

PERCEIVED EFFECTS OF NORTH CAROLINA'S RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION
PROCESS ON SCHOOL COUNSELOR'S PROFESSIONAL DUTIES AND
RESPONSIBILITIES: A CORRELATIONAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this correlational study was to test to see if there was a relationship between time reduction of the roles and responsibilities of a school counselor and the Response to Intervention (RTI) process in an elementary school setting. This study examined the perceived effects of the RTI process on the roles and responsibilities of a school counselor. This study will look at the perception of self-efficacy of school counselors and if they feel they are being effective to the students they serve. School counselors from elementary schools in North Carolina completed the Concerns-Based Adoption Model of the Stages of Concern questionnaire that accesses information about people's attitudes, reactions, or feelings about a program or practice. School counselors are known for only dealing with social and emotional problems of students in schools across the country. After the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) act, every educator in the school has been given the responsibility of teaching academics in K-12 schools including school counselors. The majority of the time, school counselors lead or participate in problem solving teams which give them the opportunity for them to fulfill the requirement of reaching students academically. NCLB and RTI reflect the same goal of providing a high quality education for every child. RTI is a multi-tiered approach to help struggling learners. Using student outcome data, RTI can be used to make decisions about interventions needed for students to improve academically. The finds from this study indicated a positive correlation between the criterion variable (RTI process) and time reduction, perception of self-efficacy, and academic achievement. There was no significance with Exceptional Children's referrals and placement of Exceptional Children's placement.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this manuscript to my biggest fan, my husband, Joe D. Bookard. You have been the backbone to this process. Your love and support has made me work harder. I truly thank God for allowing you to be my partner/soulmate for life. You are a wonderful husband and father.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	2
LIST OF TABLES.....	8
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	9
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	10
Background.....	10
Statement of Problem.....	15
Purpose Statement.....	16
Significance of the Study.....	18
Research Questions and Hypothesis.....	19
Identification of Variables.....	20
Definitions of Terms.....	21
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	24
The History of School Counseling.....	24
American School Counseling Association Standards requirements.....	25
School counselor’s Time.....	33
The Role of the School counselor.....	34
Perceptions of the School counselor.....	35
Response to Intervention.....	36
School Support.....	40
Theoretical Framework.....	40
Solution-Focused Brief Therapy.....	40
Collaborative Problem Solving Model.....	42

Bruner’s Constructivist Theory.....	42
Problem-Solving Teams/Student Services Chairperson.....	43
RTI and Student Achievement.....	45
Tiered One Instruction.....	46
Tiered Two Instruction.....	48
Tiered Three Instruction.....	51
Progress Monitoring.....	51
Special Education.....	52
Critics of RTI.....	54
The Future of RTI.....	55
Conclusion.....	56
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY.....	58
Overview of the Study.....	58
Research Design.....	58
Research Question (s).....	59
Null Hypothesis.....	60
Participants.....	61
Procedures.....	61
Setting.....	62
Variables.....	62
The Study Population.....	63
Instrumentation.....	63
Validity and Reliability.....	63

Data Collection	65
Data Analysis Procedures.....	66
Summary.....	66
CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS.....	68
Descriptive Statistics.....	68
Stages of Concern Questionnaire.....	73
Hypothesis Testing.....	73
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, & RECOMMENDATIONS.....	87
Introduction.....	87
Summary of Findings.....	91
Conclusions and Implications.....	91
Recommendations for Practice.....	96
Limitations.....	97
Summary.....	97
REFERENCES.....	100
APPENDIX A:	107
APPENDIX B.....	109
APPENDIX C.....	110
APPENDIX D.....	111

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1: RTI Process and the Roles of the Professional School Counselor	27
Table 2.2: School Counselor Role	31
Table 2.3: Methods used for Progress Monitoring	49
Table 3.1: Reliability and Corresponding Construct	65
Table 4.1: Descriptive Statistics for Counselor's Demographics	68
Table 4.2: Descriptive Statistics for School Demographics	69
Table 4.3: Descriptive Statistics for RTI (SST) Perceptions	71
Table 4.4: Descriptive Statistics for Model 1	75
Table 4.5: Regression Coefficients for Model 1	75
Table 4.6 Descriptive Statistics for Model 2	77
Table 4.7: Regression Coefficients for Model 2	77
Table 4.8: Descriptive Statistics for Model 3	79
Table 4.9: Regression Coefficients for Model 3	79
Table 4.10: Descriptive Statistics for Model 4	81
Table 4.11: Regression Coefficients for Model 4	82
Table 4.12: Descriptive Statistics for Model 5	83
Table 4.13: Regression Coefficients for Model 5	83
Table A: Descriptive Statistics for Stages of Concern Questionnaire	84

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Response to Intervention	(RTI)
American School Counselor Association	(ASCA)
Southwest of Educational Development Laboratory	(SEDL)
Exceptional Children	(EC)
Student Service Team	(SST)
No Child Left Behind	(NCLB)
Individual Education Plan	(IEP)
The Individual with Disabilities Education Act	(IDEA)
North Carolina Department of Instruction	(NCDPI)
Institutional Review Board	(IRB)
Exceptional Children's Program	(EC)
Stages of Concern Questionnaire	(SOCQ)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

School counselors are one of the key components in making sure students' educational needs are met in and outside the classroom (Barona & Santos de Barona, 2006). School counselors have an obligation to assist students who have emotional, social, and academic issues in all states according to the standards from American School counselor Association (ASCA). The 2001 No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) gave school counselors the challenge to help close the achievement gap and be held accountable for students who fail (Barna & Brott, 2011). The requirements of NCLB have caused school counselors to rely on data to identify academic achievement areas of concerns for students. According to research, the program that has been proven monitor the progress of each student is the Response to Intervention (RTI) model. This model is used in many elementary schools as a way of delivering research-based best practices to all students, and as a way to monitor the progress of at risk students (Ryan, Kaffenberger, & Carroll, 2011). RTI is highly recommended by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). This model integrates assessment and interventions within a multilevel prevention system to maximize student achievement and to reduce behavior problems. RTI helps the school identify students at- risk for poor learning outcomes, monitor student progress, provide evidence-based interventions and adjust the intensity and nature of those interventions depending on a student's responsiveness, and identify students with learning disabilities or other disabilities (Ryan, Kaffenberger, & Carroll, 2011). The RTI model also aligns with the standards of the American School counselor Association (ASCA).

Background

School counselors contribute to student academic achievement through school counseling programs that address the personal/social, career, and academic development of all students

(Barna & Brott, 2011). However many school counseling programs contain components such as emotional and social development, that make it very difficult to contribute to student achievement. Some of those components consist of abusive home situations, low self-esteem, and peer pressure. Therefore, school counselors have to make a conscious effort to work specifically with academic achievement and plan accordingly. Parents and other community individuals see the classroom teacher as the main person who works with academic achievement ,and thus, school counselors are underrepresented in important conversations regarding education reform (Barna & Brott, 2011).

In addition, school counseling programs in the elementary school are sometimes misinterpreted by parents and teachers, and this misinterpretation may allow many people to doubt the school counseling program as a viable resource for supporting academic achievement. Many teachers and parents see school counselors as educators who work with career awareness and emotional and social development only. However, according to ASCA, school counselors are stakeholders in the development and implementation of the RTI process. School counselors must align their programs with the RTI process to improve student achievement and behavior (ASCA, 2008).

Response to Intervention (RTI) is a multi-tiered approach to help struggling students (ASCA, 2008). “Guided by student outcome data, RTI can be used to make decisions about general, compensatory and special education, assisting in the creation of a well-integrated and seamless system of instruction and intervention” (ASCA, 2008). School counseling programs and the RTI model are data-driven and require educators to meet the needs of all students. Their programs will identify students who are at-risk for not meeting academic and behavioral expectations.

Most of a school counselor's time should address the needs of struggling students and collect results data based on the effectiveness of the interventions (ASCA, 2008). Eighty percent or more of a school counselor's time should be spent in direct and indirect services to students. According to the National Model by ASCA (2008), school counselors should spend a percentage of their time in each of the four major function areas:

- Guidance curriculum- 20%
- Individual planning-40%
- Responsive services-30%
- System support- 10%

RTI would be located in the responsive services component of a school counseling program.

Responsive services provide special help to students who are facing problems that interfere with their healthy personal, social, career, or educational development (Wimmer, 2001). ASCA (2008) recommends that school counselors spend 30-40% of their time in the responsive services. This amount of time should give school counselors enough time to use the RTI model effectively and refer the right students to the Exceptional Children's program for special education testing.

RTI's basic concept is that all students receive research-based instruction in general education, are screened for academic problems for which they need additional support, and are continuously screened with resulting data used to inform instruction (Ryan, Kaffenberger, & Carroll, 2011). RTI is a multi-tiered model, typically with three or four tiers characterized by increasing targeted interventions.

The state of North Carolina's RTI process is similar to those in other states; North Carolina uses a multi-tiered framework that promotes school improvement through engaging and

high-quality instruction. Additionally, North Carolina uses a team approach to guide educational practices. This approach uses a problem-solving model that addresses student needs and maximizes growth for all (NCDPI, 2012). North Carolina's RTI philosophy is:

- Shared responsibility by all stakeholders including educators, families, students, and community partners.
- Developmentally appropriate academic and behavioral growth for all students.
- Continuous reflection on and improvement of instructional practices and learning environments.
- Intentional partnerships with families, community members, and stakeholders.
- Comprehensive implementation through systematic and purposeful approaches and leadership (NCDPI, 2012).

In North Carolina, the role of the school counselor has changed drastically since 1990. Many schools search for professional school counselors who are adept at creating systems for change and at building relationships within the school community (NCDPI, 2012). North Carolina wants all school counselors to create nurturing relationships with students that enhance academic achievement and personal success as globally productive citizens in the twenty-first century. North Carolina evaluates their school counselor on how they work to identify needs of the students and adapt their services to meet those needs.

School counselors face many challenges in creating a shared learning environment. There has been an increase in social problems such as poverty, violence, suicide, divorce, child abuse, and truancy that put a strain on the role of the school counselor. The major role of the school counselor is to address the challenges that can interfere with student learning. As

these changes and problems arise, school counselors must focus their responsibilities on helping these students and families deal with these issues and concerns.

Another problem that has caused a strain on the roles and responsibilities of the school counselor is the student to counselor ratios. According to ASCA, there should be 250 students assigned to one school counselor to make sure that every student receives the attention they need (ASCA, 2006). Many schools across the nation exceed that ratio, and that gap is steadily growing. This growing disparity is causing school counselors' workload to increase with responsibilities that do not fall under the required duties of a licensed counselor. With the ASCA model, the roles of the school counselor are more defined for educators. This national model states appropriate and inappropriate activity for school counselors. ASCA also tell how much time should be spent delivering each service.

Another problem for school counselors are that many are not fully trained in special education and are therefore not familiar with the special education process and are unaware of all the needs of students with learning disabilities (Dykeman, 1998). One task of the School counselor is to identify and serve at-risk students. At-risk students are students who are not experiencing success in school and are potential dropouts (Donnelly, 1987). These students are usually low academic achievers who exhibit low self-esteem. Many of these students are males, minorities, and people from families with low socioeconomic status families. Students from this type of background are considered higher risk. One way to identify at-risk students is through the RTI process.

In the eastern part of the United States, many elementary school counselors serve as the Student Service chairperson in their school. The chairperson makes sure that the RTI process is fully implemented in the school. School counselors who serve as Student Service chairpersons

for the RTI model in their schools can fulfill the responsive service component of their position effectively by making sure they put in the necessary time to oversee students who are referred to the RTI model, making sure the teachers are implementing the interventions, and keeping track of the progress monitoring requirements. Schools have to delegate one individual from their school to oversee the RTI process. In many parts of the United States, the school counselor is the person who takes on this role because guidance and school counseling fall under student services (ASCA, 2008).

Problem Statement

The questions that arises when school counselors have to use the Response to Intervention process in their school counseling program is whether this process is taking them away from their required duties and responsibilities as a school counselor. A school counselor's main purpose is to contribute to student academic achievement through a school counseling program that address personal/social, career and academic development of all students. For this reason, school counselors could be involved with the RTI process as it relates to improving student achievement. With every educator, there should be a certain amount of time designated to work with different programs in the school as it relates to their expertise. Many school counselors deal with activities that may be so extensive that they can't do classroom guidance, small groups, or individual guidance with students who need it (Gysbers & Henderson, 2006).

In many instances, school counselors feel inadequate because they are not doing what they were hired to do (Kolodinsky, Draves, Schroder, Lindsey, & Zlatev, 2009). The increase in social problems such as poverty, violence, suicide, divorce, child abuse, and truancy has put a strain on the role of the school counselor. The major role of the school counselor is to address the challenges that can interfere with student learning. If a School counselor is not able to fulfill

all the required duties for the American School counselor Association National Model, then how effective will their services be to the students of that school?

More research that examines the role of the school counselor as it relates to RTI is needed in the school counseling (Ryan & Kaffenberger, 2011). This study will address the gap in research that examines the roles of the school counselor and the RTI process. School counselors have the support of ASCA, who continues to define the role and function of school counselors through position statements and monograph. However, there seems to be a gap in whether school counselors address or demonstrate the impact of the RTI process on student achievement and student success in school (Dahir, 2004). To what extent do School counselors perceive the RTI process as it relates to academic achievement? To what extent do School counselors think that the RTI process prevents them from serving students in the capacity that they were hired for? Does the RTI process cause a significant time reduction for classroom guidance, small group counseling or individual counseling when the RTI process is implemented into a school counselor's schedule? To what extent is a school counselor's self-efficacy affected by the RTI process? Does the RTI process when managed by the school counselor, affect the number of students that are referred to the Exceptional Children's department and their placement into the program?

Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of this quantitative research study is to identify the relationship between the RTI process that is assigned into a school counselor's schedule and whether it causes a significant time reduction in the roles and responsibilities that are required by the American School Counseling Association's National Model. ASCA's National Model emphasizes the school counselor's role in assisting all students to achieve academically. The role should include

a systematic and developmentally appropriate set of interventions that can influence families, schools and communities with the use of data and research to guide the development of programs and practices. An effective method to evaluate the program from the National Model is needed. ASCA's National Model focuses on the enhancement and development of student achievement by focusing on three "widely accepted and interrelated areas" (Dahir, 2001): academic development, career development and personal-social development (Dahir, 2001). According to Baker (2000), the national standards should be designed to:

1. shift the focus from counselors to counseling programs
2. create a framework for a national school counseling model
3. establish school counseling as an integral part of the academic mission of schools
4. promote equal access to school counseling services for all students
5. emphasize the key components of developmental school counseling
6. identify the knowledge and skills that all students should have access to as a part of a comprehensive school counseling program
7. provide for the systematic delivery of a school counseling program

The role of the school counselor as a member of the academic team within schools and the school counselor's role in the academic achievement of all students are highlighted in the development of the ASCA's National Model (Baker, 2000; Campbell & Dahir, 1997). This study will help school districts across the country to understand the impact of adding the RTI process into their school counseling programs. The results will also help educators to understand how the RTI process might cause a significant change in the roles and responsibilities for a school counselor. ASCA has stated that many educators do not have a detailed list of what is required to

be an effective school counselor. This study will help to identify the relationship between ASCA's requirements and school counselors.

. The objective of this study is to see if there is a relationship between student achievement and the RTI process and whether the process has changed the professional role of the school counselor. Student achievement can be determined when a student finds success in one of the tiers of the RTI process and does not require Exceptional Children's testing or placement.

Another objective is to look at self-efficacy of a school counselor that has the RTI process implemented into their program. Do school counselors feel that they are being effective and meeting the needs of the students in their school? This study will see if there is a relationship between student achievement and the RTI process when it is assigned to the schedule of school counselors.

