EFFECT OF SCHOOL LEVEL ON TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF SST/RTI EFFECTIVENESS (K-12), WITHIN A NORTHWEST GEORGIA SCHOOL SYSTEM

by

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Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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ABSTRACT

Susan R. Tolbert. EFFECT OF SCHOOL LEVEL ON TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF SST/RTI EFFECTIVENESS (K-12), WITHIN A NORTHWEST GEORGIA SCHOOL SYSTEM. (under the direction of Dr. Beth Ackerman) School of Education, March 5, 2011.

The purpose of this causal-comparative study is to evaluate the effect of school level (primary, elementary, middle, and high school) on teacher perceptions of Student Support Team and Response to Intervention within a Northwest Georgia school system. Understanding these differences in perceptions will allow educational leaders to create meaningful staff development for mandated programs for all certified staff. This study will utilize demographic information, 21 survey questions, and two multiple-choice questions to analyze the differences in perceptions among primary, elementary, middle, and high school certified staff in regards to SST and RTI. Analysis will involve the use of an ANOVA to compare means within different school-level groups. Analyses will help to answer four research questions: Is there a significant difference between perceptions of SST/RTI in relation to (a) familiarity of SST/RTI; (b) adequacy of training of SST/RTI; (c) effectiveness of SST/RTI for struggling students; and (d) relationship between SST, RTI, and special education due to teacher school level (primary, elementary, middle, and high school). Results will be useful in guiding administrators in future staff development and implementation of RTI and SST programs in Georgia schools at all levels.

Descriptors: Response to Intervention, Student Support Team, Perceptions, Self-efficacy

DEDICATION

God sustains those who believe and follow His plan for their lives. The past two years have been a journey of faith and endurance, knowing that I am on the path that God has planned for me. With that said, I could not have sustained my efforts without the unending support of my husband and two children. They have endured my dissertation journey with me and have encouraged my persistence and praised my efforts during the more difficult times throughout. My husband has provided only positive support during the times I had to rely on him to keep the family in order so I could pursue my journey at Liberty. I dedicate this dissertation to my wonderful family who has supported me every step of the way. I will love them always as a wife, mother, and friend and I hope they will also be lifelong learners who strive to reach God's potential in all of their endeavors.

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The past two years have definitely been a journey for me. I would like to thank my family for enduring the journey with me. My husband, son, and daughter have been by my side every step of the way, encouraging me to press forward through the process. My mom and dad have also provided me with positive motivation and helped take care of my kids when I needed to be at Liberty for intensives. This process would have been extremely difficult to finish without their unending support.

I would also like to thank the numerous faculty who supported me when my mother-in-law passed away during the first year of classes. The love, support, and prayers that went out to me during that time were greatly appreciated and there was no hesitation to allow me to leave the intensive to fly home and return to a later intensive. A situation that could have been really stressful was handled with love. I will never forget that. I found the prayers before each class to be a blessing for my own personal journey as well. I believe these are the traits that make Liberty a special place to continue learning.

To my committee, Dr. Beth Ackerman, Dr. Gary Kuhn, Dr. David Holder, and Dr. Wes Dickey, I am very thankful for the time you all took reading, proofing, redirecting, and supporting me throughout this process. I appreciate your willingness to let me struggle along the way to build my learning opportunity, while also encouraging me through my efforts. I am also thankful for my editor and for my statistical help from Dr. Jennifer Priestly, Ph.D. and Carmen Louise at Kennesaw State University.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Background

Thirty years ago, federal special education law PL 94-142 (1975) was passed as a result of growing concerns for students with learning disabilities, mainly in the area of reading (Georgia Department of Education, 2008). The discrepancy model attached to this law has been controversial throughout its existence and is well known as "the wait to fail" model (Canges, Golez, Murphy, Pavri, & Richards, 2007). Student Support Services (SST) also occurred during this time as an in-between intervention model where teachers were to work as a team to meet the students' needs or prepare documentation for special education testing.

In 2004, due to pressure from the passing of the No Child Left Behind Act, the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Plan (IDEA) replaced the original discrepancy model with a tiered model of intervention known as Response to Intervention (RTI) (No Child Left Behind Act 2001, 2006). Response to Intervention is "an educational approach designed to provide effective, evidence based interventions for struggling learners" (Detgen, Sawyer, Holland, & REL, 2008). RTI provides immediate attention to all struggling learners by first identifying areas of concern, finding an appropriate research-based intervention to address those concerns, and, finally, progress monitoring the chosen intervention to track successfulness of the intervention (Georgia Department of Education, 2008). RTI is data driven and the success of RTI with students depends greatly on each teacher's perceptions of program effectiveness and their ability to implement the programs as they are designed.

Implementation of RTI in the United States began due to over-identification of students with learning disabilities. There were also many students inaccurately referred. Changes have been made to update the identification process for a more accountable referral process.

Response to Intervention is still a new model for educators. Rollout for RTI began seven years ago and implementation first began in the early grades. It is just beginning to spread into the secondary school setting. New emphasis in research is needed to support the implementation at the secondary level to ensure the most appropriate integration of RTI practices at the middle and high school levels. Samuels (2009) discussed high school having to start SST/RTI implementation without scientific literature outlining implementation methods. Secondary teachers realize the importance of SST/RTI, but are unsure of best practices at the middle and high school level. Fletcher and Vaughn (2010) believe that providing intensive intervention at the high school level would require a significant decrease in the number of students being served through SST/RTI. Another new topic of SST/RTI research is in the area of teacher efficacy and cooperative problem solving required in the RTI process (LaRocco & Murdica, 2009). This causal-comparative study will examine the impact of teacher perceptions in these areas on the implementation of Student Support Team and Response to Intervention frameworks in a Northwest Georgia school system.

Problem Statement

Response to Intervention is a mandated program that is not going away. Educators' roles, ready or not, are changing due to RTI. Barrera and Bryant (2009) believe special education and regular education teachers will need to work together with

struggling learners in order to carry out RTI. This partnership will allow teachers to determine students' needs for further testing. No matter the model of RTI being implemented and no matter the level of school being studied, teachers have the primary responsibility to ensure that RTI is implemented effectively. Teachers are expected to seek out appropriate interventions for students to ensure success instead of waiting on students to fail. The flexibility that RTI gives teachers allows them to try multiple measures in order to find what works with groups of students, small groups of students, or individual students with one-on-one help if needed. With teachers having more control over the interventions being implemented, the role of the teacher and other educators is becoming more important each year.

Education leaders need to understand and evaluate the impact of Response to Intervention at all school levels, especially at the secondary levels. Previous studies have been conducted to investigate teacher perceptions of SST and RTI at the elementary level (Bailey, 2010; Lee-Tarver, 2006); however, more study is needed in this area for secondary schools. Georgia schools are implementing RTI due to mandates from both the federal government and state government, under the assumption that this new process is effective for all students at all grade levels. Some research suggests that this may be true for early grades, but there is not enough support at this time to warrant the amount of money, time, and training that has gone into RTI implementation at the secondary level. More research is needed to find out the significance of teacher perception at all levels and its impact on RTI implementation, as well as on initial referral rates, accurate referrals, and the impact of student achievement for secondary students. This new information will

give educational leaders the ability to make informed decisions about future RTI implementation for secondary students.

Barnes and Harlacher (2008) believe it will take collaboration amongst all stakeholders in designing and implementing intervention plans for struggling students. There must be initial training, ongoing support, and a positive environment for change among teachers and administrators. Any change in educational roles can bring anxiety and stress to professionals who are trying to ensure that "No Child" gets left behind. Teachers who feel they are not qualified or properly supported by administration may not try to implement the necessary interventions needed for student success. This research hopes to provide evidence that will help administrators to prevent such obstacles before they occur.

Purpose Statement

Understanding and evaluating the impact of teacher's perceptions of Student Support Team and Response to Intervention are areas of research in need of additional study, especially at the secondary level. Teachers' perceptions of these programs will impact the success of implementation of the Georgia SST/RTI frameworks. Important themes that impact these perceptions include familiarity with the programs in use, adequate professional development opportunities in this area, qualifications to implement and assess, collaborative problem solving, and self-efficacy to implement.

This study will help to fill a gap in education research involving the perceptions of teachers within a school system for all grade levels, K-12. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the effect of school level taught (primary, elementary, middle, or high) on teacher perceptions of SST/RTI to see if there are significant differences in teachers

perceptions in the following areas: familiarity with SST/RTI, adequate professional development, effectiveness of SST/RTI for struggling students, and the relationship between SST/ RTI and special education. This study will be conducted within a Northwest Georgia school system to see if there is a significant difference in teacher perceptions at each school level. Understanding the impact of perceptions on teacher practice will help administrators to develop effective protocols for implementation of mandated programs and initiatives at all school levels.

Significance of the Study

Administrators must be aware of and understand the possible differences in teacher perceptions at all school levels and the impact of those perceptions on the implementation of school initiatives. Good leaders must first identify where certified staff are and develop programs to get them where they want to be. This study will provide valuable insight into teacher beliefs about SST/RTI in a Georgia school system, K-12. Administrators in Georgia will be able to utilize this new information to help guide them in future decisions and planning of SST/RTI staff development for secondary teachers. The current frameworks for SST/RTI are comprehensive and distributed throughout school systems in Georgia. The usefulness of the frameworks will depend on the ability of administrators to understand their staff and their ability to deliver necessary staff development to the system about new school initiatives. Teacher perceptions of system level help in this process will also affect implementation efforts. Studies such as this one will help to provide effective implementation for all stakeholders at all school levels K-12. Buy-in from staff will be impacted by administrator ability to locate and utilize current studies that address similar need. At this time, there are some studies to

evaluate SST/RTI implementation at the elementary level (Bailey, 2010; Lee-Tarver, 2006) and this study hopes to extend that understanding to the secondary school level, an area that needs further research.

Research Questions

Research Question #1: Is there a significant difference in teacher perceptions of familiarity with SST and RTI due to school level taught (primary, elementary, middle, and high school)?

Research Question #2: Is there a significant difference in teacher perceptions of the adequacy of training to implement SST and RTI due to school level taught (primary, elementary, middle, and high school)?

Research Question #3: Is there a significant difference in teacher perceptions of the effectiveness of SST and RTI for struggling students due to school level taught (primary, elementary, middle, and high school)?

Research Question #4: Is there a significant difference in teacher perceptions of the relationship between SST, RTI, and Special Education due to school level taught (primary, elementary, middle, and high school)?

Research Hypotheses

Null Hypothesis (H_o) 1: There is no statistical difference in teacher perceptions of familiarity with SST and RTI (survey items 1, 5, 6, 20) due to school level taught (primary, elementary, middle, and high school).

Null Hypothesis (H_o) 2: There is no statistical difference in teacher perceptions of the adequacy of training to implement SST and RTI (survey items 2, 3, 11, 12) due to school level taught (primary, elementary, middle, and high school).

Null Hypothesis (H_o) 3: There is no statistical difference in teacher perceptions of the effectiveness of SST and RTI for struggling students (survey items 7-10, 13-16, 21) due to school level taught (primary, elementary, middle, and high school).

Null Hypothesis (H_o) 4: There is no statistical difference in teacher perceptions of the relationship between SST, RTI, and Special Education (survey items 4, 17-19) due to school level taught (primary, elementary, middle, and high school).

Identification of Variables

IV: School level taught (primary, elementary, middle, and high)

DV: Perceptions identified in Bailey-Tarver Survey (Bailey, 2010).

General Education: "Students are afforded an education based on the Georgia Performance Standards without an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for accommodations" (Bailey, 2010, p. 130).

Problem Solving Team: "A team of people, which may include school staff and parents, who use a problem solving approach to address a problem or area of need for a student" (Georgia Department of Education, 2008, p. 13).

Pyramid of Interventions: "The Pyramid of Intervention is also known as the Student Achievement Pyramid of Interventions. It is a conceptual framework developed by Georgia DOE that will enable all students in Georgia to continue to make great gains in school. The pyramid is a graphic organizer that illustrates layers of instructional efforts that can be provided to students according to their individual needs" (Georgia Department of Education, 2008, p. 13).

Response to Intervention: "Response to Intervention (RTI) is a practice of academic and behavioral interventions designed to provide early, effective assistance to

underperforming students. Research-based interventions are implemented and frequent progress monitoring is conducted to assess student response and progress. When students do not make progress, increasingly more intense interventions are introduced" (Georgia Department of Education, 2008, p. 13).

Self-Efficacy: "Peoples judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute course action required attaining designated types of performances" (Bandura, 1986, p.31).

Special Education: "Students are afforded an Individualized Education Plan [IEP] for academic or behavioral modifications due to the presence of a diagnosed disability that negatively impacts his/her education" (Bailey, 2010, p. 130).

Student Support Team: "The Student Support Team (SST) is a multi-disciplinary team which utilizes a problem-solving process to investigate the educational needs of students who are experiencing academic and/or social/behavioral difficulties. SST, which is required in every Georgia public school uses a data-driven process to plan individualized supports and interventions and the method of assessing their effectiveness" (Georgia Department of Education, 2008, p. 15).

Teaching Efficacy: "Faculty members' judgments of their capabilities in course design, instructional strategy, technology use, classroom management, interpersonal relation and learning assessment" (Chang, Lin, & Song, 2009, p. 208).

Tiered Instruction: Tiered instruction are "levels of instructional intensity within a tiered delivery model" (Georgia Department of Education, 2008, p.16).

Assumptions and Limitations

Assumptions

One major assumption for this study was that perceptions might impact the behavior of teachers. Teachers who viewed SST/RTI negatively would have been less likely to implement the Georgia SST/RTI frameworks. Previous studies have shown a slight connection at the elementary level (Bailey, 2010; Lee-Tarver, 2006). The researcher also assumed that all certified staff participants had received similar SST/RTI and Special Education training over the past seven years due to the study being conducted within a school system.

Limitations

Participation was voluntary and collecting a large enough sample may have been a problem. The researcher worked to provide a positive, thankful approach to obtaining participation from the participants. Honesty could have been an issue for participants who worried that negative responses might get them in trouble. The researcher followed procedures to notify participants of the purpose of the study and the safety procedures that would protect their identity. There were other extraneous variables that may have affected the outcome of the study that cannot be controlled, such as years of experience, type of degree, and level of degree. Transiency of certified teachers, in and out of the system, may have affected the study outcome in terms of past training they may have received. Extraneous variables were unavoidable, but were limited as much as possible to eliminate alternate hypotheses from occurring.

Research Plan

Previous research has been done in the area of the relationship of teacher perceptions to the success of SST/RTI implementation. This researcher wanted to build on the results of two previous studies. The first study involving RTI and teacher perceptions was done by Dr. Aleada Lee- Tarver (2006) from Alabama State University and Drs. Aksamit and Rankin (1994) from the University of Nebraska, which utilized a paper questionnaire survey to gather data about teacher perceptions of SST and RTI, blended with two multiple response questions regarding the perceived weaknesses and teacher considerations of each. The studies mentioned above did not show significant differences in perceptions amongst elementary teachers. Dr. Lynn Russell Bailey from Liberty University completed another study, which built upon the previous studies mentioned. Her study showed positive correlations between teacher perception and likelihood to implement the frameworks (Bailey, 2010). This causal-comparative study will build on previous research models with an added emphasis on differences between teacher perceptions of SST and RTI at all school levels, K-12, an area of research that is new to education and needs further study.

Causal-comparative design research was chosen because the researcher would like to examine the cause and effect relationship of two educational phenomena: teacher perceptions and school level taught (Gall, Gall, and Borg, 2007). Null hypotheses statements will be used because the researcher cannot predict whether or not there will be a significant difference due to inconsistent previous studies. It will not be possible to manipulate the one independent variable for this study, as it was predetermined based on the phenomenon being studied. Additional demographic data will also be examined in

order to help explain some of the extraneous variables that may affect the outcome of this study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Meeting individual student needs has been an ongoing concern for educators and administrators at all levels. Many procedures have been put into place to address student needs in education. A general concern has been that the procedures used to prevent students from placement into special education have eventually become an outlet for teachers to find proof that students needed special education. This was not conducive at a time when more and more pressure existed to keep students out of special education. Because of this disturbing trend, education leaders, at both the federal and state levels, developed a tiered approach to services for all students called Response to Intervention (Georgia Department of Education, 2008). This tiered intervention helped all students through early identification and support of students with learning and behavioral needs. Struggling students were given accelerated interventions to, hopefully, prevent them from needing special education services later on. Although RTI was a federally mandated initiative, the success of RTI greatly depended on the implementation carried out by certified staff.

The goal of the Response to Intervention framework was to provide a quality education for all so that fewer students were referred for special education. This new model, Response to Intervention, has replaced the discrepancy model approach to identifying special education students and instead provided a problem solving approach using problem-solving teams to help all students in need. The learning structure of this new framework was supported by many educational theories including Piaget's Theory

of Intellectual Development, Schema Theory, and Constructivist Theory. Too many students were being referred to special education due to lack of instruction and the Response to Intervention framework was developed to address this issue.

