropriate. The pilot study was conducted with one elementary principal, one support staff member, and two teachers who were representative of the proposed subject pool. The pilot study members were members of the district's RtI² Committee. The researcher sent a letter to the identified members of the pilot study team asking them to help pilot the instrument (Appendix R). The pilot study participants were asked to provide feedback on clarity of instructions, length of time for interview, and clarity of questions (Appendix S). The researcher made adjustments to the interview questions accordingly. All pilot study participants agreed that the instructions and questions were clear and the length of time for the interview was appropriate. One pilot study participant suggested that a copy of the questions be available for those who may need to read the questions in addition to hearing the researcher read them aloud.

Data Collection Procedures

The researcher obtained approval from Pepperdine University's IRB prior to collection of data. Approval from district office superintendents (Appendix B) was obtained as part of the IRB process. Approval from the district office superintendent (Appendix G) was obtained as part of the IRB process modification. The researcher sent an email, a copy of the letter (Appendices C & H), and a copy of the Informed Consent (Appendices D & I) to selected principals. The researcher shared the purpose of the study and explained why the particular site was chosen. The researcher described the purpose of the interview, discussed the amount of time involved, and assured the confidentiality of the responses. The researcher followed up with a phone call to determine the principal's willingness to participate as well as answer any additional questions (Appendix E). The researcher met with the principal to discuss selection of participants. The principals provided the participants with the consent forms prior to their participation. The researcher made herself available for questions. The researcher asked the participants to sign the consent and the researcher picked up the signed consent forms before each interview was conducted. The researcher shared the purpose of the study and explained why the particular site was chosen. The researcher described the purpose of the interview, explained the amount of time involved, and assure the confidentiality of the responses. Interviews were held during mutually convenient times for the participants and did not disrupt the school program. Pseudonyms and codes were used and tape recordings and transcribed materials were locked and secured to protect participant confidentiality.

The school site selection was dependent upon the consent of the principal and support staff (psychologists, speech pathologists, and special education teachers) in order for a school site to participate in the study. If either or both of these groups of subjects did not consent to participate, then the researcher did not include that school and moved to the next school on the list of possible schools. As the implementation of RtI² requires that the psychologist, speech pathologist, and special education teachers re-define their roles, these individuals provide necessary support and consultation and are essential participants for this study.

Once the school site was selected and the principal, psychologist, speech pathologist, and special education teacher agreed to participate, the researcher identified the general education teachers to be included in the study. The researcher requested a list of all general education teachers, identifying those that teach grades K-2 or 3-5. The researcher selected the number of teachers to participate based on the ratio of primary teachers to upper grade teachers. For example if two-thirds of the staff were comprised of primary teachers (K-2), then two-thirds of the teachers selected would be primary teachers. Volunteers were solicited. All participants were assigned a number in case more than one participant was in a selected grouping. Once the general education teacher participants were selected, the researcher contacted the participants by letter to invite them to participate in the study (Appendices F & J). A copy of the Informed Consent was also included (Appendices D & I). The researcher shared the purpose of the study and explained why the particular site was chosen. The researcher described the purpose of the interviews, discussed the amount of time involved, and assured the confidentiality of the responses. Interviews were held during mutually convenient times for the

participants and did not disrupt the school program. Pseudonyms and codes were used and tape recordings and transcribed materials were locked and secured to protect participant confidentiality.

The interviews occurred in the natural setting, which was in a small room located in the office or in their classroom, free from disruptions. The time and location of the data collection were conveniently scheduled to accommodate participant's schedule. Interviews were held individually and face-to-face. The participants were provided with the general topic and questions prior to the interview. When the researcher was ready, the participant was asked to come into the office or the researcher went to the classroom. A request was made that all phone calls be held until after the interview. The researcher reminded the participant that the interview was confidential. The researcher reminded the participant to be honest in his/her responses.

The interviews were semi-structured. First, the researcher set up the recording instrument. The researcher asked permission to tape record the interview prior to commencing. The participants were informed that they could ask to turn off the recording equipment if they chose. The researcher followed an interview protocol so procedures could be standardized for each interview (Appendices L & M). The researcher held a copy of the interview questions with space after each question the researcher could take notes in case the recording equipment did not work (Appendix K). Interviews were transcribed later.

Analytical Techniques

Data analysis involves collecting the qualitative data and developing an analysis from the information supplied by the participants. Case study research involves a

detailed description of the process, followed by analysis of the data for themes or issues (Creswell, 2009). A series of steps were used in the data analysis. Data were first organized and prepared for analysis. This involved transcribing interviews and organizing the data into different types depending on the source of information. After reading all the information, the researcher gained a general sense of the information and reflected on the overall meaning. The researcher then began a detailed analysis using a coding process. Coding is the process of organizing the data into segments of text before bringing meaning to information (Rossman & Rallis, 1998).

For this study, the interview data were transcribed by a trained transcriber. Coding was completed by the researcher as well as an additional coder to ensure trustworthiness and to minimize researcher bias. The interview data and themes were reviewed by a professional colleague with expertise on school reform efforts and qualitative research methods to prevent researcher bias and increase research credibility.

For research question 1a regarding leadership attributes and skills, the researcher used predetermined coding based on the research of Marzano et al. (2005). Marzano et al. identified 21 leadership responsibilities and practices that have a direct impact on student learning. Marzano et al. also identified seven leadership responsibilities that are significantly correlated with second-order change. These changes can be complex and generally occur outside of the existing paradigms. Second-order changes require teachers to acquire new knowledge and skills. The researcher utilized Marzano et al.'s 21 leadership responsibilities to organize the data from interviews to address the first question relating to leadership attributes and skills for the successful implementation of

RtI². After the leadership behaviors were identified, the researcher recorded the response by School A, School B, and overall.

For research question 1b on professional development and 1c on staff roles and responsibilities, the researcher used open coding. Themes were identified during the coding process (Appendix T). After the themes were identified, responses to the interview questions were recorded by School A, School B, and overall.

The themes or descriptors were represented in tables and narrative form. The final step in the data analysis involved making an interpretation or meaning of the data. Generalizations or implications for other sites implementing RtI² will be described and further areas of study will be addressed.

Chapter 4

Results

This chapter presents the results of the study. It begins with a review of the purpose and research questions, followed by a summary of the design. Then the results are presented in regard to the three components of the research question, including the key findings. The chapter concludes with a summary.

Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative case study is threefold: (a) to identify the leadership attributes and skills of site principals that contribute to the implementation of RtI²; (b) to examine the professional development practices contributing to the implementation of RtI²; and (c) to examine how the new roles of general education teachers, special education teachers, and support staff (psychologists, speech pathologists) have contributed to the implementation of RtI² at two elementary schools in one county in Southern California.

Research Question

The following research question guided this study: What do principals, teachers, and support staff in two elementary schools in one county in Southern California perceive as contributing to the implementation of RtI² in regards to the following: (a) leadership attributes, skills, and practices; (b) professional development practices; and (c) new roles of general education teachers, special education teachers, and support staff (psychologists, speech pathologists, and any additional staff utilized for RtI² implementation)?

Research Design Summary

This study used a qualitative comparative case study design in order to identify the various key components that have contributed to the successful implementation of RtI² at two purposefully selected elementary school sites. The sites selected met the following criteria: elementary school in one county in southern California, minimum of 3 years of RtI² implementation, and recommended by members of the county RtI² Task Force. Additional criteria that were included to narrow the sites to two selected sites included participation in the state pilot program to determine eligibility for specific learning disabilities, and/or an increase in API. The sites were identified and grouped based on the above criteria. The researcher sought superintendent and principal approvals to conduct research.

The researcher was unable to secure approval for the first three schools on the rank order list. School four on the ranked order list received superintendent and principal approval, as well as support staff and teachers. School four on the list became part of the study and is referred to as “School A.” The researcher was unable to secure approvals for the next six schools on the rank order list. School 11 on the ranked order list received superintendent and principal approval, as well as support staff and teachers. School 11 on the list became part of the study and is referred to as “School B.”

The researcher secured all approvals and consent prior to conducting interviews. The interviews were semi-structured consisting of 10 interview questions. The interview questions were reviewed by a panel of experts to validate the content and organization of the instrumentation, as well as piloted by representatives of the proposed subject pool. This study included interviews with two principals, two psychologists, two speech

pathologists, two special education teachers, and 12 general education teachers. The researcher selected the number of teachers to participate based on the ratio of primary teachers to upper grade teachers. The researcher interviewed principals, teachers, and support staff regarding site leadership behaviors, professional development opportunities, and the new roles for teachers and support staff in the implementation of the RtI² model at their particular site. Data were collected during the 2010-2011 academic school year. Interviews with principals, teachers and support staff took place at the school site during the school year.

The research question examined the structures that contribute to implementation of the RtI² model. The purpose was to gather the perceptions of all staff members of practices contributing to implementation of the RtI² model.

Participants were asked 10 interview questions. The first question relating to current position and years in that position was for general subject description purposes and not for a unit of analysis. The following nine interview questions addressed site leadership, professional development practices, and staff roles and responsibilities based on the literature review found in Chapter 2.

Presentation of Data and Report of Findings

Research question 1a findings. Research question 1a asked, What do principals, teachers, and support staff in two elementary schools in one county in Southern California perceive as contributing to the implementation of RtI² in regards to leadership attributes, skills, and practices? The following interview questions related to this research question: What attributes and skills do you think would be crucial in a site leader for the successful implementation of RtI²? Why? What type of leadership behaviors do you feel

may have helped or hindered RtI² implementation efforts? Table 3 indicates leadership behaviors that respondents from School As and B perceived as critical for a site leader in the implementation of RtI².

Table 3

Leadership Behaviors Perceived as Critical in a Site Leader

Leadership Behaviors	School A	School B	Overall
<i>Change agent</i> : is willing to challenge and actively challenges the status quo	5	1	6
<i>Flexibility</i> : adapts his or her leadership behavior to the needs of the current situation and is comfortable with dissent	4	5	9
<i>Intellectual stimulation</i> : ensures faculty and staff are aware of the most current theories and practices and makes the discussion of these a regular aspect of the school's culture	2	0	2
<i>Optimizer</i> : inspires and leads new and challenging innovations	6	3	9
<i>Monitors/evaluates</i> : monitors the effectiveness of school practices and their impact on student learning	1	5	6
<i>Ideals/beliefs</i> : communicates and operates from strong ideals and beliefs about schooling	2	0	2
<i>Knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment</i> : is knowledgeable about current curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices	6	7	13
Communication: establishes strong lines of communication with and among teachers and students	0	2	2
Culture: fosters shared beliefs and a sense of community and cooperation	3	2	5
Input: involves teachers in the design and implementation of important decisions and policies	0	0	0
Order: establishes a set of standard operating procedures and routines	1	0	1
Discipline: protects teachers from issues and influences that would detract from their teaching time or focus	0	0	0

(table continues)

Leadership Behaviors	School A	School B	Overall
Resources: provides teachers with materials, and professional development necessary for the successful execution of their jobs	7	2	9
Curriculum, instruction, and assessment: is directly involved in the design and implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices	0	0	0
Focus: establishes clear goals and keeps those goals in the forefront of the school's attention	0	0	0
Visibility: has quality contact and interactions with teachers and students	0	0	0
Outreach: is an advocate and spokesperson for the school to all stakeholders	0	0	0
Affirmation: recognizes and celebrates accomplishments and acknowledges failures	0	0	0
Relationship: demonstrates an awareness of the personal aspects of teachers and staff	2	2	4
Contingent rewards: recognizes and rewards individual accomplishments	0	0	0
Situational awareness: is aware of the details and undercurrents in the running of the school and uses this information to address current and potential problems	0	0	0

Note. Italicized leadership behaviors correlate to second-order changes

School A identified 11 leadership behaviors as critical in a site leader. Of the 11 behaviors identified, seven of those behaviors were identified as necessary for second-order change. Twenty-six responses fell into the leadership behaviors for second-order changes. The behaviors indicated as most critical for site leaders were *resources*, *optimizer*, and *knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment*. *Change agent* and *flexibility* were also cited as critical.

School B identified nine leadership behaviors as critical in a site leader. Of the nine behaviors identified, five of those behaviors were identified as necessary for second-order changes. Twenty-one responses fell into the leadership behaviors for second-order change. The behaviors indicated as most critical for site leaders were *knowledge of*

curriculum, instruction, and assessment. *Flexibility* and *monitor/evaluate* were also cited as critical.

A critical leadership behavior identified as common to both schools was the *knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment*. *Knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment* refers to the extent of the leader's knowledge of best practices. Marzano et al. (2005) clarify that this responsibility differs from the responsibility of involvement of *curriculum, instruction, and assessment* in that this focus is more on the acquisition and cultivation of knowledge.

Overall, 13 participants referred to the leader's *knowledge of curriculum and instruction* based on the needs of the students. When leaders know the cultural, linguistic, emotional and educational needs of their students, they are better able to determine appropriate curriculum and instructional practices. The use of "best practices" does not occur in isolation. The importance of the leader to be knowledgeable of *curriculum, instruction, and assessment* is evidenced in the statements below.

I think recognizing what the children come from. What community the children come from and what backgrounds they possess and what cultural differences there might be in that school's population. And I would imagine having a little grasp of that gives you an indication as to why children are reacting this way to say a program or not, I would think. (Upper grade teacher, personal communication, March 29, 2011)

Well, if I understand this correctly, in order for a person, for a leader to implement RTI, this individual must know its population, school population, school needs, and be able to be sympathetic with those needs and look for alternative ways of improving the needs of that particular population. And skills, one who knows the skills necessary to meet the needs of certain kids because kids have different skills, so that leader must be able to have a variety of skills for different learning levels, learning styles. (Upper grade teacher, personal communication, March 31, 2011)

In addition to specific knowledge regarding curriculum and instruction, leaders need to understand the concept of RTI. One staff member explained:

I think you need a background knowledge, instructional knowledge with literacy of course and also good understanding of what RTI really is because obviously, it's a flexible model and it looks different at different sites. (Intervention teacher, personal communication, March 29, 2011)

Another common theme identified by both sites as critical in RTI implementation efforts is the leader's ability to be flexible. According to Marzano et al. (2005), *flexibility* refers to the ability of the leader to adapt his or her leadership behavior to the current situation. An effective leader is comfortable being either directive or nondirective, as the situation warrants. An effective leader also allows for contrary opinions and is comfortable making changes. In order to be flexible, the site leader needs to know the strengths and personalities of the staff members. The site leader also understands that staff members are at different stages in the reform efforts. These leaders adjust their leadership style based on that information. The importance of flexibility is illustrated in the statements below:

I think a site leader needs to be flexible. You are dealing with different personalities, you have got to know how to approach different personalities to teaching styles when you have a new idea like RTI, even though it's not a new idea, it's new to the school. So I do think you have to be flexible. (Psychologist, personal communication, March 29, 2011)

Not being strong and making it happen but kind of coaxing people through it and not being too threatening in a way that you're implementing the change 'cause it is a big change for our school. (Intervention teacher, personal communication, March 29, 2011)

I think one thing is they need to be able to go with the flow, do whatever needs to be done, be willing to change, as well as listen to the teachers; and if something needs to be done about it, they're okay with it, or will help figure out a way to solve the problem. (Primary teacher, personal communication, May 4, 2011)

Although not equally common to both sites, *optimizer* and *resources* received the second highest number of responses. *Optimizer* refers to the leader's ability to motivate and inspire others. Respondents identified this responsibility as the driving force behind implementation efforts. An effective leader displays a positive attitude and inspires teachers to go beyond previous expectations. Key words that were common in this theme were motivational, optimistic, and inspirational. A willingness of the leader to become involved and be a part of the reform effort also motivated the staff. The importance of the leader's ability to inspire his/her staff is evident in the statements below:

I think you have to be motivational, you need to be able to approach it in a way to show the benefits for everybody because it's a new concept—you need to get buy in from everybody. I think you need to be optimistic and for anybody that's been in education as long as some others have you see that we have these paradigms that come about in five or six years and RTI is kind of new, even though it's not a new idea, it's a new concept. So I think principals have to be able to put it out there and be optimistic and think it's going to work and be very positive and I think that's hard for some principals. (Psychologist, personal communication, May 29, 2011)

They have to be able to rally the troops and get everybody on board – have buy-in. All of that is enthusiasm, so that might be an attribute. (Upper grade teacher, personal communication, May 23, 2011)

Resources received the second highest number of responses. Marzano et al. (2005) use the term *resources* to refer to the leader's ability to provide professional development and materials necessary for teachers to fulfill their required duties. An effective leader ensures that teachers have staff development opportunities that enhance their teaching as well as the required materials and equipment. Resources necessary in the implementation of RtI² were in the form of human resources or personnel. It is necessary for the leader to look at existing resources and re-distribute and manage them in such a way as to provide the necessary support for implementation. In addition to

providing additional personnel, site leaders also provide release time to staff members to attend workshops, visit other schools, or collaborate with colleagues. The importance of the leader to utilize the resources effectively is demonstrated in the statements below:

Being able to make master schedules and kind of arranged everybody and times, that's been really effective as far as getting grade levels and teams able to use resources and making the master schedule—that has been huge. (Primary grade teacher, personal communication, March 29, 2011)

Putting the staff in the correct position to meet the needs of the students. (Primary grade teacher, personal communication, March 29, 2011)

A commitment in terms of time and resources and how to make it work for everybody. It wasn't only to benefit the students but what benefit the staff will get from it also. I think you had to kind of make us see that portion of it also. (Speech therapist, personal communication, March 31, 2011)

Both site leaders felt that successful implementation depended on the ability of the site leader to look at all available resources and strategically place them where they would be most useful. One principal explained the importance of resources below:

A leader needs to be able to listen, to assess your current resource status in terms of what's going on in the classroom, what your strengths are in terms of staff and resources and definitely take a look at your needs. Being able to listen and grasp all that is very, very important. Having the skills you might say to coordinate all those resources and to let people, I don't know, I want to use the word self direct. (Principal, personal communication, March 31, 2011)

A leadership behavior that was unique to School A as well as identified as one of the seven “second-order” leadership behaviors was *change agent*. Five staff members at School A referred to the site leader's ability to create change. A leader must be willing to consider new and better ways of doing things; a leader with this quality must not only understand the “change process,” but also be able to lead the group through the change itself. A leader also systematically considers new and better ways of doing things. The

importance of the leader to be knowledgeable of the change process and create the necessary change is noted below.