Significance of the Study

Only a limited number of research studies on the RTI process and how it affects the roles and responsibilities of a school counselor. School counselors have the support of ASCA who continues to define the role and function of School counselors through position statements and monograph; however, there seems to be a gap in whether counselors address or demonstrate the impact of school counseling on student achievement and student success in schools (Dahir, 2004). It is suggested that more research is needed in the school counseling field that examines the role of the School counselor as it relates to RTI (Ryan & Kaffenberger, 2011). There is a need to see if there is a connection between RTI and school counseling programs and if this connection can be strengthen to fit the needs of the school and the School counselor. This study will allow schools to examine whether having the school counselor oversee the RTI process in their school is effective in terms of student achievement. This study will give school districts the

knowledge that is needed to make changes to how the RTI process is being implemented in their schools to determine who would be the best person to ensure that effective results are being seen through student achievement from students who don't require special education testing. The RTI process is successful when a student finds a tier that helps them to find academic success. Is the school counselor the right person to make sure that the student finds academic success in the RTI process?

Research Questions and Hypothesis

There are three research questions for this quantitative study to explore the relationship between the RTI process and the roles and responsibilities of school counselors, perception of efficacy, and time management for school counselors according to ASCA requirements. The predictor variable is the RTI process; while the criterion variables are time reduction, self-efficacy, and academic achievement.

RQ1: Does the RTI process cause a time reduction in the roles and responsibilities of a school counselor's program?

RQ2: Do elementary school counselors perceive their role as being effective when the RTI process is implemented into their school counseling program?

RQ3: Do students achieve academically when the RTI process is managed by the school counselor?

Hypotheses

H1 Null: There is no significant relationship between time reduction of a school counselor's roles and responsibilities (bi-monthly classroom guidance, weekly small group counseling and weekly individual counseling) and the RTI process (weekly observations of students, coordination and conduction of meetings for students who have academic or behavior problems,

helping teaching with strategies and interventions needed to help students, identification of students who need to be tested for the exceptional children's program) as shown by the statistical analysis of the Concerns-Based Adoption Model of the Stages of Concern questionnaire.

H2 Null: There is no significant relationship between a school counselor's involvement with the RTI process (weekly observations of students, coordination and conduction of meetings for students who have academic or behavior problems, helping teachers with strategies and interventions needed to help students, identification of students who need to be tested for the exceptional children's program) and the perception of efficacy of School counselors (personal feeling of meeting the requirements of an effective school counseling program based on the American School Counseling Association) as shown by the statistical analysis of the Concerns-Based Adoption Model of the Stages of Concern questionnaire.

H3 Null: There is no significant relationship between the RTI process being managed (meetings, observations, implementation of strategies and interventions by teachers) by School counselors and student achievement (classroom performance).

H4: There is no significant relationship between the RTI process being managed by school counselors and student achievement (students being referred to EC for testing).

H5: There is no significant relationship between the RTI process being managed by school counselors and student achievement (students being placed into the EC program).

Identification of Variables

This quantitative, correlational research study will attempt to identify the relationship between time reduction, self- efficacy, and academic achievement and the RTI process is implemented into a school counselor's counseling program. The independent/ predictor variable

is the RTI process; while the dependent/criterion variables are time reduction, student achievement, and perception of efficacy.

Definitions of Terms

1. *Response to Intervention (RTI)* - a method of academic intervention used in the United States to provide early, systematic assistance to children who are having difficulty learning (Council for Exceptional Children, 2011).
2. *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)* – a United States federal law that governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education, and related services to children with disabilities (Wright & Wright, 2011).
3. *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB)* - a United States Act of Congress that came about because of wide public concern about the state of education. NCLB supports standards-based education reform based on the premise that setting high standards and establishing measurable goals can improve individual’s outcomes in education (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 2011).
4. *At-risk students*- students who are “at risk” of failing academically, for one or more of any several reasons such as lack of motivation, peer relationships, not asking questions, and parental involvement (Donnelly, 1987).
5. *Research-based practices*- interventions that have been proven to work for students who are having academic problems in school (Council for Exceptional Children, 2007).
6. *American School counselor Association (ASCA)* an organization that supports school counselors’ efforts to help students focus on academic, personal/social and career development so that they achieve success in school and are prepared to lead fulfilling lives as responsible members of society (ASCA, 2006).

7. *School Counseling Program*- a program designed by school counselors to enhance the ability of all students to fully utilize the educational opportunities available to them. The program is delivered through the school counseling curriculum, individual student planning, responsive services, and system support (ASCA, 2008).
8. *Guidance Curriculum*- structured developmental lessons designed to assist students in achieving the desired competencies and to provide all students with the knowledge and skills appropriate for their developmental level. The guidance curriculum is infused throughout the school's overall curriculum and is presented systematically through K-12 classroom and group activities (ASCA, 2008).
9. *Individual Student Planning*- ongoing systematic activities coordinated by school counselors and designed to assist student individually in establishing personal goals and developing future plans (ASCA, 2008).
10. *Responsive Services*- responsive services, including counseling, consultation, referral, peer mediation or information that meet individual student's immediate need and usually necessitated by life events or situations and conditions in the students' lives (ASCA, 2008).
11. *Systems Support*- administration and management systems to establish, maintain, and enhance the total counseling program (ASCA, 2008).
12. *Exceptional Children's Program (EC)*-program that services students with special need by providing special education and related services according to the federal mandates of the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (Martin, 2011).
13. *Special Education*- is the education of students with special needs in a way that addresses the students' individual differences and needs and ideally, this process involves the individually planned and systematically monitored arrangement of teaching procedures, adapted equipment

and materials, accessible settings, and other interventions designed to help learners with special needs achieve a higher level of personal self-sufficiency and success in school and community than would be available if the student were only given access to a typical classroom education (Wright & Wright, 2011).

14. *Student Services Chairperson*- an educator that oversees the team that helps students who may have academic or behavior problems in the classroom (Cumberland County Schools, 2011).

15. *Perceptions*- the ability to see, hear, or become aware of something through the senses. The state of being or process of becoming aware of something in such a way (Perusse, Goodnough, Donegan, & Jones, 2004).

16. *Efficacy*- a power or capacity to produce a desired effect; effectiveness; the quality of being successful in producing an intended result (Berman, McLaughlin, Bass, Pauly, & Zellman 1977, p. 13).

17. *Student Achievement*- a student's ability to obtain, understand, analyze, communicate and apply knowledge and skills in school and life (Martin, 2011).

18. *EC case teacher*- a school certified employee who handles the Exceptional Children's referrals, paperwork, and placement of students who have gone through the RTI process or been tested by a school psychologist to identify a disability for that student.

19. *EC placement*- students who were unsuccessful in the RTI process and have been identified as having a learning disability.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

School counselors play a major role in the academic development of students in schools across the country and are constantly being asked to be accountable for their work with students (Webb, Brigman, & Campbell, 2005). School counselors are required to implement school improvement initiatives that are centered on academic achievement as a measure of accountability. Myrick (2003), one of the many voices of school counseling, has emphasized the urgency for school counselors to prove how they are contributing to the educational process and how they help students learn. House and Hayes (2002) urge that a systematic change in schools will be very difficult without the involvement of the school counselor. The Educational Trust's (2001) National Initiative for Transforming School Counseling strongly believes that counselors should use and promote interventions that will improve student academic achievement. Because of the need for increased accountability and a drive to increase academic achievement, schools counselors now have the opportunity to become heavily involved in the educational process affecting academic outcomes (Webb, Brigman, & Campbell, 2005). There are standards for school counselors that involve increasing academic achievements of all students that are directly linked to the mission of schools and districts. These National Standards follow a framework from The American School counselor Association (ASCA, 2003).

The History of School Counseling

School counseling can be traced back to the 1880s when it was introduced by Jesse B. Davis in 1889 (Coy, 1999). Davis was a school principal from Detroit that incorporated guidance into his English classes. Frank Parsons, who was known as the "Father of Guidance" began his vocational class in Boston in 1908 to help students with career choices (Coy, 1999). Shortly after that time, there was an emphasis on measurement of personality traits and

individual aptitude after the Great Depression which lead to guidance being vocational and students taking assessments in schools.

Another turn for school counseling was the movement in 1949 when Mathewson stated that the guidance process occurs in an individual in a developmental sequence to the age of maturity (Coy, 1999). Mathewson saw an academic development need for individuals. Another huge change was with the launching of Sputnik in 1957 and the passage of the National Defense Education Act in 1958. There was a need for more students who majored in school counseling to take courses in math and science and to meet certain certification standards. All of these early changes to the profession of school counseling have required the profession to train individuals in knowledge and skill-based programs that emphasize counseling, guidance, consultation, coordination, and referrals (Coy, 1999).

The American School Counselor Association

The school counselors work within parameters that meet the standards of the American School counselor Association (ASCA) which are required by every school in the United States (ASCA, 2006). ASCA requires school counseling programs to be an essential part of the students' daily educational environment and that school counselors be partners in students' achievement (ASCA, 2006). Each state has the freedom to implement each standard as they wish, a practice that creates inconsistency and can lead to a misunderstanding of what school counseling is and what it can do for a school. For this reason, school counseling is often viewed as a subordinate program that is important to student achievement. ASCA standards help fill in the questions, "What do school counselors do?" and "How are students different because of what school counselors do?" If all schools across the country implement school counseling programs based on the ASCA's National Model, schools and school districts can:

- Establish the school counseling program as an integral component of the academic mission of the school.
- Ensure every student has equitable access to the school counseling program.
- Identify and deliver the knowledge and skills all students should acquire.
- Ensure that the school counseling program is comprehensive in design and is delivered systematically to all students.

The ASCA has created the ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs (ASCA, 2006). This model framework emphasizes collaborative efforts benefiting students, parents, teachers, administrators and the overall community. The ASCA National Model supports the school's overall mission by promoting academic achievement, career planning and personal/social development and consists of four interrelated components: foundation, delivery system, management system, and accountability. Foundation is the beliefs, philosophy, and mission of the school and the school counseling program. Delivery system describes the activities, interactions, and methods to deliver the program such as the guidance curriculum, individual student planning, responsive services, and systems support. Management system incorporates organizational processes and tools to ensure the program is organized, concrete, clearly delineated, and reflective of the school's needs. Accountability is a way to evaluate the program and to hold the school responsible for student achievement.

Assigning schools counselors to key roles in the Response to Intervention implementation process will be a great way to keep them involved in making sure academically at-risk students get the help they need. It will also fulfill one of the main components of a school counseling program that states that there is an academic focus that will give students the strategies and interventions they need to reach success inside the classroom.

The RTI program falls under the delivery system component, particularly under responsive services. The delivery system component of the ASCA National Model includes school counseling interventions that directly serve students such as the guidance curriculum, individual student planning, and responsive, group-based services (Ockerman, Mason & Hollenbeck, 2012). According to Ockerman, Mason, and Hollenbeck, the RTI framework and the school counseling model works well together (2012). They are a natural fit. Through each level of the process for RTI, interventions within the school counseling program should be defined and refined as data is used by the problem solving team (Ockerman, Mason & Hollenbeck, 2012). In order for RTI to be implemented correctly, a school counselor has to be involved in the following activities: universal screening, ongoing progress monitoring, a system for organizing and disseminating assessment results in a timely manner, and providing professional development to ensure knowledge of, and fidelity to, research-based practices (Ockerman, Mason, & Hollenbeck, 2012). According to ASCA, these activities should be part of a school counselor’s yearly plan (2008). As part of their work in responsive services, school counselors are involved in activities that require meeting individual students’ immediate needs, usually necessitated by life events or situation and conditions in the students’ lives. These needs require counseling, consultation, referral, peer helping or information (ASCA, 2006). However according to ASCA, all four components play some part in the RTI process. The following charts shows how each component aligns with the role of the professional school counselor:

Table 2.1: The RTI Process and the Role of the Professional School Counselor

RTI Process	Role of the Professional School counselor
Tier1: Universal Core Instructional Interventions: All Students, Preventative and	1. Standards and Competencies (Foundation)

<p>Proactive</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Guidance Curriculum (Delivery System) 3. Individual Student Planning (Delivery) 4. Curriculum Action Plan (Management) 5. Curriculum Results Report (Accountability)
<p>Tier 2: Supplemental/Strategic Interventions: Students at Some Risk</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Standards and Competencies (Foundation) 2. Individual Student Planning (Delivery) a. small-group appraisal and b. small group advisement 3. Responsive Services (Delivery) a. Consultation and b. Individual counseling and c. Small group counseling 4. Closing the Gap Action Plan (Management) 5. Closing the Gap Results Report (Accountability)
<p>Tier 3: Intensive, Individual Interventions: Students at High Risk</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Standards and Competencies (Foundation)

	<p>2. Responsive Services (Delivery) a. Consultation and b. Individual counseling and c. Small group counseling and d. Referral to school or community services</p> <p>3. Closing the Gap Action Plan (Management)</p> <p>4. Closing the Gap Results Report (Accountability)</p>
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(ASCA, 2008)

According to ASCA, RTI should be used every day to help students academically. School counselors are major stakeholders in the development and implementation of the RTI process. Professional school counselors align with the RTI process through implementing a comprehensive school counseling program designed to improve student achievement and behavior through data-driven processes that lead to the identification of students who are at-risk for not meeting academic and behavioral expectations, by designing plans to address the needs of struggling students, and collecting results based on the effectiveness of the interventions (ASCA, 2008). School counselors work with other educators to remove systemic barriers for all students and implement intervention programs that assist in student success.

School counselors must understand how RTI affects their students as well as how they can integrate their services strategically and effectively. They should strive to implement the RTI model at their school and to make their comprehensive developmental school counseling program to be proactive, collaborative, data-driven, multi-tiered, and whole-child focused

(Ockerman, Mason & Hollenbeck, 2012). Response to Intervention and school counselors programs share three interconnected and key components: a tiered service delivery model that strives to serve all students, data and use of empirically-based assessments, and a foundation grounded in social advocacy and equity. Each of these components is important for the school counselor (Ockerman, Mason, & Hollenbeck, 2012). They indicate to schools the importance of the professional school counselor as a potential interventionist.

School counselors must understand the foundations of RTI and how it interacts. School counselors who use their assessment skills can help identify the needs of all students by assisting the RTI team with selecting, modifying, and/or creating various assessments for their school (Ockerman, Mason, & Hollenbeck, 2012). School counselors can fully help implement RTI by using the following functions: leadership, advocacy, teaming and collaboration, counseling and coordination and assessing and using data. They can help eliminate inappropriate special education placements and over identification of students by collaborating with teachers, school psychologists, and special educators (Ockerman, Mason & Hollenbeck, 2012). According to Ockerman, Mason, & Hollenbeck, limited research exists regarding how school counselors have upheld ASCA's position on RTI (2012). Santos de Barona and Barona (2006) insist that school counselors should play a major role in the implementation of the RTI process. School counselors were charged with leading and coordinating Student Support Teams comprised of teachers, intervention specialist, and parents (Ockerman, Mason, & Hollenbeck, 2012). The school counselor usually serves as the chairperson for this team; they monitor academic and behavioral interventions for each tier of RTI and assist the team in analyzing data to determine the efficacy of their interventions and to identify students needing additional support (RTI Action Network, 2009). These types of tasks help lay the groundwork for the school counselor's role within RTI.

