

SOLVING THE PROBLEM OF THE TRANSFERBILITY OF RESPONSE TO
INTERVENTION SKILLS TO THE GENERAL EDUCATION SETTING: AN APPLIED
APPROACH STUDY

by

April Renee Freeney

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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APPROVED BY:

Susan Stanley, Ed.D., Committee Chair

Tracey Pritchard, Ed.D, Committee Member

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this applied study was to solve the problem of the transferability of Response to Intervention (RTI) skills (specifically tiers 2 and 3) into the general education setting for students at an elementary school located in middle Tennessee and to design practices to address the problem. Data collection included interviews, achievement scores, and surveys from over 60 stakeholders at the elementary school. This data was collected from stakeholders to include teachers, students, administrators, and interventionists. After collecting data from the stakeholders at the elementary school, analysis strategies were incorporated to describe the problem. Coding, direct analysis, and descriptive statistics of the information occurred to assist in developing a practice to solve the circumstance. Once the data collection described the problem in a cohesive manner, the researcher proposed an action plan that includes professional development for the staff, hiring additional staff, and incorporating vigorous instruction for students. These practices seek to help improve the problem of the transferability of RTI skills at the elementary school.

Keywords: Response to Intervention (RTI) framework, transferability, at risk students, tiers, reading

Copyright Page (Optional)

April Renee Freeney, 2021

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my husband, children, and parents. I could not have completed this tremendous task without your sacrifices, support, patience, and most importantly your love.

To my husband, Dedric, thank you for always supporting me in all of my endeavors. You have sacrificed countless hours of your time to ensure that I had uninterrupted time to solely devote to this endeavor. You also ensured that financially I had the resources to successfully complete each course. While this journey has prepared me to become a leader in my career, you show me every day the meaning of a true leader by leading our household. I am blessed to have you as a spouse.

To my children, Dewan (18), Kalyn (12), and Daltyn (5), thank you for your patience throughout this journey. While I often had to devote countless hours to this endeavor, I hope I have shown you the value of hard work and the value of following your dreams. Never shy away from goals because they are perceived as difficult. Although time consuming and difficult, hard work builds an upright and pure character as James 1:12 (English Standard Version) declares, “Blessed is the man who remains under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.”

To my mom, Johnnie Champion, you are my hero. You are talented in so many areas and have a pure desire to help individuals regardless of their background. You instilled in me the importance of independence and completing a task once started. Thank you for the countless road trips each year to ensure that I have the time, resources, and manpower to excel in my career. Your love is undeniable.

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List of Abbreviations

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

Individualized Education Plan (IEP)

Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE),

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

Response to Intervention (RTI)

Specific Learning Disability (SLD)

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS)

Student Support Team (SST)

Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Reading is a skill that individuals need to effectively function and communicate as they complete daily activities throughout their lives and communities. While students receive explicit literacy and reading instruction in primary grades, a prolific number of students are unable to read grade level material and complete grade level tasks (Camera, 2018). To address this problem, Congress modified the education law, The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA), to include the systematic tiered program, Response to Intervention (RTI).

The purpose of this study was to solve the problem of the transferability of reading skills from the RTI framework (specifically tiers two and three) to the general education classrooms for a Pre-K-5 public elementary school located in central Tennessee. Although students who participate in tier two and tier three of RTI receive specialized interventions, significant academic discrepancies continue to exist between students participating in the RTI framework and students not participating in the RTI framework (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). Analyzing the transferability of skills learned in RTI into the general education setting is vital, as it allows stakeholders to determine if the needs of at-risk students in reading are being met, and to also determine if students are being prepared to master the general education curriculum. This chapter will provide readers with a background of the topic, re-identify the problem and purpose statement, identify the significance of the study, and will detail the research questions. Chapter one will conclude with a list of definitions that will help readers comprehend the terminology used throughout the study in addition to a summary of the content provided in the chapter.

Background

Despite years of reading interventions and research, students' independent reading abilities remain a severe problem (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). To address the obstacle, various state and school-wide approaches have been utilized in the past to combat the reading epidemic. Since the implementation of RTI, the nation's schools now possess a universal guide for at-risk students. The RTI initiative is an instructional framework in which schools can provide interventions and support for students who display academic and behavioral difficulties, to include reading difficulties (Hughes & Dexter, 2011). The RTI framework is also an alternative to the historical well-recognized IQ-discrepancy model for identifying students with a SLD (Hughes & Dexter, 2011). For 30 years, educators disputed the best and worst ways to adopt an eligibility policy for special education services that resulted in no consistency (Searle, 2010). In response to this dilemma, a discrepancy formula was developed to determine whether a student's actual achievement was significantly different from his or her predicted achievement based upon his or her Intelligence Quotient (IQ) score.

While the RTI initiative was created to combat the academic and behavior problems across the nation, data continues to show that a relative high percentage of the 50.4 million enrolled students in public schools continue to struggle when presented with the multifaceted academic concept of reading (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). Yet less than adequate, approaches exist that evaluate the cohesive federal RTI framework (Sparks, 2019). With such data, there is a robust sense of urgency in improving reading instruction and literacy outcomes in our country (Torgesen, 2002).

Reading is a skill that allows individuals to experience success in all areas of life (Hierck, 2014). The RTI model has positive benefits to assist students in experiencing this success and

includes a collective group of professionals, including teachers, psychologists, counselors, interventionists, and administrators. While these individuals are integral stakeholders in the RTI process, they recognize that improvements are needed to ensure that students are proficient readers in various environments (Barrio and Combes, 2014). This research will attempt to solve the transferability of reading skills learned in RTI into the general education environment. This research will target interventionists, teachers, and support staff who serve students in RTI or who have RTI students in their classrooms. Schools who have incorporated the RTI initiative may also benefit from this study. The background section of this research section will expound on the social, historical, and theoretical elements of reading, in addition to RTI.

Historical

Although the United States of America is advanced in many areas, the reading ability of American students is an area in which data continues to display negative discrepancies. Reading, a complex skill that requires mastery of various sub skills, including word recognition, fluency, and comprehension, affects all areas of academics (Malouf et al., 2014). Yet despite its significance in our society, students struggle to master the skill. In 1998, reading scores suggested that only one-third of students proficiently read grade level material (Wexler, 2018). Although two decades have passed, reading difficulties continue to plague students sitting in America's classrooms. Data currently suggests that 36% of fourth grade and 65% of eighth grade students do not have the appropriate skills to effectively read and complete grade-level work (National Center for Educational Progress, 2015). To address this epidemic, schools have employed various methods to assist students with reading difficulties.

Historically, schools utilized their school-based student support team (SST) to assist students who displayed deficits in reading. In the federal law, The Rehabilitation Act of 1973,

provisions were included for schools to have an SST team comprised of teachers, administrators, counselors, psychologists, and other school personnel. The team's primary goal centered around offering teachers support and guidance for at-risk students (Georgia Department of Education, 2019). In addition to offering support to teachers, the SST team also had the ability to recommend a comprehensive evaluation for special education services for students suspected of having a specific learning disability (SLD). Through this method, the school psychologist or qualifying evaluator used the IQ achievement discrepancy model to identify children with reading learning disabilities (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). If an incongruity existed between a student's intellectual and cognitive ability and academic achievement, then the student would receive an identification as a student with a SLD (Restori et al., 2009). For example, a fifth-grade student being evaluated as having a suspected disability, as a SLD student, may have taken an IQ assessment which revealed the student had an IQ in the average range. However, when given an academic reading assessment, test scores revealed that the student read on a second-grade level. This was noted as a discrepancy between the IQ assessment and the achievement assessment and was the method used to qualify students as having a SLD in reading (Rosen, 2014). Although this model, introduced in 1977, was commonly used to identify special education students as SLD under IDEA, many stakeholders in the educational community regarded this practice as an unreliable practice referencing the over identification of special education students, particularly males and African American students (Hoppey, 2013). Cakiroglu (2015) asserted, "Since 1977, the number of students diagnosed with learning disabilities has increased over 200% percent" (p.170). The IQ-achievement discrepancy model, in addition, was criticized as it was seen as the wait-to-fail model because schools waited until students demonstrated a significant enough discrepancy between achievement and IQ score

before special education services were provided (Bouck & Cosby, 2017). To amend the concern in addition to other concerns, Congress revised the IDEA, to include the program, RTI.

Social

When revising the IDEA to include the RTI approach, Congress sought to remediate academic and reading difficulties (Restori et al., 2009). While reading difficulties impact a student's academic success, it additionally impacts their social success. Statistics reveal that students who struggle in the content area of reading have a higher rate of dropping out of high school when compared to their peers (Weiss, 2013). Thirty-two percent of 10th grade students who dropped out of high school in 2002 stopped attending due to their inability to adapt to the literacy component of their schoolwork (Carlson, 2013). As a result, these students are less likely to obtain an advanced degree and will subsequently earn a lower income in America's workforce (Pace Miles et al., 2019). In a reading study reviewing third grade students, results revealed that students who were classified as below basic readers often did not complete their high school degree or obtain that degree after repeating multiple grades (Kerns & Bryan, 2018).

Furthermore, students with below average reading skills often have a diminished self-efficacy and attitude toward reading and even, at times, every day practical activities (Gilson et al., 2018). Self-esteem is also an important concept to consider when discussing students with reading difficulties. Self-esteem, viewed as how we value ourselves, is often lower in students with reading difficulties (Soureshjani & Naseri, 2011). Students may have a negative view of life, have a fear of being taunted, and possess a fear of taking any risk when it comes to addressing their reading difficulty (Soureshjani & Naseri, 2011). From a medical perspective, adolescents with reading difficulties are at a higher risk for conduct disorders, anxiety, and mental health issues (Boyes et al., 2018). When students are equipped with necessary reading

instruction and interventions, they make progress in overcoming the challenge. In overcoming the perverse challenge, students' social, emotional, and self-esteem abilities increase (Wilson et al., 2017).

Theoretical Context

Theories disseminated by individuals from various backgrounds explain occurrences and sensations. The social cognitive theory created by Albert Bandura (1986) provides an understanding, awareness, and knowledge of self-efficacy and how human learning can occur in social environments. Bandura's theory included the concept that human learning occurs primarily in social environments. Through observing other individuals, people have the ability to learn procedures, skills, and actions (Schunk, 2016). The theory also emphasizes that learning and knowledge is gained through imitation and modeling (Allan, 2017). The social cognitive theory developed by Albert Bandura is vital to the field of education due to its attributes of learning and self-efficacy. Self-efficacy, an individual's belief concerning their ability to perform tasks, influences choices they often make, the effort they display, and the degree of anxiety they may experience when encountering certain events in their daily life events (Usher & Pajares, 2008). These beliefs impact students through academic tasks, as research findings deem there is a relationship between self-efficacy and academic outcomes (Pajares, 2003). Students who display low self-efficacy and display difficulties in reading can become discouraged, which will impact their motivation and desire to address the challenge. However, students who have a lowered self-efficacy due to poor reading skills can ultimately build and increase their self-efficacy with others who display effective modeling in social environments, a component of the social cognitive theory. Schunk (2016) expounded on how the theory evolves in a classroom environment. Schunk (2016) declared, "A teacher explains and demonstrates the skills to be

acquired, after which students receive guided instruction while the teacher checks for understanding” (p.127). Hollingsworth and Ybarra (2009) also detailed how the theory is vital for classroom learning, revealing, “Modeling helps all students including the explicit instruction of your thinking. When you reveal the exact thinking process to use, your students have the tools necessary to be successful” (p. 102). The social cognitive theory supports intensive interventions, a component of RTI, by portraying the importance of observational learning.

Problem Statement

Although the RTI model has positive and promising benefits, the problem, is that despite receiving rigorous interventions through the RTI framework, significant academic abilities exist between students participating in the RTI framework and students not participating in the RTI framework (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). Analyzing the transferability of skills learned in RTI is vital, as students continue to read below grade level when presented with grade level texts. While research has defined and detailed the purpose of RTI, current research shows that few studies exist that evaluate the effectiveness of the program, as well as collaboratively monitoring students’ progress in the general education classroom. Although RTI is a tiered system of teaching, provides explicit instruction for all children, and allots for continuous progress monitoring for all students, there is a lack of studies that investigate the transferability of skills. Pace-Miles et al., (2019) affirm that in the 15 years since the implementation of RTI, system supports have conducted only one detailed evaluation of RTI. Addressing the transferability of skills could be beneficial in reducing the reading deficit among students.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this applied study is to solve the problem of the transferability of reading skills from the RTI framework (specifically tiers 2 and 3) into the general education classrooms

for a Pre-K-5 public elementary school located in central Tennessee and to formulate a solution to address the problem. A multimethod design will be used consisting of both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The first approach was structured interviews with staff at the elementary school to include educators, administrators, and interventionists. The second approach was quantitative in nature using achievement scores. The third approach was surveys collected from the faculty and staff at the elementary school to include educators, administrators, and interventionists at the elementary school.

Significance of the Study

The findings of the study provided the researcher with current data from students enrolled in the RTI framework at the elementary school and staff to include educators, administrators, and interventionists employed at the elementary school. When analyzed, educators and leaders can use the data to implement new strategies, practices, and educational interventions that can improve students' academic performance (Bedwell, 2004). The case study could furthermore reveal the need for more intensive instructor training and examination of current practices (Pace-Miles et al., 2019). In a study that examined over 20,000 students in 13 states, data revealed that first grade students who received RTI essentially performed inferior than a similar peer group that did not (Graves, 2017). Yet, instead of closing the gap, the students receiving RTI supports lost the equivalent of one-tenth of a school year (Graves, 2017).

This study is imperative for the organization and stakeholders being studied. Students who can transfer the skills learned in RTI into their general education classroom and other environments can have success in school and in their lives as they progress through school, eventually transitioning into a community (Salinger, 2003). In addition, individuals who are proficient readers, can manage their learning, and participate in their society (Salinger, 2003).

The results of the study have the potential to assist other schools who have students who are struggling to transfer skills learned in RTI into the general education classroom. Leaders of the schools could use the findings from the study, including literature, interviews, and surveys to support their enrolled students who currently struggle in the academic area of reading, reducing the numbers of students across the nation who are unable to independently access grade level materials.

Research Questions

Central Question: How can the problem of transferability of reading skills learned in RTI into the general education classroom be solved at an elementary school located in middle Tennessee?

Sub-question 1: How would teachers, interventionists, and administrators in an interview solve the problem of transferability of reading skills learned in RTI into the general education setting at an elementary school located in middle Tennessee?

Sub-question 2: How would achievement test data inform of the lack of transferability of reading skills learned in RTI into the general education setting at an elementary school located in middle Tennessee?

Sub-question 3: How would surveys completed by teachers, interventionists, and administrators at an elementary school inform of the lack of transferability of reading skills learned in RTI into the general education setting at an elementary school located in middle Tennessee?

Definitions

1. *Deficits* -Gaps in student learning. When compared to their typically learning peers, students with deficits fall behind the normative sample (Vaughn et al., 2010).
2. *The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA, 2004)*-Revised and signed into law by President George Bush, the IDEA Act of 2004 provides funding for all students who are at risk and display learning difficulties (Weiss, 2013).
3. *Response to Intervention*- A multi-tiered approach that identifies and provides services and interventions at increasing levels of magnitude for identified adolescents who require additional instruction (Hierck, 2014).
4. *Specific Learning Disability*-"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" (Colorado Department of Education, 2018, p.1).
5. *Tiers*-A pyramid of increasing instruction where each tier, one, two, and three provide a more intensive focus on the remediation of specific skills (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006).
6. *Transferability*- Transferring and using existing knowledge and skills in different environments (Street, Pringle, Lourenço, & Nicolletti, 2019).
7. *Universal Screener*- A process where all students are systematically given brief, technically and adequate assessments at regular intervals in a given school year (Ketterlin-Geller, Shivraj, Basaraba & Schielack, 2019).

Summary

Chapter one includes background knowledge on the current reading epidemic. This chapter also includes background knowledge pertaining to the study, the problem statement, purpose statement, and the significance of the study. The chapter includes a central research question and three sub-questions. To provide readers with clarity while reading the project, definitions are included at the end of the study.

Chapter two will discuss a theoretical and conceptual connection from two prominent theorists who completed grounded child research studies which focused on individual adolescent learning, including group learning. A review of literature is also included in the chapter. The review investigates the foundational concepts of reading, the importance of reading, a framework created to support the students who are at-risk in the academic area of reading, and current dilemmas surrounding the framework implemented to address academic and behavioral deficits. Relevant background information is also included which allows the subject to be placed in its proper perspective.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The purpose of this study is to solve the problem of the transferability of reading skills from the RTI framework (specifically tiers two and three) into the general education classrooms for a Pre-K-5 public elementary school located in central Tennessee, and to formulate a solution to address the problem. Yearly, millions of dollars are utilized on reading specific research (Kilpatrick, 2015). While a wealth of information has arisen from the research, a gap exists between the research regarding reading interventions and student success in the general education classroom, as students are not prospering according to research findings (Kilpatrick, 2015). Although the RTI framework was created to close students' deficits when presented with the general curriculum and has positive promising benefits, the problem is, despite receiving interventions through the RTI framework, significant academic abilities still exist between students participating in the RTI framework and students not participating in the RTI framework (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). The continued gap between students enrolled in RTI and students not enrolled in RTI allude to the variable that students are not being presented with transferring instructional strategies acquired in RTI. This often occurs due to barriers occurring in RTI. The barriers that will be discussed in this study include the RTI framework, the lack of highly qualified teachers, providing appropriate and evidence based instruction to students in RTI, and invested individuals accepting new roles created by RTI.

This review of literature will additionally provide a theoretical and conceptual framework from Albert Bandura and Lev Vygotsky that will efficiently guide this study and allow the study to be portrayed in a comprehensive context. Affixing educational instructional aspects with a philosophical theory creates an awareness of how students process and learn information. This

allows teachers and invested stakeholders to integrate features of learning theories into positive learning opportunities. This review of literature will also detail and analyze the five specific skill components of reading, the nation's RTI framework, the RTI framework in the state of Tennessee, provide a connection to special education, and present data barriers of RTI. Lastly, the chapter will end with a summary.

Theoretical Framework

Albert Bandura (1986), a psychologist and creator of the social cognitive theory, asserted through the social cognitive theory, behavior and knowledge is derived from environments through the process of observational learning (McLeod, 2016). Through this theory, Bandura contended that learning could not be fully achieved through reinforcement, but that the presence of other individuals was also a pivotal factor (Wheeler, 2018). Behavior and information are embraced through social experiences, models, and verbal discussions, all which include humans.

Essentially, in observational learning the learner observes a live or symbolic model then proceeds to reciprocate the process, strategy, task, or skill demonstrated by the model (Bethards, 2014). Through these encounters and abstractions, they mentally represent themselves in cognitions that include response outcomes, expectancies, and standards for self-receptions, which lead to learning (Grusec, 1992). Bandura also declared the importance of attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation (Allan, 2017). When attending to a skill, the learner first determines the extent to which they will focus on the content presented. This influences retention, which allows the information to become imprinted to memory in symbolic form (Bethards, 2014). It is vital to assert that, in order for reproduction and retention to occur effectively under the observational learning theory, individuals must be allowed the opportunity to rehearse the modeled behaviors during multiple opportunities (Bethards, 2014). After these

opportunities, feedback is warranted to strengthen the process. If individuals are focused on the content, internalize the content, practice the content, and are motivated to complete the concept, learning will occur (Wheeler, 2008). These conditions are key concepts that support and explain observational learning.

Cherry (2019) further expanded on the theory, discussing an individual's mental state and reinforcement. Cherry (2019) positioned, "Your own mental state and motivation play an important role in determining whether a behavior is learned or not. While behavioral theories of learning suggested that it was external reinforcement that created learning, Bandura realized that reinforcement does not always come from outside sources" (p.4). Yet by seeking internal rewards, such as pride, satisfaction, and a sense of accomplishment, learning and behaviors could evolve (Cherry, 2019). Indeed, adolescents who develop their individual potency through confidence building and constructive feedback, are utilizing self-efficacy, a concept that is rooted in social learning theory (Wheeler, 2018). Today the social cognitive theory remains relevant as it continues to explain how individuals learn from social experiences and self-evaluations.

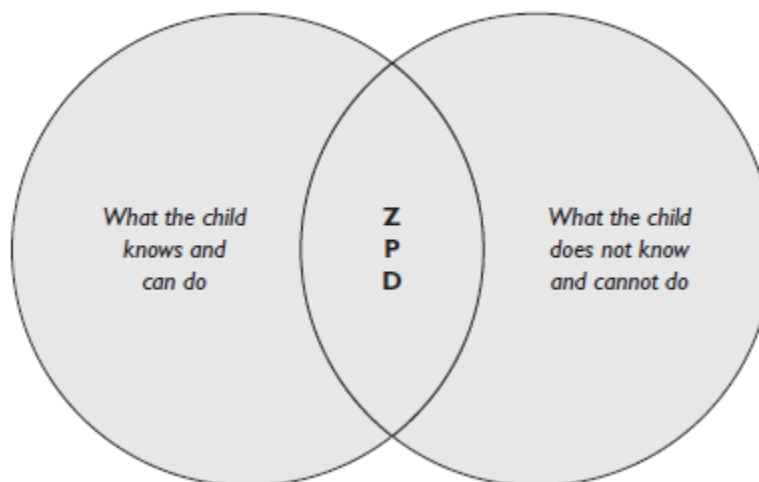
Another theory applicable to the field of education and this study is the zone of proximal development (ZPD) created by Lev Vygotsky in 1962. The ZPD has received various interpretations for many years. Although there are many interpretations, a ZPD for a student is the space between the actual development level of the student and the potential level of the student (Abtahi, 2018). Knestrick (2012) described this space as the "sweet spot" where instruction is most constructive for students and is just beyond their present level of independent capability. Wass and Golding (2014) added details to the ZPD theory, noting that when using the theory during teaching, teachers should teach content that is slightly too advanced for students to complete independently, but simple enough for them to accomplish with assistance. Through this

formulation, teachers support the maximization of instruction.