I think there has to be a willingness for change, leading change in a school, being consistent with that change and following through and allowing it to actually run it...I mean not run its course but to persevere within and just...words are not coming to me but anyway, you know just follow through I guess would be a way to put it simply to follow through is really big. (Intervention teacher, personal communication, March 29, 2011)

Let's see, I guess how to break it down into manageable pieces. It seemed like a huge task, but to break it down into components and how do we go forward with it and how to build on those skills until we got to the point where we had a product that we are all comfortable with and keep building on that also. (Speech therapist, personal communication, March 31, 2011)

A leadership behavior that was unique to School B and identified as one of the seven “second-order” leadership behaviors was *monitors/evaluates*. Five staff members at School B referred to the site leader's ability to monitor the effectiveness of school practices and the impact on student learning. The importance of monitoring and evaluating programs is explained below:

Understanding data collection, and being able to guide the staff in data collection. We are going to that, looking at data collection, and using that data to implement what is going on in the classroom. Being able to guide the teachers with how to use that data. I really feel it is to the betterment or benefit of the student, because then they are getting what they really need—working on strands they really need to work on. (Special Education teacher, personal communication, May 5, 2011)

I think a leader should just be available to the teachers and you know come in to observe their RTI and see how it is being implemented and are the teachers using the intervention teachers with flexible grouping? And are they switching back and forth and looking at different areas of need for all the students? (Upper grade teacher, personal communication, May 5, 2011)

In addition to identifying leadership behaviors critical for implementation efforts, more specific behaviors that helped or hindered RtI² implementation efforts were

identified. Table 4 presents behaviors that respondents from School A and School B indicated were helpful in implementation of RtI².

Table 4

Behaviors that Help in Implementation Efforts

Behavior	School A	School B	Overall
Strong Relationships	1	1	2
Scheduling/Organization	2	3	5
Leadership Team	3	0	3
Cohesive Staff	5	3	8
Focus	1	2	3
Resources (personnel, time)	3	2	5
Ideals/Beliefs	1	1	2
Grade level Meetings/Collaboration	1	2	3
Professional Development	0	1	1
Monitoring Classrooms	0	1	1

School A identified eight behaviors that were helpful to implementation. The most helpful behavior to implementation was having a cohesive staff. Leadership teams and the availability of resources were also indicated as important to implementation efforts. School B identified nine behaviors that were helpful to implementation. The most helpful behavior was having a cohesive staff and the scheduling and organization of resources. Staff responses varied among the seven behaviors.

One behavior that both schools identified as critical to implementation efforts was the connectedness and cohesiveness of the staff. Eight staff members indicated that the cohesiveness of the staff helped with implementation efforts. The staff members valued sharing and collaborating with one another. The principals valued collaboration and set

aside time for teachers to plan instructional units, as well as review student data.

Teachers enjoyed working with their colleagues. As one teacher shared:

We have a very cohesive staff at the school, in fact in all the schools I have worked out this is one of the most cohesive staffs that I have ever worked with. So they all get along very well. People work well together. Most people I think are pretty happy, most teachers, that's why it helps. (Psychologist, personal communication, March 29, 2011)

Another teacher shared that the principal's encouragement of teachers working together helps with implementation. She explained:

The encouragement of having people collaborate together and talk together and work together you know and it helps, we are such a close community here, we were already collaborating together that I don't think they had to do much tweaking. I don't know at other places where you might have grade levels for people aren't used to working together and don't actually prefer one another's company as much. It might be harder but you would have to have somebody that encourages people to work together because you can't really do everything on your own. You really have to be able to talk things out and you know say well I was having problems with this or you know I thought this came out really great you know what did you think, that always helps and that helps with RTI, that helps with all kinds of things, all of your lessons and stuff. (Upper grade teacher, personal communication, May 4, 2011)

School A indicated that leadership teams helped with implementation because the teams took a central role in communicating information to grade level teams. Staff members trusted leadership teams and valued their input and direction. When asked if the school would be able to implement RTI without a leadership team, a staff member said she didn't believe they could. The staff member explained:

No, I don't believe so because I think by having a strong leadership team who actually went out and got some higher training and kind of front loading in terms of what is this, what's it about. I think as teachers when you hear it from your peers and you don't feel like the district is telling you this is what you are going to do to implement it, I think you have better buy in and I think you have a respect from your peers who are also in the trenches I guess, you know when you are passing on information saying hey we are going to try something different this is the way we are going to do it, what do you guys think? I think you have a better

buy in when you are working with your peers. (Speech therapist, personal communication, March 31, 2011)

Another staff member from School A shared about the trust and respect that the staff members have towards the leadership team.

The leadership team is strong and people trust them and respect them. So I think if I get the impression I am not on the leadership team but I get the impression that the leadership team is recommending this that everybody is willing to move forward. (Psychologist, personal communication, March 29, 2011)

The second most frequent overall response regarding behaviors that helped with the implementation of RtI² was the organization and scheduling of resources. Additional personnel and release time to collaborate was helpful to the implementation. Staff members appreciated and viewed as important principals setting aside funds to hire intervention teachers, paraeducators, or substitutes in order to release the teachers. One primary teacher shared:

I think some things that really helped, especially at our school, was that our leader made it a priority; and we knew it was a priority because we set aside funds for it. We made it a priority that we had the intervention teachers and the para-educators available to us in a certain schedule. The principal put in the work in figuring out the schedule when they would come, and worked other things around – not just money, but timing to make it work smoothly for everybody on campus. The principal also provided time for the teachers to collaborate. I guess not only the work in planning, but also providing the funds and time for the teachers to be able to implement it, as well as the encouragement that this is what we're doing and why we're doing it. (Primary teacher, personal communication, May 10, 2011)

In addition to identifying behaviors that helped RtI² implementation efforts, staff members also identified behaviors that hindered implementation efforts. Table 5 indicates behaviors that respondents from School A and School B felt hindered implementation of RtI².

Table 5

Behaviors that Hinder Implementation Efforts

Behavior	School A	School B	Overall
Lack of Focus/Lack of Vision	2	0	2
Overly Sensitive to Teachers' Workload	1	0	1
Lack of Buy-in/Resistant to Change	3	0	3
Lack of Communication	1	1	2
Unrealistic Expectations	2	2	4
Lack of Knowledge	3	2	5
Lack of Resources	1	2	3
Lack of Focus/Lack of Vision	2	0	2

School A indicated seven behaviors that could hinder implementation efforts.

Lack of buy-in and lack of knowledge were both rated the highest in School A. School B indicated four behaviors could hinder implementation efforts. All four behaviors identified in School B as hindering implementation efforts, including unrealistic expectations, lack of knowledge, and lack of resources, generated one or two responses.

Both sites agreed that lack of knowledge on RtI² and how to implement a tiered model of support hindered implementation efforts. The following statements explain how lack of knowledge affected beginning implementation efforts:

I think what hindered implementation at first was not having a common definition or understanding of what it was. Is it special education; is it regular education, what are the components, what are the tiers? Being kind of under the gum to get it started before you understood it and that kind of started initially. But then I think our district kind of backed off and they said this is what you are going to do and this is how you are going to do it. I mean like it doesn't fit our style at all. And I think one of the best things that happened was there was an alignment with what the county, district and site levels for RTI was we had like this common interpretation and that was probably one of the best things to be able to move forward and then for our district to provide in-servicing and at the same time saying each site is going to look different and that's okay. All right. I think that was huge. (Speech therapist, personal communication, March 31, 2011)

One principal agreed that the lack of knowledge was a major hindrance to the beginning efforts of implementation. He shared the following:

One thing that hindered is basically, I am going to use myself as an example, I didn't have enough information. So in terms of leadership I don't think we were pushed or given enough opportunity to learn about RTI from the district office down to my level. So in that respect I didn't pass it on to my staff. But we were doing a lot of things that are RTI type. We didn't have the pyramid concept in mind. We just provided as much intervention as possible to as many kids as we could with the resource available. It started helping us once we had a clear idea and now it kind of fits into place and fit right into the pyramid concept. So hindrance would have been lack of knowledge and lack of being pushed towards that direction. Once we were pushed in that direction things kind of fell into place. We were also exposed to different models and then obviously we found that every model is totally different depending on your resource and your expertise and so that made a little more sense. Once we got the knowledge it was a lot easier. (Principal, personal communication, March 31, 2011)

One teacher shared that lack of knowledge and lack of clear expectations made the beginning phase of implementation difficult. She shared:

I feel like we didn't get enough explanation of different things, what was expected of us, what we should do and shouldn't do during the time. Our RTI is set apart, it's 45 minutes every day, and we have two other teachers—intervention teacher and then a para-educator at the same time. But we didn't really know what to have each of us do, we've kind of been figuring it out—it would have been nice to have a little more input; part of it was new, we were one of the first schools to really do it, so it would have been nice to hear from other places more, especially in kindergarten, because it's all new—what would be good. (Primary teacher, personal communication, May 4, 2011)

Lack of teacher buy-in was also one of the most frequently cited behaviors hindering implementation efforts at School A. One teacher stated,

One hindrance to implementation efforts would be teachers who are going to be more resistant and thinking why am I going to send my kids to RTI if it is not going to be effective and it is disruptive to our day? So, you need teacher buy-in and trying to make that happen. (Intervention teacher, personal communication, March 29, 2011)

Key findings. School A identified 11 leadership behaviors as critical in a site leader. Of the 11 behaviors identified, seven behaviors were identified as necessary for second-order changes. The behaviors indicated as most critical for site leaders were *optimizer, knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment, and resources*. *Change agent* and *flexibility* were also cited as critical.

School B identified nine critical leadership behaviors for a site leader. Of the nine behaviors identified, five behaviors were identified as necessary for second-order changes. The behaviors indicated as most critical for site leaders were *knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment*. *Flexibility and monitor/evaluate* were also cited as critical.

A critical leadership behavior identified as common to both schools was the *knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment*. In addition to *knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment, flexibility, change agent, and resources* were cited as critical in implementation.

Both schools cited connectedness and cohesiveness of the staff as behavior that helped in implementation. School A also indicated that leadership teams helped with implementation as the teams took a central role in communicating information to grade level teams. Staff members trusted leadership teams and valued their input and direction. The second most frequent response regarding behaviors that helped with the implementation of RTI was the organization and scheduling of resources. Additional personnel and release time to collaborate was helpful to the implementation. Both sites reported that lack of knowledge of RtI² and how to implement a tiered model of hindered implementation efforts.

Research question 1b findings. Research question 1b asked, What do principals, teachers, and support staff in two elementary schools in one county in Southern California perceive as contributing to the implementation of RtI² in regards to professional development practices. The following interview questions related to this research question: What training did you receive prior to the initial implementation? Was it helpful? What continues to be the focus of professional development? What areas were most effective? What areas still need to be addressed? What type of ongoing support is in place to maintain integrity of the implementation? Who provides that support? How do staff members work collaboratively to monitor student learning and implement interventions? Table 6 indicates types of professional development that respondents from School A and School B received prior to implementation of RtI².

Table 6

Professional Development Prior to Implementation

Type of Training	School A	School B	Overall
RTI Symposia (sharing of various models)	4	5	9
School Visitations	2	0	2
Formal Presentations at County (one presenter)	5	3	8
Trainings by Principal and/or Leadership Team on Site	3	3	6
Presentation by County Office on Site	3	0	3

School A indicated that five professional development opportunities were made available prior to implementation. Nine respondents reported having attended RTI Symposia as well as formal presentations at the county. School B indicated that three professional development opportunities were made available prior to implementation.

Eight respondents reported attending RTI Symposia as well as formal presentations at the county.

RTI Symposia and formal presentations at the county were indicated overall by 17 respondents as a professional development opportunity prior to implementation efforts. Respondents also indicated the RTI Symposium was effective in sharing how other schools were implementing RTI. The following statements explain how the RTI Symposia, county presentations, and school visitations prior to implementation were helpful.

I received formal trainings provided by the county. I have been to formal trainings provided by outside vendors even before the county picked up on a lot of things. I have been trained on the academic side of RTI, on the behavioral side of that, of RTI, what it is, how to do it, different models, the way different schools do it, and different schedules. I would say more of it was on the academic side of RTI. I have been to a couple of workshops on the behavioral side but that's more and more recent. It was helpful, especially at the beginning. There is obviously more trainings coming up and I really don't participate in those too much because I just feel like I have a good base for what I need to know so I don't go to trainings any more. I would say it's more generic, there were always specific examples in the different workshops that I went to. But if I did go, I would go to one particular workshop let's say in progress monitoring. So there is always more high level I would say. I don't even know workshops that are just on progress monitoring unless it's you know a piece of a workshop. (Psychologist, personal communication, March 29, 2011)

I think one of the most helpful things was a group of us went to do some school visitations so we went to some other schools that had successfully implementing RTI and this is way back at the beginning and we went. We went to three different schools. So we saw how they worked things, so it was kind of good because you could see it in real life and how it was really applied and how the schools handled the schedules. We went to a junior high and that of course is totally different. I think that was probably more helpful than a lot of the trainings because a lot of the trainings are the same thing over and over again. (Primary teacher, personal communication, March 29, 2011)

Presentations by the principal or leadership team were common to both sites. Six staff members indicated that this professional development was available prior to

implementation. The following statement explains how this type of professional practice was helpful to implementation.

Unfortunately, I was invited to receive the initial training but because of my situation, I was unable to attend a true training. The training I have received is through colleagues. They have gone through the training themselves. Colleagues that have gone through training -- It gave me a better understanding of what's exactly RTI, what is the purpose, what is the goal because initially, when that first acronym was presented like, oh, my God, another acronym. What does it mean? And so, I became familiar with the acronym or the RTI. I had a better understanding exactly of the whole purpose behind it. (Upper grade teacher, personal communication, March 31, 2011)

Presentations by the principal or members of the leadership team were not always perceived as effective. One teacher shared that the information was not very clear. She explained:

It was given to us second-hand. So some people went and received the training and came back to us and passed it on. I was not part of the group that went and received the whole day training. I did feel like it was second-hand and not real clear. (Primary teacher, personal communication, May 10, 2011)

Staff members shared that additional professional development opportunities helped validate what they were already doing with RTI. However, participants expressed the need for more training. Table 7 indicates what respondents from School A and School B indicated as current foci for professional development as well as areas of need for professional development opportunities.

School A identified four areas of current professional development. The current area of professional development for School A with the highest number of responses is the enhancement of the RTI model and tiers of academic support. School A identified the enhancement of the RTI model as an area of need for professional development. In addition to enhancing their model, School A identified data analysis and progress monitoring as areas of need for professional development.

Table 7

Current and Needed Areas of Professional Development

Professional Development Activity	Current Focus School A	Current Focus School B	Current Focus Overall	Area of Need School A	Area of Need School B	Area of Need Overall
Enhance RTI Tiers (Academic Side)	6	1	7	8	2	10
Develop Behavioral Side of RTI Pyramid	0	6	6	1	3	4
Newly Adopted Core Reading Program	2	0	2	0	0	0
Specific Strategies to Address Needs of Diverse Learners	1	2	3	2	3	5
Data Analysis and Progress Monitoring	1	1	2	5	1	6
Effective Use of Professional Learning Communities	0	0	0	1	0	1
No Additional Training	2	0	2	0	0	0

School B identified four areas of current professional development. The current area of professional development for School B that generated the highest number of responses is developing the behavioral side of RTI. School B identified the following areas of need for professional development: enhancing the RTI model, developing the behavioral side of RTI, specific strategies to address the needs of diverse learners, and data analysis and progress monitoring.

School A and School B indicated different professional development opportunities currently at their sites. Staff members of School A indicated more “fine tuning” of their model, whereas, School B indicated more professional development in

the behavioral aspect of RTI. The following statements indicate the importance of professional development opportunities for the enhancement of the RTI model:

I think our principal is trying to expose as many people as possible to as much information and . . . I didn't go to that but I encouraged people to be on the lookout for parts of models or models that they thought sounded effective to bring information back so that we can always be enhancing our program. And I think also just having that exposure is validating to see that we're on the right track and that our teachers can come back and, "Oh, yes. We're doing pretty well." (Intervention teacher, personal communication, March 29, 2011)

One staff member at School B shared the importance of focusing on the behavioral component of RTI. The staff member explained below:

The behavior component of RTI. I think at this school, that is one we're really looking at. We've come to the point where the academic side of the pyramid is to the point where we're just tweaking and trying to make it a little bit better. But the behavior component of it, I think we have a long way to go. And we're working on that and trying to figure out how that plays into what we're doing on the other side of the pyramid, and trying to make that part of our SST model. (Special education teacher, personal communication, May 9, 2011).

School A and School B indicated different professional development needs at their sites. Staff members of School A indicated the need for more continued professional development in the enhancement of their model, in addition to data analysis and progress monitoring. School B indicated a need for professional development in the behavioral aspects of RTI, the enhancement of their model, and specific strategies to address the needs of diverse learners. The following statements indicate the importance of professional development in the areas of enhancement of the RTI model, data collection, and progress monitoring:

One of the weaker areas I know is the data collection. We are still sort of struggling with that with this school and how they are going to interpret it. Not only how to monitor but how to interpret it. We need to have some kind of database. I know they are using DIBELS but I think that's our area of weakness. So the data interpretation, that kind of a thing, how to interpret it, how to monitor it, how to collect it. (Psychologist, personal communication, March 29, 2011)

I think our big area that we're still trying to fine tune is the assessment piece and finding an effective assessment that we can give regularly. We're using DIBELS and we're using *Results* in our curriculum assessment but it's like finding that one thing that is real easy and I think that, that's funny because it's where a lot of our development is on, doing assessment and going through but finding the one that really works to keep going. I think would be very helpful. (Primary teacher, personal communication, March 29, 2011)

One teacher shared the importance of professional development in the area of literacy and reading strategies. She indicated that general education teachers are expected to know everything, stating:

We have basically been taught to come in and like teach everything under the sun but nobody has ever really focused in on we need to be reading teachers. I think something that was more specific techniques might be helpful too that you could use in small group. (Upper grade teacher, personal communication, May 4, 2011)

The integrity of implementation was maintained by a number of supports, as presented in Table 8, which indicates supports that respondents from School A and School B indicated as necessary for the integrity of RTI implementation. School A indicated nine supports that maintain the integrity of the implementation, all nine of which generated either one or two responses. School B indicated seven currently used supports that maintain the integrity of the implementation. Four respondents in School B indicated that the intervention teacher helped maintain the integrity of the implementation. The support that received the highest number of responses was the use of grade level meetings and collaboration.