The role as a supporter and intervener would be what school counselors would do to help with the process of RTI. The following chart gives more specific detail about how the school counselor would work in the role as a supporter and intervener:

Table 2.2: School Counselor Role

	School counselor Role	
	Supporter	Intervener
Tiered Model	Highlight at RTI team meetings the evidence-based counseling interventions at various settings that already serve the goals of the team and the needs of identified students, as well as those that could contribute.	Provide evidence-based counseling interventions in school-wide, classroom, small group and individual settings to address academic and/or behavioral concerns.
Data	Share data collected from counseling interventions with the RTI team to document student movement through the tiers.	Collect and analyze data regarding all interventions used to meet the goals of the RTI team and to serve student identified by the team.
Social Advocacy	Highlight specific data from needs assessments that demonstrate academic and/or behavioral issues identified by students, staff and/or parents. Bring to the team's attention issues of social justice and the needs of marginalized populations	Design and implement needs assessment for students, staff and/or parents to give them a voice in identifying needed academic and/or behavioral supports. Create and deliver

	while connecting these issues to the RTI team's goals.	specific counseling interventions based upon the needs of underserved students.
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(Ockerman, Mason, & Hollenbeck, 2012)

The school counselor has to seek a balance with their time for both roles as a supporter and interventionist. There cannot be too much time spent on one role (Ockerman, Mason, & Hollenbeck, 2012). The school counselor should be able to be at the table during RTI meetings and provide interventions to individual's students or groups of student who are identified through the RTI process. School counselors have to be a vital member of the RTI team because they have a strong background in academic, personal/social and career development of children and adolescents. Ockerman, Mason, & Hollenbeck state that there has to be a practical balance between the roles of the RTI team member and intervention provider in order to maximize the professional training and knowledge base of school counselors (2012). However school counselors should be cautious not to absorb full responsibility for the team and should be clear about how they can help the RTI objectives and implementation of services to students as well as the team. Some suggested activities for school counselors are as follows: examine overall trends within standardized test scores, course enrollment patterns, attendance data, and disciplinary reports (Ockerman, Mason, & Hollenbeck, 2012). When examining the student's permanent file, course work, and doing a complete observation, the school counselor would be able to develop a clear picture of the needs of the student (Ockerman, Mason, & Hollenbeck, 2012).

Overall, the duty of the school counselor is to routinely collect and review school-wide data and assess placement patters in order to ensure equitable treatment of all students. Thus, counselors should be at the forefront of asking difficult yet critical questions around the

administration of RTI and the demographics of the students receiving advanced tier interventions. More research is needed in the school counseling field to examine the role of the school counselor as it relates to RTI (Ryan & Kaffenberger, 2011). There is a need to see if there is a connection between RTI and school counseling program and if it can be strengthened.

School counselor's Time

Many school counselors see themselves spending too much time in administrative functions such as scheduling, discipline, and clerical duties, and not enough time providing services to students (Zalaquett, 2005). Many school counselors are involved in test administration, and they have argued repeatedly that test administration has a detrimental impact on their capability to offer services to their students and have criticized schools for assigning them this task (Baggerly, 2002). According to Zalaquett, many school counselors engage in functions that are not among the top duties ranked by principals or are only remotely related to either their training or their professional determined roles or activities (2005). Scheduling and participating in disciplinary functions absorb much of school counselor's time, and ASCA does not consider these duties core functions of school counselors. Baggerly and Osborn (2006) states that the school counselor position is one where there are frequent expectations to perform task unrelated to professional school counseling.

Gysbers and Henderson (2006) identify four categories of non-guidance activities: student supervision, instruction, clerical, and administrative. Elementary school counselors are also assigned non-guidance activities such as lunch duty, substituting for absent teachers, bus duty, administering achievement test, discipline, and registering students. These types of tasks hinder counselors when developing and implementing a quality comprehensive guidance program and ultimately affect counselors' overall self-efficacy (Gysbers & Henderson, 2006).

Kolodinsky, Draves, Schroder, Lindsey, and Zlatev (2009) state that school counselors feel overwhelmed and off-task because of excessive non-guidance related tasks that take them away from their time to counsel with students.

According to a study conducted by Martinez and Young, thirty-seven percent of school counselors agreed that the RTI process takes up too much time (2011). The results from this study showed that the participants complained excessively about the paperwork involved. Fifty-three percent agreed that collecting data is difficult and time consuming (Martinez & Young, 2011). This study also indicates that further research is needed to find the strengths and weakness of the RTI implementation in the schools.

The Role of the School counselor

Roles ambiguity is when a person lacks information about his or her work role, clarity about work objectives, or lack of clarity about peer expectations of the responsibilities of the job (Lambie & Williamson, 2004). Because school counselor roles are not clearly stated and understood by many educators, counselors are given nonprofessional duties such as attendance, record keeping, testing coordination, and hall and bus duty. They are also given duties such as scheduling, transcripts upkeep, office sitting, clubs and organizations, sponsorship, parking lot supervision, restroom and lunch duties, averaging grades tasks and homeroom duties (Lambie & Williamson, 2004). Lambie and Williamson (2004) state that the role of the school counselor is complex and multifaceted.

However, school counselors should engage in preventive, developmental, and systematic approaches to counseling. They should work to support teachers, students, and families. School counselors should deliver a comprehensive school counseling program that encourages all students' academic, career, and personal/social development and helps all students maximize

student achievement (Lambie & Williamson, 2004). It is the responsibility of the school counselor to articulate their role and to promote consistency and reduce role incongruence. School administrators, teachers, and parents view the school counselor's role differently (Burnham & Jackson, 2000). According to Burnham and Jackson (2000), there is still a need for empirical research documenting the actual implementation of the role of the school counselor. Counselors need assertiveness skills to establish and maintain professional boundaries while limiting the number of noncounseling duties assigned to them (Sears & Granello, 2002). The school counselor is usually blamed for creating and poorly managing programs, which were dependent on the interest and priorities of individual counselors, which has resulted in many new duties added to the counselor's existing responsibilities (Dahir, 2004). When schools or school systems fail to clearly define the counselor's role it is usually because the role was poorly defined and not valued by administration (Dahir, 2004). School counselors have the support of ASCA who continues to define the role and function of school counselors through position statements and monograph, however there seems to be a gap in whether counselors address or demonstrate the impact of school counseling on student achievement and student success in schools (Dahir, 2004). After the No Child Left Behind Act, the roles and functions of school counselors have followed the recent shift into accountability practices, making the improvement of student achievement the mission of school counseling programs (Perkins, 2010).

Perception of the School counselor

Many see the school counselor as that of an administrative team member who is expected to carry out administrative needs and goals (Bardhoshi & Duncan, 2009). According to Bardhoshi and Duncan, school counselors are perceived more as a subordinate rather than an expert professional (2009). Many school principals based their perceptions of the school

counselor on their own experiences with the counselor from their school years (Coy, 1999). Many school principals are not aware of the appropriate roles for the school counselor and they formulate a counseling department on minimal expertise that is often based on internships or previous positions (Bardhoshi & Duncan, 2009). Knowing the perceptions of administrators regarding the role of the school counselor is important because it helps school counselors anticipate areas of agreement and conflict when they attempt to get administrative support for the school counselor's role (Bardhoshi & Duncan, 2009). According to Moyer (2012), counselors' perceptions of themselves as members of the counseling profession can impact their competence as counselors. Because of perceptions, principals play an important role in determining the role of the school counselor (Perusse, Goodnough, & Donegan, 2004). Many school counselors are viewed as extras rather than necessities (McLean, 2006).

Response to Intervention (RTI)

According to the Dickman (2006), Response to Intervention (RTI) is a method of academic intervention used in the United States and designed to provide early, effective assistance to students who are having difficulty learning. This method was also used to help educators identify students with learning disabilities in a group or individually. Schools across the country are able to determine if a student has a learning disability by using the ability-achievement discrepancy model.

RTI helps to bring a clearer picture of Specific Learning Disability (SLD) for students who could possibly qualify for the Disabilities Education Improvement Act (Mahdavi & Beebe-Frankenberger, 2009). SLD is a moderate learning problem that RTI helps clarify if a student should carry the SLD label or just be identified as a slow learner. Many criticize this method but

it has shown to be valid based upon practice and recent scientific studies of brain function(Sack-Min, 2009).

RTI is a process that schools can use to help children who are struggling academically or behaviorally. One of the possible underlying factors in a child's failures in school could be inadequacies in instruction or in the curriculum either in use at the moment or in the child's past educational experiences (National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities, 2010). RTI is a strategy for intervening early within the general education and can be one part in the process by which students may be identified to receive special education and related services within all public schools in the United States (National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities, 2010).

RTI benefits both regular and special education. It is not solely a special education initiative and it is not a way to identify children for special education (Se Queda, 2011). RTI belongs both to regular education and special education and focuses on all struggling students. RTI helps out the "slow learner" that would not qualify for special education (Se Queda, 2011). "Slow Learners" do not have educational obstacles severe enough to warrant special education and are often left to figure out how to keep up on their own and, thus, fall further behind. Using RTI, schools can identify those students who are scoring low and decide if there is a problem warranting interventions (Se Queda, 2011). Response to Intervention can help teachers and schools reach all learners.

Schools who implement RTI should aim to eliminate poor instruction as a variable for all learners by making sure those scientific, research-based practices in general education have the goal of reducing inappropriate referrals to special education (Ockerman, Mason,& Hollenbeck, 2012). The goal of RTI is to prevent academic failure for students by implementing early

interventions and frequent progress monitoring while providing the necessary research-based instructional interventions for students who are learning difficulties in the classroom (Council for Exceptional Children, 2011). RTI has been known as the “wait to fail” method because it provides interventions as soon as students start to show signs of difficulty. This method is very different from the traditional way of finding out if a student has a learning disability, which allows students to be tested with an IQ evaluation such as the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC-IV) and uses a teacher’s evaluation of achievement in the classroom. The question for many educators remains whether students experience student achievement when they go through each tier of the RTI model.

An elementary school in the midwest implemented the RTI framework to improve reading instruction and decision- making. They relied on formative evaluation that provided screening several times per year and progress monitoring for students receiving instructional interventions (Deno, Reschly, Lembke, Magnusson, Callender, Windram, Stachel, 2009). All of the decisions about how they wanted to implement the program were made by the principal and staff. This school realized that they needed something to help their students who were struggling in reading. They needed something that would meet the No Child Left Behind requirements, and RTI did just that and more by also determining if a student needed special education services.

The RTI method gives schools the evidence-based teaching practices they need to make decisions about what services to provide students who may be struggling in a certain subject area. Schools are able to look at progress monitoring data from weeks of interventions that were put in place specifically for that student. After careful review and consideration, the school is able to make a feasible decision on what their next steps should be. RTI makes it extremely easy

for schools to see exactly what issue or concern to address first (Lembke, Garman, Deno, Stecker, 2010).

In the state of Montana, RTI is used for two primary reasons: (a) as a method of SLD identification and (b) as a model of instruction for effectively meeting the needs of all students in a school (Lembke, Garman, Deno, Stecker, 2010). Not only Montana, but all states have some form of a response to intervention system that addresses personal academic needs of students. Lembke, Garman, Deno, Stecker (2010) gave essential elements that are supported by research and commentary on RTI. In order for RTI to be successful these elements are needed:

- Administrative and staff support
- Establishment of school-based problem-solving teams
- Selection of an evidence-based, formative assessment system that include screening and progress monitoring
- Examination of the core academic program currently in place to make sure it is meeting the needs of the majority of students
- Team analysis of school-wide data and placement of students in tiered instructional groups
- Identification of interventions of Tiers 2 and 3 and a schedule for implementation of the tiered interventions
- Determination of how fidelity of treatment for Tiers 1-3 will be assessed
- Determination of professionals who will monitor the progress of students in Tiers 2 and 3 on a frequent basis by setting goals, collecting data, implementing data-decision rules, and making changes in instruction

School Support

In order for any program to be successful, there has to be a buy-in from the entire school. Administrators and staff have to support the model (Lembke, Garman, Deno, Stecker, 2010). Administrators must ensure that all staff members are fully trained and prepared to use the RTI model. Professional development about the process is a must. This model has to be labeled as a working model that will be adjusted as needed, when needed (Lembke, Garman, Deno, Stecker, 2010). Typically, team of individuals from a school ensures that the RTI model is implemented properly. This team is comprised of the building principal, classroom teacher, school psychologist, curriculum coordinator, and school counselor (Vermont Family Network, 2011).

Theoretical Framework

Three major theories that guide and improve the Response to Intervention process and school counselor involvements are:

- Solution-Focused Theory/ Solution-Focused Brief Therapy
- Collaborative Problem Solving Model
- Constructivist Theory (Jerome Bruner)

These theories explain how school counselors incorporate RTI into their counseling programs and work collaboratively as the chairperson of the problem solving team called the Student Service Team (SST).

Solution-Focused Brief Therapy

Solution-Focused Brief Therapy is a model that is widely used by many school counselors across the United States. School counselors are required to follow an approach that will offer practical interventions for students, teachers, and parents. Solution-Focused Brief Therapy has been popular because it is very flexible and focuses on the student's strengths. It has proven to show

rapid, enduring change and the students love it (Gillen, 2005). This model has been accepted as a useful individual and group counseling modality in schools (Gillen, 2005). This model has been based off the Solution-Focused Theory, which was originally derived from Milton Erickson's work in the 1980s. Erickson made it very clear that school counselors will need to 1) meet the student where they are, 2) modify the outlook of the student to gain control, and 3) allow for change that meets the needs of the students (Gillen, 2005). In this model, the school counselor looks at the student's life and how it would be better if the problem was solved. According to Gillen (2005), this theory supports RTI because within one of the tiers, educators should find a solution that will help the student to succeed academically.

School counselors oversee this model when they serve as the chairperson on the problem-solving team called Student Service Team or SST. The purpose of the team is to find a solution that will help the student to be successful academically and/or behaviorally. This model also has been proven to help struggling readers improve their academic, social, and emotional functioning (Daki & Savage, 2010). For example, children who have reading difficulties also exhibit behavioral problems and are at an increased risk for dropping out of school and delinquent behavior. This model will allow the therapist to focus on the solution rather than the problem (Daki & Savage, 2010).

A counselor who uses the solution-focused model should adopt a competency orientation to therapy in contrast to the traditional psychopathology/deficit model. Solution-focused clients are competent, self-directed agents of change. Students with this therapy will grow to possess the resources and skills necessary to resolve their own problems (Daki & Savage, 2010).

Collaborative Problem Solving Model

This model is also a theoretical framework for Response to Intervention models when used in schools in many states. According to Willihnganz (2001), collaborative problem solving is when educators join together to find a solution that everyone can agree on for the student's best interest. There are six steps that the team must follow in order to implement this model effectively : 1) define the problem in terms of needs not solutions 2) brainstorm possible solutions 3) select the solution that will both meet both parties needs, and check possible consequences 4) plan who will do what, where, and by when 5) implement the plan, and 6) evaluate the problem-solving process. But utilizing these steps, the Student Service Team ensures that every intervention and strategy is put in place before a student can be referred to be tested for special education services. Every student that is referred after going through this problem-solving model should qualify for services with the exceptional children's department (Willihnganz, 2001).

Bruner's Constructivist Theory

Bruner's Constructivist Theory derived from the theoretical research of Lev Vygotsky and Jean Piaget. This theory believes that learners construct new ideas or concepts based upon existing knowledge. Bruner believes that children should be active problem solvers and are capable of exploring more difficult subjects of instruction (Overbaugh, 2004). This theory is important for Student Service teams because it will help team members to know that students should be given interventions on their level. Every child is capable of knowing something and has to be given the right tools to be academically successful (Overbaugh, 2004). This theory is a general framework for instruction based upon the study of cognition and is based upon the work of child development researcher Jean Piaget. The ideas originated from a conference focused on science and math learning. Bruner used the context of mathematics and social science programs for

young children (Bruner, 1973). The following academic principals are what lead this theory: 1) Instruction must be concerned with the experience and contexts that make the student willing and able to learn (readiness), 2) Instruction must be structured so that it can be easily grasped by the student (spiral organization), and 3) Instruction should be designed to facilitate the extrapolation and or fill in the gaps (going beyond the information given) (Bruner, 1973). Bruner also used Darwinian thinking in his basic assumptions about learning. His main concern was that human culture and primate evolution were needed to fully understand growth and development. He particularly believed that all individuals are different and there are no standard sequences for all learners (Bruner, 1973).

Problem-Solving Teams/Student Service Chairperson

Every school is required to have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) team so that students with disabilities have a voice. RTI also requires the same for its model. There has to be a team in place to ensure that the student is making progress. These teams usually meet every week to discuss the needs of different students. Interventions are usually assigned for four to six weeks to see if they are actually helping the student academically. Team members use data to lead all of the discussions in the meetings. The data can be attendance, grades, test grades, behavioral rating charts, what the teacher has tried already to help the student in the classroom, parent statements, and any other information that is located in the child's cumulative record that gives data from previous school years.