Through the ZPD theory, the concept *scaffolding* is also recognized. Scaffolding, or temporary support, allows learners to complete a task that might otherwise not be possible (Janneke van de Pol, et al., 2010). Scaffolding can motivate and stimulate students to focus on the instructional task, simplify it, encourage students to complete the task, and limit any hindrances that may arise (Daniel et al., 2016). ZPD scaffolding is often visualized through three circles. The smallest circle is the set of skills students can accomplish independently. The next circle represents skills students would not be able to complete without a teacher or peer. The last circle stands for skills that students cannot complete, even with assistance (Sarikas, 2018). When using ZPD, it is important to utilize the strategy accurately. Two studies, completed in 2003 and 2010 asserted that ZPD and scaffolding can be effective, yet if the instructor does not implement the components correctly, they are at risk of overly helping students, which can create passive learners (Sarikas, 2018). However, when used correctly learners are able to advance and grasp appropriate instructional content.

Figure 1

The Zone of Proximal Development



Both theories relate to education, the RTI framework, and transferability. From an educational aspect, adolescents pay attention to teachers and encode their behavior. Later, and through multiple receptions, they may imitate the behavior they have observed. The social cognitive theory likewise reinforces and supports intensive interventions provided by RTI. In RTI tiers, the educator or interventionist models precisely how to complete a task or skill. Hollingsworth and Ybarra (2009) highlighted “Modeling helps all students, but the explicit instruction of your thinking strategies really helps low performing students. When you reveal the exact thinking process to use, your students have the tools necessary to be successful” (p. 102). When analyzing transferability, it is vital that students can transfer and convey information in various settings. If students are able to retain and reproduce information in different settings, components of the social cognitive theory, transferability, and authentic learning has occurred.

The ZPD theory also relates to education, RTI, and to this study. Students in RTI are routinely progress monitored. Instructors who review and manage the data of the students based upon the data, present instruction that lies within their ZPD. The ZPD also reinforces the importance of practice and multiple exposures. Students, either individually or as a group, have the chance to work collectively with a teacher or peers to practice the task or the strategy presented under the ZPD theory (IRIS Center, 2006). While working with peers, students develop through participation problem solving skills and create an engaging culture within the classroom environment (Christmas et al., 2013). Both Bandura’s and Vygotsky’s theories support crucial reading elements in educational environments to include general education classrooms and RTI settings.

Related Literature

A literature review, a methodical analysis of literature evaluates scholarly information presented by researchers on a given topic (Efron & Ravid, 2019). A literature review also reveals that additional actions are required to progress the topic (Efron & Ravid, 2019). Although research exists on reading, this literature review contains specific knowledge on the five essential components of reading, RTI and its structure, and current barriers that exist in the educational environment which prevents at risk reading students from successfully transferring instructional strategies to multiple atmospheres.

Reading is the ability to manage a diverse set of skills that include the ability to independently decode words, in addition to completing a reasonable interpretation of the text (Wolf, 2016). Reading is a skill that impacts individuals every day, allows individuals to access their community, interact with their environment, and promotes independence. When an adolescent embarks on their journey to read, they will need multiple exposures and explicit instruction in the essential components of reading. Phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension collectively form a solid foundation necessary for a skilled reader. Using these five components, identified by the National Panel Board, teachers can utilize reading curriculums and research-based strategies to instruct students in basic reading (Read Naturally, 2019).

Components of Reading

Phonemic awareness, the foundational reading component, is an umbrella term that references the capability to hear, identify, and manipulate individual sounds (Diller, 2007). Phonemic awareness is also defined among researchers as the range of linguistics that focuses on comprehending the speech-sound relationship and the sound patterns of spoken language (Gillon,

2018). This skill, acquired at an early age, occurs before individuals are introduced to any written words and, while written words are not presented to students during this stage, phonemic awareness is an acknowledged predictor of a student's ability to proficiently master early decoding and word recognition (Ashby et al., 2013). Predictive studies conducted have concluded that when children enter kindergarten with the ability to manipulate phonemes, a prime component of phonemic awareness, they often advance at a faster pace in learning to read (Antonacci & O'Callaghan, 2012). Effective instruction in phonemic awareness requires a teacher to engage students in sound matching, sound isolation, sound blending, sound segmenting, sound adding, deletion, and substitution activities (Diller, 2007). Through mastering these tasks, a student's auditory aptitude becomes heightened, and students are primed for print.

Phonics, in contrast to phonemic awareness, provides students with print and includes a system for encoding speech sounds into written symbols (Mesmer & Griffith, 2005). Educators who provide educational instruction in phonics commonly refer to the practice as teaching adolescents the relationships between letters and sounds (Mesmer & Griffith, 2005). For the beginning reader, teaching this sub skill is crucial, as written words presented are often unfamiliar until letters are translated into speech sounds (Shapiro & Solity, 2016). Once this relationship is established, students can begin to read unknown words, using decoding skills, in which they move from print to speech (Herron, 2008). Reutzel et al. (2014) declared this relationship as a gateway toward successful reading, helping students acquire necessary skills to decipher unfamiliar words encountered in increasingly complex texts. The National Reading Panel asserts, due to its substance, phonics instruction should occur in a research based, systematic, and explicit method (Hurst & Hurst, 2015). This expectation happens when phonics instruction occurs in a rigorous nature, is accompanied by a curriculum with an indicated

sequential set of phonics, and includes teaching that is direct and precise (Mesmer & Griffith, 2005). Furthermore, effort and instruction should primarily focus on forming letter relationships and spelling patterns, which will assist students in reading a text (Hurst & Hurst, 2015). If followed with fidelity and in this manner, research has concluded that students will produce gains in word reading and spelling (Glazzard, 2017).

Like phonics, fluency is increasingly being recognized as a critical component of reading in literacy instruction. Fluency, the accuracy, and rate at which individuals read words, requires students to first identify words, which is simply the ability of readers to accurately pronounce and state the words encountered in texts (Rasinski et al., 2017). A fluency rate reflects the extent in which words are quickly read and is a key factor in reading. If individuals are unable to access a text in a timely manner, their understanding of the text becomes limited (Rasinski et al., 2017). To achieve the skill of fluency, students are required to use cognitive resources, such as their long-term working memory and attention to be used for higher order meaning construction of the text (Kim, 2017). It is imperative to understand that students must meet both subsets of the skill to experience success in fluency. It is not adequate for students to be only accurate in word recognition; they must become automatic (which will boost their rate) in their word recognition so that they can reserve and simultaneously utilize a portion of their cognitive resources for reading comprehension (Rasinski et al., 2017). Kim et al. (2014) proclaimed, “In a complex task such as reading comprehension which requires coordination of multiple processes and thus considerable cognitive resources, word reading automaticity is critical” (p.81). Despite the significant amount of attention that fluency has received when analyzing the essential components, questions continue to remain when discussing fluency to include its role in the reading process and classroom instruction (Kuhn, Schwanenflugel, & Meisinger, 2010). These

concerns impact students and educators from experiencing success in the classroom, as a solid connection between fluency and comprehension exists, which is the ultimate goal of reading.

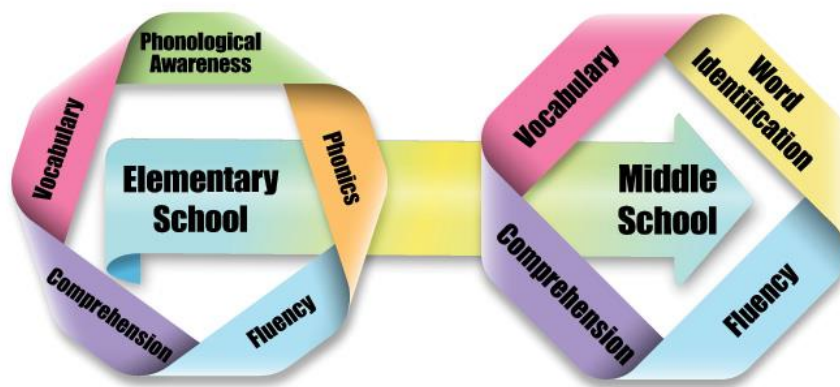
The fourth component of reading, vocabulary, refers to the awareness of words and possessing an understanding of what the words actually mean (Iris Center, 2016). Having a vocabulary knowledge is a fundamental building block for reading, as a strong correlation between understanding the meaning of words and understanding a text or other reading materials exist (Elish-Piper, 2010). Adolescents acquire vocabulary in two main ways, indirectly and through instruction (Elish-Piper, 2010). Through conversations, listening, and observing, students can gain vocabulary knowledge. Using instruction, teachers pre-select vocabulary words, define and decompose their meaning, and foster discussions with students (Iris Center, 2016). Vocabulary instruction should always include quality and quantity aspects. Students need to have a high number of vocabulary words stored in their long-term memory, in addition to knowing the meaning of the word, and having an ability to interact with the word (Coppens et al., 2013). Possessing these attributes will assist students not only in reading, but also in daily life essentials as students utilize vocabulary words as they engage and participate in conversations and exchanges with peers and other individuals.

The last component of reading, reading comprehension, occurs when students understand, remember, acknowledge, and communicate in an effective manner, information about the text (Hurst & Hurst, 2015). Perfetti and Stafura (2014) defined reading comprehension as having a propelled and an enriched understanding of a text that extends beyond the literal meaning of a text. Lastly, reading comprehension is accomplished when readers have a platform in which they have the ability to construct a deep and critical understanding of a text (Rasinski, 2010). Among the five components of reading, reading comprehension is one of the most

multifaceted behaviors in which humans will engage (Elleman & Oslund, 2019). This logic is valid, as reading comprehension requires the orchestration of a complex assortment of processes (Elleman & Oslund, 2019). A reader, striving to obtain reading comprehension, must decode words, access word meanings, and construct meaning from sentences and sections of text, while integrating information from past texts and background knowledge to create a mental model of the text (Denton et al., 2015). To accomplish reading comprehension, various efforts from researchers, educators, and policy makers will need to occur. Stakeholders should relinquish short-term practices on measures that promote low-level comprehension for long-term solutions that require years to develop (Elleman & Oslund, 2019). A research survey by the National Reading Panel concluded that, to ensure long-term success for reading comprehension to be built by students, metacognitive mechanisms for comprehension, such as collaborative learning, graphic organizers, questioning, and summarizing should be embedded in instruction (Ponce et al., 2012). Providing visuals for students, questioning, creating connections, determining a goal, and synthesizing are also crucial elements in helping students reach the ultimate goal of reading with comprehension (Lynch, 2018).

Figure 2

Five Essential Components of Reading



Response to Intervention

To guarantee that students are proficient in each of the five essential components of reading, the nation and schools have allocated funding, a variety of programs, initiatives, and curriculums to ensure such expectations. Currently, approximately 15% of the United States government's budget, which equals almost one trillion dollars, funds education (Hollands et al., 2016). Through these government funded programs, designs vary and may include an entire classroom of students, small group instruction, or individual students. Staff and delivery also vary with the utilization of teachers, educational assistants, computer software, manuals, or teacher created materials (Hollands et al., 2016). While these methods are intended to academically prepare each student for academics and reading, not every student masters instructional content or reading components (Phelps & Schilling, 2004). Individualized support and instruction are provisions that are often offered for students who do not master certain components of reading (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). The formal process, now recognized as RTI, identifies students who need additional academic and behavioral support and provides them with specialized instruction in their area of need (Printy & William, 2015). Overall, RTI is considered to be proactive as it concentrates on prevention and intervention for students through excellent instruction and matched needs of students (Marrs & Little, 2014). RTI is also considered proactive as it offers a bridge between general and special education content and services by providing timely and proficient support for all students, including students who will ultimately participate in the lengthy process required for special education eligibility (Brown-Chidsey, 2007).

When examining the RTI structure for a clear and concise definition, many concepts are distinguished; however, three chief objectives are immediately recognized. A definition is vital,

as it represents an understanding of the concept and lends direction to future considerations of the concept (Scanlon, 2013). The framework first is a multi-tiered approach that identifies and provides services and interventions at increasing levels of intensity for students who require supplemental learning (Hierck, 2014). From a medical analogy, RTI is recognized as an educational triage, where interventions in RTI are divided up into additional intensive tiers (Ferri, 2012). Increasing intensity is frequently achieved by adopting a more teacher centered, systematic, and explicit instruction, adding to its duration; creating smaller and more homogenous student groupings, and employing educators with intervention (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). In addition, the design allows for the academic interventions to transition or change in each tier. The RTI structure is designed to promote the early identification of students who display deficits in skills, with the goal that they will not fall further behind their peers (Johnsen, Sulak, & Rollins, 2012). Greenwood et al. (2012) asserted that through the RTI model, a modern learning theory exists, as students' instructional experiences are adjusted based on their level of knowledge, with all students receiving scientific based instruction. This methodology was welcomed, as many schools historically practiced consistent instruction over time, not varying on a student-to-student level (Fisher, Frey, & ASCD, 2010). Through variability in the type of instruction, design, and time, a core conjecture is that all students can reach high levels of achievement (Fisher, Frey, & ASCD, 2010).

In addition to providing a multi-tiered specialized structure to students, RTI is also a model that includes a problem-solving approach (Berkeley et al., 2009). When a problem exists, an undesired state is present (Schmidt, 2011). To solve a problem, an initial contextual problem focusing session should occur, which includes the identification of the problem, and an explicit process to manage the journey to the formulation of a solution (Newman, 2017). Tilly (2008)

concurred and affirmed that a general problem-solving technique seeks to solve the problem, determines why the problem is happening, what can be done about the problem, and determines if interventions work through progress monitoring. In RTI, the problem-solving approach utilizes a protocol that is a fluid cycle that incorporates documenting the obstacle that impacts a student, consideration of factors, formulating a solution, monitoring implementation, fidelity, and lastly monitoring a student's progress (Kong et al., 2019). Furthermore, problem solving in RTI should advance the academic and behavior performance of pupils, outlines what happens in RTI, how it will be accomplished, and by whom (Cortiella et al., n.d.). Collective groups of educators work together and complete the problem-solving approach (Iris Center, 2016). To ensure that the problem-solving approach meets the expectation of this method, RTI team members should analyze the strengths and needs of learners and the instructors who will instruct the learners (Searle, 2010). This specific analysis, executed before students are instructionally taught, prevents the loss of precious instructional time caused by implementing the inaccurate interventions (Searle, 2010).

While problem-solving models specify these fundamental and core concepts, some states have added additional components and approaches in their RTI problem-solving models. Nebraska and North Carolina require a goal setting criterion in their framework (Berkeley, Bender, Peaster, & Saunders, 2009). Ohio, Florida, and Georgia use a problem-solving method to incorporate standard interventions in tier two, in addition to using the problem-solving process to offer specialized interventions to students in tier three (Berkeley et al., 2009). Oregon, in their problem-solving method, includes precise time limits when instructing RTI students and standard checklists for documentation (Berkeley et al., 2009). Despite variability between states, incorporating problem-solving models into the RTI framework is a logical decision in which to

organize, oversee data, prioritize targets, and implement and evaluate individual interventions. Current studies demonstrate positive effects of the problem-solving model in schools as the needs of learners are prioritized (VanDerHeyden, n.d.).

Lastly, when recognizing the objectives of RTI, if a student does not respond to the research based interventions provided, school agencies may use the RTI process as a recognized process in which to identify students with a SLD (Johnsen, Sulak, & Rollins, 2012). When investigating student enrollment, the SLD category has been the leading classification when compared to other categories under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (Zirkel, 2013). First introduced in 1977, the IDEA defines a SLD 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” (Boat & Wu, 2015, p. 179). With the introduction of the disability category, the Department of Education stipulated that a discrepancy between a student’s IQ and achievement should be used as the focal condition for determining a SLD (Stahl, 2016). Yet with the reauthorization of the IDEA in 2006, initiatives were created for states to begin to implement the RTI approach to include the new recognized approach for identifying students with a SLD. With the reauthorization, if states agreed to utilize the RTI framework, they were allowed to allocate 15% of special education federal funding for RTI (Printy & Williams, 2015). As a result of this funding provision, by the year of 2011, 43 states executed RTI in some capacity (Printy & Williams, 2015).

Today the RTI tiered support system is still prominent in schools across the nation as federal, state, and local funding continues to support RTI, and the current active education law which governs public education, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), references the

requirement of a multi-tiered literacy support system for students in kindergarten through grade 12 (Bailey, 2018). Passed into law in 2015, the ESSA act requires “states to align their education programs with college and career ready standards and to extend the federal focus on equity by providing resources for poor students, students of color, English learners, and students with disabilities” (Young, Winn, & Reedy, 2017, p. 706). For example, states and local authorities are required to create and plan school interventions and supports for documented at risk schools, which have been identified when ranked in the bottom five percent of schools (Egalite et al., 2017). Revisions were also made to standardized testing, requirements and expectations for highly qualified teachers, and accountability processes to ensure accountability for every student in need (Adler-Greene, 2019). With an emphasis on improving outcomes for all students, specifically historically overlooked students, ESSA advocates that schools and districts implement a tiered system of support for both behavior and academic needs (Bailey & Jackson, 2018). ESSA also supports the concept of transferability as it stipulates the importance of a tiered support program for behavior and academic needs, while continuing to outline guidelines for college and career standards.

To meet the requirements and receive funding, states and schools must understand the RTI framework, including each tier in the trio-tiered system. Known as the largest tier, which is presented to all students, tier one instruction occurs in a setting where all students receive instruction according to grade level state standards (Wanzek, Roberts, Otaiba, & Kent, 2014). In the content area of reading, tier one instructors must incorporate research-based strategies within the literacy content (Swanson, et al, 2017). The instructor should also include purposeful learning, explicit modeling, flexible grouping, and differentiation of instruction (Wanzek, et al.,, 2014). Most importantly, elementary tier one content is to include reading instruction that

includes decoding and fluent reading skills, known as foundational skills that ultimately assist with reading comprehension (Paige, 2018). Tier one and core instruction is the first environment in which a student receives any reading instruction (Wanzek, et al., 2014). As so, its structure and effectiveness are paramount (Wanzek, et al., 2014). If a structured, research based, and explicit tier one curriculum is presented daily to students, 80-90% of the students' statistics confirm mastering the presented tier one curriculum (Johnson, 2013). It is in this tier in which baseline universal testing occurs to determine such percentage and to most importantly identify the percentage of students who have not mastered their tier one content.

Universal screeners, an assessment given to all students within a grade level in tier one, is a brief assessment given and is the first step in identifying at risk students (Hughes & Dexter, 2011). Conducted to recognize or predict students who may be at jeopardy for below expectations of learning outcomes, universal screeners can be used for all instructional areas, to include behavior, social, and emotional domains (U.S Department of Education, 2017). Searle (2010) sustained that "Universal screening data helps pinpoint high-priority areas of concern. Screening provides data that helps answer fundamental questions: What should we keep and what needs to be dropped or updated? Which students are in danger of falling through the cracks if we do not intervene quickly?" (p. 3). Given three times a year, each subtest of a reading universal screener focuses on specific literary skills and provides data in which stakeholders analyze to make informed educational decisions (Johnsen, Sulak, & Rollins, 2012). Recently through universal screening, selected assessments are given to students that help educators predict whether students are at risk for dyslexia (Gillis, 2017). Students whose data reports that they are deemed at risk according to their district's universal screener, may qualify for RTI. This is determined by school officials to include psychologists, administrators, general education

teachers, special education teachers, and parents, who analyze the student's data (Morin, 2014). The data, when presented and examined, may reveal several phenomena. For example, the pace of their curriculum may be too fast and not provide sufficient intensive strategies (Noltemeyer, Joseph, & Kunes, 2014). Whole group instruction may not provide enough opportunities for practice and specific feedback (Noltemeyer, et al., 2014). Environmental, cultural, inadequate exposure, and an adolescent's biological composition may also account for reading deficits among students (Cutting, 2017). Conducting additional extensive assessments or by administering informal diagnostic assessments help determine these specific weaknesses and factors (Gillis, 2017). The results also give the instructor a road map to provide differentiated instruction in the essential foundational skills for those adolescents red flagged as at risk students (Gillis, 2017). Understanding the rationale of the data can support the team as they make focused academic decisions concerning students.