This review of literature sought to describe the theoretical background and the current research available to provide a general overview of teacher perceptions and effectiveness of Response to Intervention frameworks that were currently in place for struggling students. The learning theories provided supported the structure of the Response to Intervention frameworks, as well as insight into the impact of teacher thinking on performance. Previous research on the effect of teacher perceptions on SST and RTI were discussed, which led to a gap in the literature that drove this research study. The problem or gap identified in current research was the need to find out if teacher perceptions were impacted due to the school level taught, K-12, in relation to SST and RTI in Georgia.

Conceptual or Theoretical Framework

Many theories supported the design of the Response to Intervention model. These theories included, but were not limited to, Theory of Intellectual Design, Schema Theory, Constructivism, and Learning Theory.

Theory of Intellectual Development

Jean Piaget was fascinated with how people acquire new knowledge. The Theory of Intellectual Development was derived from years of observing people throughout the learning process. Central to this theory is the idea of "equilibration," or the need for order and predictability (Eggen & Kauchak, 1992). This need drove people to seek understanding of the world around them. People have the innate need to find order and

structure and investigate experiences around them until that equilibrium is reached. The need drove learning, not only in the real world, but also in the classroom. Teachers and students would ask questions and challenge ideas in order to find their own equilibrium. There was also a need for organization and adaption. Teachers relied on knowledge, patterns, and rules to make sense of learning in the classroom. For students, schemas were developed and provided a structure from which to build new concepts and knowledge. For teachers, schemas provided a structure to follow to make sense of new initiatives that were introduced into the education setting.

Response to Intervention frameworks provided this type of structure for teachers by utilizing research-based interventions to address the areas of weakness for each student. For instance, if a student was struggling with adding fractions with like denominators, a plan was put into place to ensure the student understood the organized pattern to solve those types of problems using research-based intervention programs. The student's needs were addressed by learning the patterns, or rules, involved in solving problems: first recognize the problem characteristics, proceed to find lowest common denominator, and compute the answer. Over time and repeated practice, equilibrium could finally be reached. Teachers and students found equilibrium by following the provided framework as they solved problems to help each struggling student. Sometimes the need for equilibrium occurred from lack of experience or exposure with the SST/RTI frameworks. Administrators could identify teacher need by examining teacher perceptions and developing plans to address those needs.

Schema Theory

Building from the Theory of Intellectual Development was the Schema Theory; "Schema is the knowledge, procedures, and relationships that we use to understand and function in the world" (Eggen & Kauchak, 1997). So much of a student's learning resulted from the ability to develop schema or modify existing schema. Widmayer (2000) discussed how schema was used to interpret new knowledge and predict situations that may occur in the environment around them. Growth in learning occurred when students had the ability to change schema in response to new experiences through accommodation and when an experience was modified to fit an existing schema through assimilation (Eggen & Kauchak, 1997). Response to Intervention frameworks helped this growth to occur in students by presenting information just above the learner's present ability level, or experience level, in order to disrupt equilibrium. Students became motivated to make sense of the new information. Teachers were charged with making sure that meaningful learning was taking place through these connections and not relying on memorization of facts and coverage of material. Many times, students did not make the meaningful connections, which led to them being mistakenly identified as having a learning disability. The Response to Intervention framework addressed this concern by providing additional practice in changing schema as students addressed all kinds of learning problems. Cognitive development was enhanced through the use of the tiered approach in the Response to Intervention framework.

Teachers also had issues with schema in the classroom environment when trying to implement new initiatives mandated by the federal, state, or local school system. It was often difficult to connect all aspects of teaching into one schema. Administrators

could have built on previous teacher schema to help make sense of new initiatives. Teacher perceptions could be affected by gaps in schema or uncertainty of the task at hand. Identifying these gaps helped administrators to address the uncertainty during effective staff development opportunities.

Constructivism

Constructivism was a philosophy of education that defined knowledge constructed by individuals based on experiences (Yilmaz, 2008). The notion of constructivism supported the use of problem solving teams in helping to create RTI plans. Teachers built the plan based on previous experience with students. Stakeholders discussed effective interventions that had worked in the past with similar students. They discussed methods that should not be used due to the ineffectiveness of the intervention when previously used. The power of constructivism increased as the number of people on the problem solving team increased. Many views of experience were meshed together to form a strong intervention plan; "Piaget believed that an individual encountering a new learning situation draws on prior knowledge to make the new experience understandable" (Yilmaz, 2008, p. 166). Through assimilation, teachers could draw from previous successes and failures to develop a new framework to effectively reach all struggling students.

Teachers and students also learned through experiences by developing rules and hypotheses to explain new experiences (Eggen & Kauchek, 1997). Students without sufficient experiences were often those who struggled and needed an environment that provided over-learning or extended experiences in order to bridge the gap so that learning could occur. Teachers with less experience did not have past trials and triumphs to draw

from and needed additional assistance in order to be effective. Veteran teachers sometimes felt they did not need any more experiences, nor did they want additional help from leaders. This researcher wanted to find out if the level of school taught impacts perceptions of SST/RTI.

The Response to Intervention framework was designed to reach students in multiple ways and to catch students up as needed. Students who lacked experience were often perceived as having a learning disability because they were struggling to make new connections and slow in learning new concepts. Providing these individualized, targeted experiences allowed educators to determine more accurately which students needed more intensive help. The Response to Intervention framework was created to intervene for all children who lacked experiences necessary to learn and also provided detailed plans that addressed the more severe cases, which existed in extreme deprivation of a stimulating learning environment.

Certified staff also had varying levels of experience in dealing with SST and RTI. Finding out if there were differences in teacher perceptions of readiness to implement these initiatives, depending on level of school taught, helped assist administrators and directors in developing training to meet staff needs. One way to address teacher need in the area of experience was through the use of collaborative problem solving teams.

Collaborative Problem-Solving

Problem solving teams could look very different from one another, but they all had the same goal. How could stakeholders work together to best meet the needs of each student? Collaborative problem-solving teams were generally made up of a variety of staff including regular education and special education educators. Counselors,

administrators, and parents were also incorporated and played a supporting role on these teams. Student support teams collectively utilized combined expertise to address the needs of learners in a positive, proactive approach.

Collaborative problem solving was a process that had proven over time to be beneficial to both teachers and students. The most productive collaborating styles included trust among members of the team, respect for one another, and open communication (Knackendoffel, 2005). Members of a collaborative problem solving team brought different strengths and weaknesses to the group. In RTI, a collaborative problem solving team would investigate different alternatives that would help a student with particular deficits in learning. The weaknesses of one teacher would be strengthened by others' knowledge and experiences; "Every co-teacher, aide, student teacher, or intern brought new approaches, new technology, and innovative ideas to help students" (Steele, 2010, p. 68).

In the end, the student would benefit by a group of experts collaborating to develop the best plan possible to ensure that student succeeded and learned. Exact plans should have been written in detail so that every member of the collaborative problem solving team was certain of who was responsible to carry out the plan. This group of teachers continued to meet and revise the student's plan as necessary until there was success. Successful programming for struggling students required many school personnel working together for a common goal by participating on collaborative problem solving teams.

Increasing collaboration of stakeholders was shown to increase social validity to RTI problem solving plans (Beebe-Frankenberger & Mahdavi, 2009). When program

intervention ideas and goals were acceptable to the group, there was more likelihood that the intervention or school-wide plan would actually be implemented with fidelity; "The final ingredient was a belief that two minds-or three or four-were better than one" (Steele, 2010, p. 68). Collaboration would have increased knowledge, self-efficacy, personal growth, innovation, and motivation of teachers that were on a journey towards inspiration.

Collaboration should have been taking place among regular education teachers, special education teachers, counselors, intervention specialist school psychologists, parents, and administrators to develop a plan that was both accepted and sustainable. Adequate training on collaborating in teams for problem solving also increased the likelihood that problem solving would be effective and sustainable. Teachers' perceptions of problem solving teams increased positively after effective training had occurred and researchers also measured increases in verbalization and communication in teacher commentary within problem solving groups (Boughtin & Lee, 1999). Gaining social validity and time for professional development helped to build stronger problem solving teams that helped struggling learners in RTI initiatives. This positive, collaborative planning process should have provided adequate help to students who were struggling and prevented them from being unnecessarily referred for special education services.

Adaptive Meta-Cognition

"Adaptive meta-cognition involved both the adaptation of one's self and one's environment in response to a wide range of classroom variability" (Hatano, Lin, & Schwartz, 2005, p. 245). This type of training was similar to the problem-solving model,

which was the basis for the SST/RTI models being studied in the current research study. Many utilized interventions in SST/RTI were developed in a controlled, stable environment. In reality, each class was different, each student was different, and each teacher's delivery of information was different. One solution, or intervention, would not reach all struggling students. Educators needed meta-cognitive training to support adaptation and flexibility within interventions used to meet learners' needs. Hatano, Lin, and Schwartz (2005) suggested that teachers think about how to solve and make decisions on an individual basis with reflection for growth after each trial in the classroom. Adaptive meta-cognition ability was essential in the implementation of SST/RTI intervention plan development for struggling students. Teachers must have learned to develop "habits of gathering more information so that teachers can determine what strategies and solutions to apply" (Hatano et al., 2005, p. 254).

Learning Theory

Teachers' beliefs about learning in general affected expectations for personal growth and the learning of their students. Good teachers may not have fit the expected mold that most leaders used to measure effectiveness. The intangibles were just as important and were often overlooked. Knowledge of content and pedagogical background was not the only attributes that embody an effective educator (Goodwin, 2010). Teachers must have believed that all students could learn in order for RTI implementation to be successful. Goodwin (2010) discussed the Pygmalion effect from the Rosenthal experiment conducted in the late 1960s. This previous study showed that "teachers expectations for their students affected how well students learn" (Goodwin, 2010, p. 80). Teachers must have believed in their own abilities and their ability to

communicate with students. Beliefs about learning played a critical role in this research, as it related to RTI implementation. It was necessary for teachers to believe their students could learn in order to devise individual plans to help struggling learners. The motivation to take the time to provide this assistance relied on the attitude and belief system of each stakeholder involved.

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy was one aspect of learning shown to be a strong indicator of success for RTI implementation for both teachers and students. Teachers with a strong belief that they could help students showed higher implementation of RTI at the elementary level (Bailey, 2010). Self-efficacy was "the belief that the teacher was effective in controlling positive outcomes of learning and behavior as a result of their actions" (Jantz & Nunn, 2009, p.599). As teacher efficacy increased, motivation increased as well as capacity to affect outcomes. Many teachers lacking in self-efficacy overcame doubts through effective staff development and through small glimpses of success while working as members of a problem solving team. More research was needed in the area of self-efficacy and RTI at the secondary level.

Students needed to believe in their ability to learn. Self-efficacy "impacted a student's tendency to approach or avoid learning tasks, as well as their thoughts during the learning experience" (Eggen & Kauchak, 1997). With positive efficacy, a student was more willing to dig for understanding, question rules, and learn new concepts. Collins (1982) found that high-self efficacy was a predictor of achievement over actual ability and that the opposite was true for low self-efficacy students. High self-efficacy

was a critical component to student success in any tier of the Response to Intervention framework. The same concept also applied to teachers and administrators.

This research study helped to identify areas of low teacher efficacy in regards to SST and RTI at each school level so that appropriate staff development and support could be created. Too often teacher voice was not heard and this study allowed teachers to share praises and concerns towards mandated school initiatives.

Professional Development

Individual teachers continued to learn about their profession through experience and professional development opportunities. Leaders would be able to utilize the results of this research study to help guide professional development opportunities in the areas that affect the implementation of RTI. Teacher perceptions greatly affected their motivation to participate and affected their willingness to put recently learned theory into action.

Using educational theory as justification, education leaders needed to address issues related to teacher perceptions of equilibrium, belief about learning, teacher experience, teacher preparation, teacher collaboration, and teacher efficacy. The Bailey-Tarver teacher perception survey addressed all of these and allowed educational leaders insight into the perceptions of teachers that impacted effectiveness of SST and RTI implementation in all schools (Bailey, 2010).

Review of the Literature

This related research summary sought to describe the connection between teacher perceptions and implementation of SST/RTI at all grade levels. This review first described general aspects of RTI, including a summary of the model, the need for the

model and why educators should adopt it, a general description of the model in Georgia, and the necessary steps to implement RTI effectively at each tier. Prior research related to the rollout of RTI in Georgia was provided, along with several studies to examine the effectiveness of the RTI frameworks on decreasing initial referrals for special education. The literature review then led into current gaps in research, examining teacher perceptions of implementation of education initiatives similar to RTI and SST, showing the need for further study in this area,

Need for a Change in How Teachers Identify Struggling Students

The increase in referral rate for testing and problems with inaccurate and inconsistent identification of students with disabilities in special education created a need for a new system to replace the traditional discrepancy model. Barnett, Belton-Kocher, Lombard, Macmann, and Sharpe (1989) conducted a study to determine the accuracy variability among traditional achievement tests. Data provided a strong argument against using IQ-achievement tests to solely determine eligibility. For every student there was a 60% chance of meeting the eligibility criteria for learning disabled (LD) using only these types of measures. The study concluded that it was beneficial to focus energy on treatment response rather than testing because it was more reliable and helpful to students. Linan-Thompson and Vaughn (2003) summarized research in the area of aptitude-by-treatment interactions and determined that "students in the third tier of a three-tiered model of intervention were provided effective instruction with good treatment integrity and could make significant and educationally important gains in their skills" (p. 199). Another study concluded that a combination of IQ tests and the application of treatments, or interventions, was a more valid criterion to use for the

identification of students with LD (MacMillan & Speece, 1999). Tiered instruction provided educators with an effective way to monitor all students and provide appropriate services to those in need.

RTI Pyramid of Intervention

To ensure the implementation of the Response to Intervention frameworks, Federal law was created which made it clear that RTI was to be "fundamentally a dynamic assessment and instructional process based on thorough scientific research" (Canges et al., 2007, p. 56). RTI was designed at the national level as a three-tier model, but Georgia used a four-tiered model (Figure 1). The creation of these laws created a need for change from the previous discrepancy model to a more individualized, intervention-based framework.

In Georgia, Tier I consisted of standards-based instruction that all students received. Tier II was targeted instruction for small groups of students based on specific learning needs. Tier III provided more intensive instruction and was the location of the previous Student Support Team model, which was still required by law for students at this level of need as a result of the 1982 *Marshall vs. Georgia* court case, which concerned the disproportionate placement of black students in special education (National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, REL 2008, No. 063). Tier IV interventions were needed for students who had been given Tier I through Tier III interventions and still needed additional instruction in order to be successful. This tier included students with Individual Education Plans (IEP), English Language Learners (ELL), and gifted students. Educators in Georgia considered students in Tier IV to be at the top of the pyramid, while also receiving all services in the lower tiers. The long-term

goal was that students would eventually move down the pyramid, no longer needing the additional assistance required in the higher tiers.

Response to Intervention implementation success relied heavily on accurate collection of data throughout the process. Screeners were needed for all students to identify areas of concern and to identify students "at-risk." Once students' problems had been identified, a research-based intervention was needed to address each concern. While the intervention was being given to each student, it was vital that progress monitoring took place throughout each intervention. The progress-monitoring tools should have been researched, reliable measures. Interventions that were proven effective were to continue for as long as the student needed that particular intervention. If progress monitoring showed the intervention was not working, the intervention should have changed or the student should have been moved to a higher tier on the pyramid. The RTI process is individualized for each student's need and success of this implementation process was greatly affected by the perceptions of teachers responsible for carrying out each student's plan.

Bowen and Luckner (2010) conducted a study of teacher perceptions of progress monitoring and found that teachers perceived progress monitoring as an effective tool that provided clear evidence of gains in student learning and increased both student and teacher motivation throughout the implementation of the intervention. Burlbaw, Eslami, and Jia (2006) interviewed six elementary and middle school English Language Learning teachers to see how they perceived Classroom Based Monitoring Reading (CBM-R) probes. Teachers believed in CBM-R data collection as accurate, efficient progress monitoring to measure ELL reading ability and planned to continue using CBM-R probes

in the future. A similar study did not find a statistically significant effect between elementary teacher perceptions of RTI data use in consultative meetings, with or without, student data (Rosengarten, 2011). More study was needed in this area to determine the impact of teacher perceptions of RTI progress monitoring and data collection at all school levels.