Table 8

Supports Needed for Integrity of Implementation

Support for Implementation	School A	School B	Overall	Support Provider
Student Study Team	1	0	1	Principal, psychologist, speech therapist, special education teacher, intervention teacher, general education teacher
Support and Monitoring of Instructional Assistants	2	2	4	Intervention teacher
Ongoing RTI Trainings	1	3	4	Principal, district office
Master Schedule	1	2	3	Principal
Intervention Teacher	1	4	5	Intervention teacher
Staff Buy-in/Ownership	1	0	1	Staff members
Grade Level Meetings/Professional Learning Communities	3	5	8	Grade level teams
Leadership Team	1	0	1	Team members
Overseeing the Tiers and Providing Support when Necessary	1	1	2	Principal and intervention teacher
Data analysis and progress Monitoring	0	2	2	Principal, support staff and general education teachers

The use of grade level meetings to maintain the integrity of the implementation was common to both schools. Leadership team and grade level teams provide the support to maintain the integrity of the implementation by communicating, collaborating, and addressing any needs that might arise during the implementation. One staff member shared the importance of the leadership and grade level teams to the integrity of the implementation in the following statement:

Well, I'll tell you the teachers meet at grade levels. They plan together at grade levels. They have a leadership team which means that they get representation from each grade level to be part of the leadership team to participate in coming

back with information about what the goals are school-wide. The principal makes sure that at least monthly he guides us along on our RTI because our banking days—our Fridays are our minimum and oftentimes that’s when the teachers get together to plan but there are those Fridays that the principal has an agenda and he wants feedback on those items. It kind of gets the professional learning community taking place and that’s taking place very nicely, very nicely because they do come together. Some teachers are reluctant. They are still in their old ways and some of us are already retiring, those of us who are not used to teaming. You know what I’m talking about? (Special education teacher, personal communication, March 29, 2011)

Both schools indicated that their schools utilized a number of supports to maintain the integrity of the implementation. One staff member shared that no individual single-handedly maintained integrity of the implementation. Rather, the entire staff was responsible for maintaining the integrity of the implementation. A staff member shared:

I think we definitely have some ownership and I think when you have ownership or something you’re really able to maintain than try to get rid of something because we’ve developed it together so I think that’s definitely one thing. I think it’s—we own it. We tweaked it along the way. We’re trying to make it better but it was never something that was pushed upon us so I think that’s definitely one thing. We have support from the intervention teacher and I think even amongst us as a staff we all know that we’re kind of—it’s kind of being phased in and we’re all being flexible to some of the changes that are occurring but I think most importantly is something’s not kind of pushed into you and you were taking ownership and you become part of it. You kind of own it and you want to keep it together and that’s really just the whole idea of making it our own. (Upper grade teacher, personal communication, March 29, 2010)

One teacher shared that the master schedule helped to maintain the integrity of

RTI, stating:

I think the master schedule is huge in maintaining the integrity because like my whole grade level has their set time for intervention whether they are doing TIER II or not. So you don’t have much of “Well, I’ll just kind of skip this today and move things around.” There is more accountability for keeping TIER II planning and where your kids need to be. (Primary teacher, personal communication, March 29, 2011)

One principal shared that the type of support changes, depending on the tier. The principal explained:

Well, tier one is basically built into the structure of our language arts curriculum and uses that part of the reading team. The second component of the tier two in terms of the assistance that structure is set because we have the cycles established and teachers will need to provide input as to how those or who is going to participate in the next cycle, why they are selecting the kids that are going to participate. We no longer select the kids. *We* meaning the special education teacher and myself. So the teachers are beginning to take more of that responsibility for developing the groups and also to tell us what they think they should be getting. If the teachers have a concern with an individual student, they either go to special education teacher or come to me. The fact that we are constantly looking for ways to improve, they know that and they know that we are not going to throw things that are working out the window. But we are definitely looking at ways to improve and I think the teachers do accept that. Do we go back and check, I would say I drop in on a pretty consistent basis to see how the teams are working. So I think in that respect the special education teacher does a constant review from tier two. Tier three we have to say that's a weak point but there is a process in there that's involved. They have to go through school study team that they provide enough information for them to be considered. (Principal, personal communication, March 29, 2011)

In RTI implementation, staff members will need to collaborate to monitor student learning and implement interventions. Table 9 indicates the professional development activities that respondents from School A and School B believe allow for collaboration to monitor student learning and implement interventions.

Table 9

Collaboration Activities that Support and Monitor Student Learning

Type of Activity	School A	School B	Overall
Grade Level/Professional Learning Communities	9	9	18
Student Study Team	1	4	5
Informal Meetings	1	1	2

School A indicated three collaboration activities that to support student learning. Nine respondents at School A indicated that collaboration to support and monitor student learning occurs during grade level meetings.

Nine respondents at School B indicated that collaboration occurs during grade level meetings to support and monitor student learning. School B also indicated that the Student Study Team (SST) monitored student learning to a lesser degree.

Eighteen responses overall indicated that grade level meetings and/or Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) allowed staff members to monitor student learning and implement intervention. Teachers meet consistently with grade level colleagues to share data and progress monitoring results, as well as decide which students need more intensive interventions. When asked about the difference between grade level team meetings and PLC meetings, one teacher shared that grade level meetings are used for planning field trips, discussing lesson plans, in contrast to PLC meetings that focus on analyzing data and developing intervention plans for students that are not making progress. Another teacher shared the following:

Basically in the PLCs you share your data and review it as a group in terms of seeing where the kids are going. What's working, what's not in terms of the curriculum and your teaching style or how you can assist one and other in terms of getting a particular concept or deciding on the intervention. It's mostly within the PLCs but you know it's not just once a week, it's ongoing. We are trying to think, I mean, I can't really say it's just once a week because you are constantly having dialogues daily whether its informal, it's at lunch, it's after school. I would think that most decision making and collaborating happens in PLCs and then you also do it within the student study team on Friday's if you refer to a student that is having significant difficulties in academic or behavior areas. I think the biggest thing is that it's very much more data driven now or you know where is the student now, how can you demonstrate that. I think that's one of the biggest things in terms of monitoring the students. It's not just how you feel, what you think, it's what you know. (Upper grade teacher, personal communication, March 31, 2011)

Five respondents overall indicated that the SST meetings were used to help teachers monitor student progress. However, SST meetings are used more for students who are not making adequate progress. In SST meetings, the psychologist, speech

therapist, special education teacher, principal, and general education teacher discuss students more in depth and provide more intensive interventions. These meetings are generally used for students who make minimal growth throughout a series of interventions. One teacher shared the importance of grade level meetings and SST meetings. She explained:

If we have concerns about a student we can do a grade level monitor and so when we have our collaborative meetings for grade level which is usually once to twice a month, we sit down, we talk and we do talk about a kid here and there you know as we are going along whoever really has one that they need to talk about and you do need to be monitoring and documenting before we even do SST but a lot of their kids if we are really concerned are monitored through grade level. If we still have concerns, we refer to SST. Some of it is more formal where we do the documentation and some of it it's just questions that we ask one another and talk about you know we are struggling with this kid, this is a problem they seem to have, what are some suggestions so some of that could be informal. (Upper grade teacher, personal communication, May 4, 2011)

Although SST meetings were available for additional support and collaboration, one teacher felt that the process to refer a student to a team meeting presented a road block. One teacher explained:

I think we have a really strong grade-level team, and we work together a lot at grade-level meetings at our release time. I think that if you're looking at the wider scale, SST is been really a rough area. There were a lot of changes that were implemented this year, a lot of additional forms. I think that most teachers feel that the number of forms are overwhelming. So I've heard teachers say, "I'm not even going to bother." Is that the point? Is that why we've got eight, or 10, or 12 forms—however many it is—in order to bring a child to SST? I think that that's been a really bumpy road with the SST. (Primary teacher, personal communication, May 10, 2011)

Key findings. Seventeen staff members indicated that formal presentations and RTI Symposia at the county were common professional development opportunities prior to implementation efforts. One current area of professional development for School A that generated the highest number of responses is the enhancement of the RTI model and

tiers of academic support. The current area of professional development for School B generating the highest number of responses is developing the behavioral aspects of RTI.

The needs of the school dictate the type of professional development opportunities offered to teachers. Staff members of School A indicated the need for professional development to enhance their RTI model as well as data analysis and progress monitoring. The areas of need for professional development in School B were enhancing the RTI model, developing the behavioral aspects of RTI, building specific strategies to address the needs of diverse learners, and enhancing data analysis and progress monitoring.

School A indicated nine supports currently in place that maintain the integrity of the implementation. All nine supports generated one or two responses. School B indicated seven supports currently in place that maintain the integrity of the implementation. Five respondents at School B indicated that the intervention teacher helped maintain the integrity of the implementation. The support that received the highest number of overall responses was the use of the intervention teacher.

Both schools reported using of grade level meetings to maintain the integrity of the implementation. Leadership team and grade level teams provide support to maintain the integrity of the implementation by communicating, collaborating, and addressing any needs that might arise during the implementation.

Respondents at both sites indicated overall that staff members work collaboratively to monitor student learning and implement interventions through grade level meetings and/or PLCs. Teachers meet consistently with grade level colleagues to share data and

progress monitoring results, as well as decide which students need more intensive interventions.

Research question 1c findings. Research question 1c asked, What do principals, teachers, and support staff in two elementary schools in one county in Southern California perceive as contributing to the implementation of RtI² in regards to the new roles of general education teachers, special education teachers, and support staff? The following interview questions related to this research question: What job responsibilities have been restructured to provide the necessary support? Please explain. Have you received any training or support from special education staff or other support staff members? What type of training? Did you find it helpful? What additional resources, such as staffing, release time, materials, was made available or adjusted to assist in the implementation?

Staff roles and responsibilities may have changed with the implementation of RTI. Table 10 indicates whether respondents from School A and School B feel their jobs “have changed,” “have changed somewhat,” or “have not changed.”

In School A, four respondents indicated that their roles and responsibilities have changed. The three respondents that indicated their roles and responsibilities have changed “somewhat” were general education teachers. The three respondents that indicated that that jobs and responsibilities have not changes were the psychologist and general education teachers. Seven out of 10 staff members indicated that their job roles and responsibilities have change or changed somewhat with the implementation of RTI.

Table 10

Level of Change in Staff Roles and Responsibilities

Job Position	Staff Roles and Responsibilities have changed		Staff Roles and Responsibilities have changed somewhat		Staff Roles and Responsibilities have not changed	
	School A	School B	School A	School B	School A	School B
Principal (2)	1	1				
Psychologist (2)		1			1	
Speech Pathologist (2)	1	1				
Special Education Teacher (2)	1	1				
Intervention Teacher (2)	1	1				
Primary Grade Teacher (6)		2	1	1	2	
Upper Grade Teacher (4)		1	2			1

In School B, eight respondents indicated that their roles and responsibilities have changed. The two respondents that indicated that their roles and responsibilities have changed “somewhat” or not at all were general education teachers. One respondent indicated that his/her job and responsibilities have not changed. Eight out of 10 staff members indicated that their job roles and responsibilities have changed with the implementation of RTI.

Overall, 16 out of 20 staff members indicated that their job roles and responsibilities have changed or changed somewhat with the implementation of RTI. Overall, five out of six support staff members indicated that their roles and responsibilities have changed. Both principals and intervention teachers indicated that their job roles and responsibilities have changed. Overall, the general education teachers’

responses were distributed between the three categories. Three general education teachers indicated that their jobs have changed, four indicated that they have not changed, and three indicated no change. General education teachers' responses were also distributed between primary and upper grade teachers. Four primary teachers indicated that their job roles and responsibilities have changed or changed somewhat. Three upper grade teachers indicated that their job roles and responsibilities have changed or changed somewhat.

Seven general education teachers shared that their roles have changed due to increased focus on data and progress monitoring of students. In addition, general education teachers shared that their roles have also changed due to the change in roles for intervention teachers or paraeducators. One teacher explained:

I think it's been restructured a little bit, mostly because we had a para-educator for a hour-and-a-half every day, and I was used to that; and then all of a sudden, they're only coming in for 45 minutes, which is a big amount of time, and that took a long time to get used to that—and having to use them differently; before, they would come in, and they could anything I needed them to do, if it was prep work or sit with the kids; and now, it's like they have to sit with a group of kids, and that was hard to adjust to, just learning the difference. It helped having an intervention teacher come in, but I had to restructure everything I did, the way I ran my groups, because they used to change throughout the whole day; like a normal kindergarten class, I would see each kid once a day and they'd rotate through the whole day, and I had to kind of readjust my schedule, and the way I taught, and the way I did math, everything, just to fit around that. Now, I think I've got it, but it took a lot. The first couple of years were really hard to figure out how to do it. (Primary teacher, personal communication, May 4, 2011)

Well I am planning for the three you know all the groups and you also have to be willing to let go some of the control because the person over here is teaching one thing and you know I am trusting her to do a good job and trusting the other. I know some of the teachers will give them some of the things to plan. I still have enough control over and saying you know well I have noticed this and the testing I have noticed this, this is what I think this group need so I can add it in so what I am asking them to do but both of more professional enough, they can just walk in here and look at my notes and start teaching so they will look what it is that I am asking them to do. (Upper grade teacher, personal communication, May 4, 2011)

For general education teachers who expressed that their roles and responsibilities have not changed, they also indicated that they have been progress monitoring students, as well as providing flexible grouping and small group intervention prior to RTI implementation. In addition to a change in roles for intervention teachers and the use of paraeducators, general education teachers feel that there is more pressure put on them to provide intervention support for students that are not making progress. One teacher explained:

I feel that more of the intervention has been put on my shoulders. There's far less pullout support than there used to be. We used to have four full-time intervention specialists on this campus. We had two reading safety net full-time teachers and two certificated teachers in the learning center. So children who were not reading on grade level would be pulled out, and those children are no longer pulled out. So they're my responsibility now more so than they used to be. Also, children are not being identified as early as they used to be, so fewer children come to be already being seen in the learning center, or what used to be the resource room. So all those children are now my responsibility. (Primary teacher, personal communication, May 10, 2011)

Special education teachers and speech pathologists feel that their job responsibilities have changed. In addition to providing support for students who have IEPs, they also provide support to students who are not making progress in the regular classroom. One special education teacher and speech pathologist explained:

Taking on not just the special ed kids, but taking on the tier three students. More data collection in regard to the learning center for tier three; many more screenings to get into the learning center. My role in SST has changed in a good way. (Special education teacher, personal communication, May 9, 2011)

Well when we talk about RTI for me, the way that it affects me, is that within our district, all of the speech therapists now can see children for minor articulation differences. So we look at difference versus delay. And I don't have to put them on an IEP on the Special Ed paperwork. I can see a child who just has an articulation error, one or two sounds. And that way I avoid all that Special Ed paperwork, the label, tests, lots and lots of things I am able to avoid and save a lot of time. (Speech pathologist, personal communication, May 12, 2011)

One psychologist indicated that the role of psychologist has changed in that they provide more support through observation and consultation. One psychologist explained that the role of the psychologist has changed dramatically with the behavioral side of RTI:

Now we do a lot more counseling. I'm just looking at general ed students who are having some remedial problems. And then going into the classroom a lot more, making sure—trying to provide some strategies for the teachers, helping them to gather data. And then helping them to focus upon one target behavior and not feel so overwhelmed with I got ten things. You need to focus on one. And helping them to understand that change doesn't happen overnight and to be open to change and to be open to understand that this might've worked for this week, it might not work next week. I think one of the big things for me is for the teachers to have buy-in to understand that this is your kid. He's not going anywhere. Let's understand that he's not going anywhere. We've just got to accept that and just try to accept the fact that we're going to try to find some strategies. (Psychologist, personal communication, May 12, 2011)

Another psychologist indicated that her job has not changed as a result of implementation of RTI due partly to her limited time on campus. Both site leaders indicated that their job responsibilities have increased due to RTI implementation. Both principals shared that they are working more collaboratively with teachers to review student data and discuss instructional strategies. They also indicated that they are much more involved in curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices. They also indicated that organizing and utilizing staff members more efficiently is critical to the RTI process. To be effective in the placement of personnel requires site leaders to not only understand the needs of the students, but also the strengths of all staff members.

When asked about training provided by support staff, all staff members indicated that they have not received any training from the special education or support staff members. Staff members at School B shared that the psychologist described the SST process to the staff during faculty meetings. Although formal presentations or trainings

had not occurred, all staff members at both sites felt comfortable asking questions or consulting with support staff members informally regarding individual students.

Additional resources have been made available or adjusted to assist with implementation. Table 11 indicates what resources respondents from School A and School B indicated as being provided to assist with implementation.

Table 11

Types of Resources Available or Adjusted to Assist Implementation

Resource	School A	School B	Overall
Staffing (Intervention Teacher)	5	4	9
Release Time for Collaboration	6	6	12
Materials	1	4	5
No Additional Resources	1	0	1

School A indicated that three types of resources were made available for the implementation of RTI; 11 responses indicated that staffing and release time for collaboration were made available for the implementation. School B indicated that three types of resources were made available for the implementation of RTI; 10 responses indicated that staffing and release time for collaboration were made available for the implementation. Four respondents indicated that resources, such as books, forms, and assessment materials, were made available for implementation.

Overall, 12 responses indicated that release time for collaboration or training was made available to assist with implementation. Nine respondents indicated that additional staffing, such as intervention teacher or paraprofessionals, were available to assist with implementation. Overall, only one staff member shared that no resources were adjusted or made available to assist with implementation.