As a result of the data retrieved from the universal screener, identified students may require intensive instruction delivery in a small group setting where they receive additional guided and supported practice, increased content coverage, corrective feedback, and scaffolded instruction (Hierck, 2014). This instruction occurs in tier two and three of the RTI framework, and often includes approximately 20% of students who do not master tier one content (Koutsoftas, Harmon, & Gray, 2009). In tier two, or the secondary prevention tier of RTI, instruction is specialized, flexible grouping exists, and frequent progress monitoring occurs (Bryant, et al., 2008). In tier two remediation, skills are retaught, students are allowed numerous opportunities to exercise a concept, and immediate corrective feedback is present (Iris Center, 2016). It is imperative to note that tier two and tier three instruction should supplement tier one general classroom instruction, not replace it (Kelley & Goldstein, 2014). As so, in

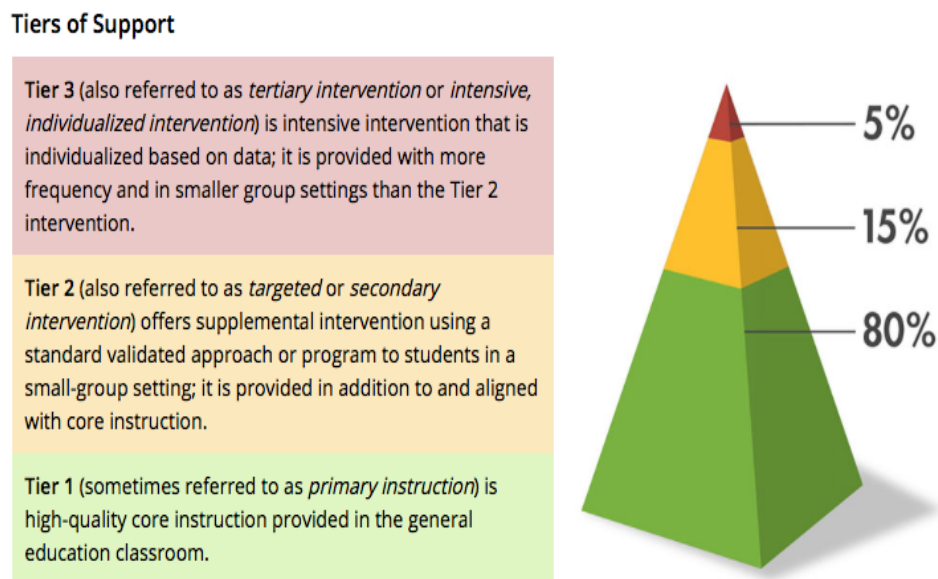
addition to receiving tier one instruction, students in tier two receive instruction targeted to their identified deficit and are monitored weekly or bi-weekly in the skill in which they receive interventions (Kelley & Goldstein, 2014). The revealed data from the progress monitoring allows the interventionist to determine future instructional decisions (Johnson, 2013). The data may reveal that a student has achieved their goal, is progressing towards their goal, or not making progress at a reasonable rate (Johnson, 2013). If students respond in a positive manner to tier two instruction, they may continue to stay and receive services in tier two or they may return to tier one (Bouck, & Cosby, 2017). Results from a completed study revealed that 15% of primary students in tier two will make enough progress to return to tier one instruction (Koutsoftas, Harmon, & Gray, 2009).

Non-responders to tier two in RTI are considered as high risk and are typically placed in tier three where they receive more specialized instruction (Cho, et al., 2014). It is in this tier where students receive the most intense level of interventions when analyzing the RTI framework. In this setting, the student's intervention time increases, the group size decreases, and teacher-student grouping may change (Sanchez & O'Connor, 2015). Students may receive forty to sixty minutes of instruction, receive an extended duration time requirement in RTI, and have a group size of one to three students (Iris Center, 2016). Students in tier three are considered to be working below grade level on various academic skills and require a delivery process, accommodations, and instruction that is different from their tier one environment (Johnsen, Sulak, & Rollins, 2012). Furthermore, in this tier, additional information is often needed to gain a complete visual of the student's ability. To assist in the development and selection of an intervention for a specific student, it is important to conduct an analysis of a student's deficits' context and function (Ervin, 2016). This allows the student to receive tailored

and unique instruction. To determine if students are responding to the tailored instruction, frequent progress monitoring continues. Lack of progress in tier three, the highest tier of the general education framework, may warrant recommendation for a special education evaluation (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006).

Figure 3

Tiers of Support



Note: This figure describes what transpires in tiers one, two, and three of RTI.

Recently, many states have created a new tier, identified as tier four. Tier four, separate from the general education RTI initiative, occurs when students have not made sufficient progress in tiers one through three, and educational personnel affirm that the extensive practices and interventions utilized in tiers one through three have been exhausted with an identified student. Students in this tier have received an evaluation and qualified for special education services (Shapiro, n.d). Under the IDEA Act, approximately six million students, between the ages of three and twenty-one, receive special education services and require services that meet their cognitive, emotional, behavior, and physical needs (Hibel et al., 2010). These students are

deemed eligible for special education services and are entitled to receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE), which consists of special education services and related services that are funded and provided at the public's expense (Yell & Katsiyannis, 2019). Each student has an individualized Education Plan (IEP) that meets their exceptional needs and supports their individualized learning (Frey, 2019). Their IEP, the cornerstone of their special education and overall education experience, emphasizes their individual strengths, interests, and developing skills (Pretti-Frontczak & Bricker, 2000). Through specialized support, goals, and frequent progress monitoring, an IEP allows students with an identified disability to access the general education curriculum. Furthermore, an IEP is pivotal, as it overall helps a student, despite their challenges, become successful.

Overrepresentation of Special Education Students

While it is imperative, as the law provides, when a student with a FAPE that includes special education services and an IEP when warranted, history and data reveals that a disproportionate high number of African Americans, English language learners, and adolescents from disadvantaged socioeconomic environments are identified as special education students, which is commonly identified as overrepresentation. (Searle, 2010). Overrepresentation ensues when the percentage of minority students in a special education environment in a district, program, or school surpasses the percentage of pupils in the total population when calculated (Miles, 2016).

The Brown vs. Board of Education case historically proved and demonstrated racial segregation in schools throughout the nation. In Brown vs. Board of Education, five complainants combined cases and detailed the segregation of African American students in public school settings (CNN, 2019). The Supreme Court declared that desegregation should

never exist in schools, and it violated the 14th Amendment of the United States Constitution, which prohibits citizens equal fortification under the law (CNN, 2019). Despite the landmark case and justice's ruling to end segregation, the practice continued, yet in an alternate manner, special education. In 1968, African American students were overrepresented in special education settings by a factor of 330% and overrepresentation continued to rise to 540% by 1974 (Herzik, 2015). Today, despite the time lapse and educational advances, data still confirms that an overrepresentation exists in the nation's schools. Miles (2016) confirmed that federal statistics acquired in 2007 shows that African American students accounted for 16% of the United States school enrollment but represent more than 30% of students who have received a diagnosis of a SLD. In 2010, a case revealed that an African American female was identified as having SLD in an elementary school and received special education services. However, her eligibility and services placement became problematic as the psychologist did not conduct a legally required instructional observation and proclaimed her achievement protocols were shredded and destroyed (Herzik, 2015). Her parents, who were not in agreement with the process, requested an independent evaluation, which revealed she was not eligible to receive special education services due to her average academic achievements (Herzik, 2015). Similarly, Harper (2017) confirmed that American Indian students are 70% more likely to be recognized as having a disability when compared to their non-disabled peers. Statistics collected on Hispanic students revealed comparable rates (Harper, 2017).

Special education identification and eligibility guidelines and practices vary widely across the nation due to achievement, demographics, school finances, and state accountability frameworks (Gordon, 2017). Yet in 2004, Congress reauthorized IDEA with the intent to reduce the overrepresentation of minority students who receive special education services. With the

reauthorization, IDEA required all school districts to follow certain procedures when qualifying a student with a specific disability (Herzik, 2015). The amendment also included steps to rectify racial disproportionality by researching and investigating cultural differences, parent involvement, and English language learners (Willis, 2019). RTI seeks to remedy overrepresentation and incorporate educational equality through prevention, avoiding the wait to fail method, providing all students with quality tier one education, and universal screening for all (Willis, 2019). Through the shift and mechanisms of RTI, all students can now receive specialized instruction, without the requirement of a disability label (Brown-Chidsey, 2007).

Tennessee Response to Intervention

In the state of Tennessee, the RTI initiative has been occurring in all elementary schools since the 2014-2015 school year and is now a requirement for all students in K-12 (Tennessee Department of Education, 2019) While the framework is different among each district in the state, certain components are mandated for every school within the state. All districts must use a three-tier model, assess students through universal screeners, and incorporate scientific and research-based interventions. The Tennessee Department of Education (2019) requires that the interventions and supports are implemented by a highly trained faculty member, confirmed with measurement, and progress monitored to ensure expectations are being met. RTI documentation is also a requirement for each student enrolled in tiers two and three (Tennessee Department of Education, 2019). Each school must maintain progress-monitoring forms for students, have documentation of parent contacts, and maintain fidelity forms (Tennessee Department of Education, 2019). To determine fidelity, administrators complete a systematic form, concluding if the instruction meets the needs of the students. Through these mandates, the state of Tennessee

seeks to identify and reduce student skill deficits and to also provide a consistent method for diagnosing students with a suspected exceptionality.

In addition to the mandates for RTI in Tennessee, each school has a data team that reviews students' universal screeners and progress monitoring data. This data allows the teams to make informative decisions regarding instruction, skills needed, and tier placement. If a student falls below the 25th percentile when compared to the peers after given the universal screener, they are considered for tier two RTI interventions (Gaschler, 2019). If students fall below the 10th percentile when given the universal screener, they are considered to be at least one grade level behind and are considered for tier three (Gaschler, 2019). Similarly, to the national framework, if a student does not demonstrate adequate gains in tier three, RTI is used as a means of identification for a student with a SLD (Dawkins, 2014).

To collect this data, elementary schools across the state of Tennessee use the commercial program, *Fast Bridge*, to implement the universal screener process. *Fast Bridge*, a computer-based program student assessment system, follows students throughout their entire academic career (kindergarten through twelfth grade) that screens students' achievement (Reinsch, 2019). Once screened students receive a score from the *Fast Bridge* system that serves schools by providing a formative assessment system for the universal screening and progress monitoring process (Brown, 2019). For example, if a student preforms unsatisfactorily on the assessment, *Fast Bridge* will provide educational instructors with the subject and particular concept or skill in which the student is at-risk (Reinsch, 2019). The data received from the assessments supports stakeholders as it provides information about students' needs (Brown, 2019).

While the state of Tennessee has productive structures in place, it has acknowledged that, since the implementation of RTI, certain aspects of the program need specific support. Gonzales

(2018) reported that one third of educators reported RTI to be ineffective since its execution during the 2014-2015 academic school year. Addressing and acknowledging the concern, Governor Bill Haslam in 2018 announced a proposed 13.3 million dollar budget to further support the program. With the proposed funds, an allocation would support educators in providing personalized instruction for students through additional training (Gonzales, 2018). However, since the application of RTI in the state of Tennessee, the state has seen a decrease of students identified as possessing a SLD (Gonzales, 2018). This is notable, as it represents that in some districts and schools, the overarching purpose of RTI is beginning to transpire.

RTI Barriers

Empowering schools to support and meet the needs for at risk students academically is urgent and challenging (Miles et al., 2019). Despite educational laws, time, personnel, and funding allowed for the national initiative, RTI has encountered various barriers, to include problems with the structure of the framework, lack of access to researched based interventions, ensuring that each program has trained educators, and acceptance of new roles. These hurdles have allowed the program to not meet its expectations fully, as national and state assessments show that students remain less than proficient in the area of reading (Paige, 2018).

Understanding the barriers of RTI and its lack of transferability into general education settings can further offer understanding of appropriate actions needed for improvements within the RTI structure and framework.

Results for the United States students' literacy performance reveal that 32% of fourth-grade students scored below a basic level of proficiency in reading when given the National Assessment of Educational Proficiency assessments (Hollands et al., 2016). Thirty-Five percent of Tennessee students who took the assessment scored at or above proficiency, while 32% of

eighth graders scored at or above proficiency (Parker & Tang, 2019). Analyzing students who qualify and receive free or reduced lunch under the National School Lunch Program indicated that 79% of the students are reading at a basic or below basic reading level (Miles et al., 2019). When looking specifically at a population of 1,000 students included in a specific study, an analysis revealed 44% of the students given the test struggled with basic fluency when given grade level passages, a precursor needed for comprehension (Conley et al., 2008).

These statistics and an analysis of the structure of the framework, a framework created to address the reading epidemic, revealed certain obstacles. According to an RTI study conducted by Stahl (2016), 45% of the schools selected had students performing at or above grade level, receiving instruction in established RTI intervention groups. As a result, some of the most at-risk students and the intended candidates for RTI were omitted from the program while students with sufficient skills were allowed to participate in RTI. Furthermore, in 67% of the identified schools, students receiving RTI interventions lost a portion of their core state instruction due to scheduling, which means that students were taken away from the general education setting during core studies (Stahl, 2016). Campsen (2013) pronounced the biggest mistake that a school can make is to substitute tiers for another. This includes taking a student from core classroom instruction for an intervention lesson under the assumption that a small group setting is better when compared to a whole-class group (Campsen, 2013). In order for students to succeed, creating a balance that gives students exposure and instruction in both areas of whole group reading and small group reading instruction is critical. Yet many schools continue to create a calculated schedule that provides a time solely for interventions and tier one content (Huff, 2015). Many schools also struggle with scheduling times for RTI personnel group meetings,

meetings that are essential for monitoring students' progress, in addition to making instructional decisions for students. Huff (2015) avowed the following:

A school schedule that does not strategically provide time for intervention, while protecting time for tier one instruction for all students, is a barrier to school improvement. Conversely, a strategic school schedule that has protected tier one instructional blocks, along with blocks where students can receive intervention and extension without missing new instruction in critical skills, is a schedule that facilitates learning (para. 2).

Another barrier that continues to exist in tiers two and three of RTI instruction is a lack of access to evidence-based strategies for students. Although evidence-based practices are often mentioned while discussing the framework, states have not outlined specific research-based interventions for each tier (Berkeley et al., 2009). Yet RTI requires a shift from traditional methods with educators incorporating and utilizing novel instructional strategies, assessment procedures, and progress monitoring (Castro-Villarreal, 2014). The National Council on Teacher Quality concluded that general education teacher programs surveyed across the nation contained no research based reading classes in the five areas of reading (Harlacher, et al., 2010). As a result, a lack of understanding among educators exists of what constitutes evidence-based interventions (Robinson et al., 2013). With no detailed knowledge, guidelines and explicit training, many RTI environments include curriculums, activities, and instructions that are not suitable for the students, or in some environments, research-based. Sparks (2015) reported that some students who qualify for RTI, despite their differentiated needs, are given a standard set of interventions. Noll (2013) concurred and added that commercially purchased intervention programs used in RTI contain menu-like interventions. Evidence demonstrates that commercially programs commonly advance isolated reading skills yet are unsuccessful in improving genuine

and multiple reading abilities, a dexterity that is needed in all academic areas (Noll, 2013).

Commercial publishing does utilize research to create academic lessons that include research - based components, yet few have demonstrated unbiased, scientific studies that demonstrate actual improved student achievement (Noll, 2013). Jenkins et al. (2013) avowed, “A central assumption of RTI is that core reading curricula are founded on research-based principles, meaning they incorporate design features that have been researched generally; however, the curriculum or program as a whole has not been studied using a rigorous research design” (p.43).

Studies continue to show that a reading program or curriculum also does not solely impact the reading achievement of struggling readers (Noll, 2013). Instructors, furthermore, use ideas, resources, and materials that have not been researched, lack evidence base, and have not been shown to close academic gaps in students (Miles et al., 2019). These resources are primarily already present at the school, cost effective, necessitate minimum change, and do not require intensive work from teachers (Robinson, et al., 2013). However, these resources have not been identified as research based (Robinson, et al., 2013). Instead of utilizing unsuccessful traditions, that do not improve struggling readers or positively impact student achievement, stakeholders should use evidence-based strategies and practices that will improve reading achievement (Noll, 2013). When students are given researched and evidence-based support and interventions, they have the potential to develop average literature skills (Miles, et al., 2019). Full understanding of educational research, methods used to recognize effective instructional strategies, and the adoption of a limited number of precise strategies for students facilitate academic growth (Burns, 2007). Correspondingly, analyzing and utilizing highly effective teacher-designed intervention practices assist students in becoming skilled readers (Noll, 2013).

It is also important to reveal that reading practices are predominantly available for early reading instruction in primary grades for students in kindergarten through third grade (Hollands et al., 2016). Yet students beyond primary grades struggle daily with early learning skills (Hollands et al., 2016). Middle and high school settings are two of the fastest growing settings in RTI (Hall & Batsche, 2010). Conversely, less is acknowledged about authentic interventions past primary grades (Lipson & Wixson, 2012). The substantial absence of research evidence strategies solely should be enough reason to give pause for secondary stakeholders who request scientific methods for a reading program (Brozo, 2009). This is often contributed to lack of knowledge that older youth in grades beyond third grade who struggle to read often are not given the appropriate instruction or assessments (Conley, 2008). For example, older students often are instructed in the sole area of comprehension. Jacobson (2019) contests that educators should continue to instruct and assess older students' foundational reading skills to include decoding, word recognition, fluency, and basic comprehension after 4th grade. Noted weaknesses in the basic areas contribute to non-proficient comprehension skills among older students that often go untreated (Jacobson, 2019). Research advocates that older students who struggle in the academic area of reading have pre-existing interests, strategies, and needs and often display communication strategies that need expertise, empathy, knowledge, and instruction (Conley, 2008).

Incorporating the RTI model as a way of supporting students, requires that students are not only recognized but also know how to support the adolescents who been identified as a targeted group (Hodges et al., 2012). This includes recognizing that tier one instruction should align with tier two interventions. However, tier two and tier three instruction often single out an individual component, hindering transferability (Spark, 2015). If interventions are focused on

single or limited skills, students lack the ability to gain the exposure and skills to put it all together in a complete reading format (Spark, 2015).

Besides the framework, structure, practices, and interventions used in RTI, the requirement of highly qualified educators in schools is now required, which has created further obstacles. With the passing of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), schools in the nation are required to employ highly qualified teachers (Mollenkopf, 2009). This requirement was largely made in response to increased expectations in schools and districts, where pacing guides, curriculums, benchmark testing, RTI, and program improvement mandates are now the norm (Chin & Wong, 2013). Providing a highly qualified teacher for each student furthermore operates under the notion that highly qualified teachers will provide quality instruction for all students, including at-risk students who have traditionally been at the paramount level for being left behind (Phillips, 2010). Literature and research revealed that teachers who are highly qualified:

- Possess a bachelor's degree from an accredited school (Brownell et al., 2018);
- Possess a certification or license (Brownell et al., 2018);
- Display proficiency in the core subject areas they teach (Brownell et al., 2018).

While incentives and programs exist to help individuals meet these qualifications, a national teacher shortage continues to exist (Brownell et al., 2018). Flannery (2018) declared that in the 2018-2019 school year, the state Board of Education in Oklahoma approved 2,153 emergency teaching certificates, enabling a record number of non-certified teachers to teach in its public schools. Papay et al. (2018) asserted that in Arizona, more than one in five teaching positions remained unfilled four months into the school year. Nationally, enrollment in teacher-preparation programs has fallen by double-digit percentages (Yaffe, 2016). Projections continue

to suggest that the national teacher shortage will only get worse, particularly in hard-to-staff subjects such as RTI, mathematics, science, intervention instructors, and special education (Papay et al., 2018).

Nevertheless, current qualified teachers report not having the necessary skills to deliver scientifically and evidence-based reading interventions in the RTI framework. Many teachers feel that they are unqualified to craft and deliver research-based instruction (Weber, 2013). Some teachers report they simply have not received adequate training in how to teach foundational skills, specifically to students at-risk for reading failure (Paige, 2018). Teachers have also indicated they possess a limited knowledge regarding the RTI data-based decision-making and problem-solving processes (Warren & Robinson, 2015). Reading specialists in today's public schools are limited and scarce. Due to the low number of active qualified reading specialists, various types of educational personnel are needed to support students who are not reading on a proficient level (Miles et al., 2019). Educators who are trained in one type of intervention would benefit from cross-training in a core set of the practices that can be targeted to a variety of students with identified instructional needs (Jimerson et al., 2007). Educators are on the front line of executing RTI interventions and supports (Wixson & Valencia, 2013). In order to implement RTI in a stellar manner, instructors must have the ability to problem-solve independently and with a RTI team. This does not often occur, as teachers do not possess the prerequisite understanding and skills to do so. This is a result of not receiving appropriate instruction in problem solving methods through specified training (Albritton & Truscott, 2014). Consequently, other teachers when presented with professional development opportunities, fail to leave their safety zone, continuing to use dated strategies that result in poor reading proficiency (Campsen, 2013). Extensive knowledge about RTI is perhaps the most vital factor in

the preventing and addressing students' literacy needs (Wixson & Valencia, 2013). Yet, while the issue of measuring a teacher's knowledge is controversial, it continues to remain that a teacher's knowledge is commonly and predominately defined as the relevant product of student achievement measured by standardized tests (Harris & Sass, 2011). These barriers have resulted in instruction that does not properly meet the needs of students, a problem that has always existed but that has been exacerbated with the accountability of RTI and accounts for the lack of transferability of RTI (Paige, 2018).

Finally, with the implementation of RTI, new roles have evolved for various individuals who interact with and instruct students. Before the implementation of RTI, educators often had a set title, which required certain responsibilities to include instructing students on state content while special education personnel often had the primary responsibility of screening, instructing, and creating a proactive plan for students with deficits (Barrio & Combes, 2015). However, general education teachers no longer have a role as a dispenser of knowledge (Holt-Reynolds, 2000). With the enactment of RTI, entire school systems and personnel are involved (Catro-Villarreal, 2014). Individuals, to include general education teachers, special education teachers, English language teachers, educational assistants, and other educational staff, despite their content knowledge or position, may provide interventions to students in RTI, a concern of stakeholders (Berkeley et al., 2009). Psychologists' roles have also transformed as districts have stopped incorporating discrepancy models when qualifying a student with a SLD. Psychologists have now adopted the role of a problem solver who employ a variety of skills (Heath & Little, 2014). Overall, roles that once were specific and detailed are blurred as RTI has increased and now included an innovation model that promotes an inclusive system for all educators (Barrio & Combes, 2015). RTI has experienced opposition as some individuals have not conformed or

embraced the roles and often the accompanying roles that have created additional barriers for RTI and its transferability (Zirkle, 2013). As classroom teachers and instructional support personnel reflect upon their new positions, many see the task as impossible (Ehren, 2013). Teachers and staff acknowledge their importance in the RTI reform but are dismayed by the aspects of RTI (Barrio & Combes, 2015). Due to the various aspects, which accompanies the framework, some schools are perplexed about the implementation and specific roles in RTI, seeking to remain in their current role (Barrio & Combes, 2015). Added responsibilities because of RTI have also increased pressure felt by teachers (Barrio & Combes, 2015). Ehren (2013) reported that many teachers often state, “But I am just a teacher,” when assigned a role in RTI (p. 450). Others feel that RTI has no potential payoff, reduces essential tier one time, and believes that students who struggle with academics and behaviors should be serviced solely by special education instructors (Intervention Central, 2010). Without buy-in from the majority of stakeholders, opposition often exists among the RTI related work (Fan et al., 2018). Teachers and interventionists play a crucial role in RTI as they need to provide interventionists for students while continuing to transfer and build upon classroom skills (Shanklin, 2008). Despite an individual not having an official title or the authority of a leader, every educator and stakeholder can adopt a leadership role in RTI (Ehren, 2013).