Schools need to make sure that the team has the following components to make collaborative decisions. A team should:

- Include a cross-disciplinary group of subject-area teachers, specialists, such as reading teachers and teachers of English language learners; related services personnels, such as school

psychologists, speech-language pathologists, social workers, and school counselors; administrators; and special education personnel.

- Be organized according to existing structures within the school. For example, middle level schools might be organized as families or grade-level teams and high school might be organized around academic department.
- Involve a core team with additional personnel as needed.
- Facilitate parent involvement in planning and reinforcing academic and behavioral interventions. Provide student progress reports to parents.
- Incorporate RTI into the business and routine of the team. Additional teams and meetings are not necessary if the team's responsibilities include solving student academic or behavior problems.
- Have clear systems in place for evaluating and adjusting RTI approaches and for providing staff development (Canter, Klotz, Cowan, 2008).

Each school should have at least one designated Problem-Solving Chairperson (Student Service Team manual, 2006). The individual selected to be SST chairperson should be assigned to the school on a full-time basis and should not be assigned additional duties. A chairperson with additional duties should delegate responsibilities to other team members so no one has a workload that is unreasonable. In selecting a chairperson, a principal should select individuals with strong leadership, interpersonal, and organizational qualities; effective oral and written communication skills; a minimum of three to five year experience in the development and implementation of non-traditional educational strategies, programs, and resources; knowledge or background in select programs for special populations such as English as a Second Language (ESL), special education, community resources, and the functions and capabilities of individual

Student Service Team (SST) members and strong dedication to continuous quality improvement (Student Service Manual, 2006). The Problem-Solving Chairperson fills a wide variety of roles and functions that may vary significantly based upon factors such as school population, organizational models, and administrator expectations. The primary role of the chairperson is one of facilitator, performing such functions as scheduling meetings, preparing teachers or others for presentation, leading and focusing the discussion, delegating tasks, and protecting the integrity of the meeting and its purpose (Student Service Manual, 2006).

RTI is a three-tiered process and schools must consider these tiers when dealing with RTI. Most students do very well with learning in general education but there are some students who need evidence-based practices like the ones recommended from the RTI process to experience success (Lembke, Garman, Deno, Stecker, 2010). According to a study by Martinez and Young, eighty seven percent of the respondents indicated that the general education teacher started the RTI process. The study also revealed that once a student is identified as a candidate for RTI the primary members of the team should be the general education teacher, special education teacher, administrator and reading specialist (Martinez & Young, 2011).

RTI and Student Achievement

According to Martinez and Young, Response to Intervention (RTI) was created to help students experience academic and behavioral success in the classroom (2011). The major role of this process is to provide the interventions a struggling student would need to become successful in the general education curriculum. When the student finds success with one of the interventions in the general education setting, then student achievement is accomplished (Martinez & Young, 2011). If the interventions are not meeting the needs of the student, the school may decide to implement different interventions or initiate a referral for special education

eligibility testing. A successful RTI program makes sure that steps are followed to identify students with behavioral and academic problems. Schools with successful RTI programs check for these issues with students early in the school year. Teachers will help the program by checking the student's progress frequently to measure the effectiveness of interventions (Martinez & Young, 2011). A successful program will also need to collaborate with a variety of personnel, parents and families during the process for successful implementation of RTI. According to Martinez and Young, research is limited regarding how stakeholders for schools perceive the RTI process and its impact on students (2011). Researchers have stated that future research should incorporate the perspective of all individuals involved in the referral process. When a student is in the RTI process, goals are set and monitoring of student academic growth is conducted by the teacher. When a student makes sufficient progress, student achievement is the result (Harlacher, Walker, & Sanford, 2010). Student achievement is evident in 90% to 95% of all learners in Tier 1 and Tier 2 if the RTI process is implemented correctly (Hoover & Love, 2011). According to a study completed by Hughes and Dexter, nine of the thirteen studies they examined measured variables related to academic achievement (2011). All of the studies stated that the impact of the RTI program showed some level of improvement on academic achievement (Hughes & Dexter, 2011).

Tiered One Instruction

Tiered 1 is defined as the classroom instruction that the teacher is required to teach. It has three elements: a) a core curriculum based on scientifically validated research, b) screening and benchmark testing of students at least three times per year (fall, winter, and spring) to determine instructional needs, and c) ongoing professional development to provide teachers with the necessary tools to ensure every student receives quality instruction (Hughes & Dexter, 2011).

Scientifically validated research is a component that every school has in their school educational program. It is research that congress has aligned to the 2006 IDEA regulations and the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. NCLB requires research to involve the application of rigorous, systemic, and objective classroom lessons. Teachers make sure that their activities in the classroom obtain reliable knowledge and include research that:

- Employs systematic, empirical methods that draw on observation or experiment
- Involves rigorous data analysis that are adequate to test the stated hypothesis and justify the general conclusions drawn
- Relies on measurement or observational methods that provide reliable and valid data across evaluators and observers, across multiple measurements and observations, and across studies by the same or different investigators
- Is evaluated using experimental or quasi-experimental designs in which individuals, entities, programs, or activities are assigned to different conditions and with appropriate controls to evaluate the effects of the condition of interest, with a preference for random-assignment experiments, or other designs to the extent that those designs contain within-condition or across-condition controls.
- Ensure that experimental studies are presented in sufficient detail and clarity to allow for replication or, at a minimum, offer the opportunity to build systematically on their findings
- Has been accepted by a peer-reviewed journal or approved by a panel of independent experts through a comparably rigorous, objective, and scientific review (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 20 U.S.C. 1411 (e) (2)(xi)).

Teachers who are skillful can challenge students with diverse abilities and background with content literacy strategies. Many teachers know that when all resources are used effectively at the Tier 1 level, then there is no reason to move on to Tier 2 (Brozo, 2010). Also in Tier 1, progress monitoring is essential for teachers to guide and adjust instruction. Tier 1 not only has an academic component but it also covers developmental domains such as behavioral and social development (Creel, Krisel, O'Connor, & Williams, 2007). Teachers will be able to quickly identify whether kids are learning and how they are learning. Benchmarks should be set to identify struggling students and data should be collected and used to modify teaching strategies. These requirements will require teachers to do extra planning that is specific to the needs of those students who are having academic struggles. If the planning is done correctly with the resources needed, then there is no need to move beyond Tier 1; however if the student continues to struggle, then there will be a need to move to Tier 2.

Tiered Two Instruction

If a student does not respond to Tier 1 interventions, then it will be time for them to move on to Tier 2. This tier allows students to receive more focused researched-based instruction in small groups (Dickman, 2006). There is a complete change made to the interventions the student was previously using in Tier 1, and new ones are created to try to see some success with the student. Usually during this stage, there is an increase in the time and intensity of the student's exposure to the general curriculum (Dickman, 2006). Students are also monitored every week and then their work is compared to the class average (Deno, Reschly, Lembke, Magnusson, Callender, Windram, Stachel, 2009). The data that is collected every week is used to make decisions about student movement between tiers of interventions.

There is no clear methodological definition of how or when a student is to be identified as a nonresponder to intervention or how nonresponsiveness is to be measured (Hughes & Dexter, 2011). Dexter and Hughes have identified six methods that are currently being promoted to help educators decide what students are nonresponders to Tier 2 using progress Monitoring Data (2011):

Table 2.3: Six Methods for Progress Monitoring

Method of Identification	Author(s) Introducing Method	How is Nonresponders Identified?
Dual Discrepancy	L.S. Fuchs and Fuchs (1998)	Slope of improvement during treatment and performance level at the end of treatment. Slope and performance levels below a given point (e.g., 1SD) in comparison with classroom peers.
Median split	Vellutino et al. (1996)	Slope of improvement never meets or exceeds the rank ordered median of the intervention group.
Final normalization	Torgesan et al. (2001)	Standard scores on a mastery test at the end of a tutoring intervention. A

		nonresponder would have to score below a given percentile rank (e.g., 25 th percentile).
Final benchmark	Good et. Al. (2001)	Criterion-referenced benchmark at the end of the intervention. A nonresponder would have to score below a given benchmark.
Slope discrepancy	D. Fuchs et al. (2004)	Slope of academic performance compared to a normative cut-point referenced by the classroom, school, district, or nation
Exit groups	Vaughn et al. (2003)	After 30 weeks of supplemental instruction, failing three times (once every 10 weeks to meet criteria on the TPRI and TORF measures

Charles Hughes, Ph.D. and Douglas D. Dexter, Ph. D. Penn State University

If the interventions in Tier 2 are not successful, the parent will be invited back out to the school to discuss the move to Tier 3.

Tiered Three Instruction

Tier 3 provides more intense interventions for students. When students are moved into this tier, they will require one-on-one instruction from the teacher and/or a tutor. There will also be cases when the interventions that were used in Tier 1 and Tier 2 will be continued along with the addition of the ones from Tier 3 (Ervin, 2011). Progress monitoring also becomes more frequent.

If a child is not being successful, then the school will look at a possible academic and/or behavioral learning disability for that student. The Exceptional Children's program is then considered by the Student Service team because the regular class room teacher has done everything he or she can, and now a specialist who works with students with learning disabilities is needed to come in and work with the student (Ervin, 2011). The Special education instruction is provided to every student who needs it individually or in a small group. Special education programs, strategies, and procedures are designed and employed to supplement, enhance, and support Tier 1 and Tier 2 (and beyond if necessary) instruction by remediation of the relevant and development of compensatory strategies (Sack-Min, 2009). Special education eligibility may allow exposure for remedial methods and practices that, although research-based and aligned with the content of the core curriculum, are not necessarily a part of the core curriculum.

Progress Monitoring

Progress monitoring is the key to the movement between tiers of the RTI process. There has to be a functioning school-wide screening and progress-monitoring model in place in every school in America because of the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education

Act (Deno, Reschly, Lembke, Magnusson, Callender, Windram, Stachel, 2009). A successful progress monitoring program typically starts with just screening data three times each academic year. This data will inform the school about students who are not reaching benchmarks or who may be at risk for failing high-stakes assessments. When these students are identified as being high risk for failing, teachers monitor more frequently to see if the interventions that were put in place are working or something else needs to be done (Deno, Reschly, Lembke, Magnusson, Callender, Windram, Stachel, 2009).

There are many ways to keep track of the progress being made during the RTI process. Many schools use checklists, rating scales, daily/weekly report cards, frequency counts, discipline reports, and time sampling techniques. Changes or alterations in the interventions should be carefully noted on any graphic representation of the data, and the parents must be notified (Creel, Krisel, O'Connor, Williams, 2008). Progress monitoring has to be documented in some form or fashion, or it cannot be determined whether or not the intervention has been effective.

Special Education

Because many students were misdiagnosed with learning disabilities (LD), Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) put in significant changes regarding how students would be identified. IDEA defines LD as “a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which disorder may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations (James, 2004).” James states that a model RTI program, which is a diagnostic-prescriptive, research-based learning system is effective in early intervention strategies for children with or at risk for disabilities in reading and mathematics (2004).

The purpose of RTI is not only to provide early intervention for students who are at risk for school failure but also to develop more valid procedures for identifying students with disabilities (Gerstein & Dimino, 2006). RTI allows teachers to identify students who need special education instruction in reading based on whether or not the student can respond to either typical classroom instruction or the type of support that is possible in a typical classroom. The RTI movement is enabling public schools in the U.S. to move away from a reactive model in which students had to show serious academic problems before being moved into special education programs. Many educators push for early and top-notch research-based interventions in the regular classroom that will give teachers data to make tough decisions about students (Martin & Lindsay, 2011). The Council for Exceptional Children believes that RTI should reduce the number of students referred for special education, promotes effective early interventions, provides diagnostic information to consider in the identification of a disability and/or may reduce the impact of a disability on a child's academic progress (2007).

The Council for Exceptional Children also believes that the problem solving team should be comprised of general educators as the primary interveners for Tier 1 and 2. They feel that special educators should be consulted during Tier 3 or the highest tier. These roles in team collaboration will ensure that the needs of the struggling learners are met before any testing is done for special education (2007). If the RTI process leads to initiation of the special education evaluation process to determine whether a child has a disability and needs special education and related services, then the special education eligibility group would become involved in decision-making regarding the student's eligibility (Virginia Department of Education, 2009). All RTI data collected during the RTI process helps to ensure that underachievement in a child that is

suspected of having a disability is not due to the lack of appropriate instruction (Virginia Department of Education, 2009).

Critics of RTI

There are many who criticize RTI because there are too many chances given before a student is given intense, one-one-one instruction that is needed. Cortiella (2011) states the student's lack of response to interventions is not adequate to identify the presence of learning disabilities. She believes that RTI will help educators to identify students whose low achievement is the result of a variety of factors such as mild retardation, limited English proficiency, language impairments, or deficits related to low socioeconomic status. The only way to truly know if a student has a learning disability is to give the student an individual comprehensive assessment (Logsdon, 2011).

Another concern for the RTI process is to make sure it is implemented by well-trained staff that are knowledgeable about research based interventions as well as procedures used to appropriately monitor student progress and performance. Many educators don't have the necessary training to ensure they follow all the necessary and required steps to fully implement the RTI model (Cortiella, 2011). Administration at all schools must commit to the model by giving teachers the tools like professional development to ensure that all the necessary steps are followed correctly.

Many critics say too much paperwork is required prior to the evaluation of a student and that RTI is used as a bureaucratic means for delaying the evaluation for special education. The cost of special education services is a powerful incentive for districts to delay services to as many students as long as possible (Logsdon, 2011). IDEA 2004 prevents schools from receiving federal funds based on identifying more students although proponents of RTI claim that public

schools tend to receive more federal and state dollars the more students they identify as qualifying for special education (Cortiella, 2011). Many critics of RTI believe that it limits access to special education services. Many believe that teachers have to wait before a student can be tested for special education.

The RTI model can be a year-long process that would require more work from teachers. Some processes last more than a year and are transferred to the next grade with a new teacher. Many educators believe that they are just a way to delay the evaluation. Some educators who work in special education complain about the cost of services; the more students that are identified for IDEA, the more money a school will receive (Sack-Min, 2009). In essence, RTI is criticized because of their interference with monies for individual schools.

The Future of RTI

The Response to Intervention model is heavily implemented mainly in elementary schools across the country. The move now is to extend it into the secondary schools, including middle and high schools. The administrators and math faculty of East Central School District in Minnesota decided to implement the RTI model when they noticed a significant number of students did not pass the math test in the 11th grade. This test was a requirement for graduation, so educators in this school district wanted to start with the students in grade 8 to determine which students were in need of intervention. The school district decided to use supplemental math instruction, use of behavior management and motivational techniques, regular progress monitoring, and small group instruction to help prepare these eighth graders for any skill they may be lacking in math. After a year, not all the students made progress, but many made on average twice the growth typically seen in grade 8 and greatly improved their rate of growth

compared with their scores from the previous year. The biggest need at the secondary level is to have significant planning leadership from administrators (Canter, Klotz, Cowan, 2008).

Conclusion

Response to Intervention (RTI) is a method, or process, of educational intervention that includes, but is not limited to reading, tutoring, peer tutoring, phonological awareness, and phonic interventions. It is sometimes referred to as a Standard Protocol Approach or as a Problem Solving Model. The RTI process and Problem Solving models use problem solving methods to figure out if a student has a learning disability. The main difference between the two is that the former uses a systematic, universal screening procedure during Tier 1 to determine which student is having problems with the benchmarks for a specific skill. The teacher usually sends a list of students to a team of individuals in her building to help him or her find interventions to help a student.

There is so much evidence that support to RTI and how it gives students the additional time and support needed to learn at high levels. Every intervention should be used before sending a student to special education. Special education should be the last avenue of resort any student. All educators need to understand that RTI is not a special education only program, but it applies to any student who may need it. The school counselor, teacher assistant, and administration can use this process. RTI has the evidence that it does work, and fewer children are referred to special education, particularly minority children. It acts as a safeguard against giving children labels that are not necessary. School counselors are essential leadership personnel in the RTI process, and it is their responsibility to work with all of the students in the school in an instructional setting. Their role provides an opportunity for early counseling

interventions and to create a stronger connection between the counseling program and the teachers.