Key findings. Overall, 16 out of 20 staff members indicated that their job roles and responsibilities have changed or changed “somewhat” with the implementation of RTI. Overall, five out of six support staff members indicated that their roles and responsibilities have changed. Both principals and intervention teachers indicated that their job roles and responsibilities have changed. Overall, the general education teachers’ responses were distributed among the three categories. Three general education teachers indicated that their jobs have changed, four indicated that they have not changed, and three indicated no change.

When asked about training provided by support staff, staff members at both sites indicated that they have not received any training from the special education or support staff members on site. Twelve responses overall indicated that release time for collaboration or training was made available to assist with implementation. Nine respondents indicated that additional staffing, such as intervention teachers or paraprofessionals, were available to assist with implementation. Overall, only one staff member shared that no resources were adjusted or made available to assist with implementation.

Chapter Summary

Both schools identified one critical leadership behavior the most frequently: *knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment*. Effective leaders must be knowledgeable and provide conceptual guidance for teachers and support staff. Overall, 13 responses referred to a leader’s *knowledge of curriculum and instruction* based on the needs of the students. When leaders know the cultural, linguistic, emotional and educational needs of the students, they are better able to determine the appropriate

curriculum and instructional practices. In addition to specific knowledge regarding curriculum and instruction, leaders need to understand the concepts and practices of RTI.

Five leadership behaviors were identified to a lesser degree. Four of these behaviors were identified as “second-order” leadership behaviors that promote change. These include *flexibility*, *optimizer*, *change agent*, and *monitors/evaluates*. *Flexibility* was identified by both sites as critical in RTI implementation efforts. In order to be flexible, the site leader needs to know the strengths and personalities of the staff members. Although not equally common to both sites, *optimizer* received the second highest number of overall responses. *Optimizer* refers to the leader’s ability to motivate and inspire others. Respondents identified this responsibility as the driving force behind implementation efforts. A leadership behavior that was unique to School A as well as identified as one of the seven “second-order” leadership behaviors was *change agent*. A leadership behavior that was unique to School B and identified as one of the seven “second-order” leadership behaviors was *monitors/evaluates*.

The fifth leadership behavior that was identified to a lesser degree, but is not considered “second-order” change behavior, is *resources*. Although not equally common to both sites, *resources* received the second highest number of overall responses. *Resources* refers to the leader’s ability to provide professional development and materials necessary for teachers to fulfill their required duties. This included additional staffing, release time, and organization and scheduling of resources.

In addition to identifying leadership behaviors critical for implementation efforts, more specific behaviors that helped or hindered RtI² implementation efforts were identified. One behavior both schools identified as helping implementation efforts was

the connectedness and cohesiveness of the staff. In addition, School A indicated that leadership teams and the availability of resources were helpful in implementation efforts. School B reported scheduling and organization of resources as most helpful. Behaviors that can hinder implementation included lack of buy-in, lack of knowledge, lack of resources, and unrealistic expectations. Lack of knowledge about RtI² and how to implement a tiered model of support was reported by both sites as behavior that could hinder implementation efforts.

Prior to implementation, the RTI Symposium and formal presentations at the county level were the most frequently offered professional development opportunities related to RtI². Regarding current professional development opportunities, School A and School B indicated different professional development opportunities currently available at their sites. Staff members of School A indicated that more “fine tuning” of their model is taking place, whereas, School B indicated more participation in professional development related to the behavioral aspects of RTI. School A and School B indicated different professional development needs at their sites. Staff members of School A indicated more continued professional development in the enhancement of their model, in addition to data analysis and progress monitoring. School B indicated a need for ongoing professional development on the behavior aspects of RTI. In addition to the behavioral aspects of RTI, School B indicated a need for professional development in the enhancement of their model as well as specific strategies to address the needs of diverse learners.

Both sites reported that the integrity of implementation was maintained by a number of supports. The support that received the highest number of responses was the

use of grade level meetings and collaboration. Both schools indicated that student learning is monitored through grade level collaboration. School B also indicated that the SST monitored student learning to a lesser degree.

Overall, 16 out of 20 staff members indicated that their job roles and responsibilities have changed or changed “somewhat” with the implementation of RTI. Seven general education teachers shared that their roles have changed due to more focus on data and progress monitoring of students. For general education teachers who expressed that roles and responsibilities have not changed, they also indicated that they have been progress monitoring students, as well as providing flexible grouping and small group intervention prior to RTI implementation. Special education teachers and speech pathologists feel that their job responsibilities have changed. In addition to providing support for students who have IEPs, they also provide support to students who are not making progress in the regular classroom.

One psychologist indicated that the role of psychologist has changed in that they provide more support through observation and consultation. Both site leaders indicated that their job responsibilities have increased due to RTI implementation. Both sites shared that they are working more collaboratively with teachers to review student data and discuss instructional strategies. They also indicated that they are much more involved in curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices. Both sites also noted that organizing and utilizing staff members more efficiently is critical to the RTI process. Although formal presentations or trainings had not occurred, all staff members at both sites felt comfortable asking questions of or consulting with support staff members informally regarding individual students.

Additional resources have been made available to or adjusted to assist with implementation. Both schools reported that staffing, release time, and purchase of materials had been adjusted or made available for implementation. Overall, release time for collaboration or training was cited as the most frequent support made available to assist with implementation.

Chapter 5

Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter presents a discussion of the study. It begins with a review of the purpose and research questions, followed by a summary of the design. Then a summary of the findings is presented, followed by the conclusion and a discussion, and recommendations for policy, practice, and further study. The chapter concludes with the researcher's final thoughts.

Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative case study is threefold: (a) to identify the leadership attributes and skills of site principals that contribute to the implementation of RtI²; (b) to examine professional development practices that contribute to the implementation of RtI²; and (c) to examine how the new roles of general education teachers, special education teachers, and support staff (psychologists, speech pathologists) have contributed to the implementation of RtI² at two elementary schools in one county in Southern California.

Research Question

The following research question guided this study: What do principals, teachers, and support staff in two elementary schools in one county in Southern California perceive as contributing to the implementation of RtI² in regards to the following: (a) leadership attributes, skills, and practices; (b) professional development practices; and (c) new roles of general education teachers, special education teachers, and support staff (psychologists, speech pathologists, and any additional staff utilized for RtI² implementation)?

Research Design Summary

This study used a qualitative comparative case study design in order to identify the various key components that have contributed to the successful implementation of RtI² at two purposefully selected elementary school sites. The sites selected met the following criteria: elementary school in one county in southern California, minimum of 3 years of RtI² implementation, and recommended by members of the county RtI² Task Force. The researcher secured all approvals and consent prior to conducting interviews. The interviews were semi-structured consisting of 10 interview questions. The interview questions were reviewed by a panel of experts to validate the content and organization of the instrumentation, as well as piloted by representatives of the proposed subject pool. This study included interviews with two principals, two psychologists, two speech pathologists, two special education teachers, and 12 general education teachers. The researcher selected the number of teachers to participate based on the ratio of primary teachers to upper grade teachers. The researcher interviewed principals, teachers, and support staff regarding site leadership behaviors, professional development opportunities, and new roles for teachers and support staff in the implementation of the RtI² model at their particular site. Data were collected during the 2010-2011 academic school year. Interviews with principals, teachers, and support staff took place at the school site during the school year.

The research question examined the structures that contribute to implementation of an RtI² model. The purpose was to gather the perceptions of all staff members regarding practices that contribute to successful implementation of an RtI² model.

Participants were asked 10 interview questions. The first question relating to current position and years in that position was used for general subject description purposes and not as a unit of analysis. The following nine interview questions addressed site leadership, professional development practices, and staff roles and responsibilities based on the literature review found in Chapter Two.

Summary of Findings

Leadership attributes, skills, and practices. Research question 1a explored what leadership attributes, skills, and practices principals, teachers, and support staff in two elementary schools in one county in Southern California perceive as contributing to the implementation of RtI². The following interview questions were dedicated to answering this question: What attributes and skills do you think would be crucial in a site leader for the successful implementation of RtI²? Why? What type of leadership behaviors do you feel may have helped or hindered RtI² implementation efforts?

Four key findings resulted from an analysis of the interview responses regarding leadership attributes, skills, and practices perceived as contributing to the successful implementation of RtI²:

1. Site leaders' guidance regarding effective practices in curriculum, instruction, and assessment.
2. Site leaders' flexibility, optimism, willingness to create change, and monitoring and evaluating, consistent with second-order changes to a lesser degree.
3. Site leaders' use of existing resources to support more intensive instruction and services.

4. Site leaders' value for collaboration and utilization of grade level meetings and leadership teams to enable staff members to feel supported, connected, and cohesive.

The first key finding regarding leadership practices was *site leaders' guidance regarding effective practices in curriculum, instruction, and assessment*. Respondents perceive that a strong understanding of curriculum, instruction, and assessment is a critical leadership behavior necessary for site leaders. Respondents identify the importance of a site leader having extensive classroom experience prior to becoming a site leader. Staff members value a site leader's experience, knowledge, and expertise. This finding supports the research by Marzano et al. (2005) identifying 21 leadership responsibilities and practices that have a direct impact on student learning. Of those 21 leadership responsibilities, seven responsibilities are defined as second-order changes that are necessary as site leaders implement school reform efforts. Knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment is one of the seven second-order changes that require a shift in thinking or a break with the past. RtI² implementation requires teachers to acquire new knowledge and skills. Implementation of RtI² requires that site leaders demonstrate a strong understanding of curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices as well as a strong understanding of the philosophy and rationale for the RtI² model.

In addition to knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment, the second key finding regarding leadership practices was a site leader's *flexibility, optimism, willingness to create change, and monitoring and evaluating of instruction*, consistent with second-order changes to a lesser degree. This finding is supported by the research by Marzano et al. (2005) regarding leadership practices needed for second-order changes.

The importance of utilizing leadership practices for second-order change is also supported by the findings of Burns and Ysseldyke (2005), who argue that implementation of RtI² is a fundamental system change that requires significant change leadership. Although the degree to which the leadership behaviors for second-order changes differed between sites, site leaders demonstrated a number of leadership responsibilities necessary to lead change efforts. Site leaders displayed the ability to be flexible (flexibility) and adapt leadership behavior to the current situation, resulting in direct or nondirective behaviors. In order to be flexible, the site leader utilized the strengths and personalities of the staff members. Site leaders displayed a positive attitude (optimizer) and inspired others to go beyond previous expectations, becoming the driving force behind implementation efforts. Site leaders displayed a willingness to challenge the status quo and consider new and better ways of doing things. Site leaders were “change agents.” Leaders understood the change process. Site leaders understood that staff members were at various stages in the change efforts. Monitoring, evaluating, and providing feedback on current practices and student achievement were also inherent in the leaders’ understanding of curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices. Site leaders routinely visited classrooms, attended grade level meetings, and reviewed student data and progress with teachers.

The third key finding regarding leadership practices was a site leader’s use of *existing resources to support more intensive instruction and services*. Marzano et al. (2005) refer to the leader’s ability to provide *resources* as one of 21 leadership responsibilities that directly impact student learning. Although *resources* is not indicated as a leadership behavior for second-order change, both site leaders articulated the

importance of being able to assess what resources were available and maximizing those resources. In order for site leaders to implement RtI², being creative with existing resources and redistributing those resources to provide the necessary support was critical for implementation. Arnold et al. (1999) state that successful reform efforts require restructuring the allocation and use of existing resources. Maximizing the use of staff expertise, investing in professional development, and providing time for collaboration contributes to initial and continuous school-wide reform efforts. Elmore (2000) noted that those who have a higher degree of knowledge, skills, and competence should be expected to spend a portion of their time engaged in improvement practices in the classroom. This key finding is also supported by CDE (2008a). The CDE also stresses the site leader's responsibility for ensuring that a process is in place to allocate staff resources to meet the needs of students. Both site leaders stressed the importance of scheduling and organizing existing resources to maximize student learning.

The fourth key finding regarding leadership practices was a site leader's value for *collaboration and utilization of grade level meetings and leadership teams to enable staff members to feel supported, connected and cohesive*. Respondents perceive that it is crucial for a site leaders to value collaboration and set aside time for teachers to review student data as a grade level, as well as plan instructional units. This enables staff members to feel connected to each other and work collaboratively to solve problems. This finding supports the recommendations by the CDE (2008a). The CDE states that to be effective in implementation efforts, site leaders are responsible for developing site teams to interpret data and analyze how well students are responding to instruction and intervention. When all staff members focus their efforts on student progress and

achievement, they feel supported and part of a team. Leadership teams helped in the implementation of RtI² as the teams took a central role in communicating information to grade level teams. Staff members trusted leadership teams and valued their input and direction.

According to Marzano et al. (2005), when site leaders undertake change initiatives, the school staff seems less clear with the school vision (culture). The site leader may also seem less accessible to teachers and support staff (communication). Teachers also may feel that they have less influence on day to day operations (input) than they had prior to the change initiative, and they may feel that things are less predictable (order) than they were prior to the change. Marzano et al. recommend that site leaders use leadership teams to distribute some of the leadership responsibilities. Both site leaders utilized their leadership teams and grade level teams to effectively maintain a positive culture, communicate their vision, solicit staff input, provide feedback, anticipate changes, and provide a structure for implementation.

Professional development practices. Research question 1b explored what professional development opportunities principals, teachers, and support staff in two elementary schools in one county in Southern California perceive as contributing to the implementation of RtI². The following interview questions were dedicated to answering this question: What training did you receive prior to the initial implementation? Was it helpful? What continues to be the focus of professional development? What areas were most effective? What areas still need to be addressed? What type of ongoing support is in place to maintain integrity of the implementation? Who provides that support? How

do staff members work collaboratively to monitor student learning and implement interventions?

Two key findings resulted from an analysis of the interview responses regarding professional development practices:

1. Initial and continuous implementation of RtI² reform efforts included professional development opportunities and collaboration.
2. The integrity of RtI² implementation and monitoring of student learning is maintained by grade level collaboration as well as a number of other supports that enhance implementation efforts.

The first key finding regarding professional development practices is that initial and continuous implementation of RtI² reform efforts included professional development opportunities and collaboration. This key finding is supported by the CDE (2008a). The CDE states that successful implementation of RtI² will depend on the quality of both the pre-service and in-service professional development models used to translate research into practice. Principals, teachers, and support staff indicated that a number of opportunities were made available to them by the county office of education prior to and during implementation. The initial professional development opportunities focused on RtI² processes, procedures, and practices.

Continuous professional development includes opportunities for teachers and support staff to reflect on their current practices and acquire new instructional strategies based on student needs. Future professional development opportunities may vary based on individual site needs. The CDE (2008a) states that in a tiered model, teachers should use a variety of instructional strategies and progress monitoring as a part of their

instructional planning. Professional development opportunities should be focused on ongoing assessments and identified student needs. Teachers will need to examine their own current practices and acquire new instructional strategies and practices to ensure “high quality” instruction.

Collaboration between grade levels as well as across grade levels is another important aspect of continuous professional growth. Staff members reported collaboration through grade level meetings, PLCs, leadership team meetings, and SST meetings as critical to implementation efforts. The National Staff Development Council (2001) identified and recommended three factors to consider in quality professional development: the “content” of professional development should be research-based in teaching and learning, the “process” of professional development should include reflection and dialogue, and the “context” of professional development should occur throughout the school day. Staff members reported various professional development opportunities that addressed the “content” of RtI², which were addressed in the preceding paragraph. The “process” and “context” of professional development occurred during the day through collaboration. Teachers collaborated frequently with colleagues during grade level meetings, leadership team meetings, and PLCs, as well as informally during lunchtimes or breaks.

The second key finding regarding professional development practices is that the integrity of RtI² implementation and monitoring of student learning is maintained by grade level collaboration as well as a number of other supports that enhance implementation efforts. Staff members reported that initial and continuous implementation of RtI² reform efforts included professional development and

collaboration. The use of intervention teachers, paraprofessionals, and SST meetings also monitored student learning to a lesser degree. Burns and Ysseldyke (2005) believe that professional learning and ongoing collaboration are critical in sustaining RtI² practices. Staff members reported that grade level meetings and/or PLCs allowed staff members to monitor student learning and implement intervention.

This finding also supports the recommendations by the CDE (2008a). The CDE states that to be effective in implementation efforts, site teams need to interpret data and analyze how well students are responding to instruction and intervention. Teachers should meet consistently with grade level colleagues to share data and progress monitoring results, as well as decide which students need more intensive interventions. In SST meetings, the psychologist, speech therapist, special education teacher, principal, and general education teacher discuss students more in depth as they provide more intensive interventions. Collaboration allows for all staff members to learn from each other. Adelman and Taylor (1997) suggest that, by increasing the knowledge and skill level of each person in the organization, reform efforts move forward and institutionalize the change. The CDE (2008a) states that successful implementation of RtI² depends on the ability of all school staff to use RtI² practices “reliably and with fidelity.” Collaboration not only maintains the integrity of implementation but also provides a structure for the monitoring of student learning.

Staff roles and responsibilities. Research question 1c of this study explored what principals, teachers, and support staff in two elementary schools in one county in Southern California perceive as contributing to the implementation of RtI² in regards to the new roles of general education teachers, special education teachers, and support staff.

The following interview questions were dedicated to answering this question: What job responsibilities have been restructured to provide the necessary support? Please explain. Have you received any training or support from special education staff or other support staff members? What type of training? Did you find it helpful? What additional resources, such as staffing, release time, materials, was made available or adjusted to assist in the implementation?

Two key findings resulted from an analysis of the interview responses regarding staff roles and responsibilities in RtI² implementation:

1. The shift in roles and responsibilities for teachers, support staff, and site leaders has changed considerably with the implementation of RtI².
2. The organization and utilization of resources, including staffing and release time for professional development and collaboration, is critical to the RtI² process.