Summary

This review of literature was composed to convey an understanding of how theories relate to education, identify and analyze the RTI framework with a purpose of conveying a concise meaning of RTI, the purpose of RTI, how RTI assists at risk students, and current research that warrants the needs for improvement when analyzing the tiered system. In the initial stages of the literature review, the theoretical views of Albert Bandura and Lev Vygotsky, two

researchers who provided rationales for learning, are detailed. The related literature detailed the concept of reading and the five essential components of reading, a key concept in the construction in the RTI framework, and chief academic subject integrated in all schools across the nation. The related literature also provided a comprehensive awareness of RTI, articulating the key fundamentals of the program's structure, outlining Tennessee's RTI structure, also providing a connection to special education services.

Readers also learn, that despite the time and resources provided for the RTI framework, obstacles currently exist that limit students' overall reading achievement to include structure, access to interventions, using appropriate interventions, professional development, and acceptance of new roles. Fourth and eighth graders across the nation have made little to no gains in the academic areas of math and reading (Camera, 2018). Data reveals that since 2015 disappointing gaps between the highest-and lowest-performing students continue to develop (Camera, 2018). In the state of Tennessee, where this study will be conducted, the percentage of students who performed at basic level in reading was 64% in 2017 (National Center for Educational Progress, 2019). This data warrants that practice and theoretical implications should occur to address the problem of transferability skills in RTI. Increased accountability and practices for existing barriers in RTI is essential and valid to support at-risk reading students. More research is needed to identify additional strategies, modifications, and concepts to eliminate existing barriers in RTI. Additional research will assist stakeholders in refining concepts in RTI that will assist at-risk students in becoming proficient in areas of need.

Chapter three will identify the elements of the methodology that will be incorporated and used in the study. The chapter will include information pertinent to the participants, instruments,

site, procedures, collection, and analysis. This data will detail the specific methods selected by the researcher to investigate the problem of the transferability of reading.

CHAPTER THREE: PROPOSED METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this applied study was to solve the problem of the transferability of reading skills from the Response to Intervention (RTI) framework (specifically tiers two and three) to the general education classrooms at a Pre-K-fifth grade public elementary school located in central Tennessee. RTI implemented through the IDEA law of 2004, sought to mandate superior instructional practices to include research-based instruction and frequent evaluation of academic progress for at-risk students (Hale, 2008). Although the RTI model has positive and promising benefits, the problem is, despite receiving rigorous interventions through the RTI framework, significant academic abilities exist between students participating in the RTI framework and students not participating in the RTI framework (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). In a study completed on first grade students, students who received reading interventions preformed worse than identical peers who did not get the additional targeted assistance, confirmed by the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (Sparks, 2015).

Analyzing the transferability of skills learned in RTI is vital, as students continue to read below grade level when presented with grade level texts. While research has defined and detailed the purpose of RTI, current research shows that few studies exist that evaluate the effectiveness of the program, as well as monitor the student's progress in the general education classroom. Gaining a perspective of the transferability of skills will allow educators to improve on practices that are currently used with students enrolled in RTI. The following sections will discuss the research design in addition to the research questions, the selected site, participants, the researcher's role, procedures, data collection and analysis, ethical considerations, and a concluding summary.

Design

A multimethod design was utilized for this applied study. A researcher may be methodical and traditional by selecting to incorporate either a quantitative or qualitative design. However, when using a multimethod design, a researcher can go beyond the qualitative and quantitative divide and integrate both quantitative and qualitative approaches to best comprehend a research problem (Bickman & Rog, 2009). Additionally, a multimethod design is intended to produce greater insight than a single method could (Sowicz, 2017). Qualitative and quantitative approaches to research are not dichotomous and discrete (Bickman & Rog, 2009). Yet for every component of a study, data, data collection, and analysis techniques are on a continuum of qualitative and quantitative approaches (Bickman & Rog, 2009). As so, this method was the most appropriate for the study, as it allowed the researcher to collect both qualitative and quantitative data. Analyzing data obtained from different methods allowed the researcher to answer their research questions in the most effective and accurate manner (Bickman & Rog, 2009). This method ultimately assisted the researcher as she analyzed the data and sought to produce beneficial solutions for the problem examined.

Specific primary and secondary approaches of data collection were incorporated for the multimethod study. The first form of data collection was qualitative in nature. When defined, qualitative research is a concept where a researcher, through notes, interviews, recordings, and conversations, makes the world visible (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Gelling (2015) defined qualitative research as an “approach to scientific inquiry that allows researchers to explore human experiences in personal and social contexts and gain greater understanding of the factors” (p.1). Qualitative research is also noted as the systematic collection and interpretation of data generated from talk, observations, and documentation (Kitto et al., 2008). In addition, qualitative

methods provide a complex understanding of social phenomena than would be obtained from purely quantitative methods (Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008). This is due to the fact that qualitative data often produces verbal data that is often difficult to convert to numbers (O'Sullivan et al., 2003). Qualitative research is furthermore appropriate when quantitative measures do not fit the problem and may not be thoughtful to gender, race, cultural, and individual variances (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A researcher should acknowledge, accept, understand, and embrace the challenge that participants who detail their experiences include the products of not one individual thing but rather the results of a mosaic of influences (De Chesnay, 2014).

The second and third form of data collection approach were quantitative in nature. In quantitative research, the researcher identifies a problem based on trends in a particular field (Creswell, 2015). The approach incorporates the systematic investigation of social phenomena, using statistical or numerical data (Watson, 2015). Using the statistical and numerical data, quantitative methods commonly try to answer “what” questions by making generalizations about communicative behavior (Allen, Titsworth, & Hunt, 2009). Accordingly, quantitative research involves measurement and assumes that the phenomena under study can be measured (Watson, 2015). Quantitative data, specifically the method used in this research process, “is not about determining a p value, but it is about understanding relationships within the data and connecting those relationships to the research context” (Albers, 2016, p. 16). The researcher for this study collected and analyzed Tennessee Comprehension Assessment reading achievement assessments given yearly to students. The researcher also distributed and analyzed quantitative surveys to selected participants.

Research Questions

Central Question: How can the problem of transferability of reading skills learned in

RTI into the general education classroom be solved at an elementary school located in central Tennessee?

Sub-question 1: How would teachers, interventionists, and administrators in an interview solve the problem of transferability of reading skills learned in RTI into the general education setting at an elementary school located in central Tennessee?

Sub-question 2: How would achievement test data inform of the lack of transferability of reading skills learned in RTI into the general education setting at an elementary school located in central Tennessee?

Sub-question 3: How would surveys completed by teachers, interventionists, and administrators at an elementary school inform of the lack of transferability of reading skills learned in RTI into the general education setting at an elementary school located in central Tennessee?

Setting

The researcher conducted the study at an elementary school located school, a school in central Tennessee. The elementary school is one of 40 schools in a district located in Tennessee. Out of the 40 schools, 24 schools are elementary schools, seven schools are middle schools, eight schools are high schools, and the district currently has one alternative school. The elementary school, a Pre-k through 5th grade public school, services 709 students, of which 45% are African American, 38% are Caucasian, 14% are Hispanic, 1% are Pacific Islanders, and less than 1% are American Indians. Of this number 52% are males and 48% are females. To remain ethical and ensure the confidentiality of the participants, pseudonyms were assigned to the school and participants. The school is served by a principal and assistant principal. In addition to the two principals, the school has two academic coaches which comprise the nuclear leadership team. A

secondary school leadership team also exists, which encompasses the nuclear leadership team and grade level representatives.

The elementary school, a title one school, serves students whose parents' income places them in a low socioeconomic bracket. Title one is specifically identified as one of the federal government's most important educational programs, as it seeks to increase the resources of school districts that serve economically disadvantaged children (Gordon, 2004). As a title one school, the elementary school receives additional funding with a focus to improve academic achievement, offering students smaller class sizes, extending class time, and providing teachers with professional development classes (Scott, 2011). Currently, 72% of the students receive free or reduced lunch under the federal lunch program.

This site was chosen for the research study because of its RTI framework. The elementary school has allocated a large amount of title one funds to the RTI framework and has a large number of students participating in the program. A teacher, paid from the title one budget, services only RTI students. Furthermore, the site has a designated classroom in which RTI students attend daily for 45 minutes a week to receive specialized interventions in the academic content of reading. Studying a school that has an established RTI program with various stakeholders, to include students, educators, and administrators, will bring validity to the study. Studying a title one school is essential, as Title one schools seek to provide additional opportunities and a quality education for under advantaged students.

Participants

Participants, to include interventionists, teachers, and administrators, will be selected from the elementary school and are stakeholders directly involved in the recognized problem. Six educators was interviewed for the study, to include two administrators, interventionists and

general education teachers. This assembly was heterogeneous (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Staff was selected if they were certified as a general education teacher who have students who participate in the RTI framework, have taught tiers two or three of RTI, or currently serve as an administrator. These participants had at least a minimum of five years of experience with the RTI framework. Participants were between 25 years and 60 years of age at the time of the study.

In addition to interviews, the researcher incorporated achievement scores of students who participate in RTI and those who do not participate in RTI will be part of the analysis. The sample size for this study will include 41 students who are currently assigned to fifth grade and range in the ages of 10-11. The sample size represents 28 students are currently not enrolled in RTI and 13 students who are currently enrolled in RTI. Of the 41 participants, there are 19 boys and 22 girls. 42% are African American, 35% are Caucasian, 20% are Hispanic, and 3% are Asian American. Of this number, 24 students are ten years old, and 17 students are 11 years old. Participants will be selected using stratified sampling. Stratified sampling occurs where a specified number of units is selected from each stratum (Roy, Acharya, & Roy, 2016). Stratified sampling spotlights the differences between groups in a given sample. Selecting stratified sampling as a design can ensure better representation of a population as it assists in ensuring equal representation of groups (Warner, 2013).

The Researcher's Role

When conducting research, the personal background of the researcher frequently determines the subject the researcher will select and investigate (Gustavsson, 2015). It was important to examine my background experiences and understand what knowledge and background that I hold on this selected problem. I currently am a special education public school educator who has an Education Specialist Degree (EDS) in Educational Leadership. Special

education teachers provide instruction and rigorous interventions to students who have a learning, emotional, and or physical disabilities (Brownell et al., 2009). As a public school teacher, I began teaching when the RTI initiative was primarily new to the school district in which I am currently employed. Through various trainings, I recognized that RTI was a progressing framework that sought to provide rigorous interventions in the areas of academics for students before initiating special education services in the area of specific learning disability. In addition to trainings, I participated in RTI data chat meetings which involved stakeholders in various capacities. In these meetings, while the RTI instructors reported gains, general education teachers often reported that students failed to improve when presented with grade level content. Solving the transferability of rigorous RTI interventions into the general education classroom ensures that students are able to transfer skills in various settings, a lifelong skill. Furthermore, completing this study seeks to determine if participating RTI students are receiving and exhausting appropriate scientific resources before obtaining a comprehensive special education. Lastly, an invested stakeholder at the elementary school, it is my goal that every student at the school succeeds. This rationale drives the motivation for this study.

Procedures

Prior to beginning the research study, permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Liberty University was obtained (see Appendix A). The IRB system was created to oversee research on human subjects as a result of the Belmont Report (Caldamone & Cooper, 2017). In the United States, researchers are required to have their study reviewed by the IRB. The IRB committee primarily provides a core protection for human research contributors through improvement and periodic independent review of the ethical acceptability of proposals for human research (Grady, 2015). If the research poses risks to participants, the IRB may require

modifications prior to approval (Warner, 2013). In addition to receiving approval from IRB, permission was granted from the district and school district. Permission from the principal of the school was gained through a meeting which included written permission to conduct the study. (see Appendix B). Permission from the district was granted by the district's research coordinator through email correspondence (see Appendix C). The records of the research study were kept private. Research records were stored securely in a file cabinet, and only the researcher had access to the records. The research may be shared in future research studies or with other researchers. If the data is shared, the researcher will remove any information that could identify the participants beforehand.

To gather the data, the researcher recorded the interviews and collected the surveys and TN Ready Reading standardized achievement reports generated for the fifth-grade selected population. Participants elicited for the interviews and surveys are certified highly qualified teachers, have a positive classroom environment, and demonstrate appropriate relationships with students. The prearranged interviews and surveys were completed at a time that was convenient for each participant. The researcher used two recording devices to ensure that the interviews were of an appropriate quality. Once recorded, the researcher used Rev, an online digital platform to transcribe the audio.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection involves the gathering of various information. Through this process, a vast amount of data is often generated (Sutton & Austin , 2015). In applied research, where, qualitative research is included, this data is often holistic, detail orientated, and nuanced, which allows themes to emerge after methodical analysis (Barrett, & Twycross, 2018). Through themes, the researcher will ultimately acquire an informed perceptive of experiences from

educators (Barrett, & Twycross, 2018). In this study, the researcher will utilize interviews, surveys, and achievement scores to answer the proposed research questions.

Interviews

The first sub-question for this applied study explored how four teachers and two administrators would solve the problem of transferability of reading skills learned in RTI into the general education classroom at an elementary school located in central Tennessee. The first and primary approach was face-to-face structured as well as a Zoom interviews and sought to answer the research question. Researchers who incorporate structured interviews begin with a justification of the study, and the researcher will then proceed to ask a set of sequenced questions (Bickman & Rog, 2009). The purpose of research interviews is to explore the views, experiences, and perceptions of individuals on specific concepts (Gill et al., 2008). Interviews are seen as a high standard, as they allow flexibility, are observable, and promote personable interaction (Heath, Williamson, Williams, & Harcourt, 2018). Through the personable interaction and dialogue, the researcher allows the interviewer to express their reality, which allows the researcher to create a holistic snapshot, analyzes words, and reports detailed data (Alshenqeeti, 2014). Interviews are particularly appropriate for researchers who explore sensitive topics, as participants may not want to talk about such issues in a group setting (Gill et al., 2008). The recorded interview occurred at the elementary school at a time that was pre-arranged individually between the researcher, interventionist, or general education teacher. Each interview occurred in the educator's classroom. Before beginning each interview, the researcher read a generated interview protocol form that thanked the participant for participating in the study, delineated the purpose of the interview, and reminded the participant of signed consent form, and informed the

participant of using a pseudonym throughout the interview. The proposed interview questions were as followed:

1. Please state your name (please give a pseudonym).
2. How many years have you been an educator?
3. What position do you currently teach?
4. Under this position what are your current responsibilities?
5. Describe a typical day in your classroom.
6. Describe how the RTI model, through its multi-tiered framework, assists students in becoming readers and mathematicians who can master their tier one, state dictated content?
7. When you reflect on your students who are currently in RTI, please explain specific academic growth that you have observed among your students.
8. If your students have not experienced growth, please explain reading elements/skills that your students still continue to struggle with.
9. How are the interventions learned in RTI (intervention environment) incorporated in curriculum's scope and sequence (general education environment)?
10. What strategies and resources do you think will further assist students transfer the strategies and skills learned in RTI into the general education classroom?
11. What specific reading skills do you think should be incorporated into the RTI framework?
12. What professional development courses do you think should be incorporated to ensure all educators can provide evidence based reading skills in multiple environments?

13. What additional information pertaining to the current RTI framework would you like to add?

Questions 1-5 were used as icebreakers and were meant to reduce any stress that the participant may have had (Creswell, 2015). The questions were meant to encourage the participants to talk (Creswell, 2015). Question 6 allowed the participant to provide knowledge and discuss their experiences concerning RTI. This technique is borrowed from the phenomenological design, which studies a group of individuals who have experienced the same encounters (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Questions 7-11 were questions that addressed the prominent central and sub questions of the interview. During the last 11 years, many studies have investigated the implementation and effects of RTI (Stahl, 2016). Yet, just as important, it is vital understand why students in RTI are not transferring their skills. RTI must supplement, not supplant, core literacy instruction (Stahl, 2016). Future academic progress of students are significantly contingent on implementing classroom and instructional elements (Hoover, 2011). The last question gave the participant an opportunity to add additional information regarding the problem.

Interview data was transcribed using the Rev online platform. After the interviews were transcribed, each interview was analyzed using coding. Coding, also known as constant comparison, occurs when a researcher analyzes a complete set of data to identify underlying themes (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). Coding is an important part of the process, as it allows the researcher to organize and add structure to the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). To conduct coding, the researcher will read each interview and chunk the data into smaller parts. A code will be created for each part. The researcher also classified the data. Classification, a step above coding, allows researchers to take information from the study and create themes or dimensions of information (Creswell & Poth, 2018). To classify data, after each part is coded, the codes will be

analyzed for similarities, and a theme will ultimately be identified (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). Classification is an important part of the process, as it allows the researcher to generate themes and categories, a vital step in qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Achievement Test Data

The second sub-question for this study explored how quantitative data would inform stakeholders at the elementary school of the lack of transferability of reading skills learned in RTI into the general education classroom at the elementary school located in central Tennessee. The researcher will collect TN Ready reading achievement scores. To collect the reading achievement scores, a non-partial individual examined the cumulative files of the selected students. Each cumulative file contained past state mandated achievement scores. The individual made copies of the achievement scores, which was placed in a secure location maintained by the researcher. Achievement data was organized, and the researcher entered the data into the Statistical Program for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The researcher used descriptive analysis to analyze the data and address the sub research question. Descriptive statistics primarily used to summarize data from a sample (Warner, 2013). Descriptive analysis also emphasize relationships between variables. Once analyzed, the researcher reported the findings in the forms of narratives, tables and figures (See Appendix H and I). Findings include a mean and percentage.

Surveys

The third sub question for this applied study analyzed how surveys completed by ten teachers at the elementary school will inform the lack of transferability of reading skills learned in RTI into the general education setting at the school located in central Tennessee. Surveys remain the foundation of social science research, as they can be implemented in almost any discipline (Story & Tait, 2019). Survey research involves the collection of information from a

sample of individuals through their documented answers to questions (Sapsford, 2007). When using the research tool, it is important that the survey questionnaire are guided by the research questions, as the research questions, collectively compose a list of the variables the survey questionnaire will need to measure (Punch, 2003). The structure of surveys vary and can include open-ended questions, closed ended questions, and agree choices (Story & Tait, 2019). The researcher used close ended and agree, neutral, and no questions for this study. The researcher used a paper method to create and disseminate the survey and allowed participants a period of five days to complete the ten-question survey. The participants returned the survey to a designated location in the building in which the researcher assembled, analyzed, and calculated percentages using technology software. The survey questions were as followed:

1. Do you believe your students are placed in the correct tier of RTI?

Agree Neutral No

2. Data from universal screeners is used to identify academically at-risk students who scored at or below the 25th percentile?

Agree Neutral No

3. Do you believe, as a result of RTI, your students have the necessary skills to master tier one content?

Agree Neutral No

4. Do you believe your school of employment and or district has provided adequate professional learning opportunities for educators to become knowledgeable about RTI and its framework?

Agree Neutral No

5. My school has put together a collective library of effective, research-based intervention ideas for common student concerns/deficits – such as poor reading fluency, math, application and behavior.

Agree Neutral No

6. As a teacher, interventionist, or support staff, I have attended RTI data chat meetings and have actively participated in providing skills that will transfer across multiple subjects, including problem solving strategies during these meetings.

Agree Neutral No

7. Do you believe that different concepts to include strategies, duration, and intensity are needed for each tier?

Agree Neutral No

8. A RTI reading intervention setting should include all five components of reading.

Agree Neutral No

9. Students who are currently in RTI effectively use strategies learned in RTI to accomplish and complete grade level tasks.

Agree Neutral No

10. Although my title and position does not include official an RTI label, I feel confident in a RTI role, supporting students who are academically at-risk.

Agree Neutral No

Ethical Considerations

The researcher, employed at the selected site, does not provide instruction to the students and had no direct contact with any students during this study. The researcher had no personal relationships with the selected educators. As the researcher of the multimethod study, the

researcher collected, oversaw, analyzed, and presented the data. To avoid ethical concerns and to remain moral when analyzing data, all data, to include positive and negative results, has been revealed. To ensure any negative findings were not attached to any individual or observation, each individual was assigned an alternate name. Researchers collecting qualitative data often include quotations or raw data to visualize specific ideas when presenting research findings (Burles & Bally, 2018). In some cases, the researcher may alter or paraphrase direct quotations (Burles & Bally, 2018). For example, the researcher may shorten a direct text by eliminating certain words. The researcher assumed that the participants studied are a representative sample of teachers and elementary students across the United States. Another assumption is that all participants answered the questions honestly and completely during the interviews.