Teachers are finally seeing the time and effort school counselors put into listening and problem solving for them. Because of their effort, children will start to succeed academically in the classroom (Ryan & Kaffenberger, 2011). According to Ryan and Kaffenberger, RTI has provided new opportunities for school counselors and their involvement in the RTI. These opportunities will help build relationships between the school counselor and administrators, teachers, staff, and parents.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Overview of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative research study is to explore the time reduction of a school counselor's roles and responsibilities when the RTI process is implemented into their school counseling program. This study examined if there is a relationship between a school counselor's involvement with the RTI process and the perception of self-efficacy of school counselors. Also if there is a relationship between the RTI process when managed by a school counselor and academic achievement of students? What is the direction, strength and significance of these relationships?

Research Design

The purpose of this correlational study is to identify if there is a significant time reduction in a school counselors roles and responsibilities when the RTI process is implemented into their school counseling program, which should meet the requirements from the American School Counseling Association (ASCA). In addition, the study seeks to determine if the RTI process reduced the time required for other duties daily duties according to the national model for school counselors?

According to the research, many school counselors are perceived as teachers and used for teacher or administrative duties such as scheduling, covering a classroom so teachers can have planning periods, being testing coordinators, and being put on a master school schedule to teach resource classes like an art or music teacher. This study will allow counselors to analyze how other counselors perceive their involvement in the RTI process and how it will affect their duties and responsibilities that are neglected because of it. The survey will ask counselors how

they perceive the RTI process and whether they feel they are being effective for students when their time is limited because of their involvement in the RTI process.

Participating counselors were asked how much time they spend using the RTI process during student service team (SST) meetings and how many students were referred to the RTI process and how many were referred to the EC case teacher for testing. The counselors were also asked how many were actually placed in the exceptional children's program.

The survey also asked demographical information for the type of school, size of student body, counselor years of experience, and the number of elementary school counselors in the school. The counselors were also asked to answer additional questions created by the researcher. These questions focused on duties and responsibilities that were neglected because of their involvement in the RTI process. These additional questions were not used in the data analysis of the study.

From the survey results, the researcher was able to determine if there was a relationship between the RTI process and time reduction, self-efficacy, and academic achievement when the process is managed by the elementary school counselor.

Research Questions and Hypothesis

There are three research questions for this quantitative study to explore the relationship between the RTI process and time reduction of the roles and responsibilities of elementary school counselors, the perception of self-efficacy, and academic achievement of students when the RTI process is placed into the elementary school counselor's yearly schedule. The independent/predictor variable is the RTI process; while the dependent/criterion variables are time reduction, self-efficacy, and academic achievement.

RQ1: Does the RTI process cause a time reduction in the roles and responsibilities of a school counselor's program?

RQ2: Do elementary school counselors perceive their role as being effective when the RTI process is implemented into their school counseling program?

RQ3: Do students achieve academically when the RTI process is managed by the school counselor?

Null Hypotheses

H1 Null: There is no significant relationship between the time reduction of a school counselor's roles and responsibilities (bi-monthly classroom guidance, weekly small group counseling and weekly individual counseling) and the RTI process(weekly observations of students, coordination and conduction of meetings for students who have academic or behavior problems, helping teaching with strategies and interventions needed to help students, identification of students who need to be tested for the exceptional children's program) as shown by the statistical analysis of the Concerns-Based Adoption Model of the Stages of Concern questionnaire.

H2 Null: There is no significant relationship between a school counselor's involvement with the RTI process (weekly observations of students, coordination and conduction of meetings for students who have academic or behavior problems, helping teachers with strategies and interventions needed to help students, identification of students who need to be tested for the exceptional children's program) and the perception of self-efficacy of school counselors (personal feeling of meeting the requirements of an effective school counseling program based on the American School Counseling Association) as shown by the statistical analysis of the Concerns-Based Adoption Model of the Stages of Concern questionnaire.

H3 Null: There is no significant relationship between the RTI process being managed (meetings, observations, implementation of strategies and interventions by teachers) by school counselors and student achievement (classroom performance).

H4: There is no significant relationship between the RTI process being managed by school counselors and student achievement (students being referred to EC for testing).

H5: There is no significant relationship between the RTI process being managed by school counselors and student achievement (student being placed into the EC program).

Participants

The population is school counselors from North Carolina. The sample is fifty- four elementary school counselors from Cumberland County, North Carolina. Each school counselor has between one to twenty years of experience. The participants came from schools that range from high to low performing. There was a contact representative from the school district that helped me inform counselors of the survey. The contact representative sent out an email to all elementary counselors informing them that my study had been approved by the county and their participation in the study was voluntary. This representative was my contact for any questions or concerns regarding the survey by the elementary school counselors who completed the survey.

Procedures

Getting approval from the authors of the SEDL Stages of Concern survey was the researcher's first step. Then the researcher got IRB approval from the university and approval from the participating school district. The researcher secured the help of the school counselor coordinator from the school district. The researcher asked the coordinator to send out an email to all elementary counselors asking for their help with the survey. The email provided a deadline of when all surveys would need to be completed and explained to the counselors that all survey

information would be confidential. The survey was sent to fifty-four elementary school counselor's school email. There was an explanation of the survey created by the researcher in the email and a hyperlink that school counselors could click on to take them directly to the survey.

Thirty-five school counselors answered demographical and descriptive information first and then moved on to questions that pertained to the analysis of the study. After all 35 questions had been answered, the counselors submitted the survey. The information was stored in an online data account that was created by the researcher. No one had access to this information except the researcher. The school counselor coordinator did not have access to the survey or the survey results. Instead of using their names, school counselors was assigned a number to complete the survey. The numbers were given to the counselors through the email sent out by the researcher. Counselors typed in their number at the end of the survey. The researcher assigned the numbers to keep a count of which school participated. The researcher was the only person who knew the identity of the participating school. School counselors signed the consent forms and returned them to the researcher by inter-district mail. The consent forms are locked in a secured place for three years and then will be destroyed. None of the participants will be identified to the school district.

Setting

The school district in North Carolina was chosen because all of their schools have at least one school counselor. Most of these school counselors are on a resource schedule and given teacher duties that take away from their required roles and responsibilities as a licensed school counselor. Every school counselor serves as a leader or team member on the Student Service Team (SST). This team makes sure that the Response to Intervention process is fully

implemented in the school. The team also has other team member such as the principal, curriculum coordinator, behavior coach (if there is a behavior concern), school psychologist, the teacher, and the parent of the student.

Variables

This quantitative, correlational research study identified the relationship between time reduction of the roles and responsibilities of a school counselor program when the RTI process is added to their schedule, how school counselors view their effectiveness when managing the RTI process, and whether the RTI process contributes to student achievement. The independent/predictor variable is the RTI process; while the dependent/criterion variables are time reduction, perception of self-efficacy, and academic achievement. A simple linear regression analysis will be used to determine the relationship, should one exist.

The Study Population

Elementary school counselors from Cumberland County participated in the study. There was a contact representative from the school district that helped the researcher inform counselors of the survey that went to their emails. This representative was the researcher's contact for any questions or concerns regarding the survey. The researcher drafted a letter explaining the study and got permission from the school district to survey their elementary school counselors.

Instrumentation

The Concerns-Based Adoption Model of the Stages of Concern questionnaire was used to collect the data for the study. The Stages of Concern survey was used. The Stages of Concern questionnaire was established to evaluate staff's reactions, feelings, and attitudes toward a new program or practice in the school. Stages of Concern, or SoC, is based on the idea that in order to implement an innovation successfully, the implementer must address the users' concern.

These concerns are captured through a questionnaire. SoC is a way of accessing information about people's attitudes, reactions, or feelings about a program or practice.

Validity and Reliability

The Stages of Concern questionnaire has been used by many different educational researchers in many studies. According to Hall, the reliability and validity for the Stages of Concern Questionnaire was tested (1979). During the two and one-half years of research related to measuring Stages of Concern about the innovation, the 35-item Stages of Concern Questionnaire was developed. In a one-week test retest study, stage score correlations range from 0.65 to 0.85 with four of the seven correlations being above 0.80. Estimates of internal consistency (alpha coefficients) range from 0.64 to 0.83 with six of the seven coefficients being above 0.70. A series of validity studies (factor analysis, known- group differences, predictive) was conducted, all of which provided increased confidence that the SoC Questionnaire measures the hypothesized Stages of Concern (p. 20). The content validity measures it is supposed to measure because the questionnaire was designed for school counselors and how they use their time. The questionnaire asked questions about time reduction when school counselors used the RTI process, perception of self-efficacy, academic achievement, EC referrals, and EC placement of students. The criteria used to justify the validity would be that the questionnaire has been used and measures what it is supposed to measure since 1960.

Several longitudinal studies during the late 1970s that indicate that the SoCQ can reflect changes in concern predicted by concerns theory. A more subjective validity study was conducted in the summer of 1976. Sixty-five educators were selected at random from a larger group who completed the SoCQ several months earlier. Data from these validity studies provided confidence to researchers that the SoCQ is a valid measure of educator concerns. The

questionnaire was also used in 2001 when a researcher surveyed 225 teachers in North Carolina about 4/4 block scheduling, their perceived professional development needs, and the relationship among their Stages of Concern, professional development needs, and selected characteristics.

Each school counselor will remain anonymous. It is reasonable to assume that greater truthfulness will be obtained if the respondent can remain anonymous. Reliability is expressed numerically, usually as a coefficient and is the degree to which an assessment tool produces stable and consistent results. This test will demonstrate reliability because it has been used in several studies and has produced the same results. Each time it was used in a research study showed consistency in repeated measurements, which identifies reliability in the study. With the results being the same from each study and each time the SoC is used, then the reliability coefficient will be 1.00. The following table shows a structured view of the reliability of each construct. I have been granted the permission to adapt the questionnaire, but the wording and order of items cannot be changed. The word “ teacher” was changed to school counselors and the word “ innovation” was changed to RTI process. This type of consistency will also guarantee validity of the questionnaire and the results.

Table 3.1: Reliability and Corresponding Construct

Internal Consistency Reliability

Construct	Reliability
Use of RTI	0.872
Time Reduction	0.847
Perception of Self- Efficacy	0.741
Academic Achievement	0.660

NOTES: The alpha reliability coefficients were sufficient with the exception of academic achievement. An alpha greater than .80 is considered good, and an alpha greater than .70 is considered sufficient. The alpha for academic achievement was a little lower than we hoped, but it will not have a major impact on the research. Overall, these numbers are good.

Data Collection

A SoCQ cohort was set up with a unique password on the survey company web site link. After each questionnaire was completed, the data was graphed and examined for each individual and then for the entire group. The online program generated graphs that represent the stages of concern for the participants. There were seven stages of concerns for each section. The Awareness Stage asked questions that assess to see if the participant is aware of the innovation (RTI process). The Information Stage assessed to see if the school counselor was knowledgeable of the innovation (RTI process). The Personal stage assessed to see how the innovation had affected them personally (self-efficacy). The Management Stage assessed to see how the school counselor has or has not managed the innovation (time reduction). The Consequences Stage assessed the consequences of having this innovation (RTI process) added to their school counseling program versus not having it added. The Collaboration Stage assessed information about collaborating around the innovation (self-efficacy). The last stage, Refocusing, assessed on how to make the innovation better for themselves and the school (academic achievement). The researcher added yes/no questions to gain additional information about how the school counselor utilize or associated with the RTI process. These questions were used for additional findings and not analyze.

Data Analysis Procedures

All of the data was entered into the on-line system with the survey company, SEDL. Their on-line program allowed the researcher to define subgroups for the SoCQ participants, which allowed the questionnaire data to be graphed and examined for each individual, the entire cohort, or by a combination of one or more subgroups. All data was exported into an excel spread sheet and then entered into SPSS. A simple linear regression model was used to describe the linear dependence of one variable on another, to predict values of one variable from values of

another, and to correct for the linear dependence of one variable on another using variability features. If the two variables were correlated, then the study was able to make a prediction and identify if there was a negative or positive correlation between the two variables. The researcher used SPSS 22.0 to assess the statistical assumptions of the regression. Scatterplots were used to identify any relationship between the data.

Summary

This quantitative study was intended to see if there is a relationship between time reduction of a school counselor's roles and responsibilities, perception of self-efficacy, and academic achievement of students when the implementation of the RTI process is added to their school counseling program. Chapter Three goes into detail about how this study occurred. Chapter Four describes the data that was collected from the questionnaire, the data analysis procedures, and the outcome of the study. Chapter Five gives a summary of the findings, limitations, and suggestions for future studies.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS

Descriptive Statistics

Fifty-four elementary counselors were invited to participate in the survey. Thirty-five school counselors participated, which gave this research study a sixty-nine percent response rate. The descriptive statistics for the school counselors' demographics and school characteristics are listed in Tables 1 and 2, respectively. A majority (21, 60.0%) of the school counselors had 5 or more years' experience with the RTI (SST) process. There was a wide dispersion in the counselors' years of counseling experience. Seven (20.0%) respondents had only 1 year of experience as a school counselor, and 16 (45.7%) had 10 or more years of experience as a school counselor.

A majority (29, 82.9%) of the counselors worked at a Title I school. The student population where the counselors worked was reported as follows: 4 (11.5%) 100 to 300 students, 12 (34.3%) 301 to 500 students, 10 (28.5%) 501 to 700 students and 9 (25.7%) more than 700 students. When asked about the number of SST referrals for the 2012 – 2013 school year the most frequent response was 71 – 80 (7, 20.0%). Sixteen (45.8%) of the respondents reported between 1 and 60 SST referrals during the school year, and 16 (45.8%) reported between 61 and 120 SST referrals for the school year. Only 3 (8.6%) respondents reported more than 120 SST referrals during the school year.

Table 1. *Descriptive Statistics for Counselors' Demographics*

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Experience with RTI (SST) Process		
Never	1	2.9
1 year	6	17.1

3 years	5	14.3
4 years	2	5.7
5 years or more	21	60.0
Years Counseling Experience		
1	7	20.0
2	1	2.9
3	3	8.6
4	2	5.7
5	1	2.9
6	1	2.9
7	2	5.7
8	1	2.9
9	1	2.9
10	4	11.4
More than 10	12	34.3

Table 2. *Descriptive Statistics for School Demographics*

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Student Population		
100 – 200	1	2.9
201 – 300	3	8.6
301 – 400	2	5.7
401 – 500	10	28.6

501 – 600	6	17.1
601 – 700	4	11.4
More than 700	9	25.7
Type of School		
Title I	29	82.9
Non-Title I	6	17.1
SST Referrals for 2012 – 2013 School Year		
1 – 10	1	2.9
11 – 20	3	8.6
21 – 30	4	11.4
31 – 40	2	5.7
41 – 50	3	8.6
51 – 60	3	8.6
71 – 80	7	20.0
81 – 90	4	11.4
91 – 100	2	5.7
101 – 110	2	5.7
111 – 120	1	2.9
121 or more	3	8.6

The school counselors also responded to a number of yes/no questions pertaining to their perceptions of the RTI (SST) process (Table 3). Overall, the respondents had issues with the RTI process and how it impacted their role as a school counselor. Twenty-six (74.3%) school

counselors indicated they did not have the time to achieve the goals set by the ASCA when using the RTI process. In addition, a large majority (28, 80.0%) revealed that the RTI process significantly reduced their time as a school counselor. For example, 25 (71.4%) indicated they did not have the time for group, classroom and individual counseling when using the RTI process. Most (27, 77.1%) of the respondents indicated that some of their counseling activities were neglected because of the RTI. Specifically, 22 (62.9%) indicated group counseling was neglected because of the RTI process, 8 (22.9%) indicated that individual counseling was neglected, and 5 (14.3%) indicated that classroom guidance was neglected because of the RTI process. When asked the number of hours spent on the RTI process, the data were reported as follows: 1 (2.9%) 1 to 3 hours, 2 (5.7%) 4 to 5 hours, 12 (34.3%) 6 to 8 hours and 20 (57.1%) 9 or more hours.