The first finding regarding the change in staff roles and responsibilities was that the shift in roles and responsibilities for teachers, support staff, and site leaders have changed considerably with the implementation of RtI². New and expanding roles require a shift in how teachers and support staff conduct assessment and intervention practices for struggling students as well as students with disabilities. As RtI² is becoming more prevalent, the shift in the roles, responsibilities, and skills of the teachers and support staff will be considerably different from what was required in the past (Ahearn, 2003; Johnson et al., 2006; Mellard & Johnson, 2008). General education teachers reported that their roles and responsibilities have changed with the implementation of RtI². For many teachers, the roles of general education teachers have expanded to include small-group or

individual instruction, collaboration with other staff members, monitoring progress, collecting data, analyzing data, and modifying instruction.

The roles and responsibilities of the support staff have also changed considerably. Elmore (2000) noted that support staff members who have a higher degree of knowledge, skills, and competence should be expected to spend a portion of their time engaged in improvement practices in the classrooms. Although formal presentations or trainings by support staff who possess expertise in their particular support role had not yet occurred in either school, all staff members felt comfortable asking questions or consulting with support staff members informally regarding individual students. In addition, support staff provided consultation through observation and feedback to the classroom teachers.

Special education teachers reported that in addition to their caseload, they provided intervention support to students needing more intensive intervention. Special education teachers reported that this allowed them to consult with general education teachers as well as observe these students in a more intensive setting. According to Cummings et al. (2008) as well as Mellard and Johnson (2008) special education teachers may experience some shift in their roles and how they provide support to their students. They may include spending more time in the general education classroom, observing and providing support to the general education teacher.

SLPs also become more active in collaborating with teachers as well as working directly with students in the general education classroom. SLPs reported that they were able to see students with minor articulation or language difficulties prior to it becoming a serious concern. The role of the psychologist in the implementation of RtI² seemed to vary based on district and site needs. According to Cummings et al. (2008) as well as

Mellard and Johnson (2008), school psychologists also may experience a shift in their roles, as they will be expected to spend more time with teachers in the classroom or collaborating with teachers in developing academic or behavior plans to assist students in the general education setting. The role of the site leader changed dramatically with the implementation of RtI². Site leaders reported that greater focus on curriculum, instruction, and assessment involved the greatest change in their responsibilities. Site leaders reported a greater involvement with student learning and achievement as well.

The second key finding regarding staff roles and responsibilities is that the organization and utilization of resources, including staffing and release time for professional development and collaboration, is critical to the RtI² process. This key finding supports the recommendation by Hoover et al. (2008) that while current training emphasizes knowledge and skills, more attention should be given to the allocation of resources and the role of educators in the RtI² process. Both schools reported the allocation of staffing and release time for teachers and support staff to collaborate as critical to implementation efforts. Both site leaders articulated the importance of being able to assess what resources were available and maximizing those resources. In order for site leaders to implement RtI², being creative with existing resources and redistributing those resources to provide the necessary support was critical for implementation. Arnold et al. (1999) state that successful reform efforts require restructuring the allocation and use of existing resources. Both schools reported restructuring the use of intervention teachers and paraprofessionals who assist with small group instruction. The entire school day itself was also restructured; both schools rescheduled their school day to allow for “Banking Time” for grade level collaboration.

Maximizing the use of staff expertise, investing in professional development, and providing time for collaboration contributes to initial and continuous school-wide reform efforts.

Conclusion and Discussion

The study was designed to examine the leadership practices, professional development, and new staff roles and responsibilities that contribute to the implementation of an RtI² model in selected schools in one county in Southern California. Six important conclusions resulted from this study:

1. Site leaders must be knowledgeable and highly skilled in curriculum, instruction and assessment when establishing and implementing an RtI² model.
2. Site leaders must demonstrate leadership practices that are consistent with seven second-order leadership practices when establishing and implementing a model of RtI².
3. Professional development practices are necessary for the initial and continuous implementation of RtI² reform efforts.
4. Professional development practices that encourage collaboration through teams are critical to ensure integrity of RtI² implementation and to monitor student learning.
5. New and expanding roles and responsibilities for all staff members will continue to grow and redefine over the course of RtI² implementation.
6. Resources, including staffing and release time, must be made available or adjusted for initial and continuous implementation of RtI².

The first conclusion addressed site leadership practices; site leaders must be knowledgeable and highly skilled when establishing and implementing a model of reform, such as an RtI² model. Respondents perceived a leader's knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment as crucial to RTI implementation. This behavior is identified as a leadership practice that contributes to "second-order" change found in *School Leadership That Works: From Research to Results* (Marzano et al., 2005). Knowledge of curriculum, instruction and assessment was not only the most frequent response pertaining to leadership behaviors, but was equally important in both schools.

In addition to knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment, site leaders need a strong understanding of RtI² processes and procedures as well. The most frequent response regarding behaviors that hinder implementation efforts was lack of knowledge. As RtI² focuses on student learning and response to instruction and intervention, a leader must have a strong understanding of curriculum, instruction, and assessment in order to support and lead implementation efforts. According to the CDE (2008a) site leaders will need to ensure that all teachers are using research-based materials and are committed to "fidelity of core instruction." Site leaders will also be responsible for evaluating student data and working with teachers to develop instructional strategies that address student needs.

The second conclusion addressed site leadership practices. Respondents identified additional behaviors that they perceived as critical to implementation; these behaviors are identified as leadership practices contributing to second order change in *School Leadership That Works: From Research to Results* (Marzano et al., 2005). These included *optimizer*, *change agent*, *flexibility*, and *monitors/evaluates*. The No Child Left

Behind Act (2008) mandated that, by the year 2014, all students would be proficient in language arts and mathematics. As a result of NCLB, educational reform efforts across the nation, such as RTI, are focusing on improving the quality of educational practices for all students. The goals of NCLB require that school leaders have a strong understanding of change and know how to effectively bring it about (Waters & Grub, 2004).

As a reform effort, RTI requires a leader who understands change efforts. RtI² requires a shift in thinking and is changing the manner in which students receive services. RTI requires teachers to acquire new knowledge and skills. Marzano et al. (2005) identified leadership behaviors that are necessary in order to promote “second-order” change within a school. Respondents perceived these behaviors as critical in a site leader for the implementation of RtI². The degree to which a site leader demonstrates these behaviors may vary depending on the stage of implementation, such as initial or later stage of implementation. The particular needs of the site may also affect the degree to which site leaders demonstrate “second-order” leadership behaviors.

The third conclusion addressed professional development practices; professional development practices are necessary for the initial and continuous implementation of RtI² reform efforts. Principals, teachers, and support staff indicated that a number of opportunities were made available to them by the county office of education prior to and during implementation. The initial professional development opportunities focused on RtI² processes, procedures, and practices. Continuous professional development includes opportunities for teachers and support staff to reflect on their current practices and acquire new instructional strategies based on student needs.

The NSDC (2009) believes that professional development practices should encourage a continuous cycle of improvement that evaluates student outcomes, defines learning goals based on analysis of data, and achieves goals by implementing research-based instructional strategies and ongoing assessments that improve instructional effectiveness and student achievement. Batsche et al. (2006) propose that the success of RtI² implementation will depend largely on the quality of professional development. Successful professional development requires that three components be addressed: current beliefs and attitudes of teachers, the development of a knowledge base for RtI², and the providing of opportunities for teachers and support staff to practice the skills required for the implementation.

The fourth conclusion addressed professional development practices; professional development practices that encourage collaboration through teams are critical to RtI² implementation efforts. Professional development practices that encourage collaboration through teams, such as PLCs, allow teachers and support staff to focus on student achievement and create opportunities for discussions of instructional strategies. The NSDC (2009) sees professional development as practices that foster collective responsibility for student learning that are aligned with rigorous state student standards and conducted by teachers, principals, coaches, mentors, master teachers, and/or teacher leaders. Hirsh (2009) noted that conducting professional development in teams creates an environment of shared responsibility. Newman (1994) defines a learning community as teachers, principals, and support staff taking responsibility for a shared vision and collaborating to achieve that vision. Collaboration will allow staff members with more expertise to share with other members. Lockwood (1995) noted that, in a learning

community, teachers work together in teams and make shared decisions. Moreover, teachers are active participants in their own professional development and continually refine their knowledge and teaching skills.

The fifth conclusion addressed new roles and responsibilities of staff members; new and expanding roles and responsibilities for all staff members will continue to grow and redefine over the course of RtI² implementation. As RTI is becoming more prevalent, the shift in the roles, responsibilities, and skills of the teachers and support staff will be considerably different from what was required in the past (Ahearn, 2003; Johnson et al., 2006; Mellard & Johnson, 2008). For many teachers, the roles of the general education teachers have expanded to include small-group or individual instruction, collaboration with other staff members, monitoring progress, collecting data, analyzing data, and modifying instruction. Special education teachers and speech pathologists are not only providing services to more students prior to referrals and assessments, they are also providing more consultation in the general education classroom. Psychologists are also providing more consultation to general education teachers and helping develop of academic or behavior plans. Over the course of implementation, support staff may continue to redefine their roles as they provide on site trainings addressing more specific instructional strategies for students not making progress, either academically or behaviorally.

The sixth and final conclusion addressed the new roles and responsibilities of staff members as existing resources are redistributed to provide support for the implementation of RtI²; resources, including staffing and release time, must be made available or adjusted for initial and continuous implementation of RtI². Arnold et al. (1999) state that

successful reform efforts require restructuring the allocation and use of existing resources. The CDE (2009) emphasizes that “a cohesive RtI² process integrates resources from general education, categorical programs, and special education into a comprehensive system of core instruction and interventions to benefit every student” (p. vi). The RtI² approach to instruction and intervention “requires school staff members to collaborate as a team to analyze data and target instruction based on student need” (CDE, 2009, p. vi). The CDE cites the use of additional personnel to assist with initial implementation. Reading specialists/coaches have unique skills that can support and enhance learning for all students. Reading specialists will contribute to school teams by offering direct or indirect support consultation. Paraprofessionals will contribute by providing supplemental and specialized instruction to students. As the roles and responsibilities of staff members have changed with the implementation of RtI², release time for professional development or collaboration needs to be provided. Release time throughout the day or restructuring of the school day to build in “common planning time” is critical for teachers to meet with colleagues.

Recommendations for Policy and Practice

This study was designed to determine the structures that contribute to the successful implementation of an RtI² model. The findings from this study can be used to inform RtI² practices as well as policy recommendations. Each of the following conclusions is followed by policy and practice recommendations.

1. Site leaders must be knowledgeable and highly skilled in curriculum, instruction and assessment when establishing and implementing a model of RtI². Site leaders need to be involved with professional development practices regarding RtI²

practices and procedures prior to RtI² implementation so they may provide an overview to staff members on the rationale, processes and procedures to implementation. In addition to an understanding of RtI², site leaders should also possess extensive experience with curriculum, instruction, and assessment at the level at which they lead so they can provide insights and resources when working with collaborative teams. Data from this study indicated that this was the most critical leadership behavior for the implementation of RtI². Staff members also reported that a site leader's classroom experience made the leader more credible.

2. Site leaders must demonstrate leadership practices that are consistent with seven second-order leadership practices when establishing and implementing a model of RtI². Leadership development programs should include leadership practices in leading culture change, capacity building, monitoring and providing feedback, and knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Leadership coaching should also be an integral part of the leadership training and development.

Leadership coaches may help site leaders understand the change process and how to effectively implement change at that particular site. Leadership coaches may assist with the development of action plans as site leaders begin implementation of RTI at their site.

3. Professional development practices are necessary for the initial and continuous implementation of RtI² reform efforts. County and district offices need to continue to provide training not only in RtI² practices and procedures, but also in instructional strategies to meet the needs of all learners. As RTI implementation continues, teachers and support staff must refine their current teaching

instructional practices to include all students. Additional strategies to meet the needs of English learners or students with disabilities is becoming more evident in the general classroom as teachers and support staff review data and monitor student progress. Both sites indicated the need for “fine tuning” of the different tiers and supports, as well as instructional strategies for diverse learners. The CDE (2008a) states that key aspects of RtI² professional development may include researched-based practices, targeted instruction based on student need, screening tools to identify students who may need additional support, progress-monitoring processes and procedures, intervention strategies and programs for students needing academic and/or behavior support, and the use of problem-solving teams or standard treatment protocol methods to facilitate decisions based on data.

4. Professional development practices that encourage collaboration through teams are critical to ensure integrity of RtI² implementation and to monitor student learning. The CDE (2008a) states that collaboration through site teams is critical to implementation efforts. Collaboration through site level teams will help to identify specific student needs using data to make decisions that guide instruction. Teams will use those data for strategic intervention student grouping. Teams will also use individual data as a measure of a student’s pattern of response to those interventions. School districts may assist by reducing caseloads, allowing support staff to collaborate more often with general education teachers to provide more consultation and training.

5. New and expanding roles and responsibilities for all staff members will continue to grow and redefine over the course of RtI² implementation. New and expanding roles require a shift in how teachers and support staff conduct assessments and intervention practices for struggling students as well as students with disabilities. One teacher explained that general education teachers are now expected to be reading specialists as they analyze data, provide intervention, and monitor students who are not making progress. The CDE (2008a) recognizes that all school staff members will play important roles in the implementation of RtI². These new roles may include team leaders, data specialists, diagnosticians, and intervention specialists. School districts may assist by reducing caseloads, allowing support staff to provide more consultation and training.
6. Resources, including staffing and release time, must be made available or adjusted for initial and continuous implementation of RtI². Schools and districts must look at the existing use of resources across the districts. Schools that qualify for additional funds, such as Title 1 funds, have more discretionary funds to hire additional personnel. Districts may be able to redistribute funds across the district, enabling all schools to have additional funds for staffing in the initial phase of implementation. Districts funds can be allocated to personnel such as data specialists, diagnosticians, and intervention specialists to provide services to all schools. Districts and schools may need to work together to provide release time for staff to collaborate or attend professional development. Restructuring the school day can also allow for built in collaboration time. Additional funds would be required for substitutes to provide release time.

Recommendation for Further Study

Recommendations for further study include the following:

1. A study of leadership practices, professional development, and staff roles and responsibilities of schools in implementation that are not receiving additional funds for school improvement status. Comparison studies of higher and lower performing schools and their implementation of RtI² may yield important findings for extending the research base for RtI².
2. A study of RtI² implementation in schools that have adapted the model for other content areas such as mathematics and behavior. These studies will begin to provide the basis for prevention and intervention, as well as provide more information regarding qualifying students for eligibility for specific learning disabilities based on lack of RtI² in mathematics.

Final Thoughts

RtI² is a framework that has great promise. The initial intent of RtI² was to provide early intervention to students who were not achieving grade level standards, as well as reduce the disproportionate amount of minority students who were qualifying for specific learning disabilities. The success of reform efforts such as RtI² depends on instructional leadership, professional development opportunities, and the availability of human and fiscal resources. Although RTI has been implemented in states outside of California for a number of years, California did not begin implementation until the last 5 years. Unfortunately, implementing a reform during tough fiscal times creates lack of buy-in, lack of resources, and inconsistencies from one school to another. Districts and schools will need to work together to develop and implement a plan that provides support

to all schools and supports the common core principles of RtI² as outlined by the CDE (2009).

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APPENDIX A

RTI Implementation Self-Assessment Tool

Target Group: (Please specify)

District _____ School _____ Grade Level _____ Department _____ Other _____

Rate each item according to the response scale.

1. High-Quality Classroom Instruction Students receive high-quality, standards and research-based, culturally and linguistically relevant instruction in their inclusive classroom setting by highly qualified teachers. Tiers: 1, 2, 3; Essential Program Components (EPCs) 1, 2, 3, 5; District Standards 2, 5	Ratings and Comments			
	<u>Not in place</u>	<u>In progress</u>	<u>Achieved</u>	<u>Maintained</u>
	N/0	I/1	A/2	M/2.5
Instructional strategies are research-based.				
Instruction is planned intentionally to maximize student engagement and interaction. Includes flexible grouping and is differentiated to address the needs of all students, including English Learners and students with disabilities.				
All instruction is linked to the grade level standards for that content area.				
All instruction is taught by teachers credentialed for both the content and the grade level.				
A broad range of systematic and individualized strategies, including positive behavior support (PBS) for achieving important social and learning outcomes while preventing problem behavior with all students, is in place.				
Classroom instruction reflects attention to the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of all students and is responsive to their unique learning needs.				
Reading instruction is scheduled at the same time within grade levels and different times across grade levels to maximize use of resources.				
School-wide data are used to evaluate the effectiveness of core academic programs.				
School-wide data are used to evaluate the effectiveness of core behavior programs.				
SCORE RANGE FOR MINIMUM FLOOR of FIDELITY OF High-Quality Classroom Instruction: 13-18				
Total: Reflections/Comments:				

2. High Expectations District and site leaders as well as teachers and other support staff believe that all students can learn including students of poverty, students with disabilities, English Learners and students representing all ethnicities as evident in the school and district cultures. Students, parents and educators hold high academic and behavioral expectations for student success that are consistent, clearly defined and well-communicated in vision and mission statements, district LEAP, school SPSA, and Board Policies. Tiers: 1, 2, 3; Essential Program Components (EPCs) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6; District Standards 2, 5	Ratings and Comments			
	<u>Not in place</u>	<u>In progress</u>	<u>Achieved</u>	<u>Maintained</u>
	N/0	I/1	A/2	M/2.5
A written plan is developed and used by the School-Based Leadership Team to guide implementation of RtI ² .				
All changes made to the implementation plan are based on a thorough examination of data.				
Master schedule ensures that sufficient time is allotted for core and supplemental instruction including access to rich and engaging curriculum, instruction and intervention.				
Site leadership demonstrates expertise with respect to research-based practices for academics and behavior.				
Various methods are used to monitor implementation of research-based strategies; e.g., instructional rounds, walk-throughs, extended observations, teacher conferences, and lesson plan evaluations .				
A variety of resources are identified and provided to address areas of screening, assessment, curriculum, behavior management and instructional strategies.				
Leadership supports the collection of school and class data to determine areas of need; e.g., resources and professional development.				
Staff members have a good understanding of language acquisition theory and English Language Development.				
Staff members are trained in understanding poverty and its effect on school performance.				
Staff members utilize their understanding of cultural differences to form relationships with students and to guide instruction.				
Leadership ensures the professional work week includes adequate time for teacher collaboration.				
Feedback on the outcomes of the RtI ² approach is provided to staff and families at least yearly.				
District Level Leadership: Leadership support includes agreement to adopt an RtI ² model and allocate required resources in both general and special education.				
Leadership demonstrates expertise with respect to research-based practices for academics and behavior.				
Leadership understands and is committed to a long term change process (3 or more years) including staff training for all components of RtI ² .				
Leadership demonstrates long term district resource commitment of staff, time, materials for screening, assessment, and interventions.				