Summary

This applied study employed a multimethod approach methodology, designed to meet the objective used for this study, solving the problem of the transferability of the skills and strategies students learn in a RTI setting to the general education environment. Chapter three provides a detailed description of the design, site, participants, research questions, researcher's role, procedures, data collection, and data analysis. The results of this study has the ability to support the development of transferability of skills in various environments.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this study was to solve the problem of the transferability of reading skills from the RTI framework (specifically tiers two and three) to the general education classrooms for a Pre-K-5 public elementary school located in central Tennessee. RTI was created with the goal of providing students in need with research-based instruction and interventions. While the RTI model has rewarding benefits for students, the problem, is that despite receiving rigorous interventions through the RTI framework, discrepancies continue to exist between students participating in the RTI framework and students not participating in the RTI framework (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). A multi-method design was used in this study to find a proposed solution to this problem. Qualitative data consisted of interviews completed by teachers, interventionists, and an administrator. Quantitative data consisted of archival data from student achievement tests and surveys from teachers and interventionists. Once collected the data was analyzed through transcribing, coding, and descriptive statistics and explained through narratives, frequency counts, tables, figures, percentages, means, and standard deviations. Several themes to include three prominent themes transpired through the data. The three prominent themes recognized were:

1. The *Big Five* Components of Reading
2. Vigorous Instruction
3. Professional Development

The research questions examined for this study were:

Central Question: How can the problem of transferability of reading skills learned in RTI into the general education classroom be solved at an elementary school located in middle

Tennessee?

Sub-question 1: How would teachers, interventionists, and administrators in an interview solve the problem of the lack of transferability of reading skills learned in RTI into the general education setting at an elementary school located in middle Tennessee?

Sub-question 2: How would achievement test data inform the lack of transferability of reading skills learned in RTI into the general education setting at an elementary school located in middle Tennessee?

Sub-question 3: How would surveys completed by teachers, interventionists, and administrators at an elementary school inform the lack of transferability of reading skills learned in RTI into the general education setting at an elementary school located in middle Tennessee? This chapter will present the results of the interviews, archival data, and surveys.

Participants

The participants in the study were all employees at one elementary school located in middle Tennessee. In total, 16 faculty members participated and were included in this study. Ten confidential participants completed surveys. In addition to the ten undisclosed survey participants, two administrators and four teachers were interviewed from the school. Interview participants were given a pseudonym to protect their identity. No demographic data was collected from the survey participants as the participants confidentially completed the surveys. Lastly, the archival data collected reflected testing data from current fifth grade students from the 2018-2019 academic school year.

Interview Participants

Two administrators and four teachers participated in face-to face and Zoom interviews from the elementary school. Zoom a video and audio conference platform has become has staple

in corporations due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Khalil, 2020). Participants had a minimum of ten years of teaching experience and extensive knowledge of the RTI process. The six participants were all females (there are currently no male teachers at the school) and had an average of 21 years of teaching experience. The interviews were recorded and were transcribed using the platform Rev. Rev a technology company, transcribes audio speeches to written text. Once transcribed, Atlas.ti 9, a computer software program, was used to analyze the qualitative data.

Principal 1, Mrs. Jones, is the current lead administrator of the school with 28 years in public education. She was a kindergarten and second grade teacher for 14 years and has spent the last 14 years as an administrator. She felt strongly about students having a strong foundation in phonics. She also expressed the importance of teaching phonics to younger students and going back to teach remedial phonics skills to older students who continue to struggle in this area.

Principal 2, Mrs. Prince, is the current assistant administrator of the school and has a combination of 17 years as a teacher, academic coach, and administrator. As a teacher she taught math and science to fourth grade students, and as an academic coach she served and assisted teachers who taught primary grades. She expressed the importance of not only identifying skill deficits among students but identifying processes to help at risk students.

Teacher 1, Mrs. Smith, is a female teacher with 13 years of experience in the public-school sector. During those 13 years of experience, she has had the title of an administrator and teacher. At the time of the study, Mrs. Smith is the leader of the fourth-grade team and teaches reading to 73 students. During the interview, Mrs. Smith was passionate about comprehension and writing and expressed that all RTI frameworks should include these elements. Although Mrs. Smith is passionate about comprehension and writing, she also advocated for professional

development in the area of phonics for upper grade levels teachers.

Teacher 2, Mrs. Doe is a female teacher with 21 years of experience, all in the central Tennessee school district. During those years Mrs. Doe has taught reading, first grade, and currently teaches second grade students. In addition to teaching second grade students, Mrs. Doe currently is the second grade multi classroom leader. As a multi classroom leader, Mrs. Doe models lessons, guides, and mentors other second grade teachers in the building. On top of leading the second-grade teachers, she also oversees three teacher residents, individuals who are currently seeking their bachelor's degree in education. Like Mrs. Smith, Mrs. Doe believes that the five vital reading skills should be incorporated into each RTI tier and that comprehension should be incorporated more in each intervention level. She also expressed the need for higher intuitions to teach phonics in depth to individuals majoring in education.

Teacher 3, Mrs. Wilson is a female teacher with 23 years of experience all at the elementary school. Mrs. Wilson has taught first and second grade and currently teaches in an inclusion setting. Mrs. Wilson felt that the RTI setting does well in scaffolding information and recognizing skills that students are missing. Mrs. Wilson also believes that students who are successfully in tiers two and three of RTI gain more confidence in the general education setting and are more vocal when answering questions.

Teacher 4, Mrs. Lincoln is a female teacher with 25 years of experience. Although Mrs. Lincoln believes that RTI provides students with missing skills especially in the lower grades, she hasn't seen students participating in the RTI framework make a tremendous amount of growth. She further explained that in order to become stronger in reading, once provided with reading skills, students must be allowed to have time where they can simply read with an accountability method in place to ensure that students are actually reading. Mrs. Wilson affirmed

that allowing students to read will build their stamina which is needed for upper grades due to the assigned lengthy text passages. Without the stamina, she explains that students are unable to finish the extended passages which hinders the students from comprehending the passage.

Table 1

Interview Participant Data

Participant	Gender	Age Range	Role
Mrs. Jones	Female	50-59	Administrator
Mrs. Prince	Female	50-59	Administrator
Mrs. Smith	Female	50-59	Reading Teacher/Department Head
Mrs. Doe	Female	50-59	Reading and Math Inclusion Teacher, Multi Classroom Leader
Mrs. Wilson	Female	50-59	Reading and Math Inclusion Teacher/Department Head
Mrs. Lincoln	Female	50-59	Reading and Social Studies Teacher/Department

			Head
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Survey Participants

After a screening conducted by the researcher, paper surveys were given to preselected participants. The demographics for the survey sample were unknown as the participants were not asked to provide demographic or identifying information in their survey to ensure confidentiality. The sample size for the survey was 10. The purpose of the survey was to recognize how interventionists and teachers at an elementary school located in middle Tennessee would inform the problem of the lack of transferability of reading skills learned in RTI into the general education setting at an elementary school located in middle Tennessee. All participants were confirmed to be employees of the district with a minimum of five years of experience with the RTI framework.

Achievement Test Data

Achievement test data was collected from forty-one fifth grade students who had previously taken state mandated test in the content area of reading. Given each spring, the high-stake summative achievement test measures what students have learned over a long period of time. The results available in paper form to educational staff members, are kept in the students' cumulative files in a secure location located in building.

Results

Results from the study were organized by the three driving sub-research questions. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers from an elementary school located in central Tennessee in order to find themes related to their experiences with the RTI framework located at their school. Several themes emerged from the qualitative analysis. Second, an analysis of

archival data was collected among the reading state testing scores of current fifth grade students to find themes related to the RTI framework. Lastly, a quantitative survey was administered to measure teacher's and interventionists' perceptions of the current RTI framework.

Sub-question 1

Sub-question one for this study was, "How would teachers, interventionists, and administrators in an interview solve the problem of transferability of reading skills learned in RTI into the general education setting at an elementary school located in central Tennessee?" Face-to-face interviews were conducted with two administrators and four teachers from the elementary school in order to find themes related to the transferability of reading skills obtained from RTI. Interviews were conducted face to face in the teacher's classrooms, the administrator's office, and via Zoom. Each interview was transcribed using the transcription platform Rev. After receiving the transcribed interviews, the qualitative data was coded and categorized using Atlas.ti 9. The themes uncovered in the qualitative analysis were incorporating the *Big Five* areas of reading into instruction, vigorous instruction particularly in the area of phonics, and providing professional development for teachers and staff. In addition to the narrative presentation of the data, the themes are also presented in the form of two qualitative tables (see Table 2 and Table 3).

Table 2

Frequency of Codes

Code Words	Frequency
Teaching	87
Words	70
Assessing	68
Decode	64
Phonemics Awareness	56
RTI	50
Reading	42
Comprehend	38
Fluency	28
Skills	27
Phonics	22
Writing	22
Comprehension	18
Read	18
Educator	10

Table 3

Themes and Examples of Participants Words from Interview

Themes	Examples of Participants' Words
The Big Five	<p>We need to have a balance of what we call the big five, which are phonics, phonemic awareness, comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary. So as long as those are all five there, we're good.</p> <p>Everyone is trained on how to do all the parts of that big five, the phonics, the phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary, and writing, including writing in that.</p> <p>Every one of the big five components of reading, we hit. I think that we need to have all big five in the RTI setting.</p>
Phonics	<p>Letter sounds or phonics areas, they were able to get the foundations of reading and then later improve, or even currently improve their fluency so that they can read better from there on out.</p> <p>If we would teach more on phonics and less on fluency, we need to fix the problem first before we're trying to have them try to be fluent in the sounds and letters that they don't know.</p>

Professional Development	<p>I think the biggest thing that I've seen students struggle with is phonics.</p> <p>I think everyone would benefit from Orton-Gillingham training. I have to be certified. you have to go through the training courses, but if everybody could sit through that, I think it would make a big difference. It's just really expensive.</p> <p>I teach tier three and we're focusing a lot on phonics, and I noticed that they are able to decode and even encode words better than they were before. That has led to a little better fluency, but they're still working on that.</p> <p>What I've noticed, especially working with young teachers, not necessarily young in age, but new teachers, are that they do not leave college with a background knowledge of phonics and phonemic awareness.</p>
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Theme #1. The Big Five. The first of the three themes identified from the interviews with the six participants was incorporating the *Big Five* reading concepts in reading instruction. Many participants felt that when reading instruction occurs all students should receive instruction in all five reading areas. Mrs. Jones attested, “We need to have a balance of what we call the big five, which are phonics, phonemic awareness, comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary. So as long as those are all five there, we're good.” Mrs. Wilson a teacher who has been at the school for an extended amount of time felt that everyone had received training in the five areas, reflecting, “Everyone is trained on how to do all the parts of that big five, the phonics, the phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary, and writing, including writing in that.” Mrs. Doe gave an illustration of what it looks like in the classroom. “We go down as far as phonemic awareness, then we do phonics, fluency, comprehension. We could incorporate more comprehension, and even incorporate writing. So vocabulary, writing, every one of the big five components of reading, we hit.” One profound statement was made by Wilson who expressed that, “I think that we need to have all big five in the RTI setting.” Including the *Big Five* in all reading environments to include RTI could assist in transferring vital skills.

Theme #2. Vigorous Instruction Needed. Vigorous instruction, specifically in the area of phonics was another important concept and identified theme among interview participants. The participants to include administrators, teachers in lower and upper grades all commented on the importance of phonics and the lack of the skill observed among students. Mrs. Doe acknowledged, "I think the biggest thing that I've seen students struggle with is phonics." Mrs. Smith agreed and stated, "They're spending way too much time trying to decode words and by that time they're at their frustration level and they don't even remember what their reading." As such, Mrs. Jones pronounced, "If we would teach more on phonics and less on fluency, we would fix the problem first before we're trying to have them try to be fluent in the sounds and letters that they don't know."

Theme #3 Professional Development. The third identifiable theme among the interview participants was professional development. Administrators and teachers perceived professional development as imperative for helping students transfer skills in multiple environments. Participants voiced their desire to model and provide beneficial instruction for students but also stressed the importance of being provided with adequate training. Mrs. Doe affirmed, "I've noticed, especially working with young teachers, not necessarily young in age, but new teachers, are that they do not leave college with a background knowledge of phonics and phonemic awareness." Mrs. Jones explained, "The biggest struggle is the time and having the teacher resources, the teachers really, to be able to teach the way it should be." Mrs. Smith, with over ten years of experience in the area of reading was vulnerable and avowed, "My weaknesses are definitely teaching phonics and things like that. So, I think more courses on just the foundations of reading would be helpful, especially when you have a fourth or fifth grader that can't read." Mrs. Wilson stated that she would like to see explicit professional development courses,

“Courses that are very specific to their content of teaching not necessarily to their grade level.”

Mrs. Prince took specific trainings geared specifically toward phonics, and remarked, “I think that everyone would benefit from Orton-Gillingham training.” This could help new teachers who Mrs. Doe said would go home and search the internet at night for videos and instruction on “specific vowel teams or whatever phonic skill that students were working on that week.”

Sub-question 2

Sub-question two for this study was, “How would achievement test data inform of the lack of transferability of reading skills learned in RTI into the general education setting at an elementary school located in central Tennessee? For this study, the researcher analyzed the adopted state achievement test. This test is given to students at the elementary level who are in the third, fourth, and fifth grade at the elementary level. In the framework of the study, the researcher only analyzed the data of fifth grade students who were currently in RTI and also currently not in RTI. The examination of only one grade level was due to students not taking the achievement test during the 2019-2020 school year. The district did not administer the test due to a statewide school closure (the decision was made in April due to COVID-19). COVID-19, a respiratory disease which entered the United States in the early months of 2020, resulted in a worldwide pandemic to include the closing of schools and business (Rogge & Gautam, 2020). The data was analyzed to determine if students who receive daily reading interventions are able to master grade level tasks when assessed. The raw data and level rankings derived from 41 students who took the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment in the area of English Language Arts/Reading.

The researcher used the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to analyze the data. The data revealed that the majority 22 (54%) of the students were girls while 19 (46%)

were boys. Seventeen (42%) of the students were African American, 14 (35%) were Caucasian, 8 (20%) were Hispanic and only 1(3%) student was an Asian American. The study revealed that the majority of the students were African American. Twenty-four (59%) of the students were 10 years old and 17 (41%) of the students were 11 years old.

Figure 4

Student Demographics

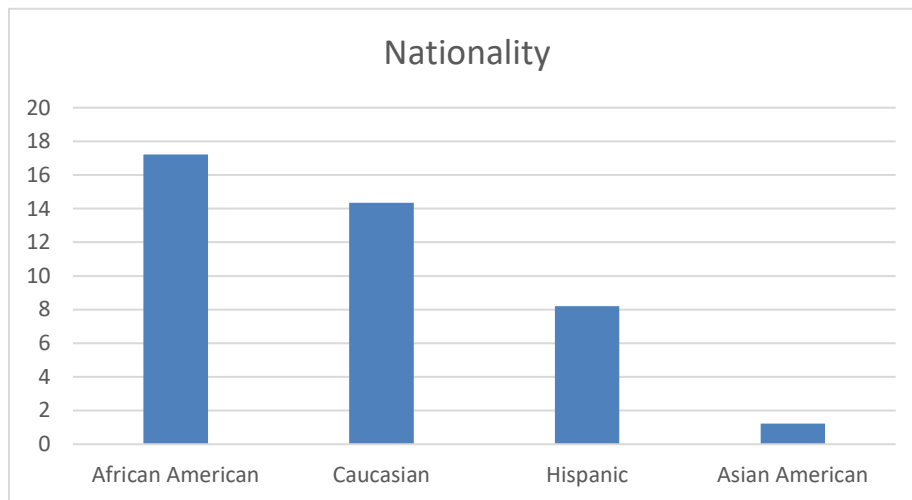


Figure 5

Student Gender

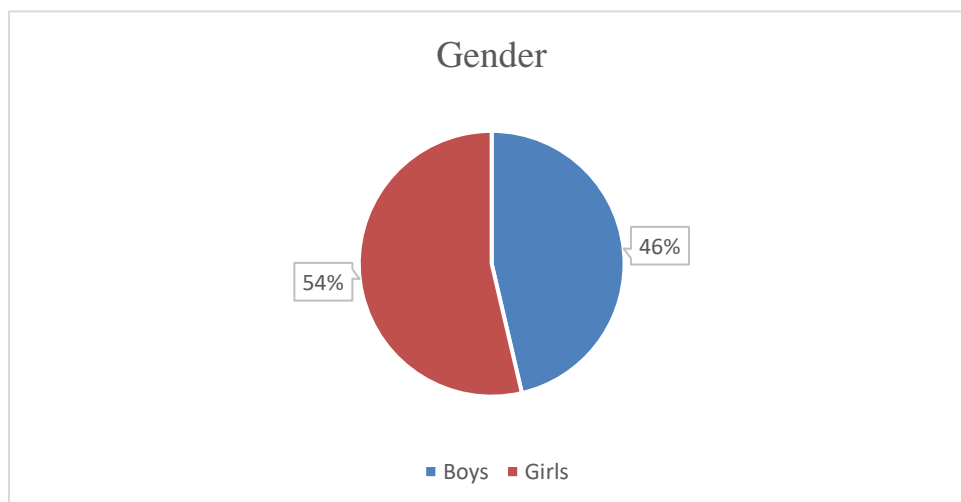
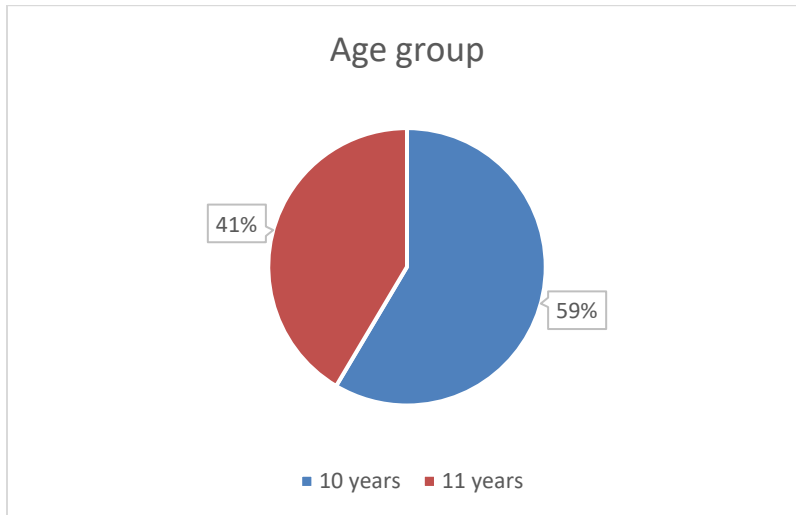


Figure 6

Age Group



When looking respectively at the scores, 6 (46%) of the students in RTI had an approaching score, 4 (31%) did not meet the set standards of the achievement test and 3 (23%) were on track to meet the set standards of the test. No students in RTI mastered the set standards of the achievement test. Twelve (43%) of the students not in RTI were on track, 4 (14%) mastered the state standards on the achievement test, 5 (18%) were below the standards while 7 (25%) were approaching the ability to meet state standards.

Table 4

Distribution of score across student group of students in RTI

Score	Frequency of Students In RTI	Percentage
Approaching	6	46%
Below	4	31%
On Track	3	23%
Total	13	100%

Figure 7

Distribution of scores among students in RTI

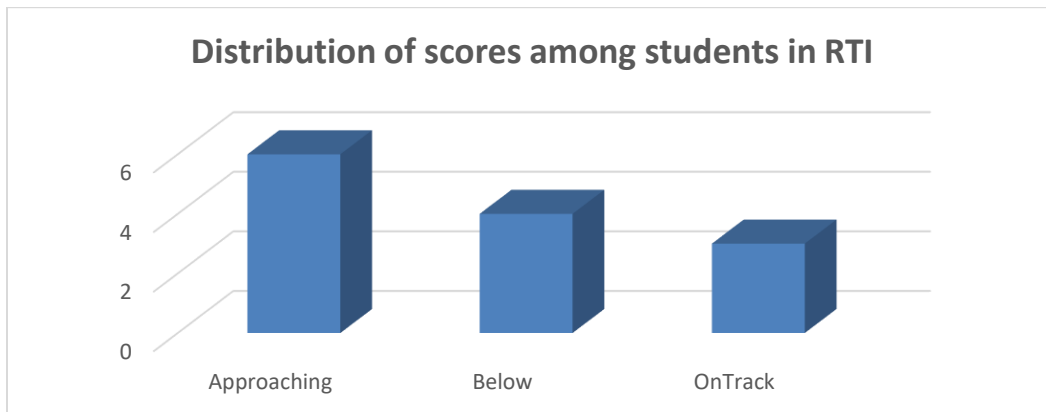


Table 5

Distribution of score across student group not in RTI

Score	Frequency of students not in RTI	Percentage
Approaching	7	25%
Below	5	18%
Mastered	4	14%
On Track	12	43%
Total	28	100%

Figure 8

Distribution of scores among students not in RTI

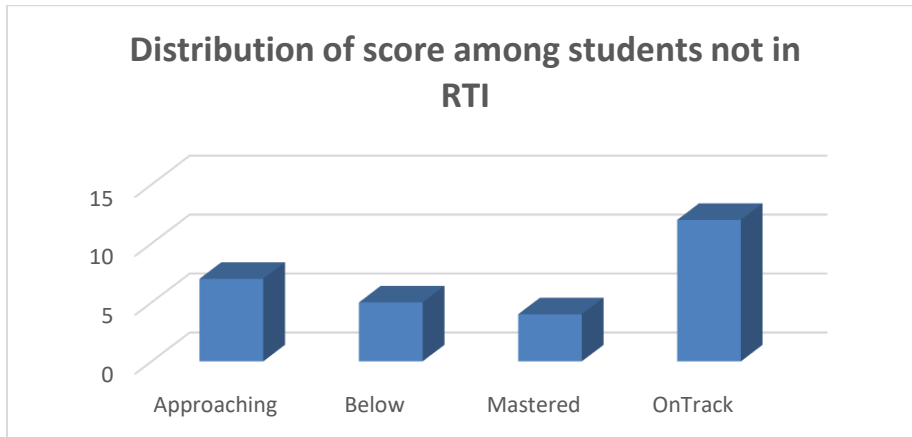


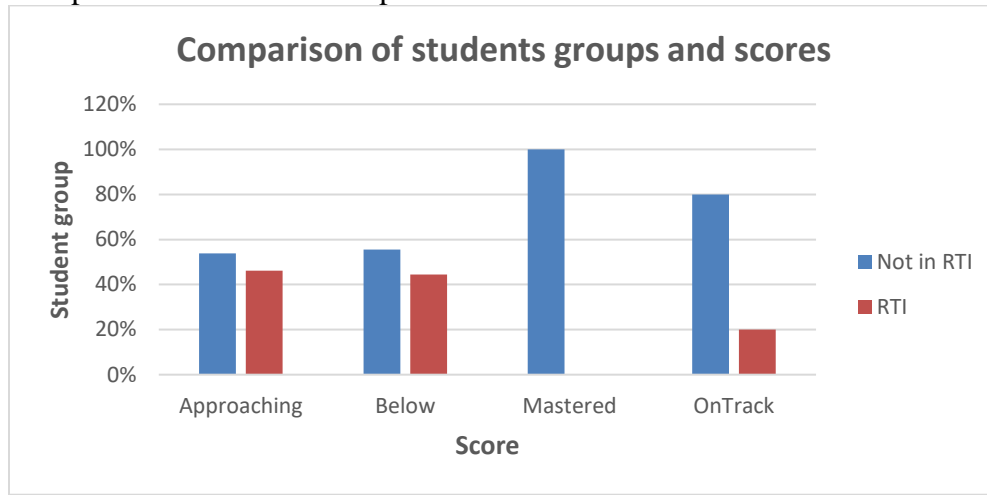
Table 6

Cross tabulation of score across groups of students

Variables		Groups of students		Total
		Not in RTI	In RTI	
Score	Approaching	7 (54%)	6 (46%)	13 (100%)
	Below	5 (56%)	4 (44%)	9 (100%)
	Mastered	4 (100%)	0 (0%)	4 (100%)
	On Track	12 (80%)	3 (20%)	15 (100%)
Total		28 (68%)	13 (32%)	41 (100%)

Figure 9

Comparison of Student Groups and Scores



Theme #1: Data Informing Best Practice Use of Data for Student Achievement Use of Test Data in the Classroom. Analyzing data from student achievement testing is imperative as it allows a researcher to make decisions and conduct actions which ultimately impact student achievement. A primary way that educational stakeholders can make learning decisions for students is to evaluate test score data that is often used as a measure of learning (Ariyanto, Harijanto, & Asri, 2020). When looking at the data to inform of the lack of transferability, the data shows educators and invested stakeholders that the interventions and instruction that students participating in RTI receive are not transferring to the general education setting. When analyzed, the achievement data shows that students in RTI continually to have gaps when assessed in the content area of reading. While the data clearly identifies that RTI students are not transferring reading skills learned to the general education setting and cannot master grade level content, the data also shows that perhaps an examination should also occur to determine if the strategies presented to RTI students are transferrable. It is important that interventions presented in RTI are not presented in isolation and exhibit symmetry, which suggests students can demonstrate skills received and learned in one setting in a second format when assessed

(Morgan, 2007). Teachers and interventionists should collaborate to evaluate presented RTI strategies, general education curriculum content, and teaching methods to determine if the tools are benefiting students in both the RTI setting and tier one reading setting. When this happens, true transferability and fluid learning can occur.