Implementation & Roll-Out of SST/RTI

Implementation of SST/RTI in the United States began by first focusing energy in the early grades where intense interventions were needed in reading for students with learning disabilities. Over the past ten years, the focus on SST/RTI implementation has continued to expand through the grades and was beginning to spread into the secondary school setting. New emphasis was being placed on the most appropriate ways to integrate SST/RTI practices into the middle and high school settings. Samuels (2009) discussed high school having to start SST/RTI implementation without scientific literature outlining implementation methods. Secondary teachers realized the importance of SST/RTI, but were unsure of best practices at the middle and high school level. Fletcher and Vaughn (2010) believed to provide intensive intervention at the high school level required a significant decrease in the number of students being served through SST/RTI. Scheduling concerns, as well as curricular concerns, were becoming the target of new SST/RTI research. Another new topic of SST/RTI research was in the area of teacher efficacy and cooperative problem solving required in the SST/RTI process (LaRocco & Murdica, 2009). It was too soon to know the full impact of Response to Intervention at the secondary level. Research was desperately needed to determine the

effectiveness and impact of Response to Intervention programs at the secondary level in relation to teacher perceptions.

Need for SST/RTI Training

In 2002, a survey was conducted by the U.S. Department of Education, which found that 36% of current teachers felt "very well prepared" to teach the new standards (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). Less than 20% of teachers at that time felt prepared to meet the needs of all students, including diverse and struggling students (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). Because of these statistics, schools began to develop training in many areas to address the gaps in teacher training that were impacting the efficacy of current educators. Many studies were being conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of those programs that were put into place and to investigate the impact of different variables on teacher effectiveness. These studies investigated many of the same variables as the current research to show the relationship of these variables to effective teacher implementation of new initiatives similar to SST/RTI. Gaps became evident in these studies and eventually led to the current research questions in this study.

Efficacy research was abundant in relation to many variables such as: new standards, problem students in regular-education classrooms, regular education initiatives, progress-monitoring, collaboration, workplace support, social situations, environment, and teacher roles in education as new initiatives were implemented. Each of these variables impacted teachers' perceived abilities to implement new initiatives by altering the mind-set of educators who were responsible for carrying them out. Understanding the perceived impact that these mentioned variables had on teacher effectiveness was important for all educators and education leaders so that all

stakeholders could problem-solve to meet the needs of all students. Identifying teacher perceptions and offering teacher support for areas of need strengthened teacher outcomes by building self-efficacy. This new information assisted educational leaders in obtaining more effective teaching behaviors and higher learning achievement for all students. For this study in particular, understanding teacher perceptions of SST/RTI helped educational leaders identify staff needs at each school level in order to have effective implementation system-wide.

Perceptions of Teacher & Administrative Support

Chang, Lin, and McLeachie (2010) conducted a study to investigate faculty perceptions of their own teaching and administrative support for teaching. Using questionnaires, this study found a positive relationship between peer support and available resources on teacher efficacy: "Offering teaching support seemed an important way to strengthen teaching outcomes" (Chang, Lin, & McLeachie, 2010, p. 207). Another study looked at the perceptions of special education teachers and the implementation of the new professional standards within special education classrooms (Shellady, Zionts, & Zionts, 2006). All levels of educators, grades K-12, showed agreement that the new standards were important, but not easy to implement successfully. Questionnaire answers identified resistance of teachers to implement the difficult standards because of feelings of inadequacy for implementing them to struggling students. There were also significant gaps in what teachers said they valued and what they were able to carry out due to low self-efficacy (Shellady, Zionts, & Zionts, 2006). Teacher efficacy increased in teachers who participated in problem-solving teams. In

both of these studies, there were no significant effects of perceived administrative support on teacher efficacy.

Another study investigated teacher perceptions in relation to social engagement as either expansive or restrictive (Deaney, Fox, & Wilson 2010). Three beginning teacher groups were interviewed to evaluate perceptions of their workplace. Results showed a big difference in what resources teachers had expected to have and what they actually were given to use in the classroom. The biggest support for beginning teachers were not the resources given to them as materials, but the social resources provided through mentors, social networks, tutors, and collaborative groups, both within and outside of the school setting. Social networks were valued by beginning teachers and provided an outlet to reveal or share expectations for support. A sense of self-awareness was heightened through these social network experiences for beginning and veteran teachers. Teachers began to hunt for resources within their social groups to enhance their own professional development as self-efficacy increased over time. These studies supported the need for collaboration in all education initiatives including SST/RTI. Teacher perceptions of collaboration and support were identified in this study.

Teacher Perceptions of School Environment

Teacher perceptions of the school environment impacted their ability to carry out initiatives to help struggling learners. Identifying these perceptions allowed educational leaders to address any environmental factors that could have been perceived as barriers to effective teaching practices. Huang (2001) studied high school teacher perceptions of school environment by gender. He found most teachers were content with the school environment, especially the female teaching staff. The study concluded that teachers felt

positive overall in the areas of collegiality, teacher-student relationships, ethnic equity, teacher influence, and teacher discipline. Teacher efficacy was positively correlated with positive school environment perceptions. Implementation of school-wide initiatives increased due to positive school environment and higher teacher efficacy (Huang, 2001).

Self-Efficacy & Resistance to Change

Many studies have examined the effect of self-efficacy on new initiative implementation and vice versa. Abernathy (1991) conducted an investigation into elementary teacher perceptions in relation to the regular education initiative to see what changes in teacher efficacy resulted from a change in classroom structure for struggling students. The regular learning environment for students with disabilities at this time was in a pullout setting, but this initiative put these students back into regular education classrooms with consultative services. Teacher perceptions were surveyed and results favored the pullout model that had been replaced. Other noticeable perceptions effected implementation of the new consultant model. Teachers did not perceive any academic improvement for both regular education and special education students with the new model. Emphasis on achievement score gains lowered staff enthusiasm towards the new model. Some teachers believed spending time on individualized instruction plans had a negative impact on the distribution of instructional time for all students. The rate at which standards could be taught effectively slowed to reach all students. There were also differences noticed between regular education teacher and special education teacher perceptions. Regular education teachers seemed more pessimistic towards the new model and did not feel they were adequately trained to alter instruction to meet the needs of all students. This feeling of inadequacy greatly impacted the implementation of the new

consultant model: "Lack of positive experience perpetuated barriers to diffusion and adoption of the new model" (Abernathy et.al.,1991, p. 20).

Another study examined teacher perceptions of problem students who were placed in regular classroom learning environments (Lopes, Monteiro, Quinn, Rutherford, & Sil, 2004). Interviews were conducted involving teachers in grades one through nine. These teachers did not reject problem students in their classrooms, but felt that these students needed a specialized curriculum in resource room settings. There were no significant differences in teacher perceptions between regular educators and special educators' perceptions towards students with problems. Overall, results suggested that as students got older, teachers' sense of efficacy towards teaching them effectively decreased (Lopes et al., 2004).

Self-Efficacy & Training Support During Change

Gravios, Kaiser, & Rosenfield (2009) investigated teacher perceptions of staff development training in the area of problem solving teams and collaboration. Teachers were given a survey before and after collaborative problem solving training to see if there were any differences in their perceptions of the process. Most teachers felt positive about the training, but those who felt negative about the training expressed concern that the process took too much time, lacked consistent meeting times, and sometimes administrators did not have adequate knowledge to help the staff. These barriers created negative feelings towards the process and prevented teachers from engaging in collaboration.

A similar study investigated middle and high school teachers' perceptions of literacy teaching and learning through collaboration (Burns, Callaway, & Cantrell, 2009).

This study revealed that teachers valued collaboration as a vital component to implementation success and that seeing the implementation work effectively drove educators to continue forward in the process: "Teachers build efficacy as they witnessed students growth and they attributed learning to instructions and motivational methods" (Jantz & Nunn, 2009, p. 599). The result of the teacher perception interviews of sixth through ninth grade teachers showed that coaching and collaboration amongst teachers supported teachers' efficacy and implementation of literacy teaching (Burns et al., 2009).

A similar study was conducted for high school science teachers to change teacher perceptions of constructivist learning environments as new standards were implemented, before and after training in constructivist teaching strategies (Cho, Park, Seo, & Yager, 1997). Collaboration, teamwork, hands-on demonstration, and practice provided effective training. Post-test results showed a significant difference in positive perceptions of participants in regards to constructivist teaching philosophy. Positive perceptions of implementation for a teaching style to address all students' needs was likely to be carried over into the classroom setting because of high self-efficacy of teachers who participated in the training (Cho et al., 1997).

Roby (2009) studied 70 masters students in a leadership program and found that teamwork was one of three factors most evident in the teacher perception surveys that they considered to be essential for student growth and teacher motivation to implement intervention for struggling students. Collaboration was supported in research as a way to increase teacher self-efficacy in many initiatives and was studied in this research of SST/RTI implementation.

Educator Roles

Educators' roles were changing due to SST/RTI. Barrera and Bryant (2009) believed special education and regular education teachers had to work together with struggling learners in order to carry out SST/RTI. This partnership allowed teachers to determine students' needs for further testing. No matter the model of SST/RTI being implemented, no matter what level of school being studied, teachers had the primary responsibility to ensure that RTI was implemented effectively. Teachers were expected to seek out appropriate interventions for students to ensure success instead of waiting on students to fail. The flexibility that SST/RTI gives teachers allowed them to try multiple measures in order to find what works with groups of students, small groups of students, or individual students, with one-on one help if needed. With teachers having more control over the interventions being implemented, the role of the teacher and other educators was changing.

Teachers' perceptions of roles were an essential factor in creating effective change. Spasovski (2010) conducted a qualitative study through interviews of 51 elementary teachers to investigate their perceptions of roles and responsibilities in the inclusion setting. Interventions for SST and RTI plans often took place in the inclusion classroom. Results show that there was much confusion of roles in the inclusion setting. This confusion led to low self-efficacy and lower teacher effectiveness for all students. The study found that the philosophy of inclusion education was not well-understood, initial preparation for this type of setting was in-adequate, and most teachers felt that they figured out what to do on their own. Some teachers felt confident, while others did not.

Some teachers became frustrated, gave up, or did not try certain strategies, and self-esteem was lowered in many teachers (Spasovski, 2010).

When student achievement was low, some critical factors in regards to learning and teaching needed to be examined. Perceptions of teachers in these areas needed to be identified so that problem solving could begin to address low achievement in students. One study asked teachers what they perceived the roles of parents, the school, and teachers played in student learning (Korkmaz, 2007). A majority of teachers suggested that schools are responsible for providing individualized instruction to meet the needs of all students. Ninety-percent of interviewed teachers believe teachers should use a variety of instructional strategies to reach struggling learners and that teachers should be aware of individual differences in student learning. The current research intends to ask teachers about their roles in SST/RTI implementation as well, in order to identify any teacher perceptions differences between school levels.

Barnes and Harlacher (2008) believe it takes collaboration amongst all stakeholders in order to provide effective change for struggling students. There must be initial training, ongoing support, and a positive environment for change among teachers and administrators. Any change in educational roles can bring anxiety and stress to professionals who are trying to ensure that no child gets left behind.

There is a need for educational leaders to empower teachers in the present system of individualized instruction for all students (Burlbaw, Eslami, & Jia, 2006). Teachers do not have enough power in the decision making process for education policy and practice. This lack of power "marginalizes teachers' roles in education" (Burlbaw et al., 2006, p. 423). Teacher roles should be redefined in a manner that allows for "teacher ongoing

presence, availability, and active participation in the classroom teaching process" (Spasovski, 2010, p. 68). Teachers who feel they are not qualified, for whatever reasons, may not try to implement the necessary interventions needed for student success.

High School Teacher Perceptions of Standards for Struggling Students

One of the major gaps in literature at this time is the difference in perceptions of educational phenomena at the secondary level from other levels. One study examined the impact of teacher beliefs of national standards on what was taught by secondary teachers (Gagnon & Maccini, 2002). Gagnon and Maccini (2002) conducted survey research to examine the familiarity and confidence of 110 secondary teachers in implementing the national standards to all students, including those with difficulty learning. There were no significant differences between middle and high school teachers on any of the survey items. High school special education teachers in rural areas were the least familiar with the new standards. General education teachers felt more prepared to teach the new standards than the special education teachers. Many areas of improvement were identified in regards to the implementation for this particular system. More studies were needed in this area to validate the results of this study and to address additional variables that may affect the outcomes of such studies.

Summary

The Georgia Framework for Response to Intervention was not going away as a mandated model for student learning. Educators throughout the state of Georgia had participated in the transition from SST to RTI over the last several years. RTI implementation has been implemented in most elementary schools throughout Georgia. Staff development has been provided and time for problem solving teams to form has

been given in order to help all students succeed. Information on teacher perceptions of SST/RTI implementation models at the middle and high school level were still being developed. The information learned from this research will guide instructional leaders in providing the most effective staff development training for SST/RTI implementation at each school level, providing for effective implementation as a system. Teachers will have reflected about their own perceptions and how those perceptions have influenced their effectiveness as teachers. This research design allowed educational leaders the opportunity to expand on many existing variables in education that were impacted by teacher perceptions.

Each year, Georgia schools have been held more and more accountable for student success. Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), the accountability measure put into place to measure passing rates and graduation rates for students, continued to guide educational leaders in school reform. Because of this accountability, school administrators have found ways to address the needs of all students and have provided interventions to address those needs at all school levels. The SST/RTI Georgia frameworks provided the system to address student need and brought regular education and special education teachers together to help all students. The success of SST/RTI depended on effective implementation by teachers. Teacher perceptions may or may not have impacted implementation. Previous research studies have shown mixed results. Most studies of teacher perceptions have been at the elementary level and no research has been compiled at the secondary level to investigate teacher perceptions of the SST/RTI frameworks. This research study provided needed, valuable insight in helping secondary educational leaders to ensure effective implementation at all school levels, resulting in

quality instruction for all students throughout their school experiences.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This causal-comparative study investigated teachers' perceptions of Student Support Team (SST) and Response to Intervention (RTI) effectiveness in Georgia secondary schools to see if grade level taught effected perceptions. Previous research had been done in the area of teacher perceptions of SST/RTI implementation. As mentioned in Chapter One, this researcher wanted to build on the results of two previous studies. The first study examined teacher perceptions of Student Support Team and was conducted by Dr. Aleada Lee- Tarver (2006) from Alabama State University and Drs. Aksamit and Rankin (1994) from the University of Nebraska. Their study utilized a paper questionnaire survey to gather data about teacher perceptions of SST. A subsequent study was conducted by Dr. Lynn Russell Bailey (2010) from Liberty University. Bailey's study included a survey on teacher perceptions of Response to Intervention and Student Support Services, blended with two multiple response questions regarding the perceived weaknesses of SST/RTI implementation in Georgia (Bailey, 2010). This researcher was hoping to build on previous research models with added emphasis on school level taught and how grade levels taught affected teachers' perceptions of SST/RTI effectiveness, an area of research that needed more study.

Participants

For this study, only certified teachers within a NW Georgia school district, grades K-12, were invited to participate. Upon IRB approval and with support from the previous two research models, this researcher invited all certified staff who work directly with students in this Northwest Georgia school district to participate in the study. This

researcher hoped to find out if grade level taught affected teacher perceptions of effectiveness and implementation of SST/RTI. By studying within a particular system, it was assumed that all certified staff would have undergone similar SST/RTI training. This should have helped to strengthen internal reliability in research results.

The system that agreed to participate represented teachers of all grade levels K-12. Demographic information was taken on all participants at each of the four schools and was compared with system-wide demographic data to analyze sample representation of the total population. Demographic information taken included years of experience, level of training, area of certification, and level of school taught. Necessary district-wide data was obtained at the Georgia Department of Education website. This researcher was interested in these statistics and used them to compare the demographics of the sample to the population of the entire district. The research also looked at statewide demographic data to see if the results of this study could be generalized.

The researcher emailed the representative from within the system to obtain the necessary paperwork and approval for the research to take place (system IRB contact, school administrators, and faculty). The researcher explained the study, inquired how to request permission from appropriate administration, and obtained a list of all the certified staff. Based on information provided by the system contact, the researcher obtained appropriate school level approval. She asked each school administrator for a reliable, trustworthy, in-building representative who would be willing to distribute and collect surveys at each school.

Approximately nine weeks after the school year began (Fall 2011), all participants received an email from the researcher forwarded by their in-building representatives that

a research study was being conducted. The letter informed potential participants about the purpose of the research, benefits, institutional affiliation of the researcher, and contact information for the researcher. The letter directed participants, who voluntarily consented to participate in the study, to complete a consent form and return it to the in-building representative within a two-to-three week time frame. One or two follow-up e-mails were sent as reminders.

All surveys were voluntary and anonymous. The consent letter was attached to each survey with general instructions and key words defined. The cover letter included each participant's name from a school list, but was removed by the in-building representative before surveys were turned in. This allowed the building representative to ensure anonymity. The researcher was not able to directly or indirectly identify participants through identifiers linked to their instrument responses. The consent letters were separated from the surveys before delivery to the researcher. The research did not link participant names with the survey. Participant consents were separated from the data for analysis. The school system studied utilized positive behavior supports with its students and faculty. The researcher provided a free jeans day pass to all certified staff that agreed to participate as a way of thanking them for their cooperation.