Interestingly, the counselors did not feel the RTI process negatively impacted students' achievement. For example, 24 (68.6%) stated that student achievement was accomplished and students were academically successful with the RTI process. Also, 25 (71.4%) indicated that student grades improved with the RTI process. The counselors were split when asked about being an effective counselor with the RTI process. Eighteen (51.4%) stated that they were not an effective counselor with the RTI process, and 17 (48.6%) indicated they were effective counselors with the RTI process.

Table 3. *Descriptive Statistics for RTI (SST) Perceptions*

Variable	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Time to Achieve ASCA Goals with RTI (SST) Process		
No	26	74.3

Yes	9	25.7
RTI (SST) Process Significantly Reduces Time as Counselor		
No	7	20.0
Yes	28	80.0
Effective Counselor with RTI (SST)		
No	18	51.4
Yes	17	48.6
Time for Group, Classroom and Individual Counseling with RTI		
No	25	71.4
Yes	10	28.6
Student Achievement Accomplished with RTI		
No	11	31.4
Yes	24	68.6
Student Grades Improved With RTI		
No	10	28.6
Yes	25	71.4
Students Academically Successful With RTI		
No	11	31.4
Yes	24	68.6
School Should Have RTI Added to Schedule		
No	23	65.7
Yes	12	34.3
Some Counselor Activities Neglected Because of RTI		

No	8	22.9
Yes	27	77.1
Weekly Hours Spent on RTI		
1 – 3	1	2.9
4 – 5	2	5.7
6 – 8	12	34.3
9 or more	20	57.1
Task Neglected Because of RTI		
Classroom guidance	5	14.3
Group counseling	22	62.9
Individual counseling	8	22.9

Stages of Concern Questionnaire

The school counselors responded to the *Stages of Concern Questionnaire*. The 35-item instrument was presented on an 8-point Likert-type scale. The survey was adapted to assess the use of the RTI process, roles and responsibilities of school counselors, counselor self-efficacy, time reduction and academic achievement (classroom performance, EC referrals, and EC placement). The descriptive statistics for the individual items of the *Stages of Concern Questionnaire* are listed in Appendix A.

Hypothesis Testing

Research Question 1. Are the counselors' uses of the RTI process a statistically significant predictor of time reduction?

H₀: Counselor use of the RTI process will not be a statistically significant predictor of time reduction.

A simple linear regression was conducted to address Hypothesis 1. The counselors' perception of the use of RTI was the predictor, and time reduction was the criterion. The following testing procedures were utilized (Howell, 2010; Stevens, 2002) for the regression model. First, the data were screened for outliers by calculating the participants' standardized residuals. A data point was considered an outlier when |standardized residual was greater than 3. This process did not reveal any outliers in the data.

The next step was to assess the statistical assumptions of the regression. A scatterplot (Figure 1) with the regression line (i.e. line of best fit) was created to assess model linearity and homoscedasticity. The plot indicated a linear model. This indicates that a straight line was the best fit for the data. In other words, a straight line best minimizes the distance of the points to the line. The plot did not reveal any evidence of model heteroscedasticity. This indicates that the size of the errors (i.e., the residuals) was consistent across levels of the criterion.

The descriptive statistics and regression coefficients are listed in Tables 4 and 5, respectively. The regression indicated that the use of RTI was a significant positive predictor of time reduction, $F(1, 33) = 6.64$, $\beta = 0.41$, $R^2 = .17$, $p = .015$. This indicates the counselors' hours of time reduction increased as the use of RTI increased. Specifically, this indicates the counselors felt that the RTI process decreased the amount of time they had to accomplish the many duties associated with their job as a school counselor. The scatterplot shows the upward sloping regression line that is indicative of the positive relationship.

Figure 1. Scatterplot for Model 1

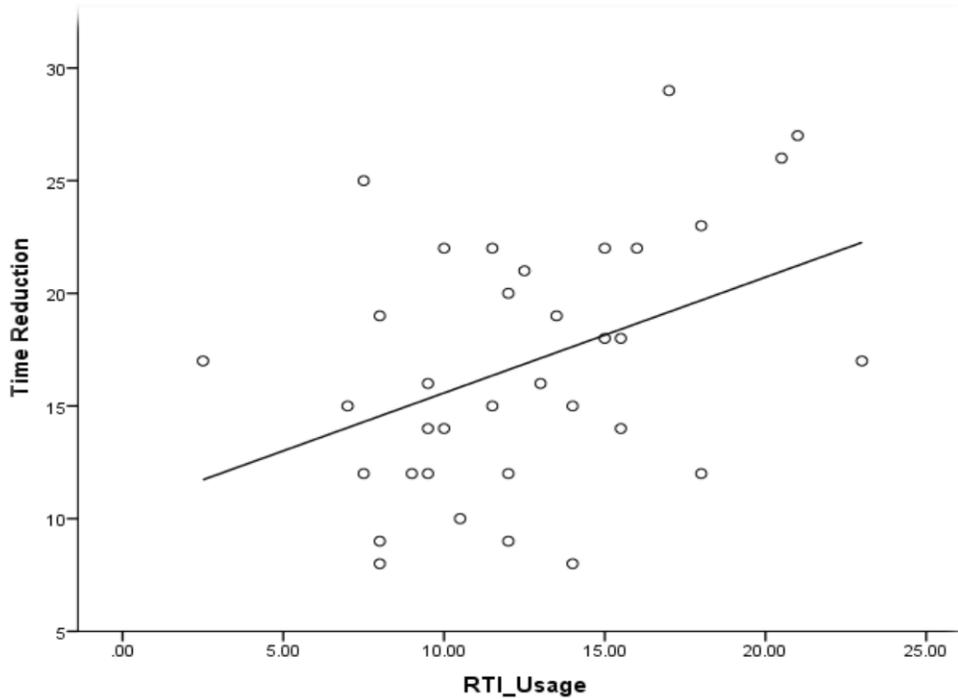


Table 4. Descriptive Statistics for Model 1

Variable	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Time Reduction	35	16.86	5.60
Use of RTI	35	12.49	4.46

Table 5. Regression Coefficients for Model 1

Predictor	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	<i>T</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	95% CI for <i>B</i>	
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Use of RTI	0.51	0.20	0.41	2.58	.015	0.11	0.92

Research Question 2. Are the counselors' uses of the RTI process a statistically significant predictor of the efficacy of school counselors?

H₀: Counselor use of the RTI process will not be a statistically significant predictor of the efficacy of school counselors.

A simple linear regression was conducted to address Hypothesis 2. The counselors' perception of the use of RTI was the predictor, and the efficacy of school counselors was the criterion. The testing procedures described in Research Question 1 were again utilized for the regression model. First, the data were screened for outliers by calculating the participants' standardized residuals. This process revealed 1 outlier in the data. This participant was removed prior to assessing the statistical assumptions.

A scatterplot (Figure 2) with the regression line (i.e., line of best fit) was created to assess model linearity and homoscedasticity. The plot indicated a linear model. This indicates that a straight line was the best fit for the data. The plot did not reveal any evidence of model heteroscedasticity. This indicates that the size of the errors (i.e., the residuals) was consistent across levels of the criterion.

The descriptive statistics and regression coefficients are listed in Tables 6 and 7, respectively. The regression indicated that the use of RTI was a significant positive predictor of counselor perceived self-efficacy, $F(1, 32) = 47.38$, $\beta = 0.77$, $R^2 = .60$, $p = .000$. This indicates the counselors' perceived self-efficacy increased with increasing use of RTI. This effect may be due to the counselors' ability to manage the increased responsibilities imposed by the RTI despite the fact it reduces the amount of time that they have to execute these actions. That is, the

counselors are still effective, thereby increasing their efficacy to deal with multiple tasks. The scatterplot shows the upward sloping regression line that is indicative of the positive relationship.

Figure 2. Scatterplot for Model 2

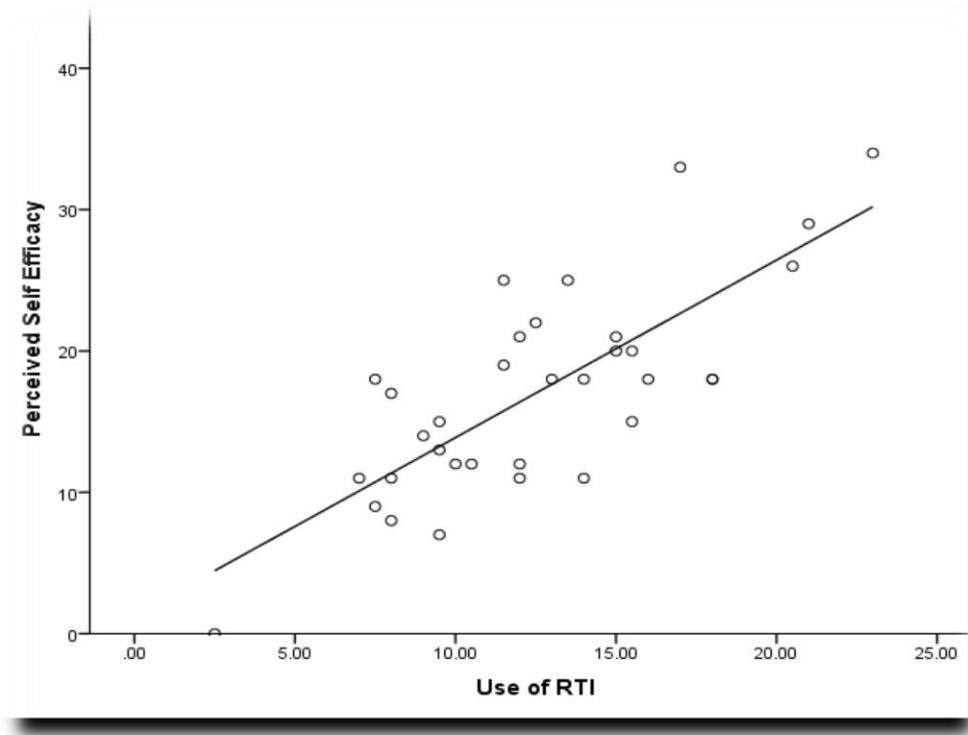


Table 6. Descriptive Statistics for Model 2

Variable	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Perceived Self Efficacy	34	17.09	7.32
Use of RTI	34	12.56	4.50

Table 7. Regression Coefficients for Model 2

Predictor	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		95% CI for B		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>T</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Use of RTI	1.26	0.18	0.77	6.88	.000	0.89	1.63

Research Question 3: Are the counselors' uses of the RTI process a statistically significant predictor of academic achievement?

H₀: Counselor use of the RTI process will not be a statistically significant predictor of academic achievement.

A simple linear regression was conducted to address Hypothesis 3. The counselors' use of RTI was the predictor, and academic achievement was the criterion. The testing procedures described in Research Question 1 were again utilized for the regression model. The data screening process did not reveal any outliers in the data.

The scatterplot with the regression line (i.e., line of best fit) is displayed in Figure 3. The plot indicated a linear model. This indicates that a straight line was the best fit for the data. The plot also did not reveal any evidence of model heteroscedasticity. This indicates that the size of the errors (i.e., the residuals) was consistent across levels of the criterion.

The descriptive statistics and regression coefficients are listed in Tables 8 and 9, respectively. The regression indicated that the use of RTI was a significant positive predictor of academic achievement, $F(1, 33) = 5.42$, $\beta = 0.38$, $R^2 = .14$, $p = .026$. This indicates that academic achievement increased with increased use of the RTI.

Figure 3. Scatterplot for Model 3

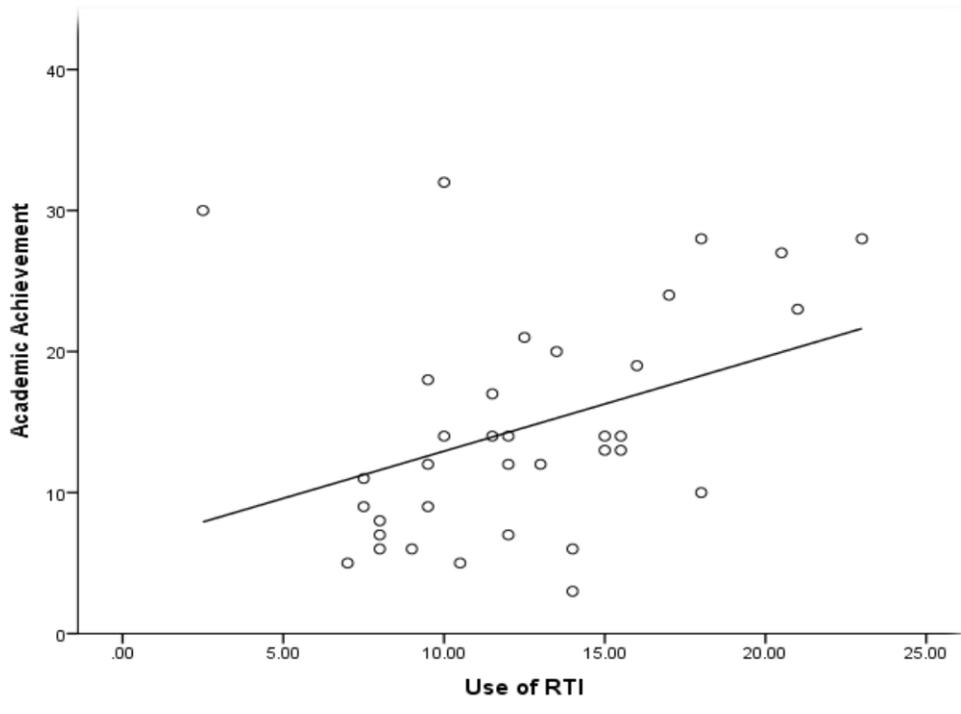


Table 8. Descriptive Statistics for Model 3

Variable	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Academic Achievement	35	0.77	0.20
Use of RTI	35	12.49	4.46

Table 9. Regression Coefficients for Model 3

Predictor	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	<i>t</i>	Sig.	95% CI for B	
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Use of RTI	0.67	0.29	0.38	2.33	.026	0.08	1.25

Research Question 3: Null Hypothesis 4: Are the counselors' uses of the RTI process a statistically significant predictor of the proportion of RTI referrals sent to the EC case manager that were placed into EC programs?

H₀: Counselor use of the RTI process will not be a statistically significant predictor of the proportion of RTI referrals sent to the EC case manager that were placed into EC programs.

A simple linear regression was conducted to address Hypothesis 4. The counselors' perception of the use of RTI was the predictor, and the proportion of RTI referrals sent to the EC case manager that were placed into EC programs was the criterion. The testing procedures described in Research Question 1 were again utilized for the regression model. The data screening process did not reveal any outliers in the data.

The scatterplot with the regression line (i.e., line of best fit) is displayed in Figure 4. The plot indicated a linear model. This indicates that a straight line was the best fit for the data. However, the plot did reveal some evidence of model heteroscedasticity. This indicates that the size of the errors (i.e., the residuals) was inconsistent across levels of the criterion. Specifically, the size of the errors was larger for lower values of the criterion compared to the errors for higher values of the criterion.

The descriptive statistics and regression coefficients are listed in Tables 10 and 11, respectively. The regression indicated that the use of RTI just missed reaching conventional levels of statistical significance as a predictor of the proportion of RTI referrals sent to the EC case manager that were placed into EC programs, $F(1, 33) = 3.23$, $\beta = 0.30$, $R^2 = .09$, $p = .082$. However, the regression did reveal a trend effect (i.e., $.05 < p\text{-value} < .10$). In other words, the

effect was not statistically significant at $\alpha = .05$, but there was trend toward significance. This is of particular interest given the relatively small sample size.