In addition, interventions within the tiers seeks to ensure that students do not continuously fall behind. When provided with not only the raw number but also the detailed test statistics for each student, teachers and interventionists should identify gaps and use the information to drive instruction by offering targeted support in the identified areas. These skills may focus on foundational reading skills or grade level skills. This may be offered through an extension of tier one content, modification of tier one content, or through remedial instruction.

Data without an analysis is simply numbers and words. It is important to allow the data to tell and form a story. Data visualization, using data in inventive ways to show patterns and draw conclusions about a hypothesis, can assist in formulating decisions (Martin, 2018). Once a story is formed, researchers should strive to determine how the data and story can be turned into something actionable (Martin, 2018). The data provided from the student achievement testing, has formed the explanation that instruction in the both the RTI setting and general education setting must be examined and altered for student growth and transferability of reading skills.

Theme #2. Vigorous Instruction Needed. Instruction was another theme that emerged from the review of achievement test data. Six students, which equates to 46% of students in RTI, were approaching the ability to meet state standards on the assessment. Strategic planning and vigorous instruction would allow these students to move up levels when assessed. The next level, on track (level 3), was obtained by 46% of students, identified that the students had a comprehensive understanding of the state standards, a performance level that is recognized

as a positive level. Three students did receive a level three ranking, however no students in RTI mastered the achievement test. The overall student achievement data showed that improvement is warranted in all content areas of reading. In addition to specialized instruction for students in RTI, tier one instruction should be a precedence to ensure that all students are receiving vigorous, relevant, and differentiated instruction.

Lastly, the data recognized out of the 28 students not in RTI, 43% of students were on track and received a level three ranking when measured and 14% of the students mastered the assessment. Five students, 18% percent of students not in RTI, did not master state standards. While these students are not in RTI, analyzing their current academic abilities would be beneficial, as helping any student reach a higher level of academic success is vital.

Theme #3. Standards. The state achievement data measures students according to their ability to interact and understand the Tennessee academic state standards. While the data reports a raw number and level number, stakeholders should also analyze the detailed reports which states how students preformed against reading sub content area to include various standards. This will allow instructors to provide tailored and also remedial interventions on specific standards in both environments which will assist in transferability and ensures that students are receiving instruction on standards dependent on their needs.

Sub-question 3

Sub-question three for this study was, “How would surveys completed by teachers, interventionists, and administrators at an elementary school inform the lack of transferability of reading skills learned in RTI into the general education setting at an elementary school located in central Tennessee?” The ten question Likert scale survey instrument (see Appendix E) was administered to ten anonymous teachers and interventionists and was used to collected

quantitative data relating to their feeling and thoughts towards the current RTI framework within the elementary school. Themes that emerged from the surveys completed by participants focused on the *Big Five* reading concepts, professional development, resources needed for staff, and the ability to transfer skills.

Data showed that all the respondents believed that their students were all placed in the correct tiers of RTI. All respondents also agreed that different concept which include strategies, duration, and intensity are needed for each tier. Nine (90%) of the respondents said that data from the universal screener is used to identify academically at-risk students who scored at or below 25th percentile while only 1(10%) of the respondents was not sure. This survey question had a mean of 1.10 and standard deviation of 0.316. Nine (90%) of the respondents agreed that they have attended an RTI data chat meeting and had actively participated in providing skills that will transfer across multiple subjects and also problem solving strategies during these meetings while only 1(10%) of the respondents was neutral to this.

Table 7

Question 1: Do you Believe that students are placed in the correct tier of RTI?

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Agreed	10	100%

Table 8

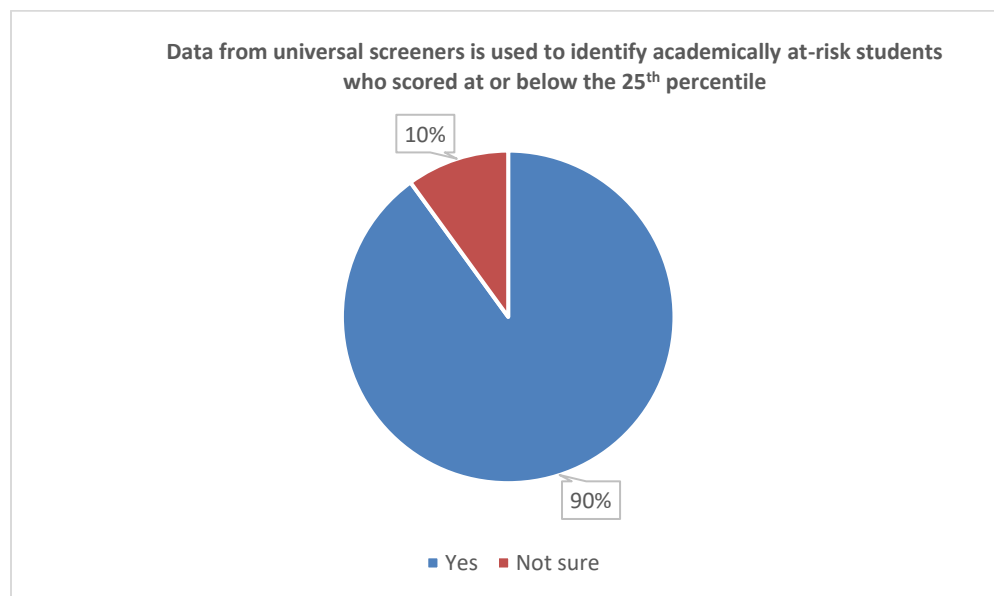
Question 2: Data from universal screeners is used to identify academically at-risk students who scored at or below the 25th percentile.

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	9	90%

Not sure	1	10%
Total	10	100%
Mean=1.10 Std. deviation = 0.316		

Figure 10

Data from universal screeners is used to identify academically at-risk students who scored at or below the 25th percentile



When asked about students' ability to transfer information learned from RTI into the general education, professional development opportunities, and resources the participants selected varying answers. When asked if students have the necessary skills to master tier one content as a result of RTI, only 30% agreed, 40% of the participants were neutral and 30% disagreed. Three (30%) of the total respondent agreed that their school of employment or district

provided adequate professional learning opportunities for educators to become knowledgeable about RTI, 4 (40%) were neutral to this claim while the remaining 3 (30%) disagreed. The items had a mean value of 2.00 and a standard deviation of 0.816. Four (40%) of the respondents agreed that their school had put together a collective library of effectiveness, research-based intervention ideas for common student's concern/deficit such as poor reading fluency, math application and behavior, 2 (20%) of the respondents were neutral to this while the remaining 4 (40%) of the respondents disagreed that their school put together a collective library. Four (40%) of the respondents said students who are currently in RTI effectively used the strategies learned in RTI to accomplish and complete grade level tier, 3 (30%) of the respondents were not sure if the strategies learned is effective while the 3 (30%) said students who are currently in RTI do not effectively use strategies learned in RTI to accomplish and complete grade level tier. Lastly, seven (70%) of the teachers and interventionist felt that even though their title and position does not include a RTI official label, they feel confident in an RTI role, supporting at risk students who are currently in two tiers or three of RTI. Two teachers and interventionists (20%) were not sure of this while only 1(10%) individual said they did not feel confident in a RTI role with a standard deviation of 0.699 and a mean value of 1.40.

Table 9

Question 3: Students have the necessary skill to master tier one content as a result of RTI

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Agree	3	30%
Neutral	4	40%
Disagree	3	30%

Total	10	100%
Mean value = 2.00 Std. Deviation = 0.816		

Figure 11

Students have the necessary skill to master tier one content as a result of RTI

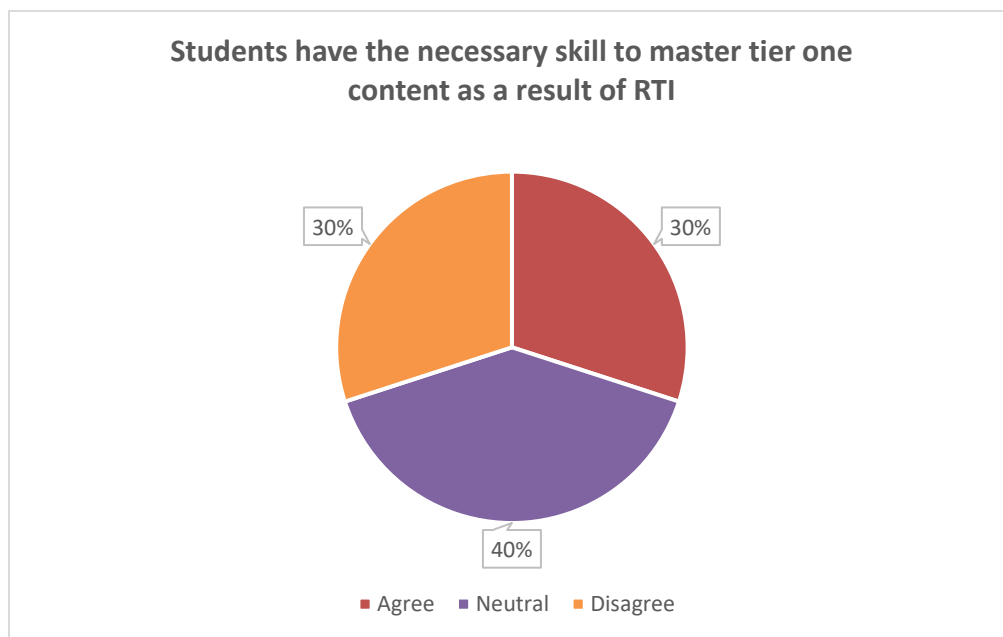


Table 10

Question 4: My school of employment or district has provided adequate professional learning opportunities for educators to become knowledgeable about RTI and its framework

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Agreed	4	40%

Neutral	2	20%
Disagree	4	40%
Total	10	100%
Mean value = 2.00 Std. deviation = 0.943		

Figure 12

My school of employment or district has provided adequate professional learning opportunities for educators to become knowledgeable about RTI and its framework

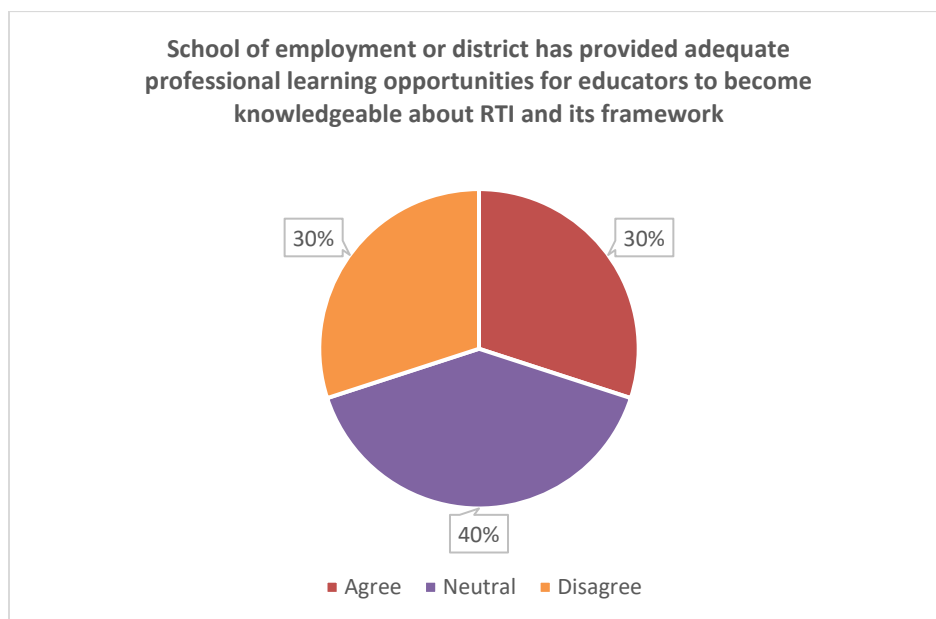


Table 11

Question 5: My school has put together collective library of effectiveness, research-based intervention ideas for common students' concern/deficit-- such as poor reading fluency, math, application and behavior.

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Agreed	4	40%
Neutral	2	20%
Disagree	4	40%
Total	10	100%
Mean value = 2.00 Std. deviation = 0.943		

Figure 13

My school has put together collective library of effectiveness, research-based intervention ideas for common students' concern/deficit-such as poor reading fluency, math, application and behavior.

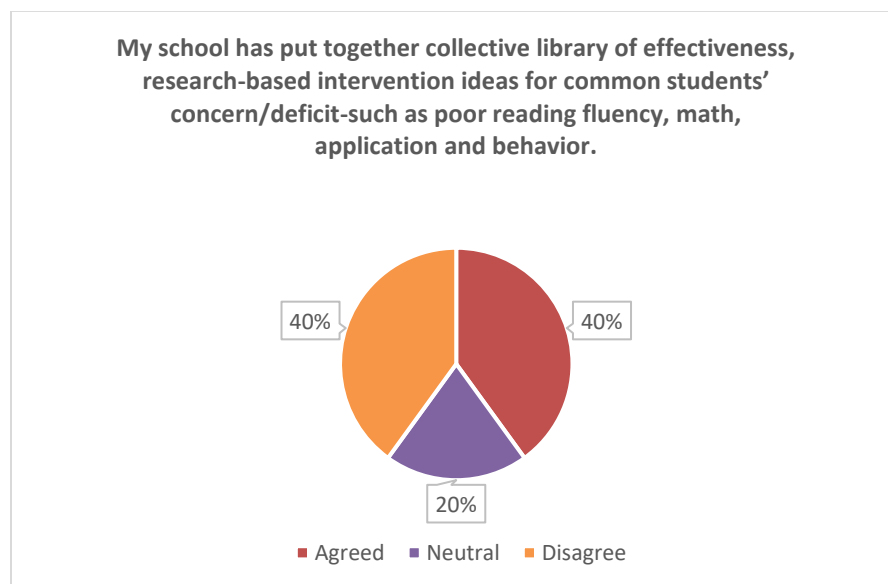


Table 12

Question 9: Students who are currently in RTI effectively use strategies learned in RTI to accomplish and complete grade level tier.

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Yes	4	40%
No	3	30%
Not sure	3	30%
Total	10	100%
Mean =1.90 Std. deviation= 0.876		

Figure 14

Students who are currently in RTI effectively use strategies learned in RTI to accomplish and complete grade level tier.

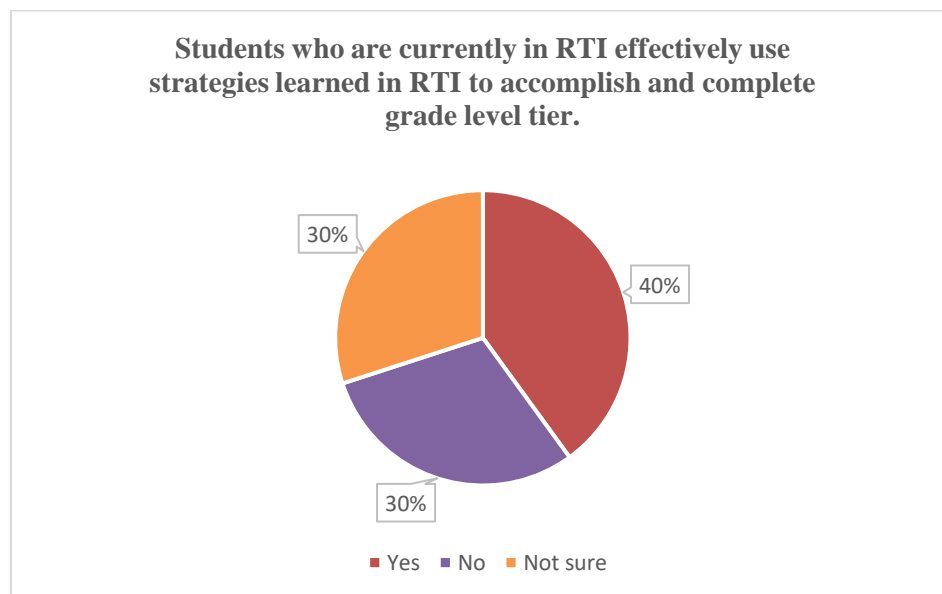


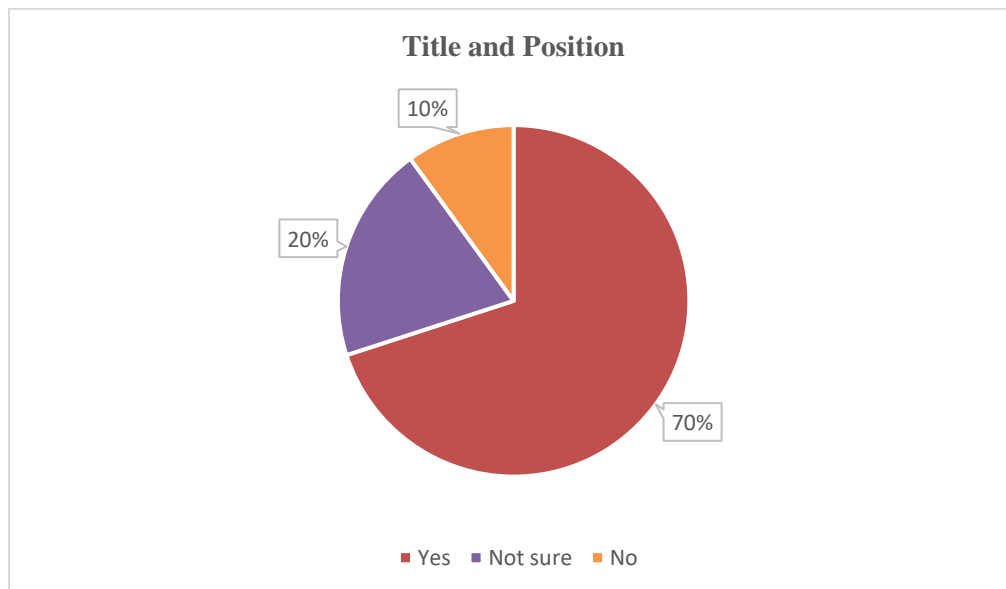
Table 13

Question 10: My title and position does not include a RTI official label.

Category	Frequency	Percent
Yes	7	70%
Not sure	2	20%
No	1	10%
Total	10	100%
Mean Value =1.40 Std. Deviations=0.699		

Figure 15

Title and Position



Theme #1: The Big Five. From the survey results, it was clearly indicated with 100% survey participants agreeing that all students participating in RTI, no matter the tier, need to be

taught all five components of reading to include phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. This conclusion was determined by the calculated mean of 1.0. In a significant report published by the National Reading Panel in 2000, the panel which included school administrators, teachers, and scientists asserted that in elementary classrooms, the five component of reading should be included in reading instruction using research-based instruction when taught (McIntyre, Hulan, & Layne, 2011). With all participants being in agreement, incorporating the *Big Five* in the RTI setting as well as tier one instruction could lead to the solution of solving the transferability of reading skills in multiple environments at the school.