This study used a convenience sample of approximately 305 teachers within a city school system. Four schools within one system participated: primary, elementary, middle, and high. All certified staff received an initial invite during an after-school faulty meeting at each school. There were 98 certified staff at the primary school, 80 certified staff at the elementary school, 63 certified staff at the middle school, and 64 certified staff at the high school who were eligible. Research was conducted after the end of the

first nine-week grading period so that rituals and routines for the current school year were in place.

Setting

This particular city school system in Northwest Georgia was comprised of four schools that work closely together to implement system initiatives and goals. All four schools sent staff to participate on district level teams in the implementation of initiatives and day-to-day management of the schools. This top-down approach ensured similar implementation of initiatives throughout the system. All four schools fully implemented some type of positive behavior support system within each school. This system was considered a title system. Because of this, all schools had a math coach and literacy coach. Early Intervention Program (EIP) staff supported teachers to implement interventions, with the one exception being the high school, which was not considered a title school. The high school had system level support to carry out needed interventions. All four schools had built-in staff that met with teacher teams and monitored the SST/RTI process. School counselors have been the primary in-school staff providing this support. All four schools sought guidance from the same system level SST/RTI intervention specialist on a daily basis through email and phone calls, as well as periodic system level meetings and one-on-one school support as needed.

All four schools implemented the same SST/RTI model by following the Response to Intervention manual developed by the system and have undergone the same initial training at each of the four schools. The system hired an intervention specialist two years ago to assist teachers with the SST/RTI process at all four schools in order to help maintain consistency in SST/RTI implementation procedures. Two psychologists

also helped to maintain consistency in the referral process for all schools and occasionally helped with SST/RTI training. The English Learner (EL) coordinator has collaborated with the intervention specialist to train all of the schools each year on the topic of SST/RTI for EL so that teachers have a clear idea of how to help language learners in the SST/RTI process. The advantage of having a small number of schools in a system was the consistency maintained within program training and implementation.

Communication throughout the data collecting process was provided as needed. All site representatives were provided the researcher's contact information. Participants were able to call, text, or email the researcher for clarification, ask questions regarding the distribution or collection of surveys, or if they had general questions about the research topic. Contact information for Liberty University and Dr. Ackerman was also provided. All correspondence was reviewed for clarity and succinctness. Clear communication was ensured throughout the project to ensure willingness to participate in the study and to ensure accuracy of data collection.

Instrumentation

This study was a continuation of several previous studies. With their permission and IRB approval, this researcher planned to use the previous instrumentation with the addition of a new population: secondary teachers in Georgia. Three types of instrumentation were used to provide data for analysis: demographic information, survey items, and two multiple-choice questions.

Demographic data consisted of years of experience, level of degree, type of degree, and school level taught (IV). The survey (DV) consisted of twenty-one questions pertaining to teachers' perceptions of SST/RTI and two multiple response questions. In

previous studies, field tests were run to ensure internal validity of survey questions. The Cronbach's Alpha score supported the reliability of the study with an accepted Alpha value of 0.809. The multiple-choice questions investigated reasons teachers may not refer students for SST/RTI services and how teachers' perceptions affected the effectiveness of SST/RTI implementation. A predetermined list of responses was chosen for the multiple choice questions so the data could be quantified for the study. Other key extraneous variables that were not controlled for, that could impact results included, but were not limited to: teacher maturation, school schedule differences, available interventions and support staff available at each school. Below are the survey items this researcher incorporated into the survey for this study.

Survey Questions

1. I am familiar with the tiered intervention model, which provides more intensive interventions for students based on responses to previous interventions (RTI).
2. I receive adequate training prior to serving on the Student Support Team (SST).
3. I receive adequate training prior to the implementation of Response to Intervention (RTI).
4. I understand the basic eligibility criteria for special education.
5. I understand the purpose and operation of Student Support Team (SST).
6. I consider the paperwork and documentation required for the Student Support Team (SST) as part of my intervention on behalf of the student.
7. I remain actively involved in the SST process when I refer a struggling student.
8. Research-based interventions and progress monitoring are common classroom practices for struggling learners in the general education setting.

9. Careful attention to paperwork and documentation are critical parts of the intervention process.
10. The Student Support Team (SST) meetings are useful to me as I seek to help the student.
11. It is my responsibility to provide the interventions for students in Student Support Team.
12. It should be the responsibility of others to provide the interventions for students in Student Support Team (SST).
13. The Student Support Team (SST) meeting is vital for bringing parental input into the intervention plan.
14. The Student Support Team (SST) meeting should produce ideas for research-based interventions for struggling learners.
15. My input at Student Support Team (SST) meetings is both valued and desired.
16. Most general education teachers are supportive of the SST process and the RTI framework.
17. The student support team's (SST) primary purpose is to move students towards special education.
18. When I refer a student to Student Support Team (SST), I expect that he/she will be evaluated for special education.
19. The Student Support Team (SST) is valuable for monitoring the transition from special education back to the general education classroom.
20. The Response to Intervention (RTI) Framework prolongs the Student Support Team (SST) process unnecessarily.

21. I am supportive of the SST process and the RTI framework and believe it to be effective for helping struggling students.

Procedures

Before any research began, several procedural steps were followed and approved. The prospectus and proposal were approved with guidance from the research consultant and eventually the dissertation committee. Permission to replicate previous studies was obtained from previous researchers. A research proposal was submitted for approval to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and permission to obtain data from the school system was gained before any data could be released from the system database. This researcher did not need to elicit participants for the study. The non-random sample of participants was drawn from a specific population pertinent to this study (Gall et al., 2007). Data on the finalized sample was collected and organized by school. The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of school level taught on teacher perceptions of SST/RTI. It was not necessary to record teacher names to the data collected. To assure anonymity, no student names were attached to the data collected.

The finalized teacher sample was contacted and invited to participate in the study. There was one designated staff member, or contact person, assigned to each school facility. This researcher asked the system level IRB coordinator for a possible building level person who they felt would be best to take charge of the distribution and collection of surveys in an anonymous, reliable fashion. Ongoing communication through email and phone calls determined how many surveys needed to be delivered to each building. All necessary materials were kept inside envelopes for each building, including cover letters, directions, surveys, and necessary directions to have the materials returned back

to the researcher. To assure anonymity, the contact person at each school pulled apart the consent forms and the surveys before returning them to the researcher. These forms were kept in separate envelopes. This researcher thanked each building level contact person for helping out in the research process. Once data was received, it was put into an Excel spreadsheet and imported into SAS for statistical analysis.

Proposed Schedule

Dissertation Committee and Chair review proposal for approval: August 2011

Institutional Review Board Reviews Proposal: August 2011

Revise Proposal for Feedback: August 2011

Final Approval: August/September 2011

Prepare Materials to be used in Research: September 2011

Conduct Research: September 2011/October 2011

Analyze Research: October/November 2011

First Draft: December 2011

Final Draft: January 2012

Dissertation Submitted: February 2012

Defend Dissertation: Spring 2012

Research Design

A causal-comparative research design was used to analyze the effect of grade level taught on teachers' perceptions of SST/RTI in a Northwest Georgia school district. Demographic data was collected to help examine the impact of extraneous variables such as years of experience (YE), type of degree (TD), and level of degree (LD). Causal-comparative research design was chosen because the researcher would like to compare

pre-determined data to teacher perceptions of SST/RTI (Gall et al., 2007). It was not possible to manipulate the independent variable for this study, as it was predetermined based on the phenomenon being studied.

Teacher perceptions were quantified using a five-point Likert scale. With approval from Dr. Bailey, the survey contained 21 questions and two multiple response questions. The survey contained several types of teacher perceptions to be analyzed, including teacher perceptions regarding training and qualifications, attitude towards participation, the relationship of SST and special education roles, understanding of SST/RTI, and effectiveness of SST/RTI (Bailey, 2010). These four types of perceptions were represented in each of the four research questions.

Survey questions were analyzed for descriptive statistics by subgroups. Answers to the survey items were quantified for statistical analysis. The numerical values ranged from SD (1), D (2), NO (3), A (4), and SA (5). A smaller mean represented more disagreement for each survey statement and a larger mean represented more agreement for survey statements. Means near three represented a sample that had no opinion for particular survey statements. After descriptive statistics were calculated, the researcher investigated the impact of grade level taught on teacher perceptions of SST/RTI. Internal reliability was calculated using Cronbach Alpha calculations for each construct group of survey items. Any research question that did not show an appropriate Cronbach score was reviewed and survey items were removed. An explanation of the removal of survey items is discussed in the next chapter. Grade level taught (IV) was used to analyze the effect; teacher perceptions (DV) were analyzed using ANOVA. Post Hoc analysis was also used to clarify exact subgroups in each construct that showed statistical significance

for each research question. Using multiple-choice questions, opinions were collected about perceived weaknesses of the RTI framework and why teachers did not refer a student to the RTI process. This portion of data analysis provided frequency information only and helped to explain possible extraneous variables.

The researcher assumed that grade level taught could impact teachers' perceptions towards SST/RTI, but was not sure of the outcome. There had not been enough support through previous research to predict an outcome for this study. Because of this uncertainty, this researcher used null hypotheses statements to find out if there were significant differences in teacher perceptions caused by grade level taught. This portion of analysis needed to use ANOVA analysis to compare means within the different demographic groups to determine if there was a significant difference in perceptions due to demographic information. Significant differences were further examined by running additional Post Hoc tests to determine where the differences between subgroups existed. Below are the variables, research questions, and null hypotheses for this study.

IV: School level taught (primary, elementary, middle, and high)

DV: Perceptions identified in Bailey-Tarver Survey (Bailey, 2010).

Research Question #1: Is there a significant difference in teacher perceptions of familiarity with SST and RTI due to school level taught (primary, elementary, middle, and high school)?

Null Hypothesis (H_o) #1: There is no statistical difference in teacher perceptions of familiarity with SST and RTI (survey items 1, 5, 6, 20) due to school level taught (primary, elementary, middle, and high school).

Research Question #2: Is there a significant difference in teacher perceptions of the adequacy of training to implement SST and RTI due to school level taught (primary, elementary, middle, and high school)?

Null Hypothesis (H_o) #2: There is no statistical difference in teacher perceptions of the adequacy of training to implement SST and RTI (survey items 2, 3, 11, 12) due school level taught (primary, elementary, middle, and high school).

Research Question #3: Is there a significant difference in teacher perceptions of the effectiveness of SST and RTI for struggling students due to school level taught (primary, elementary, middle, and high school)?

Null Hypothesis (H_o) #3: There is no statistical difference in teacher perceptions of the effectiveness of SST and RTI for struggling students (survey items 7-10, 13-16, 21) due to school level taught (primary, elementary, middle, and high school).

Research Question #4: Is there a significant difference in teacher perceptions of the relationship between SST, RTI, and Special Education due to school level taught (primary, elementary, middle, and high school)?

Null Hypothesis (H_o) #4: There is no statistical difference in teacher perceptions of the relationship between SST, RTI, and Special Education (survey items 4, 17-19) due to school level taught (primary, elementary, middle, and high school)

Data Analysis

Basic demographic data was collected at the beginning of each survey and was used to record the independent variable, grade level taught, and extra information needed to help rule out extraneous variables in the overall analysis. Demographic data was used

to collect frequency data and variability data in the following areas: years of experience, level of training, area of certification, and the school level taught.

Survey questions related to teacher perceptions of SST/RTI provided numerical data for the dependent variables in this research. Frequency, mean, and standard deviation were provided for each of the survey questions. Survey item responses were assigned values for data analysis (SD=1, D=2, NO=3, A=4, and SA=5). This allowed for a mean value; the smaller the mean value, the more disagreement present in the sample. A large SD (standard deviation) value represented more variability in teacher responses and perceptions.

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to compare the means, within and between, the four subgroups due to one independent variable: school level taught. Statistical methods used helped to determine if there was a difference in teacher perceptions of SST/RTI due to school level taught. Any p value < .05 showed a significant difference in the variables and allowed rejecting the null hypotheses statements.

Post Hoc comparisons were used to evaluate pair-wise differences among group means using Tukey HSD test. Once the degree of freedom was established, it would need to be less than the critical value for the null hypothesis to be accepted at a .1 value.

Validity, Reliability, & Objectivity

Previous researchers, using these same survey items, conducted field tests of each question on the survey to establish internal consistency. The Cronbach's Alpha test was used to validate the reliability, or internal consistency, of the instrument. The previous researcher found the reliability of the survey was Alpha= 0.809. Nunnaly (1978) has

indicated that any score with a value of at least 0.7 on the Cronbach's Alpha test is acceptable. After the field test was complete, comments and suggestions led researchers to review each survey item for succinctness and clarity. A team of teachers reviewed all materials to be sent out, including the cover letter, consent, and survey to ensure a good fit and clear understanding of objectives of study. This researcher also reviewed documents to ensure a good fit for teachers grades K-12.

Survey validity was ensured in several ways. First, each survey item was supported in previous research articles in order to support the question being used in the survey through triangulation. The questions where then grouped into subcategories and randomly ordered in the survey to prevent participants from predicting answers. The individual survey statements were designed to assess specific attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors. Each question was field tested and edited for clarity and succinctness. Each survey question was then quantified using a five-point Likert scale.

Subjectivity will be limited due to quantitative data analysis. Correspondence will be previewed by professionals for input to ensure clarity and objectivity. This researcher will follow the same data analysis as the previous researcher for convergent validity. The researcher does not have any preconceived expectations for the outcome of the study. She will not benefit in any way by the results of this study. She will present her findings in an ethical manner by presenting the facts provided by the data collected. It is the hope that this research will help to further identify areas of strength or concern due to secondary teachers' perceptions about SST/RTI in Georgia that could lead to effective staff development and teacher growth.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Growing concerns in meeting the needs of all students in federally funded schools was an area that educational leaders must continue to investigate in order to meet the extreme demands placed on school systems to meet accountability standards. In order to maintain high performance measures, school systems continue to monitor student progress and design interventions to address the student need identified through data collection. These educational, school-improvement components have been addressed through the development of programs such as Student Support Team and Response to Intervention frameworks. In Georgia, a four-tiered model was put into place statewide. Individual school systems were charged with training and implementing these frameworks using this model and were provided instructions through the state Response to Intervention Manual. Most school systems began this implementation at the primary and elementary levels, with training now expanding into the secondary schools. Research related to Response to Intervention has focused at the primary and elementary levels because there has been more data to show progress for the younger grades.

Overview of Problem

The problem investigated in this study was the need to find out the effect of school level taught on teacher perceptions of Student Support Team and Response to Intervention so that appropriate staff development could be provided to teachers at all school levels. Previous studies had examined teacher perceptions in relation to SST/RTI at the elementary level, but not at the secondary level. Many studies mentioned earlier examined specific aspects of teaching, such as efficacy and collaboration, but did not

address SST/RTI specifically in the research studies. There was not enough data to support the amount of money and time that had been spent on cookie-cutter SST/RTI training modules to train teachers at all school levels. This study provided necessary insight into the implementation of SST/RTI for all school levels to help guide educators in the creation of staff development appropriate for each school level based on the needs of the staff. Teacher perceptions were examined in relation to familiarity of SST/RTI, adequacy of training to implement SST/RTI, perceptions of effectiveness of SST/RTI, and perceptions of the relationship between SST, RTI, and special education programs.

Restatement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effect of school level taught (primary, elementary, middle, and high school) on teacher perceptions of Student Support Team and Response to Intervention within a Northwest Georgia school system. The intent of this study was to evaluate the data collected in order for educational leaders to be able to make informed decisions about the most appropriate staff development for effective implementation of SST/RTI at all school levels (K-12). Educational leaders needed to see if teacher perceptions differed between schools so that meaningful decisions about training all teachers could be made. The current state manual offered one model with no regard to school level taught. This study helped to provide data that may suggest the manual should be updated to include sub-sections to address teacher need at all levels. Identifying and addressing teacher perceptions could lead to better implementation, effectiveness, and sustainability of current programs already in place to meet the needs of all students. Federal and state mandates were requiring the process be in place, but systems must continue to investigate implementation to make sure they are

making their best efforts to implement these programs effectively. Research on teacher perceptions of SST/RTI programs at all levels was necessary data that needed to be gathered.

Instrumentation

This causal-comparative study involved the use of demographic data, a 21 question Likert scale survey, and two multiple response questions. Basic demographic information was collected, including completed years of classroom experience, type of degree, level of degree, and school level taught. The questions in the survey were comprised of four constructs: perceptions of familiarity of SST/RTI, perceptions of adequacy of training and qualification of SST/RTI, relationship of SST/RTI with special education, and perceptions of effectiveness of SST/RTI frameworks. Two multiple-choice questions were also used to determine why teachers may choose not to refer a student for help and how SST/RTI could be made more effective.