Figure 4. Scatterplot for Model 4

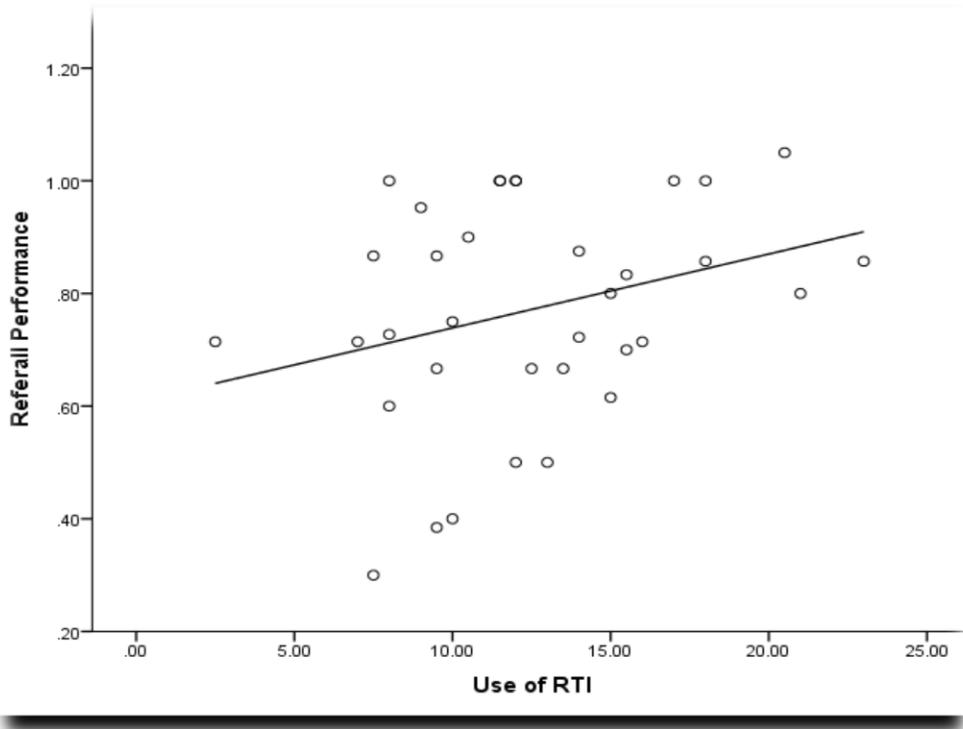


Table 10. Descriptive Statistics for Model 4

Variable	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Proportion of Referrals Placed in EC Program	35	0.77	0.20
Use of RTI	35	12.49	4.46

Table 11. *Regression Coefficients for Model 4*

Predictor	<i>Unstandardized Coefficients</i>		<i>Standardized Coefficients</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>95% CI for B</i>	
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β			<i>Lower Bound</i>	<i>Upper Bound</i>
Use of RTI	0.01	0.01	0.30	1.80	.082	-0.00	0.03

Research Question 3: Null Hypothesis 5: Are the counselors’ uses of the RTI process a statistically significant predictor of the number of placed Exceptional Children’s referrals?

H₀: Counselor use of the RTI process will not be a statistically significant predictor of the number of placed Exceptional Children’s referrals.

A simple linear regression was conducted to address Hypothesis 5. The counselors’ perception of the use of RTI was the predictor, and the number of placed Exceptional Children’s referrals was the criterion. The testing procedures described in Research Question 1 were again utilized for the regression model. The data screening process did not reveal any outliers in the data.

The scatterplot with the regression line (i.e., line of best fit) is displayed in Figure 5. The plot indicated a linear model. This indicates that a straight line was the best fit for the data. The plot did not reveal any evidence of model heteroscedasticity. This indicates that the size of the errors (i.e., the residuals) was consistent across levels of the criterion.

The descriptive statistics and regression coefficients are listed in Tables 12 and 13, respectively. The regression indicated that the use of RTI was not a significant predictor of the number of behavioral referrals, $F(1, 33) = 1.75$, $\beta = 0.22$, $R^2 = .05$, $p = .195$.

Figure 5. Scatterplot for Model 5

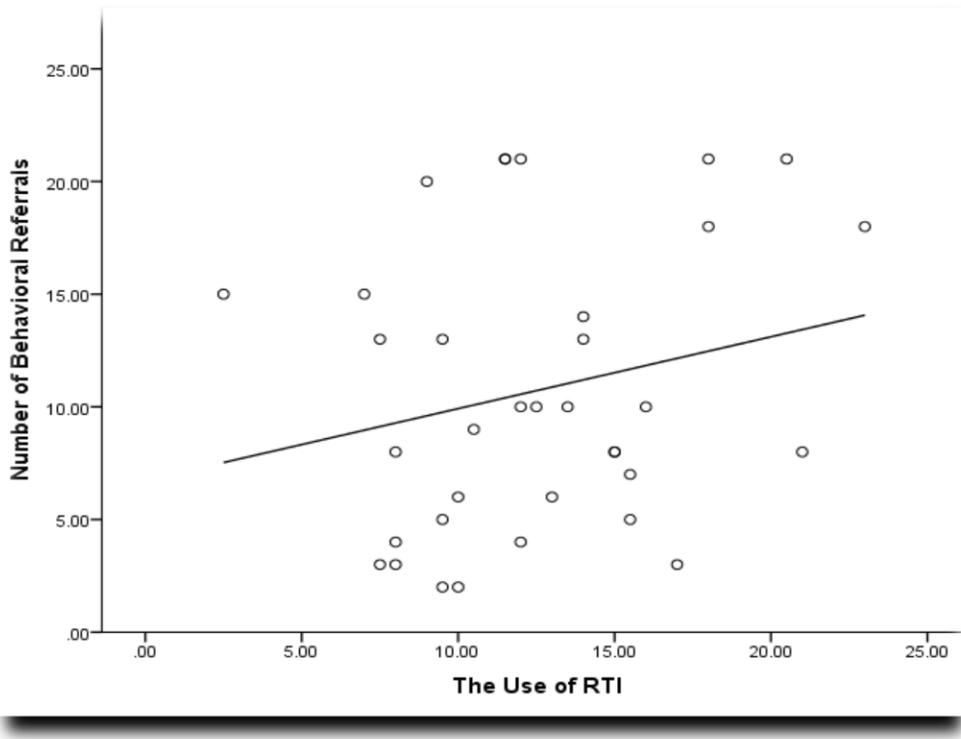


Table 12. Descriptive Statistics for Model 5

Variable	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Number of Behavioral Referrals	35	10.71	6.33
Use of RTI	35	12.49	4.46

Table 13. Regression Coefficients for Model 5

Predictor	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		95% CI for B		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Use of RTI	0.32	0.24	0.22	1.32	.195	-0.17	0.81

Table A. *Descriptive Statistics for Stages of Concern Questionnaire*

Item	<i>n</i>	<i>Min.</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
I am concerned about my attitudes toward the RTI process.	35	0	7	2.97	2.15
I now know of some other roles that might work better with my time as a school counselor.	35	0	7	2.03	1.72
I am more concerned about my ability to fulfill my roles and responsibilities as a school counselor.	35	0	6	1.57	1.42
I am concerned about not having enough time to organize myself each day.	35	0	7	4.29	2.37
I would like to help teachers refer students to the EC department in their use of the RTI process.	35	1	7	4.06	2.07
I have a very limited knowledge of the RTI process and EC placement of students.	35	0	4	1.51	1.01
I would like to know the effect of the RTI process on my professional status.	35	0	7	4.03	1.90
I am concerned about conflict between my requirements and responsibilities with the RTI process.	35	0	7	3.31	2.25
I am concerned about revising my use of the RTI process.	35	0	7	2.89	2.00
I would like to develop working relationships with all faculty using the RTI process and placement of students in the EC program.	35	0	7	3.69	1.69
I am concerned about how the RTI process affects students.	35	0	7	3.60	1.90
I am concerned with how students are referred to EC for testing.	35	0	7	2.40	1.99
I would like to know who if my decisions about the RTI process affects EC referrals and EC placement of students.	35	0	7	3.17	1.99

I would like to discuss the possibility of using the RTI process in my schedule.	35	0	7	2.20	1.76
I would like to know what academic resources are available if school counselors decide to use the RTI process in their schedule.	35	0	7	3.20	2.17
I am concerned about my inability to manage all that the RTI process requires.	35	1	7	3.43	2.00
I would like to know how my counseling or time would change when not using the RTI process.	35	0	7	3.43	2.21
I would like to familiarize the EC department with the RTI process for referral reasons.	35	0	7	3.86	2.13
I am concerned about evaluating my academic achievement impact on students.	35	1	7	3.51	1.82
I would like to revise the use of RTI process when used by school counselors.	35	1	7	3.26	2.08
I am preoccupied with things other than the RTI process.	35	0	7	1.97	1.67
I would like to modify our use of the RTI process based on the academic experiences of our students.	35	0	7	2.89	2.01
I spend lot of time thinking about the RTI process and its effect on EC Placement of students.	35	0	5	1.31	0.90
I would like to know if my EC referrals are significant with my use of the RTI process	35	0	7	3.43	2.00
I am concerned about time spent working with the RTI process.	35	1	7	3.31	2.10
I would like to know what the use of the RTI process will require in the immediate future for EC referrals and EC placement of students.	35	0	7	4.00	2.14
I would like to coordinate my efforts with EC referrals to maximize the RTI process's effects.	35	0	7	4.63	1.96
I would like to have more information on time and energy commitments required by the RTI process.	35	0	7	3.97	2.07
I would like to know how my use of the RTI affects the EC placement of students.	35	0	7	4.00	2.02
Currently, other priorities prevent me from focusing my attention on the RTI process.	35	0	7	2.29	1.81

I would like to determine how to supplement, enhance, or replace the RTI process.	35	1	7	3.54	2.13
I would like to use feedback from teachers to change the program.	35	0	7	3.34	1.78
I would like to know how my role will change when I am not using the RTI process.	35	0	7	3.00	2.29
Coordination of the RTI process is taking too much of my time.	35	0	7	4.00	2.38
I would like to know how the RTI process is better when handled by the school counselor.	35	1	7	4.51	2.23

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, & RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Research states that RTI is highly encouraged for students who are struggling in school academically or behaviorally. This process is used to help schools identify and recommend students to be assessed for the Exceptional Children's program. Response to Intervention (RTI) combines assessment and research-based interventions in a multi-level system that promotes student achievement and a reduction in behavioral problems. With this process, schools are able to identify students who are at-risk for failing academically, monitor student progress, provide evidence-based interventions, adjust the interventions as needed, and identify students with learning disabilities or other disabilities.

The role of the school counselor is viewed as a part of the administrative team in some North Carolina schools. School counselors have obligations and responsibilities that need to be implemented into their school counseling program based upon the requirements from the American School Counseling Association and their state department of education. In the state of North Carolina, school counselors should promote student achievement in all aspects of their program. Their program should be data driven and based on standards in cognitive, career and socio-emotional development, and it should also promote and enhance the learning process for all students. School counselors should enforce a program that has direct and indirect services to students. Direct services are services that involve in-person interactions between the student and school counselor. Indirect services are provided on behalf of the student and include referrals for assistance, consultation, and collaboration with parents, teachers, other educators and community agencies. For elementary school counselors their distribution of total school counselor time

should be as follows: Guidance Curriculum- 35%-45%, Individual Student Planning- 5%-10%, Responsive Services- 30%-40%, and System Support- 10%-15%. (Gysbers & Henderson, 2000).

School counselors should be involved in reading literacy and instruction. In the responsive services component early interventions that help students academically and behaviorally should be enforced and ASCA believes their roles should be as stakeholders that develop and implement the RTI process. A school counselor's role should support the RTI prevention and early intervention function. Spending too much time on a certain component of a school counseling program could be imbalanced (ASCA, 2008).

The review of literature indicates that school counselors have to create opportunities that give them direct involvement in the educational process affecting academic outcome (Webb, Brigman, & Campbell, 2005). Being a key player in the RTI process would be an excellent way to keep school counselors involved in making sure academically and behaviorally at-risk students get the interventions they need. Previous research stated that school counselors needed to be involved in the following activities to implement the RTI process correctly: universal screening, ongoing progress monitoring, a system for organizing and disseminating assessment results in a timely manner, and providing professional development to ensure knowledge of , and fidelity to, research-based practices (Ockerman, Mason, & Hollenbeck, 2012).

Other studies suggest that school counselors should play an essential leadership role in the RTI process. The process should be a collaboration of educators who have a shared responsibility. The school counselor's role should be to work with all of the students in the school in instructional settings. They should have a role that provides an opportunity for early counseling interventions. RTI has created new opportunities for school counselors. This process allows counselors to build relationships with administrators, teachers, staff, and parents (Ryan,

Kaffenberger, Carroll, 2011). School counselors should play a large role within the pre-referral process and in primary intervention efforts. School counselors can serve as the liaison between teachers and the school psychologist and provide updates on student working through the tiers of RTI (Zambrano, Castro-Villarreal, & Sullivan, 2012).

The role of the school counselor is constantly evolving and is predicted on educational reform. Their role is determined by numerous sources, and people don't have a solid understanding of the responsibilities of the school counselor (Ockerman, Mason, & Hollenbeck, 2012). According to Whiston, school counselors often try to pitch in and help which can often bring on responsibilities to their schedule that cause them to become overwhelmed (2002). School counselors are not viewed as decision makers in their school but their role is viewed as support rather than central to the mission of the school. It is essential to clarify the role of the school counselor and educate the public about the appropriate responsibilities of the professional school counselor (Ockerman, Mason, & Hollenbeck, 2012).

North Carolina has a state developed RTI guidance document on their website that requires schools in their state to implement the RTI process. There have only been a few case studies that give specifics to how school counselors should implement this process into their school programs. School counselors need critical roles in relation to developing and successfully implementing RTI models and how RTI affects students. School counselors need to be able to establish a role that equally implements RTI and other responsibilities required by ASCA (Ockerman, Mason, and Hollenbeck, 2012). The role of a school counselor should be viewed as a potential interventionist who understands the foundation of RTI and each school process should allow them to work with other school-based professionals with a foundation in social justice and advocacy (Berkley, Bender, Peaster, & Saunders, 2009).

The aim of the present study was to identify whether the RTI process affects the time reduction of the roles and responsibilities, the self-efficacy of elementary school counselors, and the academic achievement of students in elementary schools in North Carolina. More specifically, statistical analysis was undertaken to determine if the RTI process causes a significant time reduction to their roles and responsibilities as a school counselor, whether school counselors feel they are effective when they manage the RTI process in their school, and whether student achievement is established. Understanding the workload and significance of the RTI process and how it impacts the roles and responsibilities of the elementary school counselor may be useful as school districts determine how they will utilize the services of the school counselor. When evaluating the school counselors, school districts will want to make sure that school counselors are able to fulfill all requirements for their yearly evaluations. The research questions that framed this study were:

Research Question 1 (RQ1): Does the RTI process cause a time reduction in the roles and responsibilities of a school counselor's program?

Research Question 2 (RQ2): Do elementary school counselors perceive their role as being effective when the RTI process is implemented into their school counseling program?

Research Question 3 (RQ3): Do students achieve academically when the RTI process is managed by the school counselor?

Data for this study were collected electronically using an adapted version of the Stages of Concern questionnaire by SEDL. The research questions were answered through quantitative analysis of data collected measuring participants' time reduction of their roles and responsibilities, perception of self-efficacy, and academic achievement. The sample included 35

elementary school counselors from North Carolina. All of these counselors were classified as the chairperson of the RTI process in their schools.

Summary of Findings

SPSS 22.0 was used to analyze data for the research questions. Each research question and hypothesis was answered by running a simple linear regression analysis. Full details of these analyses were presented in Chapter 4 with key findings summarized in this section.

Results from the analyses indicate a positive correlation between the criterion variable (RTI process) and time reduction ($p=.015$), perception of self-efficacy ($p=.000$), and academic achievement ($p=.026$). However, the analysis showed no significance with EC referrals to the EC program ($p=.082$) and placement of the EC referrals ($p=.195$). As such, only three null hypotheses were retained. The hypotheses for Exceptional Children's referrals to the EC program and placement of the EC referrals showed a trend effect. The regression for these 2 criterion variables (EC and EC placement referrals) did reveal a trend effect (i.e., $.05 < p\text{-value} < .10$). The effect was not statistically significant at $\alpha=.05$, but there was trend toward significance. This trend effect shows a particular interest because of the small sample size. It is believed that significance could be found with a larger sample size.