Theme #2: Professional Development. A total of 70% of teachers and interventionists to include 40% of participants who were neutral and 30% of participants who disagreed, asserted that the district and the school had not provided adequate amounts of professional learning opportunities which would ultimately allow students to become knowledgeable about the RTI framework. At times, some challenging aspects of RTI for staff include the types of interventions to incorporate, who should perform the interventions, and which approach to use when instructing students (Wanzek & Vaughn, 2007). Providing teachers and interventionists with specific RTI professional development courses may alleviate these concerns, and most importantly lead to transferability of reading skills into the general education classroom for students participating in the RTI framework. If teachers and interventionists are not provided with the necessary tools to provide scientific interventions, students will not have a model or guide as to how to transfer reading skills from the RTI setting to the general education setting.

Theme #3: Resources for Staff. Similar to professional development, a large amount of the survey participants asserted that the school had not put together a collective library of

effectiveness, research-based intervention ideas for student's deficits. While teachers have ideas and activities to use with students, activities and tasks presented to students must be presented through researched based methods. Evidence research-based resources are often less susceptible to bias and have a foundational base that encourages reasoning and problem solving (Mazzotti, Rowe, & Test, 2013). These methods have also been tested and proven to provide successful outcomes for student achievement.

Theme #4: Transferability. A total of 60% of participants were not sure or did not believe that students used the interventions or strategies learned in RTI to complete grade level standards, a negative aspect when analyzed. Students who receive reading interventions are receiving initial skills which are often noted as foundational reading skills. However, these initial foundational skills will need to progress and build upon each other, and most importantly they will be used by students in multiple environments. Without the ability to transfer reading interventions to complete grade level activities, students are engaging in passive learning not active learning (Gregory et al., 2016). With such a high number from the survey participants, additional conversations are warranted to determine why educators believe that students do not or lack the ability to transfer reading skills learned from the RTI setting.

Discussion

All instruction and education encompass some form of reading to include deciphering and extracting information from a text (Rose, 2007). Most importantly, through printed literature, oral texts, televised texts, or electronic texts, all texts educate (Rose, 2007). Examining the connection between data and themes allow invested educators to gain insight on research, data, and the perspective of educators which can help RTI reading barriers at the local elementary level and furthermore in the education community. Through a triangulation method of data

collection, themes and insights emerged, which identified a connection to chapter's two literature section. Chapter two discussed the five components of reading, the RTI structure, professional development, resources, and obstacles identified among the RTI framework. While various themes emerged from the data, the *Big Five* reading components, professional development, and vigorous instruction were three prominent themes that emerged through the triangulation data collection which indicate a collective correlation among the research and data.

Theme 1: The Big Five

The ultimate goal of reading occurs when a student or individual can comprehend the text being read. To reach this goal, several strategies that provide proficient skills in the five areas of reading must be taught (Boyle, 2008). These skills occur in the *Big Five* areas of reading known as phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (Read Naturally, 2019). Research recognizes that to accomplish reading comprehension, students must decode words, gain word meanings, compose knowledge from texts, to create a mental model of the text (Denton et al., 2015). Research also distinguishes that including these five components have been effective in preventing or remediating reading difficulties for most students (Whalon et al., 2009). Qualitative data and data taken from the surveys confirmed that participants believe that incorporating these five concepts in RTI is vital for student success in the area of reading. Every survey participant who took the survey agreed that all settings that incorporate reading instruction should also incorporate the *Big Five* elements of reading. With a standard deviation of 1.00, each survey participant also consensually believed that each tier needs different concepts to include strategies, duration and intensity. Lastly, each survey participant concurred and affirmed that all five reading domains should be included in RTI instructional time. Incorporating the *Big Five* elements for students and varying grades level will differ according to

the needs of the students. Findings of the interview participants identified that a balance is needed when incorporating each of the reading domains. Mrs. Jones, the current administrator of the school, recognized that the school is trying to find the needed balance by revisiting the expectations of guided reading small group instruction with teachers. While the time a teacher gives to each area may vary, including all five components provides students with a solid reading foundation. It also allows students to have reading instruction that includes a continuous sequence which allows for the development of reading skills.

Theme 2: Professional Development

Another theme that was highly prominent among teachers was professional development. Teaching students to read is often seen as a teacher's most vital job (McIntyre, Hulan, & Layne, 2011). While this task is often the most important job of elementary teachers, it can also be the most challenging job that a teacher can have. If teachers do not receive ongoing professional training that is research-based, teachers can become discouraged which can impact their ability to carry out instructional, impacting students from achieving success. Chapter two reported that many teachers do not feel competent to deliver research-based instruction to students (Weber, 2013). Data also revealed that reading specialists are scarce in schools, which has required that various educational personnel provide reading interventions to students (Miles, et al., 2019). Mrs. Wilson confirmed such concept and stated, "In most schools, there is no RTI interventionists, so the classroom teacher is the interventionist." Current trends indicate that professional development is a required piece for changing education in the twenty-first century for teachers and students (Collinson et al., 2009). Only three survey participants felt that the district had provided satisfactory professional development opportunities concerning the area of RTI. Four participants were neutral while the remaining three survey participants disagreed,

resulting in a standard deviation of 0.816. More than half of survey participants were collectively unsure or disagreed that their current school had a collection of resources needed to support students in transferring reading skills. This corroborates studies who have reported that teachers report not having essential strategies and knowledge to deliver scientific interventions in the RTI framework. Instructors often feel that they are inexperienced and cannot effectively deliver research-based instruction (Weber, 2013). One interview participant showed vulnerability revealing, “My weaknesses are definitely teaching phonics and things like that. So, I think more courses on just the foundations of reading would be helpful, especially when you have a fourth or fifth grader that can't read.” These barriers have resulted in instruction that does not properly meet the needs of students who are struggling in the area of reading and can be also noted as a cause for the lack of transferability of RTI (Paige, 2018). These findings also shed light on the test achievement scores which revealed that 6 (46%) of the students in RTI had an approaching score, 4 (31%) did not meet the set standards of the achievement test and 3 (23%) were on track to meet the set standards of the test. The assessment data revealed that no students participating in RTI mastered the set standards of the achievement test. Twelve (43%) of the students not in RTI were on track when assessed, 4 (14%) mastered the state standards on the achievement test, 5 (18%) were below the standards while 7 (25%) were approaching the ability to meet state standards. Based on the information received from participants and ongoing research, professional development although scarce in some schools, is a practice that every teacher should be afforded for the ongoing development of teachers as well as the goal improved student achievement.

Theme 3: Vigorous Instruction

The last focal theme that was recognized among participants and also among the archival

data was the need for strong instruction in all tiers of reading in the RTI framework. Powerful teachers know the content and skills that students must master in their classroom (Grant, Hindman, & Stronge, 2013). More importantly, they not only know the content, but they also know many ways to teach it, having the content knowledge as well as the pedagogical content knowledge (Grant et al., 2013). Research discussed in the literature section corroborated that profound knowledge of the RTI framework is one of the most important factors in preventing and assisting students with their literacy needs (Wixson & Valencia, 2013). Only three survey respondents felt that students through the received RTI instruction could master their tier core instruction, while the remaining seven participants revealed that they disagreed or were neutral on the statement. One interview participant spoke honestly stating, “In reading, I haven't really seen them master anything. I can't really pinpoint anybody specifically that I can think of that has showed a tremendous growth.” When analyzing the achievement test data, only 23% of RTI students were on track to meet state standards. Phonics was an area that interview participants felt passionately about, avowing that vigorous instruction should occur in the area, especially for students who are in upper grade levels and face reading challenges. Mrs. Lincoln avowed that “students must have foundational skills in order to be successful in the general education curriculum.” Once the foundation is built, interview participants further avowed that student’s fluency can improve followed by their ability to comprehend which is crucial for transferability and success in the tier one setting. Other topics discussed in Chapter Two including data analysis, needed resources, and transferability were also revealed in the data that was collected throughout the study.

Summary

This study was developed to understand, formulate, and gather solutions for an identified

problem at an elementary school located in Tennessee. The central research problem that guided the analyzed research was, “How can the problem of transferability of reading skills learned in RTI into the general education classroom be solved at an elementary school located in middle Tennessee?” Data to include interviews, archival data, and surveys were analyzed and themes were established. Three major themes included the big five concepts of reading, vigorous teaching, and professional development were identified. As a result of the themes derived from the triangulation analysis, actions can occur which will assist in solving the problem of transferability of RTI reading skills. Chapter five will discuss these actions and provide a proposed solution, along with suggested resources, funds needed, roles, responsibilities, timeline, solution implications, limitations, and an evaluation plan.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this study was to solve the problem of the transferability of reading skills from the RTI framework (specifically tiers 2 and 3) into the general education classrooms for a Pre-K-5 public elementary school located in central Tennessee and to formulate a solution to address the problem. Many districts across the nation have adopted and use the RTI framework. However, students participating in the framework continue to struggle when presented with their tier one reading instruction and tasks and a small amount of research studies exist, which study the relationship between transferring reading intervention skills from the RTI setting to the general education setting. This chapter will explain the proposed solutions to address the central question and will detail an action plan for the site as well as schools across the nation experiencing similar obstacles.

Restatement of the Problem

This study examined a chief problem often associated with the RTI model, analyzing why students in tiers two and three of RTI often struggle transferring reading skills learned in the RTI setting into the tier one general education setting. RTI impacts numerous members in the education community to include administrators, teachers, interventionists, and students. Analyzing their insights and observations, in addition to data allows stakeholders to identify if the RTI framework is genuinely reducing students' academic deficits in the area of literacy and reading. As RTI continues to operate in public schools across the nation, it is necessary to certify that the framework helps students access one of most vital skills needed in today's society, the ability to read and comprehend information.

Proposed Solution to the Central Question

This study sought to determine how the problem of transferability of reading skills learned in RTI into the general education classroom could be solved at an elementary school located in central Tennessee. Through data collection from qualitative and quantitative data sources, several themes emerged that allowed for the formulation of an action plan. The proposed action plan will include three practical, yet strategic actions that will allow the site in addition to other schools besieged with transferring reading skills to experience positive changes and academic growth in the area of reading. The three actions, incorporating rigorous tier one instruction, teaching the *Big Five* in all settings, and providing educators with professional development was selected based off the themes developed in chapter four, consideration of literature provided in chapter two, and scholarly research. Bernhardt & Hebert (2017) who examined continuous school development, asserted a redesign of general education and special education is required for a school to appropriately implement the RTI framework. They proclaimed:

Adding a program or intervention, here or there, will not provide the improvement which schools desire or require to meet the learning needs of all students. School staff members who use RTI at the whole school level understand what their students know and do not know. These staff members make agreements and commitments to get all students on grade level with direct, intense core curriculum supported with intensive and focused interventions, even when that means moving some students more than one grade level in one year (Bernhardt & Hebert, 2017, p. 2).

When discerning the RTI setting, it is important to not only understand the RTI framework but also understanding why RTI is needed, as it has the expectation to enhance student learning for

at-risk students. The three solutions and proposals require commitments from stakeholders, but, most importantly target and address challenges and focus on the main objective, student achievement.

Proposal One: Incorporating Rigorous Tier One Instruction

Existing research validates the importance of rigorous instruction. The focus of a potent and fruitful reading instruction block begins with core instruction, a setting where students receive grade level instruction according to state standards. In this tier and environment, students receive their most prominent form of reading instruction (Wanzek et al., 2014). In the past, efforts to improve tier one instruction have included ability grouping, flexible grouping and smaller class sizes (Gregory et al., 2016). While these strategies and efforts are beneficial, examining fundamental classroom cores and understanding the term *rigor* in an educational environment can improve tier one instruction. In a rigorous tier one environment, an educator creates a setting where all students are expected to learn at elevated levels, yet still at their personal and individual levels (Blackburn & Witzel, 2018). While learning at advanced levels, scaffolding lessons and allowing for demonstration of active learning after presenting in engaging tasks fosters rigorous learning (Blackburn & Witzel, 2018). Gregory et al. (2016) further asserted the following paths for teachers who seek to provide students with vigorous tier one instruction:

1. Evidence-Based Practices
2. Essential Standards
3. Success Criteria for Mastery
4. Meaningful, Relevant and Student-Centered Instruction
5. 21st Century Skills

By including these elements in daily instruction and tasks, teachers are intentionally planning a modern map that will add validity to teaching, set smart goals for students, and most importantly include students at the center of instruction (Blackburn & Witzel, 2018). Furthermore, when incorporating these elements, stakeholders are embracing prevention actions which will decrease the need for RTI for some students. Often the central focus when analyzing an at-risk student focused on miscalculations of the student's abilities (Blackburn & Witzel, 2018). Yet focusing on the relationship of the curriculum, instruction, environment, learner, looks at what educators can do to help a student improve (Blackburn & Witzel, 2018). Although prevention methods have been applied to mental health and the education field in the past, with the implementation of the RTI framework, the method has begun to receive present day attention (Jimerson et al., 2014). By using proper researched methods to help students acquire reading skills, reading achievement for at-risk students can become stabilized for at least 50% of the identified students (Jimerson et al., 2014). While the other remaining percentage will need additional support through the tiers two and three of the RTI framework, all students will have accessibility to strong core instruction. For these reasons, it is imperative that students receive rigorous instruction.

Proposal Two: Teaching the Big Five in All Settings

The findings from the study support, that in addition to incorporating rigorous core instruction, including all of the vital reading components in every setting is paramount. Phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension, comprise the *Big Five* reading instructional areas. In addition to the findings from the study, research has demonstrated that instructional practices designed and implemented to assist students with mastering basic skills, promoting reading competency, should include the five reading

components (Suarez et al., 2018). These components of reading are unified and work in unison to extract the essence of reading which is gaining meaning from a text (Tindall & Nisbet, 2010). Teaching students one or two reading components and omitting the others, presents students with partial reading instruction and does not promote academic reading growth. While the amount of time a teacher may spend teaching each of the five areas may vary according to grade level and student's developmental levels, each area has a place in a student's daily reading block.

Proposal Three: Professional Development

Lastly, to ensure that teachers and instructors can provide rigorous instruction and seamlessly incorporate the *Big Five* into reading, teachers need to receive adequate professional development. When receiving professional development courses in the forms of training, classes, presentations, and collaboration, educators have the opportunity to expand their knowledge base. When teachers use this knowledge during daily instruction, they initiate their student's learning stamina, which leads to higher outcomes for students learning and understanding of the subject matter (Krolak-Schwerdt et al., 2014). Professional development for instructors has also become vital as the demand for improved quality of teaching and increased accountability has become an expectation for teachers (Creemers, Kyriakidēs, & Antoniou, 2013). Johnson (2018) explained that giving instructors tools to develop from novice levels to higher levels of expertise should be a growth process that happens in each stage of an instructor's career. Professional development should also be continuous, as student learning fluctuates and advances over time (Johnson, 2018).

When completing the survey, 40% percent of participants felt neutral when asked if the school or district had provided adequate professional learning opportunities for educators to become knowledgeable about RTI and its framework, while 30% disagreed and stated that the

school and district had not provided adequate learning opportunities for professional learning development. Supporting teachers can have a significant impact on student learning in schools, yet calls for high-quality instruction from teachers (White, 2014). Educators as a result warrant high consideration in the educational field as the learning of students is directly impacted by their teachers (White, 2014).

Resources Needed

The chief resources needed for the proposed solution would be instructional materials, opportunities for professional development, and hiring additional staff members. Instructional resources to include graphic organizers, thematic readers to be used in both settings, and engaging reading products for both settings, can be used in all tiers to ensure transferability. Students would also receive a hands-on comprehension tool kit box, which would include visual and kinesthetic materials for diverse learners. This tool kit would travel with students as they enter the RTI setting and return to the general education setting, allowing students to use the same materials to scaffold different tasks across multiple settings.

Professional development is also a needed resource. Each year many school districts across the nation cease in-person instruction for approximately eight weeks. During this time students do not report to school. While students do not physically report to school, administrators, faculty, and staff members continue to complete various activities which often include continuous learning for educators. Continuous learning often occurs within a school district or organization. Yet, perhaps taking professional development courses from a third party, will allow the staff attempting to overcome transferability concerns in RTI, to learn new content, strategies, and skills. New instructional ideas and strategies will allow the faculty and staff to strengthen their instructional practices. When teachers come together to learn various ways to

revive student engagement, all parties will make gains, including the instructor, the school, school district, and students involved (Johnson, 2018).

Lastly, trained personnel entering classrooms to help students transfer their information in the ultimate desired environment (Tier 1) would benefit students. Known as a *floater*, the staff member would spend time in both the general education classroom, as well as the RTI setting, having knowledge of tier content as well as the current interventions being used. One staff member per grade level, specifically in upper grade levels to include third, fourth, and fifth grade would benefit students who are working on basic reading deficits. With scaffolding and support from the trained floater, a bridge could form that would allow a crossover from each setting. For example, a student who currently receives tier two support in fluency, can receive from the floater modified fluency passages relating to the current tier three content. Research has avowed that students who receive interventions integrated with their regular classroom instruction preformed at a greater rate than students who received interventions outside of the classroom. (McIntyre, Hulan, & Layne, 2011). Co-instruction from a floater could offer such opportunities.

Funds Needed

Specified funds would allow schools to purchase resources that could be used and scaffolded in both the general education classroom and RTI setting. In addition to hands on resources for students, funds would be allocated for professional development and additional staff. The cost of materials would not exceed \$1000.00 to purchase the reading materials.

To hire an educational assistant that would have the responsibilities of being a floater would depend on the funds allocated to the district or school. The leadership team of schools frequently meet throughout the year but often meet each spring to discuss personnel for the upcoming year. During this time, if funds are warranted, the hiring of additional personnel could

be proposed. It is also during this time that the leadership team determines if funds for professional development is warranted. This cost for professional development would also vary depending on the company or organization selected and the amount of individuals attending the professional development.

Procuring the needed resources would depend on the school and district, as schools and districts have varying budgets. Varying budgets occur due to the size of the school, the location, and the type of school. Leaders and schools could examine their basic funding program, an account which allows schools to receive funding through state funding. If the school is a Title One school, leaders could also analyze this budget, which perhaps could cover professional development and the hiring of additional staff. A potential barrier would be the inability to secure funds to purchase the needed resources.

Roles and Responsibilities

In order to help with the transferability of reading skills from the RTI setting to the general education setting, specific roles are needed. The administration team or leadership team at an elementary school would seek and approve specific professional development courses that would increase the transferability of reading intervention skills into the general education setting. After acquiring professional development courses, the administration team would schedule during the summer or during a time that is feasible for all stakeholders. Also, a school administration team often has the responsibility of observing teachers and environments in the building to include the RTI setting. While observing teachers in a general education setting and RTI setting, administrators could assess and determine if similar and parallel instruction is occurring between both environments. The leadership team would also have the role of improving the proposed budget.

It is recommended that all teachers and staff in a building who teach tier one reading or RTI interventions participate in the professional development designated by administration. It is correspondingly recommended that the teachers and staff plan and together create a yearly instructional map which details standards, topics, units, themes, student expectations, and essential questions of the academic year. This would allow RTI teachers to incorporate modified but similar topics, units, and themes into the RTI setting with support from general education educators.

Timeline

The timeline of the action plan would be accomplished over the span of one academic school year. It is recommended that professional development would occur at the beginning of the school year, with refresher courses and check-in points for staff occurring throughout the school year. Materials would also be purchased at the beginning of the school year and would need to be incorporated into the academic environments when students start the school year in August. Yearly, students enrolled in elementary public schools, take the state mandated tests in April or May, as required by the department of education. At the end of the academic school year, the researcher would review the scores of the tests, survey teachers, and speak with selected staff members again. If completed at a school other than the original researched site, an assigned person would review the scores derived from the state mandated tests. This information would be given to the leadership team to prepare for the next academic school year through exploration of highlights and continued areas of needs. The timeline below outlines how the school district can employ the proposed solution over the course of one academic school year.

Timeline

June

- The administration or leadership team would select and approve of strategic professional development courses for the faculty and staff.
- The administration team, if approved, would hire instructional floaters.

July

- General education teachers in the content area of reading and RTI interventionists would participate in professional development courses related to rigorous instruction and the transferability of skills.
- Student resources would be purchased. Comprehension kits would be assembled.

August

- General education teachers in the content area of reading and RTI interventionists would plan and create an instructional map to promote parallel instruction of topics, themes, and units.
- Students return to school and begin to use purchased resource materials

September-April

- Teachers and stakeholders incorporate effective instruction in all settings which promote the transferability of reading skills
- Instructional floaters would enter daily both classroom environments, helping students to use the strategies and scaffolding support from the RTI setting into the general education setting.
- Administration would conduct monthly fidelity checks and monitor parallel teaching.

- Check in meetings would occur on school professional development days between administrators, general education teachers, and interventionists to assess progress.

April

- Students take as a summative assessment, state mandated tests.

May

- The researcher will review the data from the state mandated tests, survey teachers and interventionists, and also speak with teachers on the advancement of the transferability of reading skills.
- The researcher or assigned personnel will comprise a report for the leadership team to have as a data sheet to help guide decisions for the upcoming year in the area of reading.

Solution Implications

The positive implications of this study are that students will be able to transfer skills and strategies learned in the intervention setting to the general education setting. If students can accomplish this task, positive impacts would include a comprehensive flow of reading understanding for students, active learning, improved academic scores, and enhanced learning environments. Once achieved this can have long lasting positive effects on the school and student's academic abilities as they progress through elementary, middle, and high school. Possible negative implications include the cost to cover all the resources needed for the staff. The leadership team may not approve of hiring additional staff due to funding, which will decrease the ability of students to transfer reading skills from various environments. If this occurs, cross collaboration of general education teachers and RTI staff is imperative.