Univariate Analyses

Demographic data was collected for the sample of teachers in this Northwest Georgia school system. The following data was important to help describe the sample and also to determine if this research could be generalized to the system and other systems on a more global scale.

School Level Taught Data

School level taught data included four values: 1. Primary; 2. Elementary; 3. Middle; and 4. High School. Frequency data showed that value 1 was the largest sample group and percentage, which represented the primary school level taught. Table 4.1 illustrates school level taught frequency, where the largest population had 33.33% of

participants taught at the primary school level and the smallest population, 20.00%, of participants taught at the elementary level. Overall, frequency numbers were close in frequency and percentage for each school within this district. Frequency data showed good overall representation of the research sample for the overall population being studied. No significant differences were detected in frequency in school level taught between the sample and the population being studied.

Table 4.1

School Level Taught Frequency Table

Level Taught	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1	55	33.33	55	33.33
2	33	20.00	88	53.33
3	43	26.06	131	79.39
4	34	20.61	165	100.00

Years Classroom Experience Data

Years of classroom experience frequency data taken included four values: 1. 0-5 years experience; 2. 6-12 years experience; 3. 13-19 years of experience; and 4. 20+ years experience. Frequency data for years of classroom experience can be found in Table 4.2, which illustrates the largest reporting group at 33.33% of the sample taught 20 or more years and the smallest group, 12.35%, of the sample taught 0-5 years.

Table 4.2

Years Classroom Teaching Experience Frequency Table

Years Classroom Experience	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1	20	12.35	20	12.35
2	51	31.48	71	42.83
3	37	22.84	108	66.67
4	54	33.33	162	100.00

Academic Training Data

Academic Training frequency data included four values: 1. Bachelors; 2. Masters; 3. Specialist; and 4. Doctorate. Table 4.3 illustrates the distribution of data in relation to the highest degree earned within the sample population for this study, which shows 46.34% of the sample obtained a Bachelor's degree and only 3.05% a Doctoral degree. Table 4.4 illustrates a significant difference in the research sample and the population for the district involved. The sample is generally more educated than the population. Implications for this difference will be explained in the Chronbach Alpha section, as it may have affected the responses to some of the survey items.

Table 4.3

Academic Training Frequency Table

Academic Training	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1	28	17.07	28	17.07
2	76	46.34	104	63.41
3	55	33.54	159	96.95
4	5	3.05	164	100.00

Table 4.4

Academic Training Sample versus Population Frequency Table

Academic Training	Percent Sample	Percent Population
1	17.07	27.90
2	46.34	41.00
3	33.54	31.00
4	3.05	.10

Area of Certification Data

Data studied according to area of certification is illustrated in Table 4.5. The table shows that 88.34% of the sample were general education certified and 11.66% of the sample held a special education certification. Some of the sample were actually certified in both areas, but were told to mark the area in which they were currently

teaching. This percentage closely resembles the overall population and represents the overall population of the school system being studied.

Table 4.5

Area of Certification Frequency Table

Certification	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
General Education	144	88.34	144	88.34
Special Education	19	11.66	163	100.00

Survey Descriptive Statistics

Survey responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as mean, median, and standard deviation. A Likert scale was used to quantify the results. Five values were used to quantify survey responses: 1. Strongly Disagree (SD); 2. Disagree (D); 3. No Opinion (NO); 4. Agree (A); and 5. Strongly Agree (SA). The lower the mean score reported, the more disagreement in the construct being evaluated. The higher the mean score, the more agreement in relation to the particular construct. The higher the standard deviation score, the more variability was shown in answers for each question overall for the sample being studied.

Several perception statements addressed teacher familiarity with SST/RTI. Table 4.6 and Table 4.7 illustrate descriptive statistics from Research Questions #1, #5, #6, and #20. The four survey statements, for Research Question #1, helped to identify teacher perceptions of familiarity with SST/RTI. These four research questions are listed in Table 4.6. Table 4.7 shows the highest mean value of 4.13, representing an agreement that teachers overall were familiar with the intervention model. The lowest mean value of this construct was 3.53, showing the lowest level of agreement to the perception

statement. Question #6 had the highest standard deviation, showing the most variability of perceptions within the sample to that question.

Table 4.6

Survey Statements for First Construct: RQ #1

Question Number	Survey Statement
1	I am familiar with the tiered intervention model, which provides more intensive interventions for students based on response to previous interventions.
5	I understand the purpose and operation of SST/Tier III.
6	I consider the paperwork and documentation required for the SST/Tier III framework as part of my intervention on behalf of the student.
20	The Response to Intervention (RTI) framework prolongs the Student Support Team (SST) process unnecessarily.

Table 4.7

Descriptive Statistics for RQ#1: Familiarity with RTI/SST

Survey Statement	Mean	Median	Std Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Question #1	4.13	4.00	0.77	1.00	4.00
Question #5	3.91	4.00	0.83	2.00	5.00
Question #6	3.70	4.00	1.02	1.00	5.00
Question #20	3.53	4.00	1.04	1.00	5.00

Four perception statements were used to form the data analysis for Research Question #2, which helped to describe teacher perceptions of the adequacy of training and qualifications to implement SST/RTI. Table 4.8 lists the four questions that make up construct two. Table 4.9 illustrates the descriptive statistics for each of these research

questions, which shows Question #11 with the most agreement and Question #3 with the least agreement. Question #3 also exhibited the most variability in answers with a standard deviation of 1.16.

Table 4.8

Survey Statements for Second Construct: RQ #2

Question Number	Survey Statement
2	I received adequate training prior to serving on the Student Support Team SST/Tier III.
3	I received adequate training prior to the implementation of Response to Intervention RTI/Tier II.
11	It is my responsibility to provide the interventions for students in Student Support Team SST/TIER III.
12	It should be the responsibility of others to provide the interventions and document the Response to Intervention RTI/Tier II.

Table 4.9

Descriptive Statistics for RQ#2: Adequacy of Training to Implement

Survey Statement	Mean	Median	Std Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Question #2	3.07	3.00	1.11	1.00	5.00
Question #3	3.06	3.00	1.16	1.00	5.00
Question # 11	3.90	4.00	0.87	1.00	5.00
Question #12	3.22	3.00	1.06	1.00	5.00

Nine perception statements were used to form the data analysis for Research Question #3, which helped to describe teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of SST/RTI for struggling students. Table 4.10 lists the research questions that make up construct number three. Table 4.11 illustrates the descriptive statistics for each of these

research questions, which illustrates the highest agreement in Question #9 with a mean value of 4.25 and lowest agreement in Question #16 with a mean value of 3.12. Question #21 had the highest variability of perceptions with a standard deviation of 1.06.

Table 4.10

Survey Statements for Construct Three: RQ #3

Question Number	Perception Statement
7	I remain actively involved in the SST/RTI process when I refer a struggling student.
8	Research-based interventions and progress monitoring are common classroom practices for struggling learners in the general education setting.
9	Careful attention to paperwork and documentation are critical parts of the intervention process.
10	The Student Support Team (SST/Tier III) meetings are useful to me as I seek to help the student.
13	The Student Support Team (SST/Tier III) meeting is vital for bringing parental input into the intervention plan.
14	The Student Support Team (SST/Tier III) meeting should produce ideas for research-based interventions for struggling learners.
15	My input at Student Support (SST/Tier III) meetings is both valued and desired.
16	Most general education teachers are supportive of the SST process and the RTI framework.
21	I am supportive of the SST process and the RTI framework and believe it to be effective for helping struggling students.

Table 4.11

Descriptive Statistics for RQ#3: Effectiveness of SST/RTI for Struggling Students

Survey Statement	Mean	Median	Std Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Question #7	3.98	4.00	0.69	2.00	5.00
Question #8	3.99	4.00	0.88	1.00	5.00
Question #9	4.25	4.00	0.64	2.00	5.00
Question #10	3.58	4.00	0.95	1.00	5.00
Question #13	4.03	4.00	0.77	2.00	5.00
Question #14	4.28	4.00	0.58	2.00	5.00
Question #15	3.81	4.00	0.74	1.00	5.00
Question #16	3.12	3.00	1.06	1.00	5.00
Question #21	3.49	4.00	1.08	1.00	5.00

Four perception statements were used to form the data analysis for Research Question #4, which helped to describe teacher perceptions of the relationship between SST/RTI and special education. Table 4.12 lists the questions related to construct number four. Table 4.13 illustrates the descriptive statistics for these four statements, which illustrates Question #4 with the highest agreement within the sample with a mean score of 3.59 and Question #17 with the lowest level of agreement with a mean score of 2.26. Question #18 contained the most variability for this construct with a standard deviation of 1.12.

Table 4.12

Survey Statements for Fourth Construct: RQ #4

Question Number	Perception Statement
4	I understand the basic eligibility criteria for special education.
17	The Student Support Team's primary purpose is to move students towards special education.
18	When I refer a student to Student Support Team I expect that he/she will be evaluated for special education.
19	The Student Support Team is valuable for monitoring the transition from special education back to the general education classroom.

Table 4.13

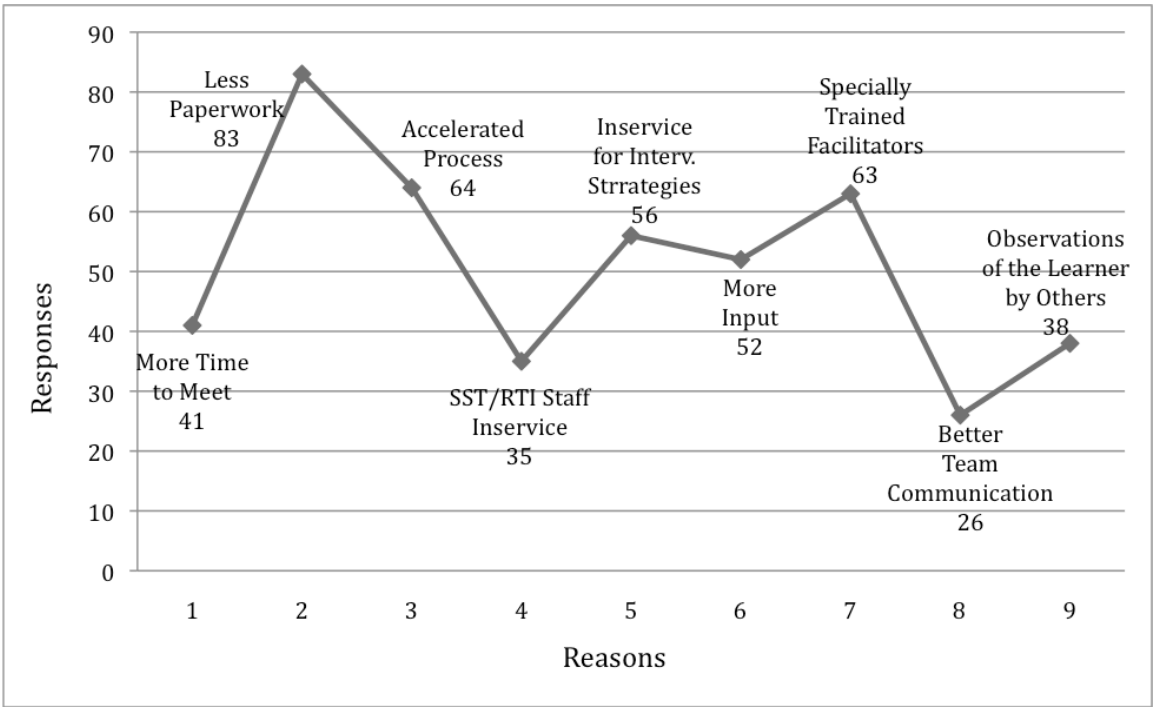
Descriptive Statistics RQ #4: Relationship between SST/RTI and Special Education

Survey Statement	Mean	Median	Std Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Question # 4	3.59	4.00	1.07	1.00	5.00
Question #17	2.26	2.00	1.01	1.00	5.00
Question #18	2.50	2.00	1.12	1.00	5.00
Question #19	3.34	3.00	1.02	1.00	5.00

Teachers were asked two short answer responses in order to gather additional data on teacher perceptions of SST/RTI. The first question asked teachers what modifications, if any, could be made to increase the effectiveness of the Student Support Team and/or Response to Intervention framework. Figure 4.1 shows the frequencies for each of the responses listed for this question. Teachers could choose up to three responses from the list. "Less paperwork" received the most responses with 83 marks, followed by

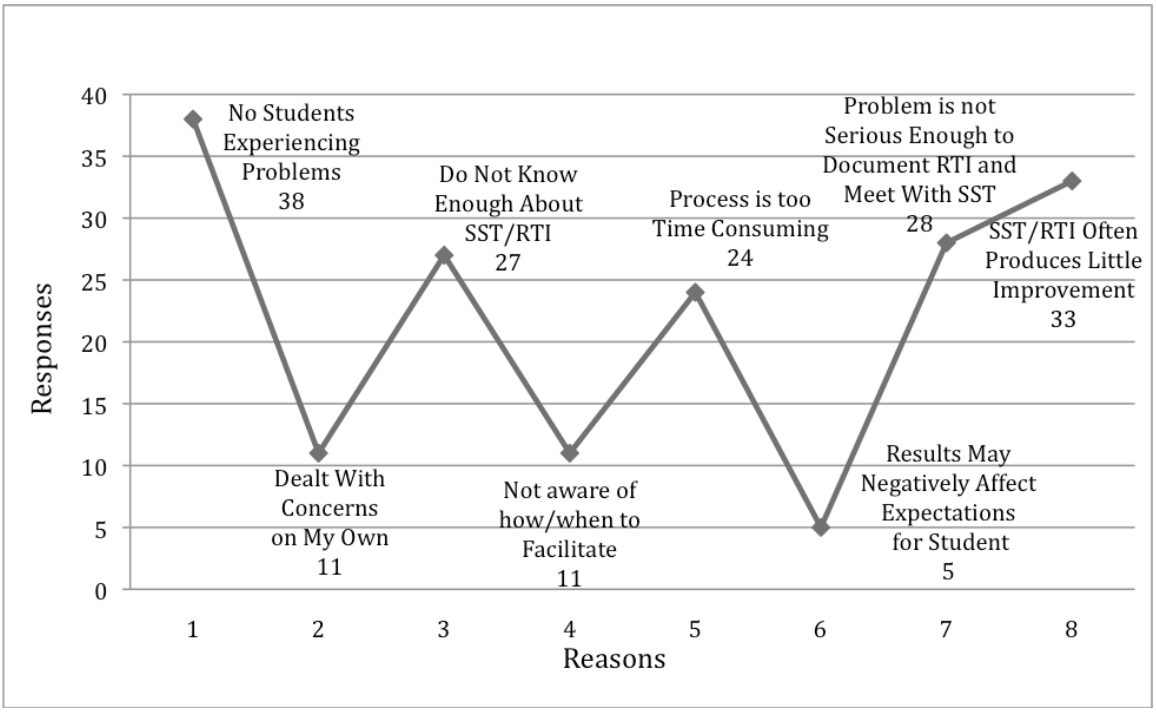
"accelerating the process" with 64 marks. "Communication within the team" did not seem to be a factor as it only received 26 marks.

Figure 4.1: Frequencies for Short Answer A



The second multiple response question asked teachers to choose up to three reasons why they may have chosen not to refer a student for SST/RTI. Figure 4.2 showed that 38 teachers chose not to refer students for SST/RTI due to no students experiencing problems. The next most chosen response, receiving 33 responses, was that due to perception that SST/RTI often produces little improvement. The frequency of all offered choices are illustrated in Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2: Frequencies for Short Answer B



Cronbach Alpha Constructs Analyses

Cronbach's Alpha is a measure of internal consistency or reliability. A high value of alpha is often used, along with substantive arguments and possibly other statistical measures, as evidence that the items measure an underlying, or latent, construct, such as familiarity, or perception of effectiveness. The accepted measurement is >.7 (Nunnaly, 1978). Previous studies ran field tests on each of the survey items and also supported each question through triangulation through previous research studies. The Alpha score from the previous study was 0.809, which was well within the required acceptable range. The previous study had not broken down the Alpha score by construct. This study divided the survey items into four latent constructs and the researcher decided to run four separate Cronbach's Alpha analyses to ensure internal reliability of the research questions. There were a few perception statements that needed to be removed in order to

reach the acceptable >.7 limit for internal reliability. Explanations for the removal of these statements will be provided in each construct analysis.

There were four latent constructs in this analysis. The first was perceptions of familiarity, which was hypothesized to include Question #1, #5, #6, and #20. The questions generated an initial Cronbach's Alpha score of .318, well below the required value of .7. Table 4.14 illustrates the raw and standardized alpha scores, with all four research questions included. Each question was carefully reviewed to identify which question might be affecting the alpha value. Of the four questions, Question #20 was inversely correlated with the other three questions, indicating that it was not measuring the same latent construct. Once this question was removed, the revised Cronbach's Alpha rose to .674. It was possible that the wording of Question #20 might have confused teachers because it compared RTI to SST. In this particular school system, teachers were trained that SST is one part of RTI. Comparing them may have caused confusion.