Conclusions and Implications

The ASCA National model is the framework for school counseling programs to promote student achievement (ASCA, 2006). This national model give schools across the country the process to design, organize, coordinate and evaluate their school counselors. This model is made of four interconnected components: the foundation, the delivery system, the management system and accountability. The delivery system is the component where RTI would be utilized because school counselors use counseling interventions that directly serve students such as teaching the

guidance curriculum, individual student planning and responsive services, and group based services (ASCA, 2008).

The results of this study indicate that the overall tiered structure of the RTI process can be utilized with interventions within a school counseling program in moderation. The RTI process can be incorporated into the school counseling program but should not be used as a secretarial position of the RTI team. Counselors should not be responsible for excessive paperwork, countless hours of meetings, record keeping, Exceptional Children's tasks, and serving on a 1-2 person RTI team of educators. Many of the comments from the survey state that school counselors should be used as an interventionist and not as the chairperson of the team. Being chairperson puts a huge responsibility on the school counselor because they are the organizer of the entire RTI model. Many counselors stated that because they spent so much time doing the logistics of the RTI process, they rarely had time to fully implement the process into their school counseling program. The RTI process became a separate job that did not include group counseling, classroom guidance, or individual counseling. One of these tasks was always eliminated because the RTI process was managed by the elementary school counselor. 62.9% of school counselors said they did not have time for group counseling, 22.9% did not have time for individual counseling, and 14.3% did not have time for classroom guidance. 32 school counselors spent 6 or more hours per week on the RTI process and 74.3% of the sample did not have time to achieve ASCA goals while managing the RTI process. Elementary counselors felt they were the driving force for the RTI process, which required them to schedule meetings, manage numerous caseloads, facilitate communication between all departments in the school follow-up on needed steps to pass students to the next tier, and do observations of all students being referred to the RTI process. One counselor stated, "It is very overwhelming to be the gate

keeper for referring students to the IEP team, but still be a practitioner that should be addressing the same concerns, there are times I feel ineffective due to the number of student and families that need assistance and the lack of time I have to help them.” School counselors spend 2 days a week conducting parent meetings and another day to write the schedule, review student files, do invitations, and do reminder calls to parents.

Research data suggest that school counselors should incorporate the RTI process into each tier of the RTI model and it should mirror the requirements from ASCA. School counselors should take their school counseling program and incorporate it into the 3 tiers of the RTI process. Tier One should include interventions to all students at a school wide level. Tier Two should be for students who are identified as having a greater need and require target interventions with increased intensity and focus. Tier Three should be focused on individual needs of students and tailored for that particular student (Ockerman, Mason, & Hollenbeck, 2012). With a schedule that models this technique, time reduction is not an issue for elementary school counselors and meeting the requirements of the national school counseling model is not a concern. The greatest amount of time should be spent in tier one, which would be direct services to students with school wide interventions and implementations of the guidance curriculum. Tier One allows for serving the greatest number of students. Tier One is also where school counselors should monitor the progress of students who are potentially struggling and need more intensive services. School data should allow for changes with the interventions and evaluations of the overall school counseling program. Students should move between the tiers for school counseling just like they do for the RTI process. The school counseling program and RTI process should be interconnected to help school counselors serve in a proactive, accountable manner. The school improvement team at the school should evaluate the school counseling program to ensure that

classroom guidance, small group sessions, and individual counseling have intervention at each tier of the RTI process with the use of school data.

Recommendations for Further Research

As was highlighted in the review of literature, school counselors are major stakeholders in the development and implementation of the Response to Intervention (RTI) process. School counselors programs should be data-driven and lead to identifying students who are at-risk academically and behaviorally. If this is indeed the case, the non-significant findings in the present study indicating that Exceptional Children's (EC) referrals to the case manager and EC placement referrals have no direct correlation to the RTI process when it is managed by school counselors. The question of why these two tasks are not affected is an important areas for additional research. Further research should, therefore, strive to obtain a larger sample size when conducting similar quantitative research to ensure sufficient, statistical power. A qualitative study would allow participants to discuss how the RTI process affects their roles and responsibilities as a school counselor and how they feel about not being able to implement all of the requirements that are needed for ASCA. Another idea for a future study would be to give the survey in the middle or at the end of the school year. Would the timing impact the results? It would be interesting to see the differences in the perceptions of the school counselors about the RTI process and how it impacts their schedule.

With a larger emphasis on test scores, it is vital that school counselors play a major role in helping schools meet satisfactory scores on state test. Further research on how school counselors can help with student achievement on state-recognized tests while using the RTI process would be useful. Once this research has been conducted it may be possible for schools to utilize school counselors in a capacity that is most effective for the student. Previous studies

have consistently shown that school districts utilize their school counselors in administrative functions in tasks that are not related to their training. Given this information, it is pertinent that researchers evaluate the effects of student learning when their school counselor is utilized in a different capacity other than the one that incorporates ASCA National Model. The Department of Education plans to push legislators to invest more in schools that do not have the resources to hire more counselors (Bidwell, 2013). School officials are saying a lack of school counselors hurt students academically and mentally. Further research should be conducted to see how the lack of funding leaves school counselors struggling to find balance in their work place. How do school counselors juggle acting as a crisis interventionist and other clerical duties that would include the RTI process? How do heavier caseloads affected by schools that cut school counseling positions and increase the case load of one school counselor with 1,000 to 2,000 students in a school affect student achievement? These questions warrant more research in this field.

Previous studies state that school counselors feel inadequate because they are not doing what they were hired to do (Kolodinky, Draves, Shroder, Lindsey, & Zlater, 2009). School counselors have the support of ASCA, who continues to define the role and function of school counselors. However, there is still a knowledge gap about whether they impact student success (Dahir, 2004). These results are contrary to what would be expected based on the majority of previous studies on this subject. Because of the small sample size, limited statistical power of the test conducted on the subject could be the reason for no significant differences found. It is recommended that additional research be conducted on the subject, both quantitative and qualitative. Specifically, investigation into whether the RTI process when managed by school counselors has significance to students being referred to the Exceptional Children program for

testing and students who actually placed into the EC program when the school counselor manages the RTI process

Recommendation for Practice

When a person decides to be a school counselor, they should consider the decision carefully. Because school counselors require a Master's degree, this profession is usually a second career for most individuals. Most people who pursue a degree in school counseling are usually people who want to help children and are able to multi-task. In 1996, the Education Trust started a national initiative to transform school counselors, TSCI (Galassi & Akos, 2012). The initiative is to put an emphasis on training school counselors to promote academic development for all students. Historically, school counselors were viewed as gatekeepers for minority students and students of color (House & Sears, 2002). TSCI showed limitations in school counselor preparation programs. TSCI recommends a reform of college/universities school counseling programs. These programs should have greater emphasis on engagement of students in K-12 during their internship, integration of curriculum and clinical experiences, integration with other educational professional cohort models, and learning about school change (Galassi & Akos, 2012). These changes would reform "inadequate preservice training."

School counselor programs no longer require prior teaching experience. However it would be beneficial for them to be introduced to knowledge from teacher education (e.g., educational leadership, differentiated instruction, educational psychology, self-regulated learning) to help them promote academic development and contribute to leadership initiatives that foster academic success for all students. It is also recommended that school preparation programs in colleges and universities develop graduate courses that include how to promote academic development, K-12 school-based practicums and internships, and ASCA's national

model. As the end of their program, students who are preparing to become school counselors should develop a year-long plan that shows how they would incorporate all of the requirements of a school counselor and how it would promote academic achievement. This plan should also show how each component is aligned with the ASCA National Model and the RTI process. School counselor programs will need to strive to produce counselors of high quality to ensure the profession maintains and is funded.

Limitations

The results of this study were limited by the small sample size. Although Cumberland County Schools elementary counselors have 54 employees that were asked to participate in the study, it proved difficult to get the 35 participants' participation. All the participants were from the same geographical region, so the findings were not a general reflection of the entire U.S. The time in which the survey was administered was a month after school began. School counselors were just starting their program and because many of them are on a master schedule like a teacher, many did not have ample amount of time during the school day to focus on the survey questions and answer open-ended questions.

Summary

Implementing the American School Counseling Association National Model is an essential component for school counseling programs. ASCA's mission is to stimulate school counseling programs with the primary goal of today's schools, which is increasing the academic achievement of all students (Brown & Trusty, 2005). School counselors who incorporate RTI into their program and not add it as an additional responsibility will produce increases in student achievement. According to a previous study, students who attended schools with more fully implemented comprehensive school counseling program reported that they earned higher grades,

had better relationships with their teachers, were getting a more relevant education, and had a more positive view of the school environment. The purpose of this quantitative research study was to see if there was a relationship between the RTI process and time reduction of a school counselor's schedule, a relationship between the RTI process and a school counselor's self-efficacy, and a relationship between the RTI process and academic achievement (EC referral and placement of the EC referrals) when the RTI process is managed by the school counselor. This study gave some valuable findings on how a school counselor's roles and responsibilities are impacted by the RTI process when it is added to their schedule. Data for this study was collected through the use of survey methodology. Five hypotheses were analyzed using a correlational research design.

Findings from the analyses show that the RTI process causes a negative impact to time reduction of school counselor's schedule which greatly increases their roles and responsibilities. The RTI process does not cause the school counselor to feel ineffective even though it is overwhelming. According to the results of this survey, school counselors still have a positive attitude and rise above the huge work load to make sure every child is academically successful. However, the findings also showed no significance between how many EC referrals are sent to the case teacher and placement of students into the EC program when the RTI process is managed by the school counselor. This does not mean there is no relationship; further research with a large sample size would be a benefit in these two areas. While the role of the school counselor is constantly being discussed because of funding, it is vital that school counselors manage their time in activities that are required and provide academic success to all students in their school. It should be a priority for school counselors to mirror their programs to ASCA's national model. If their program is aligned with ASCA, their time will be utilized effectively to

help students. It is recommended that additional research be conducted on the subject, both quantitative and qualitative, specifically investigation with a larger sample size that also focused on counselor/student ratio and how self-efficacy is affected because of a large case load for one counselor (1:700-1500).

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Appendix A

ONLINE CONSENT FORM

Survey: Stages of Concern Questionnaire (SoCQ 075) for Perceived Effects of North Carolina's Response to Intervention Process on School Counselor's Professional Duties and Responsibilities (A Correlational Study)

Researcher: Katina Bookard (910) 723-1431
Liberty University
School of Education

You are invited to be in a research study of School Counselors and the Response to Intervention process. You were selected as a possible participant because you are an elementary school counselor. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Katina Bookard and the Department of Education at Liberty University.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to identify the relationship between the RTI process that is assigned into a school counselor's schedule and whether it causes a significant time reduction for other responsibilities that are required by the American School Counseling Association's National Model. This study will help school districts across the country to understand the impact of adding the RTI process into their school counseling programs. The results will also help educators to understand how the RTI process might cause a significant change in the roles and responsibilities for a School Counselor. ASCA has stated that many educators do not have a detailed list of what is required to be an effective school counselor. This study will help to identify the relationship between school counselors and the requirements from ASCA. The objective of this study is to see if there is a relationship with the RTI process and whether it has changed the professional role of the school counselor. Another objective is to look at self-efficacy of a school counselor that has the RTI process implemented into their program. Do they feel that they are being effective and meeting the needs of the students in their school? This study will see if there is a relationship between student achievement and the RTI process when it is assigned to the schedule of school counselors. Student achievement can be determined when a student finds success in one of the tiers of the RTI process and does not require exceptional children's testing or placement.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:
Complete a one-time online survey, approximately 10 minutes.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:

Risk

The risks are no more than you would encounter in everyday life.

Benefits

The significance of this study will allow schools to examine whether having the school counselor to oversee this process in their school is being effective with student achievement. This study will give school districts the knowledge that is needed to make changes to how the RTI process is being implemented in their schools and who would be the best person to ensure that effective results are being seen through student achievement from students who don't require special education testing. The RTI process is successful when a student finds a tier that helps them to find academic success. Is the school counselor the right person to make sure that the student finds academic success in the RTI process?

Compensation:

Participants will not be compensated.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the records.

The information will be stored in an online data account that will be created by me. No one will have access to this information. The school counselor coordinator will not have access to the survey or the survey results. Instead of using their names, school counselors will assign a number given to each counselor.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Katina Bookard. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact Katina Bookard at 910-723-1431, klbookard@liberty.edu or Dr. Erik Mullinix, faculty advisor, enmullinix@liberty.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 1837, Lynchburg, VA 24502 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

Appendix B



Cumberland County Schools

ALICIA S. CHISOLM, CHAIR
GREGORY E. WEST, VICE CHAIR
MICHAEL C. BOOSE
KIMBERLY P. FISHER
MACKY HALL

P.O. Box 2357
Fayetteville, North Carolina 28302
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LARRY LANCASTER
JAMES A. MCLAUGHLIN
CARRIE SUTTON
SUSAN B. WILLIAMS

DR. FRANK TILL
SUPERINTENDENT

September 11, 2013

To: Ms. Katina Bookard

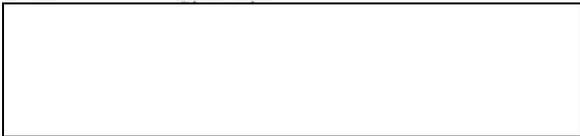
From: Ron Phipps, Associate Superintendent
Evaluation and Testing

Study: *"Perceived effects of North Carolina's Response to Intervention Process on School Counselor's Professional Duties and Responsibilities (A Correlational Study)"*

Your human subject research proposal has been reviewed and approved by the Cumberland County Schools' Research Committee, pending Liberty University's IRB approval.

The Research Committee approved your request to conduct your research under the conditions that you comply with Cumberland County Policy: ICC and Research Project Guidelines. Please keep in mind that participation is voluntary and instructional time is not to be interrupted.

Congratulations and best wishes with your research project.



Fully Accredited School System

Appendix C

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

October 7, 2013

Katina L. Bookard
IRB Approval 1679.100713: Perceived Effects of North Carolina's Response to
Intervention Process on School Counselors' Professional Duties and
Responsibilities: A Correlational Study

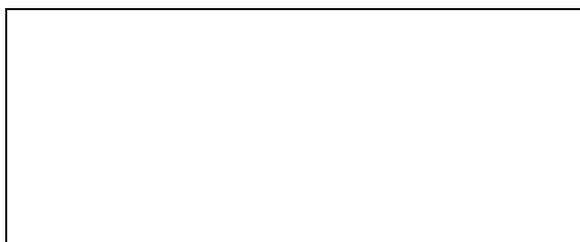
Dear Katina,

We are pleased to inform you that your above study has been approved by the Liberty IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Please retain this letter for your records. Also, if you are conducting research as part of the requirements for a master's thesis or doctoral dissertation, this approval letter should be included as an appendix to your completed thesis or dissertation.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,



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Appendix D

09/04/2013 WED 09:55 FAX 512 476 2286

SEDL

001



SEDL License Agreement

To: Katina Bookard (Licensee)
School Counselor
Liberty University
360 Kimberwicke Drive
Fayetteville, NC 28311

From: Nancy Reynolds
Information Associate
SEDL
Information Resource Center-Copyright Permissions
4700 Mueller Blvd.
Austin, TX 78723

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Date: October 2, 2012

Thank you for your interest in using the **Stages of Concern Questionnaire** (SoCQ 075) published by SEDL in *Measuring Implementation in Schools: The Stages of Concern Questionnaire* written by Archie A. George, Gene E. Hall, and Suzanne M. Stiegelbauer in 2006, as Appendix A, pages 79-82; it is also available in electronic format as SEDL's *Stages of Concern Questionnaire (SoCQ) Online* (which can be purchased on the SEDL website at <http://www.sedl.org/pubs/catalog/items/cbam21.html>) and in the book *Taking Charge of Change*, revised ed., published in 2006 and written by Shirley M. Hord, William L. Rutherford, Leslie Huling, and Gene E. Hall, on pages 48-49.

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Thank you, again, for your interest in using SEDL's *Stages of Concern Questionnaire*. If you have any questions, please contact me at 800-476-6861, ext. 6548 or 512-391-6548, or by e-mail at nancy.reynolds@sedl.org.

Sincerely,