The district leadership meets with the School-Based Leadership Team at least twice each year to review data and implementation issues.				
Changes are made to the implementation plan as a result of district and site team data-based decisions.				
Data are collected to assess level of commitment and impact of RtI ² on staff.				
SCORE RANGE FOR MINIMUM FLOOR OF FIDELITY OF High Expectations: 27-38				
Total: Reflections/Comments:				

3. Assessments and Data Collection Integrated data collection and assessment system includes universal screening, diagnostics and progress monitoring to inform decisions appropriate for each tier of service delivery. Tiers: 1, 2, 3; Essential Program Components (EPCs) 6, 7, 8. District Standards 2, 4, 6.	Ratings and Comments			
	Not in place	In progress	Achieved	Maintained
	N/0	I/1	A/2	M/2.5
Screening Assessments are administered to all students for academic and behavioral needs upon entry. Additional assessments are available as needed. Based on the collected data, school staff determine which students require close progress monitoring, differentiated instruction, additional targeted assessment, a specific research-based intervention, or acceleration.				
Screening Assessments allow for decision making 3 or more times a year along with established decision-making criteria to be used with screening results.				
Diagnostic Assessments are gathered based on an established process when additional information is necessary to align instruction to individual student need.				
There are established decision-making criteria/benchmarks/cut scores that apply to diagnostic results.				
Teachers use the data to differentiate instruction.				
Formative Assessments may include any curriculum based measures including, teacher made probes, benchmark and other critical indicators and are aligned to the standards.				
Student performance is clearly identified/defined by the assessment used and instructional decisions are based on this data.				
Appropriate monitoring for each academic or behavioral intervention is used and is uniform in content and procedure.				
Teachers engage in a collaborative team problem-solving process using data to design instruction and behavior intervention plans or modify if positive progress is made.				
Data is collected at approximately six to eight week intervals for progress monitoring to determine the effectiveness of the academic or behavioral acceleration or intervention and to make any modifications, if necessary.				
Progress monitoring occurs more frequently (weekly or bi-weekly) for students in intensive intervention programs.				
Data is regularly charted or graphed in an easy to read format to share information with students, teachers, parents, and administrators as feedback about the effectiveness of the intervention.				
School-wide data are presented to staff in a timely fashion after each benchmarking sessions (staff meetings, grade level/department meetings).				
SCORE RANGE FOR MINIMUM FLOOR OF FIDELITY OF Assessments and Data Collection: 18-26				
Total:				
Reflections/Comments:				

4. Problem-Solving Systems Approach Uses a problem-solving systems process and method to identify problems, develop interventions and evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention in a multi-tiered system of service delivery. Tiers: 1, 2, 3; Essential Program Components (EPCs) 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8; District Standards 2, 6, 7.	Ratings and comments			
	<u>Not in</u> <u>place</u>	<u>In</u> <u>progress</u>	<u>Achieved</u>	<u>Maintained</u>
	N/0	I/1	A/2	M/2.5
Collaborative problem-solving teams meet regularly to monitor students in the RtI ² process.				
Collaborative problem-solving teams (facilitator, time keeper, recorder, etc.) have defined roles .				
The school schedule is arranged in such a way the grade/department level teaching teams can meet to discuss student progress and instructional changes on at least a twice monthly basis.				
The team uses standardized forms at the meeting to lead the team through the Problem-Solving process.				
Collaborative problem-solving teams identify a specific measureable outcome and design research-based intervention to address concerns.				
Collaborative problem-solving team uses academic and behavioral assessments to identify why students are not mastering the required academic skills and to guide the development of effective interventions and to provide frequent monitoring of progress.				
The team maintains records on students served through the team.				
Communication occurs within and across grade levels and among stakeholders of the school.				
The team sets clear, objective, measurable goals for student progress.				
The team has access to the inventory of school-wide resources that it can use in Team interventions.				
The team holds follow-up meetings with the referring teacher to review student progress and judge whether interventions were effective.				
Collaborative problem solving teams ensure interventions are implemented with fidelity according to their research base and student progress is monitored to determine the student's response.				
Resources are allocated to teaching teams based on results of progress monitoring.				
SCORE RANGE FOR MINIMUM FLOOR OF FIDELITY OF Problem-Solving Systems Approach: 18-26				
Total: Reflections/Comments:				

5. Research-Based Interventions The interventions are designed to increase the intensity of the students' instructional experience. Tiers: 1, 2, 3; Essential Program Components (EPCs) 1, 2, 7, 8. District Standards 2, 6	Ratings and comments			
	<u>N</u>ot in place	<u>I</u>n progress	<u>A</u>chieved	<u>M</u>aintained
	N/0	I/1	A/2	M/2.5
When monitoring data indicate a lack of progress, an appropriate research-based intervention is implemented.				
Research-based interventions target learning or behavioral identified through progress monitoring data.				
The school has in place standard protocol interventions designed to address common and/or frequent learning or behavior problems.				
The school has invested in multiple effective, research-based intervention programs/ideas to meet the needs of individual students.				
Allocation of staff to provide various interventions is flexible across educational roles recognizing availability and expertise.				
Intervention plans include frequency, intensity, and duration of intervention, as well as progress monitoring tools and timelines.				
A process is in place to ensure research-based strategies and interventions are implemented with fidelity.				
A tiered system of research-based instructional interventions is established:				
➤ Tier 1 Academic Core Instruction clearly identified.				
➤ Tier 1 Behavioral Core Instruction clearly identified.				
➤ Tier 2 Academic Strategic/Supplemental Instruction/Programs clearly identified.				
➤ Tier 2 Behavioral Strategic/Supplemental Instruction/Programs clearly identified.				
➤ Tier 3 Academic Intensive Strategies/Programs are evidenced-based.				
➤ Tier 3 Behavioral Intensive/Programs are evidence-based.				
SCORE RANGE FOR MINIMUM FLOOR OF FIDELITY OF Research-Based Interventions: 18-26				
Total: Reflections/Comments:				

6. Positive Behavioral Strategies The school uses schoolwide and classroom research-based positive behavioral strategies for achieving important social and learning outcomes. Tiers: 1, 2, 3; Essential Program Components (EPCs) 2, 6, 7, 8. Standards 7	Ratings and comments			
	<u>N</u>ot in Place	<u>I</u>n Progress	<u>A</u>chieved	<u>M</u>aintained
	N/0	I/1	A/2	M/2.5
There is a schoolwide behavior support system which is understood and implemented by all staff and is clearly articulated to students.				
All students are acknowledged and recognized for appropriate behaviors regularly.				
Behavioral expectations are clearly articulated and behavior and instructional errors are monitored, corrected, or re-taught.				
There is a system for universal screening of all students at key developmental stages for risk factors in social/emotional development.				
Office Disciplinary Referral data are used in conjunction with other data sources to identify students needing targeted group intervention and individualized interventions for behavior.				
Appropriate monitoring for each academic or behavioral intervention is used and is uniform in content and procedure.				
Teachers engage in a collaborative team problem-solving process identifying underlying causes and replacement behaviors.				
Positive behavioral strategies are consistently used in the classroom and school wide. A broad range of systematic and individualized strategies including positive behavior support (PBS) is in place.				
The school has established a three-tiered system of behavior supports:				
➤ Tier 1 Behavioral Core Instruction clearly identified.				
➤ Tier 2 Behavioral Supplemental/Strategic Instruction/programs clearly identified.				
➤ Tier 3 Behavioral Intensive Strategies/Programs are evidenced based.				
There is a system in place for collecting data on the increase of individual positive replacement behaviors that are being targeted for a student.				
SCORE RANGE FOR MINIMUM FLOOR FIDELITY OF Positive Behavioral Strategies: 17- 24				
Total: Reflections/Comments:				

7. Fidelity of Program Implementation Student success in the RtI model requires fidelity of implementation in the delivery of content and instructional strategies specific to the learning and/or behavioral needs of the student Tiers: 1, 2, 3; Essential Program Components (EPCs) 1, 2, 6, 8. District Standards 1, 2, 7	Ratings and comments			
	<u>N</u>ot in place	<u>P</u>artially in place	<u>A</u>chieved	<u>M</u>aintained
	0	1	A/2	M/2.5
The core R/LA/ELA curriculum is evidenced-based and addresses five necessary components: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension.				
The arithmetic approach incorporates the three components of math instruction: conceptual knowledge and number sense; problem solving and mathematical reasoning; basic computational and procedural skills.				
The curriculum is <i>guaranteed</i> ; articulated and taught in the way it is intended to be taught.				
The curriculum is <i>mapped</i> to align curriculum across grade levels and is <i>viable</i> ; effectively sequenced and paced so that the content is adequately addressed in the time available.				
The curriculum is aligned with the California Standards.				
The literacy block is prioritized and protected from interruption.				
Teachers use flexible grouping during Universal Access core instruction to maximize student performance.				
Data demonstrates that the instruction in core is meeting the needs of most students (80%).				
Administrator ensures that critical components of core curriculum are implemented, as defined by the publisher's implementation design.				
Additional strategic/supplemental (Tier 2) instruction is scheduled, protected and targeted to student(s) needs.				
There is evidence that strategic/supplemental (Tier 2) instruction is meeting the targeted instructional needs of approximately 10-15% students.				
Additional intensive instruction (Tier 3) is scheduled, protected and highly targeted to student need.				
There is evidence that intensive instruction (Tier 3) is meeting the targeted instructional needs of approximately 5% of students.				
Intensive intervention program instruction is provided within the same constructs and in accordance to program recommendations of the research environment in which it was developed:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fidelity of instructional minutes/frequency 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fidelity of group size 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fidelity of instructional practices and procedures 				
Administrator uses a variety of classroom observation methods and tools on a frequent basis (instructional rounds, walk-throughs, etc.).				
SCORE RANGE FOR MINIMUM FLOOR OF IMPLEMENTATION				
Fidelity of Program: 24-34				
Total:				
Reflections/Comments				

8. Staff Development and Collaboration All school staff members are trained in assessments, data analysis, programs, and research-based instructional practices and positive behavioral strategies. Tiers: 1, 2, 3; Essential Program Components (EPCs) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. District Standards 6, 7.	Ratings and comments			
	<u>N</u>ot in place	<u>P</u>artially in place	<u>A</u>chieved	<u>M</u>aintained
	N/0	P/1	A/2	M/2.5
Staff members are trained in the California RtI ² Core Components including but not limited to:				
• RtI ² overview				
• RtI ² implementation procedures				
• Collaborative delivery of instruction/interventions				
• Administering universal screening measures				
• Administering universal screening data (cut scores/guidclines)				
• Diagnostic assessment				
• Formative assessment				
• The effective use of data to drive instruction				
• The adopted core curriculum (SB 472)				
• The appropriate intervention curriculum				
• The effective implementation of research based instructional strategies and interventions, including those for ELs and SWDs				
• Culturally and linguistically responsive instruction				
• The use of positive behavioral support strategies				
• The use of differentiated instruction				
• Managing small group instruction and intervention				
• Determining rate of learning				
• Parent/family engagement strategies				
Staff members are trained in the effective use of collaboration time for:				
• Analyzing data to make instructional decisions				
• Planning instruction				
• Developing instructional strategies that meet diverse learning needs				
• Collaborative decision making				
Site grade level or interdisciplinary teams use a collaborative approach to analyze student data and work together in the development, implementation, and monitoring of the intervention process.				
Staff development is linked to program evaluation data and identified student need.				
District leadership has ensured that school leaders have the tools they need to effectively collect, analyze, and publish progress monitoring data from short cycle assessments and Curriculum Based Measurements.				
SCORE RANGE FOR MINIMUM FLOOR OF FIDELITY OF Staff Development and Collaboration: 34-48				
Total:				
Reflections/Comments				

9. Parent/Family Involvement The involvement and active participation of parents/families at all stages of the instructional and intervention process are essential to improving the educational outcomes of their students. Tiers: 1, 2, 3; Essential Program Components (EPCs) 7 District Standards 4	Ratings and comments			
	<u>Not in place</u>	<u>Partially in place</u>	<u>Achieved</u>	<u>Maintained</u>
	N/0	P/1	A/2	M/2.5
School community includes parents/families in a culturally-sensitive, problem solving approach to support student learning.				
Staff members utilize parent interview, questionnaires, student records, previous teachers, and all other available resources to learn about students and the factors that may contribute to their learning and/or behavior challenges.				
Parents/families are kept informed of the progress of their students in their native language or other mode of communication, and their input is used to make appropriate decisions in an understandable format.				
Parents/ families receive ongoing communication regarding students academic and behavioral progress, with early notification of difficulties their child may experience in academic and/or behavior.				
District and school RtI ² framework and problem-solving process is widely disseminated to families and community members.				
School communicates with parents and families about problem-solving meetings and has invited them to attend meetings.				
SCORE RANGE FOR MINIMUM FLOOR OF FIDELITY OF Parent and Family Support: 9-12				
Total: Comments:				

10. Specific Learning Disability Determination The RtI ² approach may be one component of Specific Learning Disability determination as addressed in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 statute and regulations. As part of determining eligibility, the data from the RtI ² process may be used to ensure that a student has received research-based instruction and interventions. Tiers: 3 Essential Program Components (EPCs) 7 District Standards 2, 4	Ratings and comments			
	<u>Not in place</u>	<u>Partially in place</u>	<u>Achieved</u>	<u>Maintained</u>
	N/0	P/1	A/2	M/2.5
Multi-disciplinary assessment teams use RtI ² academic and behavioral progress monitoring data for decision making to identify patterns of strength and weakness.				
Multi-disciplinary assessment teams utilize a variety of diagnostic assessments in addition to RtI ² data for decision making around SLD eligibility.				
Multi-disciplinary teams consider data from parents, general education teachers, team members familiar with English language development, and other specialists relevant to student's learning or behavioral needs, in the decision making process.				
The process for identifying a Specific Learning Disability includes identifying the academic areas of strength as well as need.				
The process for identifying a Specific Learning Disability includes an analysis of the types of interventions used and their relevant efficacy.				
The system for making a referral to special education includes the consideration of the implementation of increasing intensive research-based interventions over time.				
The process for identifying a Specific Learning Disability includes consideration of the student's opportunity to participate in research-based curriculum and methods implemented with fidelity.				
The process for identifying a Specific Learning Disability includes identification of the student's cognitive processing strengths and weaknesses.				
There are criteria for determining when a child's needs exceed the resources of the problem-solving team and special education eligibility is considered.				
SCORE RANGE FOR MINIMUM FLOOR OF FIDELITY OF Specific Learning Disability Determination: 13-18				
Total: Reflections/Comments:				

APPENDIX B

Superintendent or Designee Permission to Conduct Study

TO: _____

FROM: Nancy Barker

DATE: November 26, 2010

SUBJECT: Superintendent or Designee Permission to Conduct Study

I would like your permission to conduct a research study at _____ Elementary School as part of my doctoral dissertation at Pepperdine University. I am researching elementary schools that have been identified by _____, RtI² Task Force Chair and Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Continuous Improvement for _____ County Office of Education, as schools that have been implementing RtI² with success for a minimum of three years.

This study intends to explore the implementation of the Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI²) framework for two elementary schools in one county in Southern California. Selected schools in implementation are purposively selected for qualitative methods to examine the structures that are in place that affect school wide implementation of a Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI²) model. The principals, support staff, and teachers will participate in semi-structured interviews. This study will explore site leadership attributes, skills, and practices; professional development opportunities for RtI²; and support and collaboration from staff including special education teachers, psychologist, and speech pathologist that are necessary for implementation of RtI² in elementary schools. Results of the study may help inform leadership training programs focusing on components of RtI² structures and leadership behaviors that move implementation forward. This study will also contribute to the existing body of literature on reform efforts and the efficacy of Response to Instruction and Intervention models at elementary schools. Your district's participation in the study will contribute to knowledge and practices surrounding implementation practices of RtI².

I selected _____ Elementary School as a possible site for this study as it was recommended by _____. In addition, this site may be participating in the state pilot program for the use of the identifying students with specific learning disabilities and/or this site has shown an increase in API scores over the last three years. If the school's principal, psychologist, speech pathologist, and special education teacher and selected general education teachers agree to participate, the participants will be asked to participate in a 45-60 minute interview regarding the school's practices that contributed to implementation of RtI² in regards to site leadership, professional development practices, and the new roles and responsibilities of support staff and general education teachers.

I will share the purpose of the study and explain why the particular site was chosen with all participants. Interviews will be scheduled at mutually convenient times for the participants during the normal workday at the school site and will not be disruptive to the school program. The results of the study may be shared following the study. Pseudonyms will be

used. Tape recordings and transcribed materials will be locked and secured. Participant's identities will remain confidential and the interview notes and recordings will not be shared with others. The interview notes will be examined for common themes and used to identify leadership attributes, skills, and behaviors; professional development practices; and the new roles for staff members in the implementation of RtI².

Participation in this study is voluntary. Participants who decide to participate are free to withdraw their consent or discontinue participation at any time. A copy of the informed consent and the interview protocol and questions are attached for your information.

Please sign and return your approval by _____. If you are unable to respond by that date, please send this approval as soon as possible. Please return one copy of this signed form to: Nancy Barker, XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX. You may also fax the signed form to XXXXXXXXX or email it to XXXXXXXXXXXX. If you have any questions regarding this study please feel free to contact me at XXXXXXXXXXXX or XXXXXXXXXXXX. If you have any additional questions or concerns regarding this study, you may also contact the researcher's supervisor Dr. Linda Purrington at XXXXXXXXXXXX or XXXXXXXXX@pepperdine.edu.

Your signature indicates that you have read and understood the information provided above, that you willingly agree for me to invite your site and staff to participate in this study, and that you have received a copy of this form.

Respectfully,

Nancy Barker

Attachments:
Copy of Superintendent or Designee Permission to Conduct Study;
Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities;
Interview Protocol and Questions

I hereby consent to my school district's participation in the research described above.