Table 4.14

Cronbach's Alpha: Construct One/ RQ #1

Variables	Alpha Values
Raw	0.252096
Standardized	0.318472
Revised Raw	0.665245
Revised Standardized	0.673997

While still slightly below the .7 threshold, no other individual questions could be deleted to improve the measurement. Therefore, a summated scale (SSII) was created

using these three questions to measure the first latent construct of perceptions of familiarity. The summated scale was used to test the first hypothesis statement. Because the alpha value was less the .7, the researcher will also evaluate each of the four perception statements in this construct individually in the next section.

The second construct was hypothesized to measure perceptions of the adequacy of training and was hypothesized to include Question #2, #3, #11, and #12. Again, the initial Cronbach's Alpha analysis generated a value lower than the accepted minimum with a score of .57, which is illustrated in Table 4.15 below. Of the four questions, Question #12 demonstrated a correlation of almost 0 with the other three questions. When this question was removed, the Cronbach's Alpha increased to an acceptable alpha value of .745. This acceptable measurement of reliability allowed the creation of the second summated scale (SS12) used to test the second hypothesis statement.

Table 4.15

Cronbach's Alpha: Construct Two/RQ #2

Variables	Alpha Values
Raw	0.580640
Standardized	0.566565
Revised Raw	0.759856
Standardized	0.744909

The third construct was hypothesized to measure perceptions of effectiveness and was hypothesized to include Question #7, #8, #9, #10, #13, #14, #15, #16, and #21. The initial analysis did generate an acceptable reliability measurement of .752, as illustrated

in Table 4.16. This acceptable reliability measurement allowed for the creation of the third summated scale (SS13), which was used to test the third hypothesis statement.

Table 4.16

Cronbach's Alpha: Construct Three/ RQ #3

Variables	Alpha Values
Raw	0.743656
Standardized	0.752229

The fourth construct was hypothesized to measure perceptions of relationship between SST/RTI and special education and was hypothesized to include Question #4, #17, #18, and #19. These questions generated an initial Cronbach's Alpha of .483, well below the required value of .7, as illustrated in Table 4.17. Question #4 and Question #19 both correlated at a very low rate with Question #17 and Question #18, which were highly correlated with each other. When only Questions #17 and #18 were retained, the reliability of the construct increased to .782 within the accepted alpha range for reliability. Questions #4 and #19 asked special education specific questions. Depending on whether or not the research participant was regular education or special education certified could have resulted in mixed understanding of what the questions were asking. A special education teacher would have known more specifics on how a student actually becomes eligible for services than a regular education teacher. Questions #17 and #18 were very similar in nature, questioning perceptions of progression from SST to special education and resulted in reliable values. These two survey items were kept to form the construct for Research Question #4.

Table 4.17

Cronbach's Alpha: Construct Four/ RQ #4

Variables	Alpha Values
Raw	0.480561
Standardized	0.483177
Revised Raw	0.780655
Revised Standardized	0.781756

Bivariate Analyses

Research Question #1

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test the null hypothesis to see if there was a statistical difference in teacher perceptions of familiarity with SST and RTI (survey items 1, 5, 6, where 20 had been dropped) based on the school level taught (primary, elementary, middle, and high school). Individual ANOVA analysis was also run on the four survey items individually due to the low Alpha variable not reaching the required >.70 for internal reliability within this construct.

First analysis is provided for Research Question #1 as a construct. Table 4.18 illustrates there was a significant effect of school level taught on teacher perceptions of the effectiveness of SST and RTI for struggling students as a construct with all four questions combined [F (3, 161) = 6.36, p = .0004] less than $p = .05$. The mean levels of teacher perceptions of familiarity with SST and RTI for primary, elementary, middle, and high school teachers were 3.61, 3.86, 4.19, and 4.00 respectfully. Post Hoc comparisons are shown to be significant if the value is at least 0.1 and are shown with asterisk marks in the Post Hoc table. Table 4.19 illustrated Post Hoc test results and showed that middle

and high school teachers had a higher mean level of familiarity with SST and RTI than did primary teachers. No other comparisons were found to be statistically significant.

Table 4.18

ANOVA analysis for Construct One: Research Question #1

Source	DF	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F Value	Pr>F
Model	3	8.64662125	2.88220708	6.36	0.0004
Error	161	72.98300838	0.45331061		
Corrected Total	164	81.62962963			

Table 4.19

Post Hoc Analysis for Construct One: Research Question #1

Level Taught Comparison	Difference Between Means	Simultaneous 90% Confidence Limits		Significance
3-4	0.1860	-0.1709	0.5430	
3-2	0.3275	-0.0325	0.6874	
3-1	0.5800	0.2634	0.8966	***
4-3	-0.1860	-0.5430	0.1709	
4-2	0.1414	-0.2386	0.5215	
4-1	0.3939	0.0546	0.7332	***
2-3	-0.3275	-0.6874	0.0325	
2-4	-0.1414	-0.5215	0.2386	
2-1	0.2525	-0.0899	0.5950	
1-3	-0.5800	-0.8966	-0.2634	***
1-4	-0.3939	-0.7332	-0.0546	***
1-2	-0.2525	-0.5950	0.0899	

The individual survey items within this construct were also compared individually by level taught due to the low Cronbach's Alpha score for this construct. Table 4.20 illustrated no statistical difference amongst the grade levels taught for Survey Statement #1. The mean levels of response for Survey Statement #1 for primary, elementary,

middle, and high school teachers were 4.07, 4.03, 4.30, and 4.09 respectfully and are illustrated in Table 4.21 below.

Table 4.20

ANOVA analysis for Survey Statement #1

Source	DF	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F Value	Pr>F
Model	3	1.8434239	0.61447443	1.05	0.3734
Error	161	94.48384944	0.58685621		
Corrected Error	164	96.32727273			

Table 4.21

Mean Level Response for Survey Statement #1

Level of Level Taught	N	Mean	Std Deviation
Primary	55	4.07272727	0.76629328
Elementary	33	4.03030303	0.80950789
Middle	43	4.30232558	0.63751316
High	34	4.08823529	0.86576808

A one-way ANOVA was also run to determine if the response to Survey Statement #5 differed across grade level taught. Tables 4.22 and 4.23 illustrate the ANOVA results and the mean response of Statement #5 to show that it was statistically

different amongst primary, elementary, middle, and high school teachers (M = 3.57, 3.85, 4.16, and 4.18 respectfully) [F (3, 160) = 5.94, p = .0007] which is less than the required $p = .05$.

Table 4.22

ANOVA analysis for Survey Statement #5

Source	DF	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F Value	Pr>F
Model	3	11.3802792	3.7934264	5.94	0.0007
Error	160	102.2477695	0.6390486		
Corrected Total	163	113.6280488			

Table 4.23

Mean Level Response for Survey Statement #5

Level of Level Taught	N	Mean	Std Deviation
Primary	55	3.57407407	0.88171899
Elementary	33	3.84848485	0.93945503
Middle	43	4.16279070	0.65211132
High	34	4.17647059	0.67287660

Based on the Post Hoc test below, the following comparisons were made. Post Hoc comparisons are shown to be significant if the value is at least 0.1 and are shown with asterisk marks in the Post Hoc Table. Table 4.24 showed that high school teachers

had a higher mean score than did primary school teachers. Middle school teachers had a higher mean score, representing more agreement, than primary teachers.

Table 4.24

Post Hoc Analysis for Survey Statement #5

Level Taught Comparison	Difference Between Means	Simultaneous 90% Confidence Limits		Significance
4-3	0.0137	-0.4101	0.4375	
4-2	0.3280	-0.1233	0.7793	
4-1	0.6024	0.1981	1.0067	***
3-4	-0.0137	-0.4375	0.4101	
3-2	0.3143	-0.1131	0.7417	
3-1	0.5887	0.2113	0.9662	***
2-4	-0.3280	-0.7793	0.1233	
2-3	-0.3143	-0.7417	0.1131	
2-1	-0.2744	-0.1336	0.6825	
1-4	-0.6024	-1.0067	-0.1981	***
1-3	-0.5887	-0.9662	-0.2113	***
1-2	-0.2744	-0.6825	0.1336	

A one-way ANOVA analysis was used to determine if response to Survey Statement #6 varied amongst grade levels taught for Research Question #1. Table 4.25 illustrates level taught was a significant predictor of response to Question #6 [F (3, 159)= 5.53, p = .0011] less than $p = .05$, which showed that teacher perceptions of paperwork associated with SST/RTI were impacted by school level taught.

Table 4.25

ANOVA Analysis for Survey Statement #6

Source	DF	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F value	Pr>F
Model	3	16.17006512	5.3902171	5.63	0.0011
Error	159	152.0992874	0.9565993		
Corrected Total	162	168.2699387			

The means for primary, elementary, middle, and high school were 3.29, 3.70, 4.09, and 3.85 respectfully and are illustrated in Table 4.26 below.

Table 4.26

Mean Level Response for Survey Statement #6

Level of Level Taught	N	Mean	Std Deviation
Primary	54	3.29629630	1.14314412
Elementary	33	3.69696970	0.95147414
Middle	43	4.09302326	0.78114548
High	33	3.84848485	0.93945503

Based on Post Hoc test results in Table 4.27, the following comparisons were made. Post Hoc comparisons are shown to be significant if the value is at least 0.1 and are shown with asterisk marks in the Post Hoc Table. High school teachers had a higher mean score than did primary school teachers, showing that the high school teachers strongly agreed that paperwork involved in the process was a required element in

implementation of SST/RTI, more so than primary teachers. Middle school teachers also had a higher mean score than primary teachers, showing that middle school teachers perceive more agreement in the necessity of paperwork in the process than did primary teachers. The impact of these perceptions will be addressed in Chapter Five.

Table 4.27

Post Hoc Analysis for Survey Statement #6

Level Taught Comparison	Difference Between Means	Simultaneous 90% Confidence Limits		Significance
3-4	0.2445	-0.2784	0.7675	
3-2	0.3961	-0.1269	0.9190	
3-1	0.7967	0.3349	1.2585	***
4-3	-0.2445	-0.7675	0.2784	
4-2	0.1515	-0.4047	0.7078	
4-1	0.5522	0.0529	1.0514	***
2-3	-0.3961	-0.9190	0.1269	
2-4	-0.1515	-0.7078	0.4047	
2-1	0.4007	-0.0986	0.8999	
1-3	-0.7969	-1.2585	-0.3349	***
1-4	-0.5522	-1.0514	-0.0529	***
1-2	-0.4007	-0.8999	0.0986	

Finally, a one-way ANOVA was run on level taught and Survey Statement #20, the final statement of the first construct. This survey item examined teacher perception of RTI in prolonging the SST process. Table 4.29 illustrates the mean scores for Survey

Statement #20 were significantly different amongst primary, elementary, middle, and high school (M=4.06, 3.50, 3.21, and 3.00) respectfully and are illustrated in Table 4.28 below. ANOVA analysis did show a significant difference in teacher perceptions due to school level taught.

Table 4.28

ANOVA analysis for Survey Statement #20

Source	DF	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F Value	Pr>F
Model	3	25.5977160	8.5325720	9.05	.0001
Error	152	143.2997199	0.9427613		
Corrected Total	155	168.8974359			

Table 4.29

Mean Level Response to Survey Statement #20

Level of Level Taught	N	Mean	Std Deviation
Primary	51	4.05882353	1.02784755
Elementary	30	3.50000000	1.04221250
Middle	42	3.30952381	0.92362212
High	33	3.00000000	0.86602540

Further examination of this survey item was completed in order to describe specific areas within this statement that showed significant differences in perceptions for

varying school levels using Post Hoc analysis. Post Hoc comparisons are shown to be significant if the value is at least 0.1 and are shown with asterisk marks in the Post Hoc Table. Figure 4.30 illustrates the following comparisons of significance. Elementary, middle, and high school teachers all had a significantly higher mean score, showing more agreement that RTI prolongs the process than did primary school teachers.

Table 4.30

Post Hoc Analysis for Survey Statement # 20

Level Taught Comparison	Difference Between Means	Simultaneous 90% Confidence Limits		Significance
1-2	0.5588	0.0425	1.0751	***
1-3	0.7493	0.2817	1.2169	***
1-4	1.0588	0.5575	1.5601	***
2-1	-0.5588	-1.0751	-0.0425	***
2-3	0.1905	-0.3459	0.7269	
2-4	0.5000	-0.0661	1.0661	
3-1	-0.7493	-1.2169	-0.2817	***
3-2	-0.1905	-0.7269	0.3459	
3-4	0.3095	-0.2125	0.8315	
4-1	-1.0588	-1.5601	-0.5575	***
4-2	-0.5000	-1.0661	0.0661	
4-3	-0.3095	-0.8315	0.2125	

Overall, when ANOVA analysis was run as construct one there was a statistical difference in teacher perceptions of familiarity with SST and RTI due to school level taught when Question #20 was dropped. There was a statistical difference in teacher

perceptions due to school level taught because the *p* value was .0004, less than the required .05. The null hypothesis for Research Question #1 can be rejected because there is a significant difference in perceptions due to school level taught. Because the Cronbach's alpha score was not acceptable, even after dropping one of the survey items, individual ANOVA analysis was run on the individual survey items listed below in Table 4.31.

Table 4.31

Survey Items for First Construct/RQ #1

Question Number	Survey Statement
1	I am familiar with the tiered intervention model, which provides more intensive interventions for students based on response to previous interventions.
5	I understand the purpose and operation of SST/Tier III.
6	I consider the paperwork and documentation required for the SST/Tier III framework as part of my intervention on behalf of the student.
20	The Response to Intervention (RTI) framework prolongs the Student Support Team (SST) process unnecessarily.

When each survey item was analyzed independently of one another, a significant difference was shown in Survey Statement #5, #6, and #20. Survey Statement #1 did not show a significant difference. Seventy-five percent of the time, the survey items from construct one showed a significant difference when run independently of the others. By running ANOVA analysis as a construct and individually for Research Question #1, the researcher hoped to overcome the reliability issue caused by the Cronbach's Alpha score. Overall, it appeared that null hypothesis #1 could be rejected because there appeared to

be a significant difference in teacher familiarity of SST and RTI due to school level taught overall.

Research Question #2

The second construct was hypothesized to measure perceptions of the adequacy of training and was to include Survey Statements #2, #3, #11, and #12. Again, the initial Cronbach's Alpha analysis generated a value lower than the accepted minimum with a score of .57, which is illustrated in Table 4.15. Of the four Survey Statements, Statement #12 demonstrated a correlation of almost 0 with the other three questions. When this question was removed, the Chronbach Alpha increased to an acceptable alpha value of .745. This acceptable measurement of reliability allowed the creation of the second summated scale (SS12) used to test the second hypothesis statement.

A one-way ANOVA was used to test the hypothesis that there was a statistical difference in teacher perceptions of the adequacy of training to implement SST and RTI, where Statement #12 was dropped, based on school level taught (primary, elementary, middle, and high school). Table 4.32 illustrated the ANOVA analysis results, which showed that there was a significant effect of school level taught on teachers' perceptions of the adequacy of training to implement SST and RTI for struggling students based on $p < .05$ [$F (3, 161) = 9.41$, $p = .0001$].

Table 4.32

ANOVA analysis for Research Question #2 (SS12)

Source	DF	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F Value	Pr>F
Model	3	19.3449354	6.4483118	9.41	.0001
Error	161	110.3008558	0.6850985		
Corrected Total	164	129.6457912			

The mean scores for teacher perceptions of the adequacy of training to implement SST and RTI for primary, elementary, middle, and high school teachers was 2.92, 3.10, 3.72, and 3.56 respectively, and are illustrated in Table 4.33 below. The table also shows that for this construct, the primary school showed the most deviation in their responses and the high school teachers showed the least amount of variability or the most agreement in their answers.

Table 4.33

Mean Level Response for Research Question #2

Level of Level Taught	N	Mean	Std Deviation
Primary	55	2.91515152	0.87304911
Elementary	33	3.10101010	0.78830360
Middle	43	3.72093023	0.84806107
High	34	3.55882353	0.75976511

Post Hoc analysis was run to determine any pair-wise differences within this construct. Post Hoc comparisons were shown to be significant if the value was at least 0.1 and were shown with asterisk marks in the Post Hoc Table 4.34 below. The following comparisons were statistically significant: middle and high school teachers had a higher mean score than primary teachers, showing more agreement that they felt they had received adequate training in order to implement SST and RTI; middle school teachers had a higher mean score than elementary teachers, showing more agreement that they had received adequate training to implement SST and RTI.

Table 4.34

Post Hoc Analysis for Research Question #2

Level Taught Comparison	Difference Between Means	Simultaneous 90% Confidence Limits		Significance
3-4	0.1621	-0.2767	0.6009	
3-2	0.6199	0.1774	1.0624	***
3-1	0.8058	0.4166	1.1950	***
4-3	-0.1621	-0.6009	0.2767	
4-2	0.4578	-0.0094	0.9250	
4-1	0.6437	0.2266	1.0608	***
2-3	-0.6199	-1.0624	-0.1774	***
2-4	-0.4578	-0.9250	0.0094	
2-1	0.1859	-0.2351	0.6069	
1-3	-0.8058	-1.1950	-0.4166	***
1-4	-0.6437	-1.0608	-0.2266	***
1-2	-0.1859	-0.6069	0.2351	

Research Question #3

The third construct was hypothesized to measure perceptions of effectiveness and was hypothesized to include Questions #7, #8, #9, #10, #13, #14, #15, #16, and #21. The initial analysis did generate an acceptable reliability measurement of .752, as illustrated in Table 4.16. This acceptable reliability measurement allowed for the creation of the third summated scale (SS13), which was used to test the third hypothesis statement.

A one-way ANOVA was used to test the hypothesis that there is a statistical difference in teacher perceptions of the effectiveness of SST and RTI for struggling students due to school level taught (primary, elementary, middle, and high school). As illustrated in Table 4.35, there was a significant effect of school level taught on teacher perceptions of the effectiveness of SST and RTI for struggling students based on a $p <$ .05: [F (3, 161) = 5.66, p = .001].

Table 4.35

ANOVA analysis for Research Question #3 (SS13)

Source	DF	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F Value	Pr>F
Model	3	7.26360616	2.42120206	5.66	0.0010
Error	161	68.91791272	0.42806157		
Corrected Total	164	76.18151889			

The mean scores for differences in perceptions of the effectiveness of SST and RTI for struggling students for primary, elementary, middle, and high school teachers was 3.52, 3.55, 4.03, and 3.69 respectively, and are shown in Table 4.36 below. Primary and elementary school teachers showed the most variability in perceptions with the highest standard deviation numbers and the high school had the least variability in survey responses with the lowest variability number for this construct of survey items.

Table 4.36

Mean Level Response to Research Question #3

Level of Level Taught	N	Mean	Std Deviation
Primary	55	3.51515152	0.73714052
Elementary	33	3.54882155	0.73384841
Middle	43	4.02842377	0.60377658
High	33	3.68954248	0.46160426

Post Hoc analysis was run to determine any pair-wise differences within this construct. Post Hoc comparisons were shown to be significant if the value was at least 0.1 and were shown with asterisk marks in the Post Hoc Table 4.37 below. The following comparisons were statistically significant: middle school teachers had a higher mean score than both primary and elementary teachers, showing that middle school teachers believed the SST and RTI process to be the most effective; the high school also had a higher mean score than both the primary and elementary level, but not at the significant level; the primary school has implemented the SST/RTI process the longest, yet had the lowest mean score overall, showing the least perceptions of effectiveness of the SST/RTI model; the high school level has been implementing SST/RTI the shortest amount of time and had the second highest perception rating of overall SST/RTI effectiveness.

Table 4.37

Post Hoc Analysis for Research Question #3

Level Taught Comparison	Difference Between Means	Simultaneous 90% Confidence Limits		Significance
3-4	0.3389	-0.0080	0.6857	
3-2	0.4796	0.1298	0.8294	***
3-1	0.5133	0.2056	0.8209	***
4-3	-0.3389	-0.6857	0.0080	
4-2	0.1407	-0.2286	0.5100	
4-1	0.1744	-0.1553	0.5041	
2-3	-0.4796	-0.8294	-0.1298	***
2-4	-0.1407	-0.5100	0.2286	
2-1	0.0337	-0.2991	0.3665	
1-3	-0.5133	-0.8209	-0.2056	***
1-4	-0.1744	-0.5041	0.1553	
1-2	-0.0337	-0.3665	0.2991	

Research Question #4

The fourth construct was hypothesized to measure perceptions of relationship between SST/RTI and special education and was hypothesized to include Questions #4, #17, #18, and #19. These questions generated an initial Cronbach's Alpha of .483, well below the required value of .7, as illustrated in Table 4.38. Questions #4 and #19 both correlated at a very low rate with Questions #17 and #18, which were highly correlated with each other. When only Questions #17 and #18 were retained, the reliability of the

construct increased to .782 within the accepted alpha range for reliability. This acceptable reliability measurement allowed for the creation of the fourth summated scale (SS14), which was used to test the fourth hypothesis statement.

A one-way ANOVA was used to test the hypothesis that there is a statistical difference in teacher perceptions of the relationship between SST, RTI, and Special Education based on school level taught (primary, elementary, middle, and high school). There was no significant effect of school level taught on teacher perceptions where $p < .05$. Table 4.38 illustrates the following ANOVA data [F (3, 161) = 399, p = .4]. The null hypothesis statement for Research Question #4 could not be rejected because the p value was greater than .05.

Table 4.38

ANOVA analysis for Research Question #4 (SS14)

Source	DF	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F Value	Pr>F
Model	3	3.4928533	1.1642844	0.99	0.4002
Error	161	189.8101770	1.1789452		
Corrected Total	164	193.3030303			

The mean scores for teacher perceptions of the relationships between SST, RTI, and Special Education of primary, elementary, middle, and high school teachers were 2.01, 2.26, 2.44, and 2.64 respectively, and are shown below in Table 4.39. Middle school teachers had the highest mean, showing most agreement out of the four school

levels. The elementary school responses showed the most variability among the answers given to the survey items in this construct.

Table 4.39

Mean Level Response for Research Question #4

Level of Level Taught	N	Mean	Std Deviation
Primary	55	2.06363636	1.06742397
Elementary	33	2.25757576	1.25698804
Middle	43	2.44186047	1.14543245
High	34	2.26470588	0.82787876

Findings and Summary

Overall, the research has shown that the first three null hypotheses could be rejected because school level did affect teacher perceptions of SST and RTI in a Northwest Georgia school system. The fourth null hypothesis could not be rejected because no significant difference in teachers' perception could be shown due to school level taught. Chapter Five will present implications for future research and in-depth discussion of the results provided by this ANOVA analysis.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Accountability for teachers toward student learning is continuing to shape education reform. In 2004, due to pressure from the passing of the No Child Left Behind Act, the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Plan (IDEA) replaced the discrepancy model for determining eligibility for special education services with a tiered model of intervention known as Response to Intervention (RTI) (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 2006). The new RTI model embedded the previous Student Support Team (SST) model with added emphasis on early intervention. Educator roles were altered due to the implementation of the new SST/RTI framework in Georgia schools. It became apparent that all teachers would need to work together to ensure success of all students (Barrera & Bryant, 2009). Rollout of the RTI model began first at the primary and elementary levels, grades K-5, and more recently has been implemented in the middle and high school levels, grades 6-12. More research on teacher perceptions of SST/RTI in secondary schools needed to be done to ensure proper staff development for teachers at all levels.

Teacher perceptions of the SST/RTI model were predicted to greatly impact implementation at all levels. Several studies had researched teacher perceptions of RTI in primary schools (Bailey, 2010; Lee-Tarver, 2006), but more research was needed to identify teacher perceptions in relation to RTI implementation. Teachers' perceptions of SST/RTI in Georgia schools needed to be understood at all levels, K-12, to see how teachers' perceptions could differ due to grade level taught. School systems need to understand these perceptions in order to better address teacher needs for staff

development and for successful implementation of the model. Educational leaders cannot afford to assume that one style of staff development will be effective for all teachers, grades K-12.

The problem for Georgia educational leaders is that they really do not know the full impact of grade level taught on teachers' perceptions of SST/RTI models in Georgia schools. The purpose of this study was to determine if there were any differences in teacher perceptions in the following four constructs: familiarity with SST and RTI; adequacy of professional development; effectiveness of SST and RTI for struggling students; and the perceived relationship between SST, RTI, and special education. Understanding the differences of teacher perceptions at each grade level will help educational leaders to develop effective professional development opportunities to sustain mandated programs and initiatives at all school levels. This study sought to answer four questions about the impact of school level taught on teachers' perceptions of SST/RTI in Georgia schools.

Research Question #1: Is there a significant difference in teacher perceptions of familiarity with SST and RTI due to school level taught (primary, elementary, middle, and high school)?

Research Question #2: Is there a significant difference in teacher perceptions of the adequacy of training to implement SST and RTI due to school level taught (primary, elementary, middle, and high school)?

Research Question #3: Is there a significant difference in teacher perceptions of the effectiveness of SST and RTI for struggling students due to school level taught (primary, elementary, middle, and high school)?

Research Question #4: Is there a significant difference in teacher perceptions of the relationship between SST, RTI, and Special Education due to school level taught (primary, elementary, middle, and high school)?

Null Hypothesis (H_o) #1: There is no statistical difference in teacher perceptions of familiarity with SST and RTI (survey items 1, 5, 6, 20) due to school level taught (primary, elementary, middle, and high school).

Null Hypothesis (H_o) #2: There is no statistical difference in teacher perceptions of the adequacy of training to implement SST and RTI (survey items 2, 3, 11, 12) due to school level taught (primary, elementary, middle, and high school).

Null Hypothesis (H_o) 3#: There is no statistical difference in teacher perceptions of the effectiveness of SST and RTI for struggling students (survey items 7-10, 13-16, 21) due to school level taught (primary, elementary, middle, and high school).

Null Hypothesis (H_o) #4: There is no statistical difference in teacher perceptions of the relationship between SST, RTI, and Special Education (survey items 4, 17-19) due to school level taught (primary, elementary, middle, and high school).

Summary of Findings

Demographic information was collected on the population sample for this study, along with a 21 question Likert-scale survey, to investigate teacher perceptions of SST/RTI at all grade levels, K-12. Data from the survey were entered into the BASE SAS 9.2 statistical software program in order to quantify the results. Initial descriptive statistics for the sample population were evaluated. Cronbach's Alpha analyses were determined for each of the four constructs to ensure reliability of the survey items. ANOVA analyses were provided for each of the four research questions this study sought

to answer and were considered statistically significant if the $p < .05$. Post Hoc analysis was also analyzed to evaluate any pair-wise differences within each construct and were determined statistically significant if the value was at least 0.1.

Findings for Research Question #1

ANOVA analysis was calculated as the primary analysis for construct one even though the Cronbach's Alpha score did not meet the required alpha level. When Question #20 was dropped from the construct, there was a statistical difference in teacher perceptions of familiarity of SST/RTI due to school level taught because the p value was .0004, less than the required $p < .05$. The null hypothesis for Research Question #1 was rejected because there was a significant difference in perceptions due to school level taught. The Cronbach's Alpha score was not acceptable even after dropping one of the survey items. Individual ANOVA analyses was run on these individual survey items within this construct to investigate individual statistical significance to be used for comparison reasons only.

Each survey item was analyzed independently of one another due to the low Cronbach's alpha score. Results showed a significant difference in Survey Statements #5, #6, and #20. Survey Statement #1 did not show a significant difference, but middle school teachers did show the most familiarity with the SST/RTI frameworks. Seventy-five percent of the time, the survey items from construct one showed a significant difference when run independently of each other. By running ANOVA analysis as a construct and individually for Research Question #1, the researcher hoped to overcome the reliability issue caused by the Cronbach's Alpha score. Overall, it appeared that Ho_1 could be rejected and Research Hypothesis #1 accepted because there appeared to be a

significant difference in teacher familiarity of SST and RTI due to school level taught, within construct one. It is never an absolute cause and effect relationship and other variables need to be considered as factors that could have affected this difference.

Findings for Research Question #2

A one-way ANOVA was used to test the hypothesis that there was a statistical difference in teacher perceptions of the adequacy of training to implement SST and RTI, when item #12 was dropped, based on school level taught (primary, elementary, middle, and high school). ANOVA analysis showed there was a significant effect of school level on teachers' perceptions of the adequacy of training to implement SST and RTI for struggling students based on $p < .05$ [$F(3, 161) = 9.41$, $p = .0001$]. $H0_2$ was rejected and the Research Hypothesis #2 was accepted because a statistically significant difference exists in teacher perceptions of adequacy of training due to school level taught.

Post Hoc analysis was run to determine any pair-wise differences. The following Post Hoc comparisons were statistically significant with a value of at least 0.1. Middle and high school teachers showed more agreement and felt they had received adequate training in order to implement SST and RTI more than teachers at the primary level. Middle school teachers had a higher mean score than elementary teachers, showing more agreement that they had received adequate training to implement SST and RTI.

Findings for Research Question #3

A one-way ANOVA was used to test the hypothesis that there is a statistical difference in teacher perceptions of the effectiveness of SST and RTI for struggling students due to school level taught (primary, elementary, middle, and high school). There was a significant effect of school level taught on teacher perceptions of the

effectiveness of SST and RTI for struggling students based on a $p < .05$: [F (3, 161) = 5.66, $p = .001$]. $H0_3$ was rejected and the Research Hypothesis #3 accepted that a statistically significant difference exists in teacher perceptions of the effectiveness of SST and RTI for struggling learners due to school level taught.

Post Hoc analysis was run to determine any pair-wise differences within this construct. Post Hoc comparisons were shown to be significant if the value was at least 0.1. The following comparisons were statistically significant: middle school teachers believed the SST/RTI process to be the most effective than did both primary and elementary teachers; high school teachers also had a higher perception of effectiveness of SST/RTI frameworks than both the primary and elementary level, but not at the significant level; primary school teachers had implemented the SST/RTI process the longest, yet had the lowest mean score overall.

Findings for Research Question #4

A one-way ANOVA was used to test the hypothesis that there is a statistical difference in teacher perceptions of the relationship between SST, RTI, and special education based on school level taught (primary, elementary, middle, and high school). There was no significant effect of school level taught on teacher perceptions where $p <$ .05 level [F (3, 161) = 399, $p = .4$]. The null hypothesis statement for Research Question #4 could not be rejected because the p value was greater than .05.

Discussion

Many theories helped to explain the importance of teacher perceptions on the willingness of teachers to participate in new learning initiatives. Piaget's Theory of Intellectual Development explained the need for staff to find order and predictability of

new initiatives (Eggen & Kauchak, 1992). Existing schema would have provided necessary order and predictability to build from when new initiatives are introduced. If structure was not provided when staff development was taking place, teachers would have become frustrated when they could assimilate old schema to new schema (Widmayer, 2000). Any gaps in schema would need to be addressed by administrators to ensure effective staff development opportunities.

Teacher perceptions were also impacted by experience. Constructivism helped to explain that teachers would build on past experiences to make sense of new experiences. Teachers who had experienced negative past experiences would have needed to be exposed to successful, repeated experiences in order to experience positive learning of new initiatives. Teachers with less experience would not have past experiences to build from and veteran teachers may have tried to hold on to past experiences as absolute truth (Yilmaz, 2008). In order for Response to Intervention to be successful, teachers would need to learn about each others experiences and work collaboratively to design individualized plans for students to address their needs. One teacher's strengths provided knowledge to a new teacher with little experience. Appropriate staff development at each school level was necessary to find out the differences in teacher perceptions of readiness to implement at each school level.

Adequate training on collaboration would need to be provided to meet the needs of staff in implementing the new RTI framework. It was important to know teacher perceptions on their adequacy of training in order to design staff development for teachers at all grade levels. Boughtin and Lee (1999) showed teacher perceptions increased towards problem solving teams after effective training had occurred. Teacher

self-efficacy and belief that they can learn and be effective was also a determining factor in their effectiveness as educators. As teacher efficacy increased motivation the "capacity to affect outcomes" increased (Jantz & Nunn, 2009).

Educational theory helped to support the need for educational leaders to examine the perceptions of staff in relation to school environment, administrative support, change, and roles before any type of staff development was designed (Barnes & Harlacher, 2008; Barrera & Bryant, 2009; Chang et al., 2010; Deaney, Fox, & Wilson, 2009; Gagnon & Maccini, 2002; Huang, 2001; Jantz & Nunn, 2009; Korkmaz, 2007; Lopes et al., 2004; Shellady, Zionts, & Zionts, 2006; Spasovski, 2010). Educational leaders must first know how teachers perceive the environment around them before effective change can take place.

Though there was an abundance of studies on teacher perceptions in school reform movements, very few studies examined how teacher perceptions towards an initiative could vary due to grade level taught. Two significant studies examined the perceptions of staff towards SST/RTI implementation, but neither study examined perception differences due to grade level taught.

Implication of the Findings

This research study helped to show that teacher perceptions do vary across grade levels. The significance of these perception differences should guide educational leaders to create staff development to meet the needs of each group. Cookie-cutter staff development given to the masses may not address teacher needs and may not result in the most effective implementation of education initiatives.