School District

Superintendent or Designee Signature

Please Print Superintendent or Designee's Name

Date

APPENDIX C

Cover Letter for Principal Informed Consent

TO:

FROM: Nancy Barker

DATE:

SUBJECT: Research Request

I am researching elementary schools that have been identified by _____, RtI² Task Force Chair and Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Continuous Improvement for _____ County Office of Education, as schools that have been implementing RtI² with success for a minimum of three years. In addition, this selected school may be participating in the state pilot program for the use of the identifying students with specific learning disabilities and/or this school site has shown an increase in API scores over the last three years.

This study intends to explore the implementation of the Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI²) framework for two elementary schools in one county in Southern California. Selected schools in implementation are purposively selected for qualitative methods to examine the structures that are in place that affect school wide implementation of a Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI²) model. The principals, support staff, and teachers will participate in semi-structured interviews. This study will explore site leadership attributes, skills, and practices; professional development opportunities for RtI²; and support and collaboration from staff including special education teachers, psychologist, and speech pathologist that are necessary for implementation of RtI² in elementary schools. Results of the study may help inform leadership training programs focusing on components of RtI² structures and leadership behaviors that move implementation forward. This study will also contribute to the existing body of literature on reform efforts and the efficacy of Response to Instruction and Intervention models at elementary schools. Your school's participation in the study will contribute to knowledge and practices surrounding implementation practices of RtI².

If you agree to participate in the study, you will be asked to participate in a 45-60 minute interview regarding the school's practices that contributed to implementation of RtI² in regards to site leadership, professional development practices, and the new roles and responsibilities of support staff and general education teachers. In addition to your participation, I will be asking the school psychologist, speech pathologist, special education teacher, and selected teachers from primary and upper grade general education classrooms to participate in the study.

Prior to the interview, I will remind the participants the purpose of the study and explain why the particular site was chosen. Interviews will be scheduled at mutually convenient times for the participants during the normal workday at the school site and will not be

disruptive to the school program. The results of the study may be shared following the study. Pseudonyms will be used. Tape recordings and transcribed materials will be locked and secured. Participant's identities will remain confidential and the interview notes and recordings will not be shared with others. The interview notes will be examined for common themes and used to identify leadership attributes, skills, and behaviors; professional development practices; and the new roles for staff members in the implementation of RtI².

Participation in this study is voluntary. Participants who decide to participate are free to withdraw their consent or discontinue participation at any time. A copy of the informed consent and the interview protocol and questions are attached for your information.

Please sign and return one copy of the signed consent form prior to the interview to Nancy Barker, XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX. You may also fax the signed form to XXXXXXXX or email it to XXXXXXXXXXXX. If you have any questions regarding this study please feel free to contact me at XXXXXXXXXXXX or XXXXXXXXXXXX. If you have any additional questions or concerns regarding this study, you may also contact the researcher's supervisor Dr. Linda Purrington at XXXXXXXXXXXX or XXXXXXXX@pepperdine.edu.

I will contact you in the next week to answer any questions you may have and to schedule an interview time if you choose to participate in this study.

Respectfully,

Nancy Barker

Attachments:

Copy of Cover Letter for Principal Informed Consent;
Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities;
Interview Protocol and Questions

APPENDIX D

Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities

Participant: _____

Principal Investigator: Nancy Barker

Project Title: Systems Change: A Study of Two Implementations of Response to Instruction and Intervention in One County in Southern California

I, _____, agree to participate in the dissertation research study conducted by doctoral student Nancy Barker, from the Educational Leadership, Administration and Policy Program at Pepperdine University. I understand that I may contact Mrs. Barker's supervisor Dr. Linda Purrington at XXXXXXXXXXXX or XXXXXXXX@pepperdine.edu if I have any questions or concerns regarding the study.

I understand that the overall purpose of this research study is to identify the critical components necessary for the implementation of RtI² which include site leadership attributes, skills, and practices; professional development practices; and the change in roles and responsibilities for support staff and teachers in the implementation of RtI².

I understand that I have been asked to participate in this study as this school site has been identified by RtI² Task Force Chairperson as a school that has been implementing RtI² with success for a minimum of three years. In addition, this school may be participating in the state pilot program for the use of the identifying students with specific learning disabilities through a model of RtI² or may have shown an increase in API scores over the last three years.

I understand that my participation will involve one 45-60 minute semi-structured interview at a mutually agreed upon time at my workplace regarding leadership attributes, skills and practices; professional development practices; and the change in roles and responsibilities of staff members in the implementation of RtI². I also understand that the study will be taking place between January 2011-June 2011.

I understand that my interview will be audio taped if I decide to participate in this study. The tapes will be used for research purposes only. The interview will be conducted face-to-face and tape recorded in order to ensure the accuracy of the interview notes. The researcher will convert the audio files to written text and will use the interview content to identify various structures that contribute to RtI² implementation regarding leadership attributes, skills, practices; professional development practices; and the change in roles and responsibilities of staff members. The audio files, written text and interview notes will be stored in a locked file cabinet and destroyed after three years.

I understand that the researcher will work with me to ensure there are minimal risk, discomfort, and inconvenience, identifying and addressing any concerns I may have. I understand that the potential risks of participating in this study are fatigue, boredom, and possibly feelings of being uncomfortable with a particular question. In the event that I do experience fatigue and/or boredom, a break will be provided. If I am uncomfortable with any question, I have the option to not answer.

I understand that there is no direct benefit from participation in this study; however, the benefit to the profession may help inform leadership training programs focusing on components of RtI² structures and leadership behaviors that move implementation forward. This study will also contribute to the existing body of literature on reform efforts and the efficacy of Response to Instruction and Intervention models at elementary schools.

I understand my participation in this study is strictly voluntary. I understand that I have the right to refuse to participate in, or to withdraw from, the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled. I understand that I may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled. I also have the right to refuse to answer any question I choose not to answer. I also understand that the researcher may find it necessary to end my participation in this study.

I understand that the researcher will take all reasonable measures to protect the confidentiality of my records and my identity will not be revealed in any publication that may result from this study. I understand that under California law, the privilege of confidentiality does not extend to information about the abuse of a child. If the researcher has or is given such information, the researcher is required to report this information to the authorities. The obligation to report includes alleged or probable abuse as well as known abuse. Furthermore, under California law, the researcher is obligated to report any evidence of physical abuse against elders or dependent adults, or if a person indicates that he/she wishes to do serious harm to self, others, or property.

I understand that if the findings of the study are published or presented to a professional audience, no personally identifying information will be released. I understand that the interviews will be tape recorded only with my permission prior to each interview. The raw data gathered will be stored on the researcher's personal computer and transcribed interviews will be stored in locked file cabinets to which only the investigator will have access. The raw data will be maintained in a secure manner for three years at which time the data will be destroyed.

I understand that I will receive no compensation, financial or otherwise, for participating in this study.

I understand that if I have any questions regarding the study procedures, I can contact Nancy Barker at XXXXXXXXXX or email at XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX to get answers to my questions. If I have further questions, I may contact Dr. Linda Purrington @ (XXX)

XXX-XXXX, Pepperdine University Graduate School of Education and Psychology, 6100 Center Dr., 5th Floor, Los Angeles CA, 90045. If I have questions about my rights as a research participant, I may contact Dr. Doug Leigh, chairperson of the Pepperdine University Graduate and Professional Schools Institutional Review Board (GPS IRB) at (XXX) XXX-XXXX, Pepperdine University Graduate School of Education and Psychology, 6100 Center Dr., 5th Floor, Los Angeles CA, 90045.

I understand that I will be informed of any significant new findings developed during the course of my participation in this research which may have a bearing on my willingness to continue in the study.

I understand to my satisfaction the information in the consent form regarding my participation in the research project. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have received a copy of this informed consent form which I have read and understand.

I hereby consent to participate in the research described above.

Participant's Signature

Date

Witness

Date

I have explained and defined in detail the research procedure in which the subject has consented to participate. Having explained this and answered any questions, I am cosigning this form and accepting this person's consent.

Principal Investigator

Date

APPENDIX E

Request to Participate Follow-up Email Protocol

I will follow the following steps when contacting participants for email follow-up and to schedule an interview.

1. Review why their school and participant were selected and the purpose of the study.
2. Provide information regarding the interview procedures found in the informed consent form.
3. Ask if the participant has any additional questions.
4. Ask the participant to schedule an interview.
5. Ask participant to sign and return the informed consent prior to the interview.

APPENDIX F

Cover Letter for Principal Informed Consent

TO:

FROM: Nancy Barker

DATE:

SUBJECT: Research Request

I am researching elementary schools that have been identified by the chairperson of the RtI² Task Force as schools that have been implementing RtI² with success for a minimum of three years. In addition, this selected school may be participating in the state pilot program for the use of the identifying students with specific learning disabilities or this school site may have shown an increase in API scores over the last three years.

This study intends to explore the implementation of the Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI²) framework for two elementary schools in one county in Southern California. Selected schools in implementation are purposively selected for qualitative methods to examine the structures that are in place that affect school-wide implementation of a Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI²) model. The principals, support staff, and teachers will participate in semi-structured interviews. This study will explore site leadership attributes, skills, and practices; professional development opportunities for RtI²; and support and collaboration from staff including special education teachers, psychologist, and speech pathologist that are necessary for implementation of RtI² in elementary schools. Results of the study may help inform leadership training programs focusing on components of RtI² structures and leadership behaviors that move implementation forward. This study will also contribute to the existing body of literature on reform efforts and the efficacy of Response to Instruction and Intervention models at elementary schools. Your school's participation in the study will contribute to knowledge and practices surrounding implementation practices of RtI².

If you agree to participate in the study, you will be asked to participate in a 45-60 minute interview regarding the school's practices that contributed to implementation of RtI² in regards to site leadership, professional development practices, and the new roles and responsibilities of support staff and general education teachers. In addition to your participation, I will be asking the school psychologist, speech pathologist, special education teacher, and selected teachers from primary and upper grade general education classrooms to participate in the study.

Prior to the interview, I will remind the participants the purpose of the study and explain why the particular site was chosen. Interviews will be scheduled at mutually convenient times for the participants during the normal workday at the school site and will not be disruptive to the school program. The results of the study may be shared following the

study. Pseudonyms will be used. Tape recordings and transcribed materials will be locked and secured. Participant's identities will remain confidential and the interview notes and recordings will not be shared with others. The interview notes will be examined for common themes and used to identify leadership attributes, skills, and behaviors; professional development practices; and the new roles for staff members in the implementation of RtI².

Participation in this study is voluntary. Participants who decide to participate are free to withdraw their consent or discontinue participation at any time. A copy of the informed consent and the interview protocol and questions are attached for your information.

Please sign and return one copy of the signed consent form prior to the interview to: Nancy Barker, XXXXXXXXXXXX. You may also fax the signed form to XXXXXXXX or email it to XXXXXXXX. If you have any questions regarding this study please feel free to contact me at XXXXXXXX or XXXXXXXX. If you have any additional questions or concerns regarding this study, you may also contact the researcher's supervisor Dr. Linda Purrington at XXXXXXXXXXXX or XXXXXXXX@pepperdine.edu.

I will contact you in the next week to answer any questions you may have and to schedule an interview time if you choose to participate in this study.

Respectfully,

Nancy Barker

Attachments:

Copy of Cover Letter for Principal Informed Consent;
Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities;
Interview Protocol and Questions

APPENDIX G

Superintendent or Designee Permission to Conduct Study

TO: _____

FROM: Nancy Barker

DATE: November 26, 2010

SUBJECT: Superintendent or Designee Permission to Conduct Study

I would like your permission to conduct a research study at _____ Elementary School as part of my doctoral dissertation at Pepperdine University. I am researching elementary schools that have been identified by members of the RtI² Task Force as schools that have been implementing RtI² with success for a minimum of three years.

This study intends to explore the implementation of the Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI²) framework for two elementary schools in one county in Southern California. Selected schools in implementation are purposively selected for qualitative methods to examine the structures that are in place that affect school wide implementation of a Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI²) model. The principals, support staff, and teachers will participate in semi-structured interviews. This study will explore site leadership attributes, skills, and practices; professional development opportunities for RtI²; and support and collaboration from staff including special education teachers, psychologist, and speech pathologist that are necessary for implementation of RtI² in elementary schools. The results may help inform leadership training programs focusing on components of RtI² structures and leadership behaviors that move implementation forward. This study will also contribute to the existing body of literature on reform efforts and the efficacy of Response to Instruction and Intervention models at elementary schools. Your district's participation in the study will contribute to knowledge and practices surrounding implementation practices of RtI².

I selected _____ Elementary School as a possible site for this study as it was recommended by members of the RtI² Task Force. In addition, this site may be participating in the state pilot program for the use of the identifying students with specific learning disabilities or this site may have shown an increase in API scores over the last three years. If the school's principal, psychologist, speech pathologist, and special education teacher and selected general education teachers agree to participate, the participants will be asked to participate in a 45-60 minute interview regarding the school's practices that contributed to implementation of RtI² in regards to site leadership, professional development practices, and the new roles and responsibilities of support staff and general education teachers.

I will share the purpose of the study and explain why the particular site was chosen with all participants. Interviews will be scheduled at mutually convenient times for the participants during the normal workday at the school site and will not be disruptive to the school program. The results of the study may be shared following the study. Pseudonyms will be used. Tape recordings and transcribed materials will be locked and secured. Participant's identities will remain confidential and the interview notes and recordings will not be shared

with others. The interview notes will be examined for common themes and used to identify leadership attributes, skills, and behaviors; professional development practices; and the new roles for staff members in the implementation of RtI².

Participation in this study is voluntary. Participants who decide to participate are free to withdraw their consent or discontinue participation at any time. A copy of the informed consent and the interview protocol and questions are attached for your information.

Please sign and return your approval by _____. If you are unable to respond by that date, please send this approval as soon as possible. Please return one copy of this signed form to: Nancy Barker, XXXXXXXXXXXX. You may also fax the signed form to XXXXXXX or email it to XXXXXXXXXXXX. If you have any questions regarding this study please feel free to contact me at XXXXXXXX or XXXXXXXX. If you have any additional questions or concerns regarding this study, you may also contact the researcher's supervisor Dr. Linda Purrington at XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX or XXXXXXXXXXXX@pepperdine.edu.

Your signature indicates that you have read and understood the information provided above, that you willingly agree for me to invite your site and staff to participate in this study, and that you have received a copy of this form.

Respectfully,

Nancy Barker

Attachments:

Copy of Superintendent or Designee Permission to Conduct Study; Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities; Interview Protocol and Questions

I hereby consent to my school district's participation in the research described above.

School District

Superintendent or Designee Signature

Please Print Superintendent or Designee's Name

Date

APPENDIX H

Cover Letter for Principal Informed Consent

TO:

FROM: Nancy Barker

DATE:

SUBJECT: Research Request

I am researching elementary schools that have been identified by members of the RtI² Task Force as schools that have been implementing RtI² with success for a minimum of three years. In addition, this selected school may be participating in the state pilot program for the use of the identifying students with specific learning disabilities or this school site may have shown an increase in API scores over the last three years.

This study intends to explore the implementation of the Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI²) framework for two elementary schools in one county in Southern California. Selected schools in implementation are purposively selected for qualitative methods to examine the structures that are in place that affect school wide implementation of a Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI²) model. The principals, support staff, and teachers will participate in semi-structured interviews. This study will explore site leadership attributes, skills, and practices; professional development opportunities for RtI²; and support and collaboration from staff including special education teachers, psychologist, and speech pathologist that are necessary for implementation of RtI² in elementary schools. Results of the study may help inform leadership training programs focusing on components of RtI² structures and leadership behaviors that move implementation forward. This study will also contribute to the existing body of literature on reform efforts and the efficacy of Response to Instruction and Intervention models at elementary schools. Your school's participation in the study will contribute to knowledge and practices surrounding implementation practices of RtI².

If you agree to participate in the study, you will be asked to participate in a 45-60 minute interview regarding the school's practices that contributed to implementation of RtI² in regards to site leadership, professional development practices, and the new roles and responsibilities of support staff and general education teachers. In addition to your participation, I will be asking the school psychologist, speech pathologist, special education teacher, and selected teachers from primary and upper grade general education classrooms to participate in the study.

Prior to the interview, I will remind the participants the purpose of the study and explain why the particular site was chosen. Interviews will be scheduled at mutually convenient times for the participants during the normal workday at the school site and will not be disruptive to the school program. The results of the study may be shared following the

study. Pseudonyms will be used. Tape recordings and transcribed materials will be locked and secured. Participant's identities will remain confidential and the interview notes and recordings will not be shared with others. The interview notes will be examined for common themes and used to identify leadership attributes, skills, and behaviors; professional development practices; and the new roles for staff members in the implementation of RtI².

Participation in this study is voluntary. Participants who decide to participate are free to withdraw their consent or discontinue participation at any time. A copy of the informed consent and the interview protocol and questions are attached for your information.

Please sign and return one copy of the signed consent form prior to the interview to: Nancy Barker, XXXXXXXXXX. You may also fax the signed form to XXXXXXXX or email it to XXXXXXXX. If you have any questions regarding this study please feel free to contact me at XXXXXXXX or XXXXXXXX. If you have any additional questions or concerns regarding this study, you may also contact the researcher's supervisor Dr. Linda Purrington at XXXXXXXXXXXX or XXXXXXXX@pepperdine.edu.

I will contact you in the next week to answer any questions you may have and to schedule an interview time if you choose to participate in this study.

Respectfully,

Nancy Barker

Attachments:

Copy of Cover Letter for Principal Informed Consent;
Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities;
Interview Protocol and Questions

APPENDIX I

Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities

Participant: _____

Principal Investigator: Nancy Barker

Project Title: Systems Change: A Study of Two Implementations of Response to Instruction and Intervention in One County in Southern California

I, _____, agree to participate in the dissertation research study conducted by doctoral student Nancy Barker, from the Educational Leadership, Administration and Policy Program at Pepperdine University. I understand that I may contact Mrs. Barker's supervisor Dr. Linda Purrington at XXXXXXXXXXXX or XXXXXXXXX@pepperdine.edu if I have any questions or concerns regarding the study.