Utilizing the perception statements survey as a measurement of teacher perceptions, educational leaders could identify differences in perceptions that negatively impact teacher participation, self-efficacy, and learning towards the SST/RTI framework. Positive perceptions could be identified as existing schema and used as an anchor for new learning to begin. There were definite differences in how teachers at each school level perceived implementation of SST/RTI in this particular Northwest Georgia school system. In order to continue growing as a staff and system, educational leaders need to examine current perceptions of implementation and then fill in any gaps at each school level to ensure sustainability and continuous improvement of the SST/RTI implementation. Targeted staff development to address differing perceptions would ultimately maximize student learning and help systems to meet AYP and state mandated learning targets.

Major new initiatives, such as the national Common Core Curriculum Standards (CCCS) are being introduced to school systems around Georgia to ensure students are college and career ready to enter the workforce when they graduate. More and more pressure is being felt to increase rigor and relevance in student expectations for learning. Struggling learners will be held to these standards and the importance of SST/RTI learning plans will become increasingly important for these students to be successful. Teacher perceptions will impact how effective these plans are designed and implemented.

Educational leaders will need to ensure an environment conducive for collaboration and communication to build new schema to the already existing schema of its teachers as curriculum continues to change. Building teacher empowerment, or self-efficacy, in staff development opportunities will be necessary to sustain these new reform

efforts. The gap in student learning will continue to grow as the rigor and relevance of the standards increases. Understanding teacher perceptions towards current initiatives can help educational leaders plan for new initiatives by building new schema that encompasses past and present programs, providing the best overall educational experience for its students.

Limitations

In any education research setting, it is impossible to prove anything absolutely true and impossible to eliminate all extraneous variables from a given set of variables. Many things can impact teacher perceptions towards educational initiatives and perceptions can change day-to-day due to experiences and mood. Survey research provides a snap-shot look into the mind of each teacher participating on that particular day, so it is probable that teacher perceptions would be reported differently on any given day.

Participation in this study was voluntary and the sample that chose to participate in this study did not always represent the population for certain demographics in the school system overall. The sample generally was more educated than the overall population. In other demographic areas, the sample did represent the overall population within this system. Caution should be used when generalizing the system involved in this research study to other systems in the State of Georgia. While the system of study does resemble some small city systems around the state, particular systems should compare overall demographics to ensure similarities in the two systems exist before assuming results would be similar in another system.

One assumption of this study was that all teachers had undergone similar training in the SST/RTI frameworks under one set of educational leaders. It is probable that some of the teachers in the sample had moved in after the initial training had been given and that perceptions may have differed because of training in another system. It is also possible that school level environment could have affected implementation, as well as the leadership style of each administrator at each school level. Extraneous variables will always be present in causal-comparative research design. ANOVA analysis hoped to show a significant difference in teacher perceptions of SST/RTI implementation at each school level to provide insight for future staff development training. Post Hoc analysis was used to identify specific significant differences within each construct to try and narrow down the results and reduce extraneous variables. Demographic data was also collected for future research studies to determine if the study would apply to a new population sample.

Implications for Future Research

More research is needed to further study the impact of school level taught on teacher perceptions. One of the surprising outcomes in this study is that there were more positive perceptions from middle and high school teachers than primary and elementary teachers. It would be beneficial to look in more detail as to why perceptions of SST/RTI become more negative the longer it has been implemented. It would seem that the longer a program has been in place, the more comfortable teachers would be with the process. Variables to consider might be time that it takes to carry out the frameworks effectively, student growth outcomes from such plans, administrator support, administrator

involvement in school accountability of implementation, and teacher buy-in of effectiveness of model over time for sustained growth.

Furthermore, it would be helpful to conduct other similar studies to build reliability and validity for other school systems in the State of Georgia. The system in this study is a small system in Northwest Georgia with one school at each level. It would be beneficial to study other sized systems with more than one school at each level to see if any significant differences occur. Larger systems would also provide a larger sample for comparison purposes.

The survey reliability for some constructs did not show high enough Cronbach's Alpha scores for internal reliability. This study was the first to use the survey at the secondary level and it may be necessary for some of the statements to be examined in detail and updated for future use in upcoming studies. The researcher provided ANOVA analysis on individual perception statements to address this concern for this study, but additional statements could be added to clarify educational language for all school levels. More survey statements could be added to address other extraneous variables listed as limitations. For instance, additional statements could provide more information on the impact of accountability to carry out the plan and leadership styles within each school administrator on teacher perceptions.

Summary

Significant differences existed in teacher perceptions of SST/RTI implementation at each school level within this Northwest Georgia school system. Two major areas of significance were related to adequacy of training and effectiveness of the two frameworks. Although the middle and high schools received training later in the rollout

of both models, there were significant differences showing that middle and high school teachers felt they had been more adequately trained and that the models were effective than did the primary and elementary teachers. The primary school repeatedly showed the least favorable perceptions in all four constructs. The results were a surprise to this researcher and resulted in more questions than answers.

As an educational leader, it is important to look at students' needs first, while not forgetting the impact that teachers' perceptions have on their ability to reach students. It is easy to overlook teachers' needs and feelings about school initiatives due to state mandates dictating what needs to get done. Hopefully this study will remind educational leaders that teacher perceptions do matter in order to provide students with a sustainable, effective educational experience. Educational leaders cannot look at all teachers within a system and assume they all think alike and respond to change the same, no matter what grade they teach. As Christian leaders, it is important to guide educators with compassionate, servant leadership by listening first to their needs and acknowledging their celebrations and concerns towards educational reform mandates.

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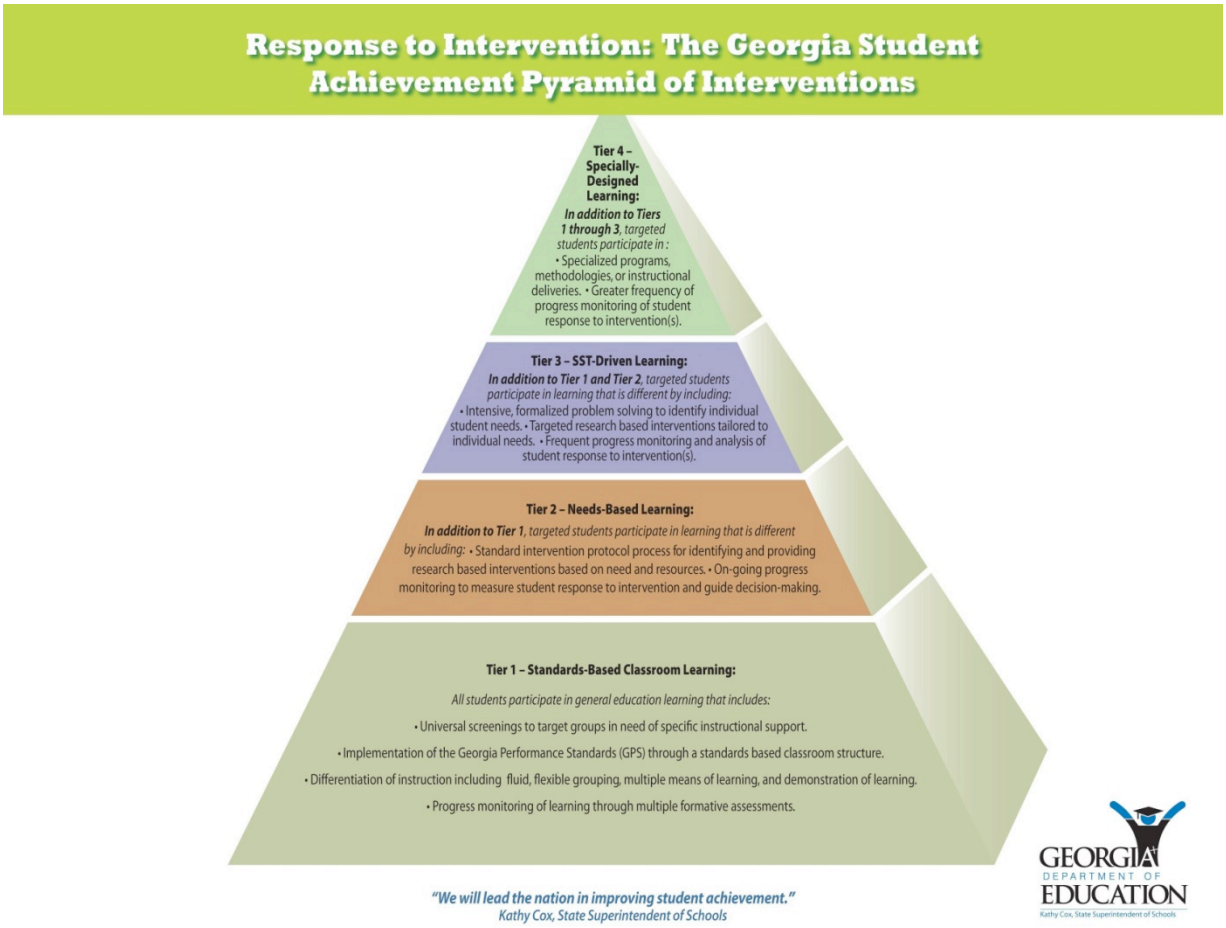
APPENDIX A


Response to Intervention: The Georgia Student Achievement Pyramid of Interventions
Tier 4 – Specially-Designed Learning:
In addition to Tiers 1 through 3, targeted students participate in :
• Specialized programs, methodologies, or instructional deliveries. • Greater frequency of progress monitoring of student response to intervention(s).
Tier 3 – SST-Driven Learning:
In addition to Tier 1 and Tier 2, targeted students participate in learning that is different by including:
• Intensive, formalized problem solving to identify individual student needs. • Targeted research based interventions tailored to individual needs. • Frequent progress monitoring and analysis of student response to intervention(s).
Tier 2 – Needs-Based Learning:
In addition to Tier 1, targeted students participate in learning that is different by including: • Standard intervention protocol process for identifying and providing research based interventions based on need and resources. • On-going progress monitoring to measure student response to intervention and guide decision-making.
Tier 1 – Standards-Based Classroom Learning:
All students participate in general education learning that includes:
• Universal screenings to target groups in need of specific instructional support.
• Implementation of the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) through a standards based classroom structure.
• Differentiation of instruction including fluid, flexible grouping, multiple means of learning, and demonstration of learning.
• Progress monitoring of learning through multiple formative assessments.
"We will lead the nation in improving student achievement."
Kathy Cox, State Superintendent of Schools
GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Kathy Cox, State Superintendent of Schools

APPENDIX B

I, _____, agree to participate in a research study titled, "Effect of School Level Taught on Teacher Perceptions of SST/RTI Effectiveness (K-12), within a NW Georgia School System" conducted by Susan R. Tolbert, a candidate for Doctorate of Education (Ed.D) in Teaching and Learning from Liberty University. The dissertation chairperson for this research is Dr. Beth Ackerman, Associate Dean, Education (434-582-2445).

I understand that my participation is voluntary. I can refuse to participate or stop taking part without giving any reason, without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled. As a participant of this study, I will be asked to complete a survey, which should take about 15 minutes to complete. There are no direct benefits to me as a participant. However, by participating, my answers may help the researcher gain a better understanding of teacher perceptions at all school levels of the frameworks utilized in Georgia for student support.

This survey is anonymous and the demographic information collected will not be analyzed to identify the specific survey respondent. No personal or professional risk is anticipated. No individually-identifiable information about me or provided by me during the survey will be shared with others. Specific questions about the survey or research may be directed to the researcher, Susan Tolbert, via email (srtolbert@liberty.edu) or phone call (770-608-9723).

I understand that I am agreeing by my signature on this form to take part in this research project and understand that I may copy this consent form for my records.

Susan R. Tolbert
770-608-9723
srtolbert@liberty.edu

Dr. Beth Ackerman
434-582-2445
mackerman@liberty.edu

Name of Participant	Signature	Date

APPENDIX C

Dear Educator:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study of "Teacher Perceptions of SST and RTI Effectiveness". The purpose of this study is to investigate general education teacher perceptions of Student Support Team (SST) and Response to Intervention (RTI) at all grade levels. It is vital that the teachers and specialists who implement SST/RTI be knowledgeable and prepared for the challenges they face. Their perceptions and opinions can help guide administrators and professional development personnel as they plan for future training and implementation of new procedures.

Because school districts and counties in Georgia have been given great latitude in what they label their tiers of intervention, this survey will use the following terms for consistency for this school system.

- ✓ **General education**: Students are afforded an education based on the Georgia Performance Standards without an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for accommodations.
- ✓ **Special education**: Students are afforded an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for academic or behavioral modifications due to the presence of a diagnosed disability that negatively impacts his/her education.
- ✓ **Tiered intervention**: Struggling students are provided research-based interventions with graduating levels of intensity based on data collected over time. A student's failure to respond appropriately to academic and/or behavioral interventions would call for changing or increasing the intensity of research-based interventions on his/her behalf.
- ✓ **Student Support Team (SST)** is a collaboration of experts and interventionists to systematically problem solve and provide research-based interventions on behalf of struggling learners. The team may be known by a variety of names or acronyms, but their common function is to document interventions and the data collected for the purpose of monitoring a student's achievement or lack thereof.
- ✓ **Response to Intervention (RTI)** is defined by providing for research-based interventions over time while progress monitoring the students' responses to those interventions. The state of Georgia recommends both duration and increased intensity of interventions to help ascertain whether a student needs further evaluation by a psychologist and/or an individualized education plan.

Thank you for taking the time to respond to these statements.

Please return your consent and survey to the building level designee:

APPENDIX D

Directions: Please consider carefully and circle ONE response to each of the following statements.

Demographics					
Respondent's Completed Years of Classroom Experience	0-5 years	6-12 years	13-19 years	20 + years	
Respondent's Highest Level of Academic Training	Bachelor of Science (B.S.)	Master of Education (M.Ed.)	Education Specialist (Ed.S.)	Doctor of Education (Ed.D. or Ph.D.)	
Respondent's Certification	General Education		Special Education		
School Level Taught:	Primary (Grades k, 1, 2)	Elementary (Grades 3, 4, 5)	Middle (Grades 6, 7, 8)	High (Grades 9-12)	
Perception Survey					
1. I am familiar with the tiered intervention model, which provides more intensive interventions for students based on responses to previous interventions (RTI).	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
2. I received adequate training prior to serving on the Student Support Team (SST).	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
3. I received adequate training prior to the implementation of Response to Intervention (RTI)	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
4. I understand the basic eligibility criteria for special education.	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5. I understand the purpose and operation of Student Support	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Team (SST).					
6. I consider the paperwork and documentation required for the Student Support Team (SST) as part of my intervention on behalf of the student.	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
7. I remain actively involved in the SST process when I refer a struggling student.	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
8. Research-based interventions and progress monitoring are common classroom practices for struggling learners in the general education setting.	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
9. Careful attention to paperwork and documentation are critical parts of the intervention process.	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
10. The Student Support Team (SST) meetings are useful to me as I seek to help the student.	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
11. It is my responsibility to provide the interventions for students in Student Support Team (SST).	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
12. It should be the responsibility of others to provide the interventions and document the Response to Interventions (RTI).	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
13. The Student Support Team (SST) meeting is vital for bringing parental input into the intervention plan.	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
14. The Student Support Team (SST) meeting should produce ideas for research-based interventions for struggling learners.	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
15. My input at Student Support	Strongly	Agree	No	Disagree	Strongly

Team (SST) meetings is both valued and desired.	Agree		Opinion		Disagree
16. Most general education teachers are supportive of the SST process and the RTI framework.	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
17. The Student Support Team's (SST) primary purpose is to move students toward special education.	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
18. When I refer a student to Student Support Team (SST), I expect that he/she will be evaluated for special education.	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
19. The Student Support Team (SST) is valuable for monitoring the transition from Special Education back to the general education classroom.	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
20. The Response to Intervention (RTI) framework prolongs the Student Support Team (SST) process unnecessarily.	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
21. I am supportive of the SST process and the RTI framework and believe it to be effective for helping struggling students.	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Short Answer Response					
In your opinion, what modifications, if any, could be made to increase the effectiveness of the Student Support Team (SST) and/or Response to Intervention (RTI) framework? (Select up to THREE (3) responses)	◊ More time to meet ◊ Less paperwork ◊ Accelerated process	◊ SST/RTI Staff in-service ◊ In-service for intervention strategies	◊ More input from specialists ◊ Specially trained facilitators of the process	◊ Better team communication ◊ Observations of the learner by others	

If you have recently chosen not to refer a student for SST/RTI, please explain your reasons and/or concerns. (Select up to THREE (3) responses)	◊ No students experiencing problems ◊ Have been able to deal with concerns on my own	◊ Do not know enough about SST/RTI ◊ Not aware of how/when to facilitate SST/RTI	◊ Process is too time consuming ◊ Results may negatively affect expectations for student	◊ Problem is not serious enough to document RTI and meet with SST ◊ SST/RTI often produces little improvement