I understand that the overall purpose of this research study is to identify the critical components necessary for the implementation of RtI² which include site leadership attributes, skills, and practices; professional development practices; and the change in roles and responsibilities for support staff and teachers in the implementation of RtI².

I understand that I have been asked to participate in this study as this school site has been identified by members of the RtI² Task Force as a school that has been implementing RtI² with success for a minimum of three years. In addition, this school may be participating in the state pilot program for the use of the identifying students with specific learning disabilities through a model of RtI² or may have shown an increase in API scores over the last three years.

I understand that my participation will involve one 45-60 minute semi-structured interview at a mutually agreed upon time at my workplace regarding leadership attributes, skills and practices; professional development practices; and the change in roles and responsibilities of staff members in the implementation of RtI². I also understand that the study will be taking place between January 2011-June 2011.

I understand that my interview will be audio taped if I decide to participate in this study. The tapes will be used for research purposes only. The interview will be conducted face-to-face and tape recorded in order to ensure the accuracy of the interview notes. The researcher will convert the audio files to written text and will use the interview content to identify various structures that contribute to RtI² implementation regarding leadership attributes, skills, practices; professional development practices; and the change in roles and responsibilities of staff members. The audio files, written text and interview notes will be stored in a locked file cabinet and destroyed after three years.

I understand that the researcher will work with me to ensure there are minimal risk, discomfort, and inconvenience, identifying and addressing any concerns I may have. I understand that the potential risks of participating in this study are fatigue, boredom, and possibly feelings of being uncomfortable with a particular question. In the event that I do experience fatigue and/or boredom, a break will be provided. If I am uncomfortable with any question, I have the option to not answer.

I understand that there is no direct benefit from participation in this study; however, the benefit to the profession may help inform leadership training programs focusing on components of RtI² structures and leadership behaviors that move implementation forward. This study will also contribute to the existing body of literature on reform efforts and the efficacy of Response to Instruction and Intervention models at elementary schools.

I understand my participation in this study is strictly voluntary. I understand that I have the right to refuse to participate in, or to withdraw from, the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled. I understand that I may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled. I also have the right to refuse to answer any question I choose not to answer. I also understand that the researcher may find it necessary to end my participation in this study.

I understand that the researcher will take all reasonable measures to protect the confidentiality of my records and my identity will not be revealed in any publication that may result from this study. I understand that under California law, the privilege of confidentiality does not extend to information about the abuse of a child. If the researcher has or is given such information, the researcher is required to report this information to the authorities. The obligation to report includes alleged or probable abuse as well as known abuse. Furthermore, under California law, the researcher is obligated to report any evidence of physical abuse against elders or dependent adults, or if a person indicates that he/she wishes to do serious harm to self, others, or property.

I understand that if the findings of the study are published or presented to a professional audience, no personally identifying information will be released. I understand that the interviews will be tape recorded only with my permission prior to each interview. The raw data gathered will be stored on the researcher's personal computer and transcribed interviews will be stored in locked file cabinets to which only the investigator will have access. The raw data will be maintained in a secure manner for three years at which time the data will be destroyed.

I understand that I will receive no compensation, financial or otherwise, for participating in this study.

I understand that if I have any questions regarding the study procedures, I can contact Nancy Barker at XXXXXXXX or email at XXXXXXXX to get answers to my questions. If I have further questions, I may contact Dr. Linda Purrington @ XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX,

Pepperdine University Graduate School of Education and Psychology, 6100 Center Dr., 5th Floor, Los Angeles CA, 90045. If I have questions about my rights as a research participant, I may contact Dr. Doug Leigh, chairperson of the Pepperdine University Graduate and Professional Schools Institutional Review Board (GPS IRB) at (XXX) XXX-XXXX, Pepperdine University Graduate School of Education and Psychology, 6100 Center Dr., 5th Floor, Los Angeles CA, 90045.

I understand that I will be informed of any significant new findings developed during the course of my participation in this research which may have a bearing on my willingness to continue in the study.

I understand to my satisfaction the information in the consent form regarding my participation in the research project. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have received a copy of this informed consent form which I have read and understand.

I hereby consent to participate in the research described above.

Participant's Signature

Date

Witness

Date

I have explained and defined in detail the research procedure in which the subject has consented to participate. Having explained this and answered any questions, I am cosigning this form and accepting this person's consent.

Principal Investigator

Date

APPENDIX J

Cover Letter for Support Staff and Teacher Informed Consent

TO:

FROM: Nancy Barker

DATE:

SUBJECT: Research Request

I am researching elementary schools that have been identified by members of the RtI² Task Force as schools that have been implementing RtI² with success for a minimum of three years. In addition, this selected school may be participating in the state pilot program for the use of the identifying students with specific learning disabilities or this school site may have shown an increase in API scores over the last three years.

This study intends to explore the implementation of the Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI²) framework for two elementary schools in one county in Southern California. Selected schools in implementation are purposively selected for qualitative methods to examine the structures that are in place that affect school wide implementation of a Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI²) model. The principal, support staff, and selected teachers will participate in semi-structured interviews. This study will explore site leadership attributes, skills, and practices; professional development opportunities for RtI²; and support and collaboration from staff including special education teachers, psychologist, and speech pathologist that are necessary for implementation of RtI² in elementary schools. Results of the study may help inform leadership training programs focusing on components of RtI² structures and leadership behaviors that move implementation forward. This study will also contribute to the existing body of literature on reform efforts and the efficacy of Response to Instruction and Intervention models at elementary schools. Your school's participation in the study will contribute to knowledge and practices surrounding implementation practices of RtI².

If you agree to participate in the study, you will be asked to participate in a 45-60 minute interview regarding the school's practices that contributed to implementation of RtI² in regards to site leadership, professional development practices, and the new roles and responsibilities of support staff and general education teachers.

Prior to the interview, I will remind participants the purpose of the study and explain why the particular site was chosen. Interviews will be scheduled at mutually convenient times for the participants during the normal workday at the school site and will not be disruptive to the school program. The results of the study may be shared following the study. Pseudonyms will be used. Tape recordings and transcribed materials will be locked and secured. Participant's identities will remain confidential and the interview notes and recordings will not be shared with others. The interview notes will be

examined for common themes and used to identify leadership attributes, skills, and behaviors; professional development practices; and the new roles for staff members in the implementation of RtI².

Participation in this study is voluntary. Participants who decide to participate are free to withdraw their consent or discontinue participation at any time.

Please sign and return one copy of the signed consent form prior to the interview to: Nancy Barker, XXXXXXXX. You may also fax the signed form to XXXXXXXX or email it to XXXXXXXX. If you have any questions regarding this study please feel free to contact me at XXXXXXXX or XXXXXXXX. If you have any additional questions or concerns regarding this study, you may also contact the researcher's supervisor Dr. Linda Purrington at XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX or XXXXXXXX@pepperdine.edu.

I will contact you in the next week to answer any questions you may have and to schedule an interview time if you choose to participate in this study.

Respectfully,

Nancy Barker

Attachments:

Copy of Cover Letter for Support Staff and Teachers Informed Consent;
Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities

APPENDIX K

Interview Questions for Principals, Support Staff, and Teachers

Background

What is your current position? How many years have you been teaching?

Leadership

L.1. What attributes and skills do you think would be crucial in a site leader for the successful implementation of RtI²? Why?

L.2. What type of leadership behaviors do you feel may have helped or hindered RtI² implementation efforts?

Professional Development

P.D.3. What training did you receive prior to the initial implementation? Was it helpful?

P.D. 4. What continues to be the focus of professional development? What areas were most effective? What areas still need to be addressed?

P.D. 5. What type of ongoing support is in place to maintain integrity of the implementation? Who provides that support?

P.D. 6. How do staff members work collaboratively to monitor student learning and implement interventions?

Staff Roles and Responsibilities

S.R.7. What job responsibilities have been restructured to provide the necessary support? Please explain.

S.R.8. Have you received any training or support from special education staff or other support staff members? What type of training? Did you find it helpful?

S.R.9. What additional resources, such as staffing, release time, materials, was made available or adjusted to assist in the implementation?

APPENDIX L

Interview Protocol for Principals, Support Staff, and Teachers

I will review the following information prior to the interview:

You have been chosen for this study because this school site has been identified by _____, RtI² Task Force Chair and Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Continuous Improvement for _____ County Office of Education, as a school that has been implementing RtI² with success for a minimum of three years. In addition, this school is participating in the state pilot program for the use of the identifying students with specific learning disabilities through a model of RtI² and/or has shown an increase in API scores over the last three years.

I will be conducting research regarding site leadership attributes, skills, and practices; professional development practices; and the new roles and responsibilities necessary for RtI² implementation.

I will be conducting one 45-60 minute interview with you. I will take notes of our conversation during the interview and the interview will be tape recorded with your permission.

I will not be excessive in demands and will be sensitive to your needs. I will attempt to be the least disruptive as possible.

The findings will be published and shared with the educational community. I assure you of confidentiality that names will not be used in the manuscript, and individual identities will be disguised through coding of data. No one will have access to the transcriptions, recordings, and field notes except me.

Your participation is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your relationship with the researcher or your school or district.

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty.

Data gathered from the interviews will be safeguarded and not shared with others. Data will be stored for three years, after which it will be destroyed.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

I will conclude the interview with the following. Thank you for your time and willingness to participate in this study.

APPENDIX M

Interview Protocol for Principals, Support Staff, and Teachers

I will review the following information prior to the interview:

You have been chosen for this study because this school site has been identified by members of the RtI² Task Force as a school that has been implementing RtI² with success for a minimum of three years. In addition, this school may be participating in the state pilot program for the use of the identifying students with specific learning disabilities through a model of RtI² or may have shown an increase in API scores over the last three years.

I will be conducting research regarding site leadership attributes, skills, and practices; professional development practices; and the new roles and responsibilities necessary for RtI² implementation.

I will be conducting one 45-60 minute interview with you. I will take notes of our conversation during the interview and the interview will be tape recorded with your permission.

I will not be excessive in demands and will be sensitive to your needs. I will attempt to be the least disruptive as possible.

The findings will be published and shared with the educational community. I assure you of confidentiality that names will not be used in the manuscript, and individual identities will be disguised through coding of data. No one will have access to the transcriptions, recordings, and field notes except me.

Your participation is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your relationship with the researcher or your school or district.

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty.

Data gathered from the interviews will be safeguarded and not shared with others. Data will be stored for three years, after which it will be destroyed.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

I will conclude the interview with the following. Thank you for your time and willingness to participate in this study.

APPENDIX N

Thank You Letter for Participants

Date _____

Dear _____

Thank you for your participation in my doctoral study on the implementation of Response to Instruction and Intervention in selected schools. The analysis of the principals, support staff, and teacher interviews identified several significant themes regarding implementation that you may find interesting. The interviews identified the following structures are critical in implementation:

In an effort to check for accuracy, I would like to allow you an opportunity to comment on the findings. If you are interested in a follow up interview, please feel free to contact me at XXXXXXXX or by email at XXXXXXXX.

Thank you again for your willingness to participate in this research study. It was a pleasure meeting you and hearing your perspective on improving student achievement for all students in your school.

Sincerely,

Nancy Barker

APPENDIX O

Invitation to Participate as Key Expert

Date_____

Dear_____

I am a doctoral student at Pepperdine University and my dissertation topic is on the critical components of Response to Instruction and Intervention implementation. The California Department of Education has cited leadership, professional development, and the re-defining of staff roles as critical to implementation. Because the interview protocol is a new instrument, expert review will be utilized to validate the content and organization of the instrumentation. I would like to invite you as a key expert to assist in reviewing the interview protocol for content and clarity. I will also be asking if there are other questions that need be added. In addition, I will ask if the interview questions relate to the research questions being asked.

The members on this panel will receive several pages of materials in the mail. The panel members will be asked to review the materials, complete the response forms and return the form to me in the self-addressed stamped envelope provided.

Your participation as a panel member will be very much appreciated. Please complete the tear off at the bottom of this page and return it to me in the enclosed envelope.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at XXXXXXXX or email me at XXXXXXXX.

Thank you.

Nancy Barker

Key Expert_____

Number where you may prefer to be reached during the day or evening

Day_____

Evening_____

___ Yes, I am willing to participate as a member of the Panel of Experts.

___ No, I am unable to participate as a member of the Panel of Experts.

APPENDIX P

Cover Letter for Key Expert Response Form

Date _____

Dear _____

Thank you for agreeing to participate as a key expert for my dissertation study. Because the interview protocol is a new instrument, your expert review will be utilized to validate the content and organization of the instrumentation. I would like you to review the interview questions for content and clarity. If there are other questions that need be added, please indicate. In addition, please provide feedback as to whether you feel the interview questions relate to the research questions being asked.

Please complete the response form and return the form to me in the self-addressed stamped envelope provided.

Your participation as a panel member is very much appreciated. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at XXXXXXXX or email me at XXXXXXXX.

Sincerely,

Nancy Barker

APPENDIX Q

Key Expert Response Form

Date _____

Key Expert _____

I have provided the purpose of this study and the research question for your information.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is threefold: a) to identify the leadership attributes, and skills of site principals that contribute to the implementation of RtI²; b) to examine the professional development practices contributing to the implementation of RtI²; and c) to examine how the new roles of general education teachers, special education teachers, and support staff (psychologist, speech pathologist) have contributed to the implementation of RtI².

The following research question provides the focus for this study:

What do principals, teachers, and support staff in two elementary schools in one county in Southern California perceive as contributing to the implementation of RtI² in regards to the following:

- a. Leadership attributes, skills, and practices (Interview Questions L.1; L.2)
- b. Professional development practices (Interview Questions P.D.3; P.D.4; P.D.5; P.D.6)
- c. New roles of general education teachers, special education teachers, and support staff (psychologist, speech pathologist, and any additional staff utilized for RtI² implementation) (Interview Questions S.R.7; S.R.8; S.R.9)

Directions: Please judge each interview question as to the degree it will elicit information directly relevant to the research questions. Use the following scale:

H = High Probable

S = Somewhat Probable

I = Improbable

INTERVIEW QUESTION	H	S	I
L.1. What attributes and skills do you think would be crucial in a site leader for the successful implementation of RtI ² ? Why?			
L.2. What type of leadership behaviors do you feel may have helped or hindered RtI ² implementation efforts? Please explain.			
P.D.3. What training did you receive prior to the initial implementation? Was it helpful?			
P.D.4. What continues to be the focus of professional development? What areas were most effective? What areas still need to be addressed?			
P.D.5. What type of ongoing support is in place to maintain integrity of the implementation? Who provides that support?			
P.D.6. How do staff members work collaboratively to monitor student learning and implement interventions? Please explain?			
S.R.7. What job responsibilities have been restructured to provide the necessary support? Please explain.			
S.R.8. Have you received any training or support from special education staff or other support staff members? What type of training? Did you find it helpful?			
S.R.9. What additional resources, such as staffing, release time, materials, was made available or adjusted to assist in the implementation? What materials do you feel you still need?			

I would like you to review the interview questions for content and clarity. If there are other questions that need be added, please indicate.

Please complete the response form and return the form to me in the self-addressed stamped envelope provided.

Your participation as a panel member is very much appreciated. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at XXXXXXXX or email me at XXXXXXXX.

Thank you.

Nancy Barker

APPENDIX R

Invitation to Participate in Pilot Study

Date _____

Dear _____

I am a doctoral student at Pepperdine University and my dissertation topic is on the critical components of Response to Instruction and Intervention implementation. The California Department of Education has cited leadership, professional development, and the re-defining of staff roles as critical to implementation. Because the interview protocol is a new instrument, a pilot study will be used for trying out the instrument to see if the interview instructions are clear; questions make sense to subject-like respondents, time proposed for interviews is appropriate. The pilot study will be conducted with 1 elementary principal, 1 support staff, and 2 teachers who will be representative of the proposed subject pool. I would like to invite selected members of the Design Team to assist with piloting the instrumentation. You will be asked to provide feedback on clarity of instructions; length of time for interview; and clarity of questions. The interviews are expected to be 45-60 minutes. Your answers will only be used to make adjustments to the interview protocol.

Your participation as a pilot study member will be very much appreciated. Please complete the tear off at the bottom of this page and return it to me in the enclosed envelope.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at XXXXXXXX or email me at XXXXXXXX.

Thank you.

Nancy Barker

Pilot Study Member _____

Number where you may prefer to be reached during the day or evening

Day _____

Evening _____

___ Yes, I am willing to participate as a member of the Panel of Experts.

___ No, I am unable to participate as a member of the Panel of Experts.

APPENDIX S

Pilot Study Directions and Feedback Form

Date_____

Pilot Study Member_____

Current Position_____

Thank you for agreeing to participate in a pilot study to try out the interview protocol that will be used in my research study. As I mentioned in my invitation letter, I am a doctoral student at Pepperdine University and my dissertation topic is on the critical components of Response to Instruction and Intervention implementation. The California Department of Education has cited leadership, professional development, and the re-defining of staff roles as critical to implementation. Because the interview protocol is a new instrument, I will be trying out the instrument to see if the interview instructions are clear; questions make sense to subject-like respondents, time proposed for interviews is appropriate. I will conduct the interview as I propose for the actual participants. Following the interview, you will be asked to provide feedback on clarity of instructions; length of time for interview; and clarity of questions. The interviews are expected to be 45-60 minutes. Your answers will only be used to make adjustments to the interview protocol. Do you have any questions?

Researcher reads the Interview Protocol (Appendix F)
Researcher begins Interview Questions (Appendix G)

I would like to ask the following questions:

Were the instructions clear?

Did you feel the length of time for interview was appropriate?

Were the interview questions clear?

Is there anything else you feel would be helpful?

Your participation as a pilot study member is very much appreciated.

Thank you.

APPENDIX T

Analysis of Data for Themes Collection Form

(Sample)

Code	Themes	Tally of Occurrence
L	School Vision is articulated and visible for teachers, parents, and students.	
PD	Teachers meet regularly to discuss progress monitoring and plan lessons accordingly	
SR	Speech pathologist regularly visits the classroom to observe students and provide feedback to classroom teacher.	
SR	Psychologist, speech pathologist provides workshops and trainings on the connection of language to learning.	