Evaluation Plan

To ensure that the plan of assisting students transfer their skills learned in tier two and tier three of RTI into the general education setting is productive and successful, the proposed solutions to the problem should be assessed a year after the plan has been implemented. After a year of implementation, a summative consultation will occur where teachers will be consulted about the current RTI framework using the initial survey questionnaire. The researcher will review the state mandated test in reading and language arts for students in fourth and fifth grade, comparing the scores of students in RTI and student not in RTI. Teachers will also be consulted to receive additional thoughts concerning the implementation plan. Conducting the actions over a year's time span, allows stakeholders time to execute the necessary components and track student learning through strategic data. To evaluate these areas, the researcher will oversee the evaluation plan.

Limitations of the study include the turnover rate of the school, including teachers. As a transit school, the original teachers surveyed who met the initial criteria may no longer be employed with the school. In addition to teachers and staff, students also transition and move to other schools within the district. Future studies would be heightened if a higher number of teachers participated and more test scores were available. Gaining permission from multiple schools that have similar demographics would help solve this concern.

Limitations

All studies can have limitations. Two distinct limitations occurred during the research of this study. COVID-19, a severe acute respiratory virus, entered the United States early in 2020, which resulted in a nationwide pandemic (Rogge & Gautam, 2020). As a result, schools across the nation shut down in March of 2020, including the elementary school located in central

Tennessee. The archival data of students who are currently in fourth grade could not be obtained which resulted in only the archival data of fifth grade students being collected.

Another limitation resulted from a large teacher turnover which occurred in August 2020. As a result of teachers transferring, retiring, or leaving the school system, the researcher had a smaller pool to collect surveys and conduct interviews on as the participants had to meet certain qualifications. Additional data obtained from archival data, surveys, and interviews could have added to the validity of the study as the researcher would have more of a representative of the population.

Summary

This applied research study spotlighted the central question of how can the problem of transferability of reading skills learned in RTI into the general education classroom be solved at an elementary school located in central Tennessee. The district in which the study was conducted had a literacy vision that seeks “All students to be readers, writers, and thinkers who utilize text and tasks to deepen knowledge, think critically, solve problems, and generate new ideas about the world around them” (CMCSS, 2019, p.1). Reading is an essential skill that every student will need as they gain knowledge in school and interact in their communities. Through data collection and analysis, themes emerged in this study which helped generate solutions to helping all students in the school become successful readers. Furthermore, aside from students, teachers are the heart of education. As so, it is imperative that educators feel supported. Providing educators with ongoing professional development opportunities supports and elevates teachers. Teachers with the information have a chance to feel empowered with new knowledge and can provide rigorous instruction for students in all reading tiers. In addition to empowering teachers, understanding that the ability to read, and understanding what is being read, is needed in almost

every area of life, should prompt stakeholders who teach students who struggle with reading literacy interventions, the importance of being able to use those skills in multiple environments. Lastly, revisiting the importance of teaching the five key reading skills in both the RTI setting and general education setting, is essential for students' academic success.

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Appendix A
Institutional Review Board application

2/15/21, 8:10

IRB-FY19-20-184 - Initial: Initial - Exempt

lib@liberty.edu <lib@liberty.edu>

Wed 11/11/2020 1:37 PM

To: Freeney, April Renee <afreeney@liberty.edu> Stanley, Susan K (School of Education) <stanley@liberty.edu>

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

November 11, 2020

April Freeney

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY19-20-184 Solving the Problem of the Transferability of Response to Intervention Skills to the General Education Setting

Dear April Freeney, Susan Stanley

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:101(b):

Category 2.(iii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:

The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

Your stamped consent forms can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. These forms should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent documents should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of

continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

[Redacted Signature]

Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office

Appendix B
Permission Form District



Dr. Kimi Sucharski
Director of Accountability
Phone: 931-553-1142
Fax: 931-920-9813
kimi.sucharski@cmcoss.net

From: Dr. Kimi Sucharski
CMCSS Research Team
7.9.2020
To: April Freeney
Subject: Request to Conduct Research in CMCSS

The Clarksville Montgomery County School System Research Committee has met and approved your request to conduct research in the Clarksville Montgomery County School System at Kenwood Elementary School addressing the project *investigating the transferability of skills acquired in RTI to the regular education setting*. The project timeline will be the 2020-2021 academic year. This approval includes the collection of all relevant academic, assessment, and survey data.

Sincerely,

Dr. Kimi Sucharski

Director of Accountability

kimi.sucharski@cmcoss.net

931-553-1142 office

Appendix C
Permission Form-Site

March 1, 2020

Principal [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Elementary School
[REDACTED]

Dear Mrs. [REDACTED],

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The title of my research project is Solving the Problem of the Transferability of Response to Intervention Skills to the General Education Setting and the purpose of my research is to solve the problem of the transferability of reading skills from the RTI framework (specifically tiers two and three) to the general education classrooms.

I am writing to request your permission to conduct my research at [REDACTED].

Participants will be asked to complete an interview or survey. Data will also be collected. The data collected will be analyzed as I seek to compare data of students in RTI and students not in RTI. Participants (adults only) will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please provide a signed statement on official letterhead indicating your approval. A permission letter document is attached for your convenience.

Sincerely,

April Freeney
Doctoral Student, Liberty University



Kenwood Elementary School
101 Peachtree Mill Road, Clarksville, TN 37043
931-553-2059 Fax 931-553-3101

June 13, 2020

April Freeney
Researcher/Doctoral Candidate
Liberty University
1971 University Way
Lynchburg, VA 24502

Dear Mrs. Freeney,

After careful review of your research proposal entitled Solving the Problem of the Transferability of Response to Intervention Skills to the General Education Setting, I have decided to grant you permission to conduct your study at Kenwood Elementary.

☒ The requested data WILL BE STRIPPED of all identifying information before it is provided to the researcher.

☐ The requested data WILL NOT BE STRIPPED of identifying information before it is provided to the researcher.

☒ I am requesting a copy of the results upon study completion and/or publication.

Sincerely,

[Redacted Signature]

[Redacted Name]

Principal

Kenwood Elementary, Clarksville Montgomery School District

Accredited by



Appendix D

Interview Consent Form

Solving the Problem of the Transferability of Response to Intervention Skills to the General
Education Setting
April Freeney
Liberty University
School of Education

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study regarding improving the transferability of response to intervention skills to the general education setting. You were selected to participate in the research because are 18 years of age or older and have a minimum of five years of teaching reading and literacy in tiers two or three of RTI in the CMCSS district. You must be an administrator, an interventionist or a teacher. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

April Freeney, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, is conducting this research.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to solve the problem of the transferability of reading skills from the RTI framework (specifically tiers two and three) to the general education classrooms.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. Participate in an interview. Interviews will last approximately 60 minutes and will be recorded for transcription purposes.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports 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. Data collected from you may be shared for use in future research studies or with other researchers. If data collected from you is shared, any

information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed before the data is shared.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer or electronic hard drive and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

Is study participation voluntary?

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

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address included in the next paragraph. Participants have the opportunity to withdraw from the study before the interview, after the interview, and before data analysis occurs. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study April Freeney. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at arfreaney@liberty.edu. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Susan Stanley at skstanley@liberty.edu

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

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., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

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

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

Appendix E

Survey Consent Form

Solving the Problem of the Transferability of Response to Intervention Skills to the General
Education Setting
April Freeney
Liberty University
School of Education

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study regarding improving the transferability of response to intervention skills to the general education setting. You were selected to participate in the research because you 18 years of age or older and have a minimum of five years of teaching reading and literacy in tiers two or three of RTI in the CMCSS district. Participants must be an interventionist or teacher. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

April Freeney, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, is conducting this research.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to solve the problem of the transferability of reading skills from the RTI framework (specifically tiers two and three) to the general education classrooms.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

2. Complete an anonymous survey. This task should take approximately 25 minutes to complete.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant survey will be anonymous.

- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer, electronic hard drive, and a locked cabinet and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted, and all hard copy records will be shredded.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or Clarksville Montgomery County School System. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time, prior to submitting the survey, without affecting these relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please inform the researcher that you wish to discontinue your participation, and do not submit your study materials. Your responses will not be recorded or included in the study.

If completing the survey online and you choose to withdraw from the study, please exit the survey and close your internet browser prior to submitting the survey. Your responses will not be recorded or included in the study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study April Freeney. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at arfreeney@liberty.edu. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Susan Stanley at skstanley@liberty.edu

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

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., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Your Consent

Before agreeing to be part of the research, please be sure that you understand what the study is about. You will be given a copy of this document for your records/you can print a copy of the document for your record. If you have any questions about the study later, you can contact the researcher/study team using the information provided above.

Appendix F

Interview Questions

Solving the Problem of the Transferability of Response to Intervention Skills to the General Education Setting

An Applied Research Qualitative Interview

1. Please state your name (please give a pseudonym).
2. How many years have you been an educator?
3. What position do you currently teach?
4. Under this position what are your current responsibilities?
5. Describe a typical day in your classroom.
6. Describe how the RTI model through its multi-tiered framework, assists students in becoming readers and mathematicians who can master their tier one, state dictated content?
7. When you reflect on your students who are currently in RTI, please explain specific academic growth that you have observed among your students.
8. If your students have not experienced growth, please explain reading elements/skills that your students still continue to struggle with.
9. How are the interventions learned in RTI (intervention environment) incorporated in curriculum's scope and sequence (general education environment)
10. What strategies and resources do you think will further assist students transfer the strategies and skills learned in RTI into the general education classroom?
11. What specific reading skills do you think should be incorporated into the RTI framework?

12. What professional development courses do you think should be incorporated to ensure all educators can provide evidence based reading skills in multiple environments?
13. What additional information pertaining to the current RTI framework would you like to add?

Appendix G

Survey Questions

Solving the Problem of the Transferability of Response to Intervention Skills to the General Education Setting

An Applied Research Qualitative Survey

1. Do you believe your students are placed in the correct tier of RTI?

Agree Neutral No

2. Data from universal screeners is used to identify academically at-risk students who scored at or below the 25th percentile?

Agree Neutral No

3. Do you believe as a result of RTI, your students have the necessary skills to master tier one content?

Agree Neutral No

4. Do you believe your school of employment and or district has provided adequate professional learning opportunities for educators to become knowledge about RTI and its framework?

Agree Neutral No

5. My school has put together a collective library of effective, research-based intervention ideas for common student concerns/deficits – such as poor reading fluency, math, application and behavior.

Agree Neutral No

6. As a teacher, interventionist, or support staff, I have attended RTI data chat meetings and have actively participated in providing skills that will transfer across multiple subjects and also problem solving strategies during these meetings.

Agree Neutral No

7. Do you believe that different concepts to include strategies, duration, and intensity are needed for each tier?

Agree Neutral No

8. A RTI reading intervention setting should include all five components of reading.

Agree Neutral No

9. Students who are currently in RTI effectively use strategies learned in RTI to accomplish and complete grade level tasks.

Agree Neutral No

10. Although my title and position does not include official an RTI label, I feel confident in a RTI role, supporting at risk students who are currently.

Agree Neutral No

Appendix H:
Student Demographics

Figure 4

Nationality Participation

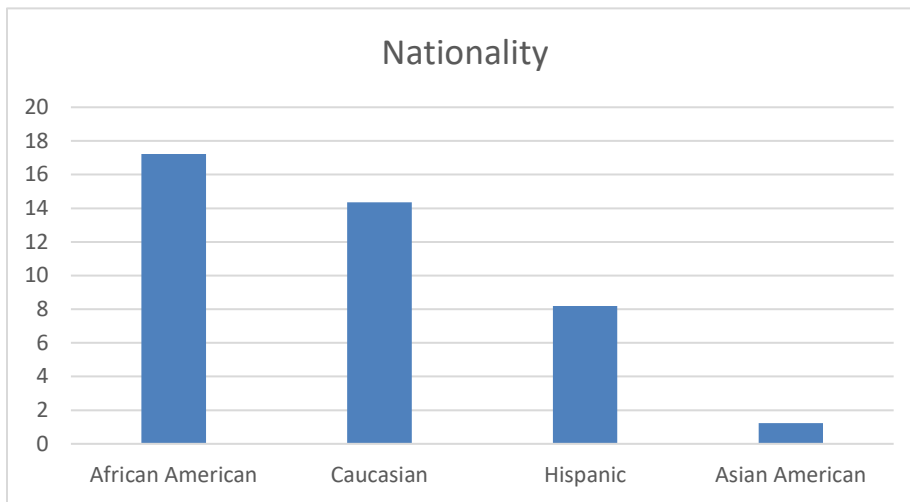


Figure 5

Gender Participation

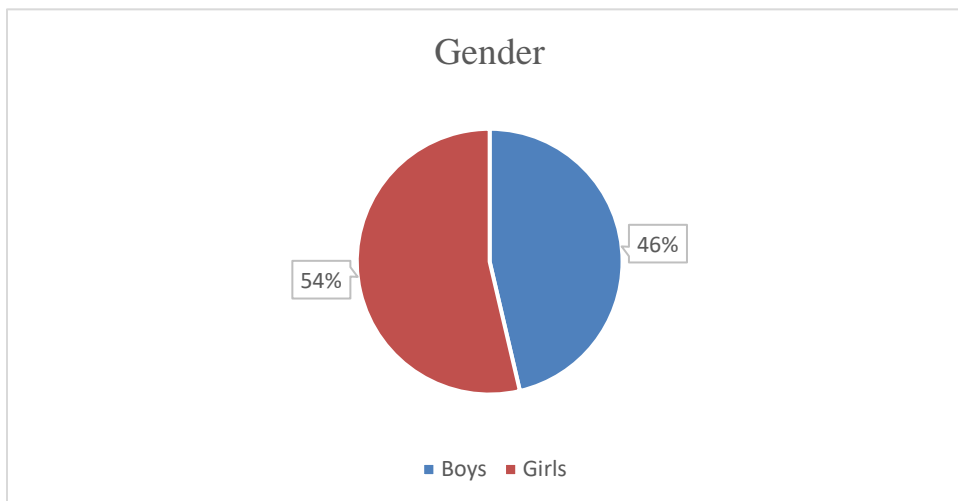


Figure 6

Age Group

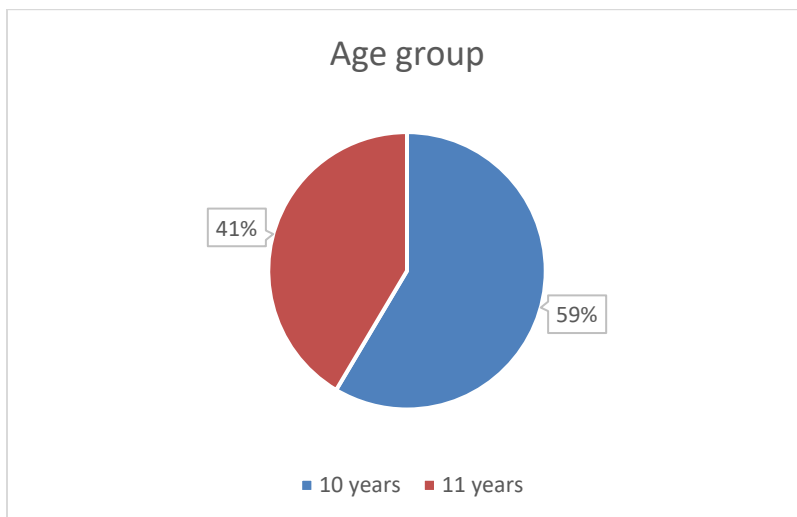


Table 4

Distribution of score across student group of students in RTI

<i>Score</i>	<i>Frequency of Students In RTI</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>Approaching</i>	6	46%
<i>Below</i>	4	31%
<i>On Track</i>	3	23%
<i>Total</i>	13	100%

Figure 7

Distribution of scores among students in RTI

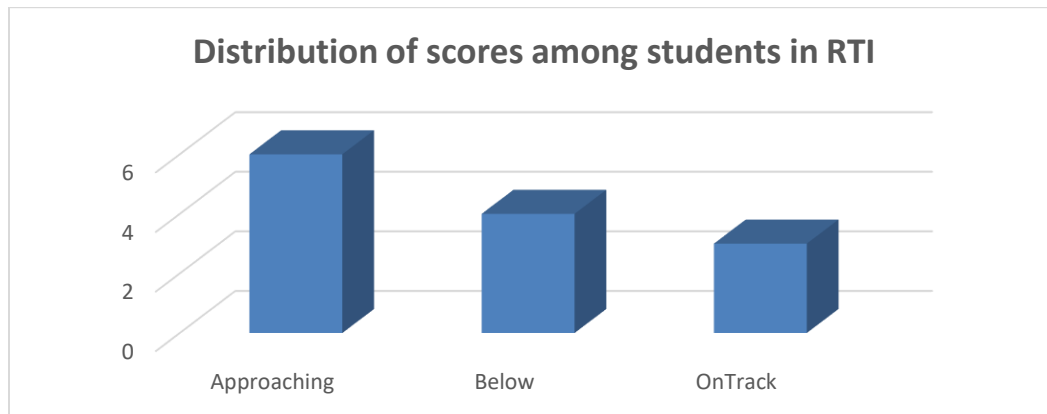


Table 5

Frequency of Students Not in RTI

Score	Frequency of students not in RTI	Percentage
Approaching	7	25%
Below	5	18%
Mastered	4	14%
On Track	12	43%
Total	28	100%

Figure 8

Distribution of Students Not in RTI

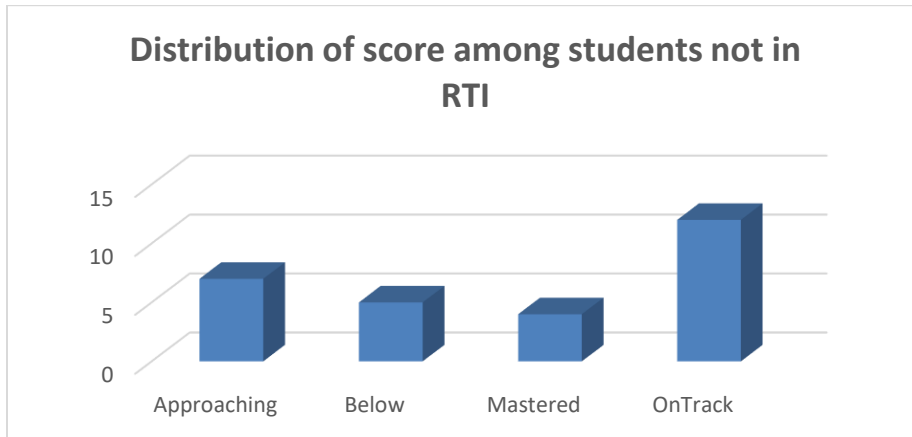


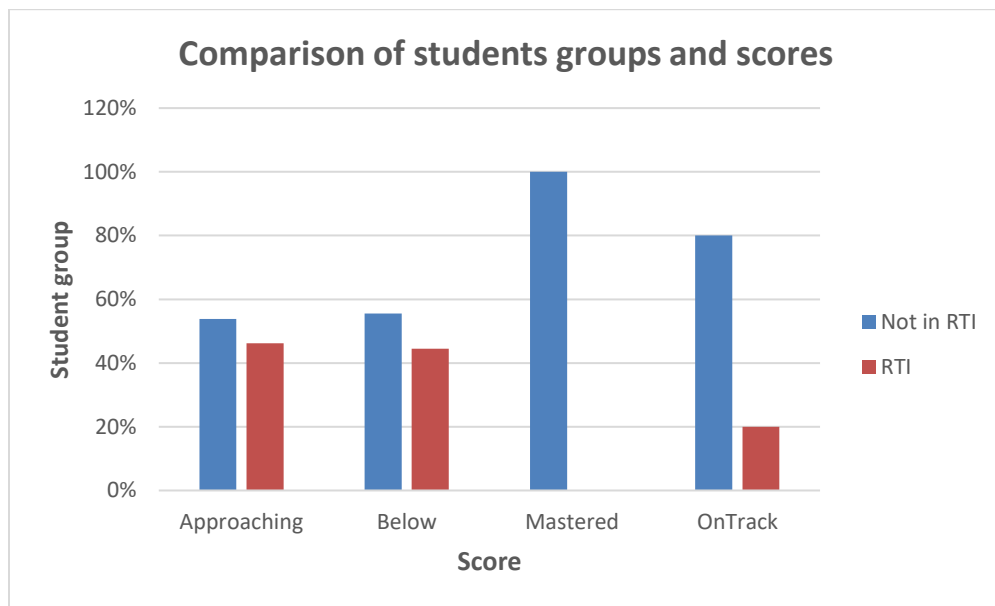
Table 6

Cross-tabulation of score and group of students

<i>Variables</i>		<i>Groups of students</i>		<i>Total</i>
		Not in RTI	In RTI	
<i>Score</i>	Approaching	7 (54%)	6 (46%)	13 (100%)
	Below	5 (56%)	4 (44%)	9 (100%)
	Mastered	4 (100%)	0 (0%)	4 (100%)
	On Track	12 (80%)	3 (20%)	15 (100%)
<i>Total</i>		28 (68%)	13 (32%)	41 (100%)

Figure 9

Comparison of Student Groups and Scores



Appendix I

Survey Findings

Table7

Question 1: Do you Believe that students are placed in the correct tier of RTI?

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Agreed	10	100%

Table 8

Question 2: Data from universal screeners is used to identify academically at-risk students who scored at or below the 25th percentile.

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	9	90%
Not sure	1	10%
Total	10	100%
Mean=1.10 Std. deviation = 0.316		

Figure 10

Data from universal screeners is used to identify academically at-risk students who scored at or below the 25th percentile

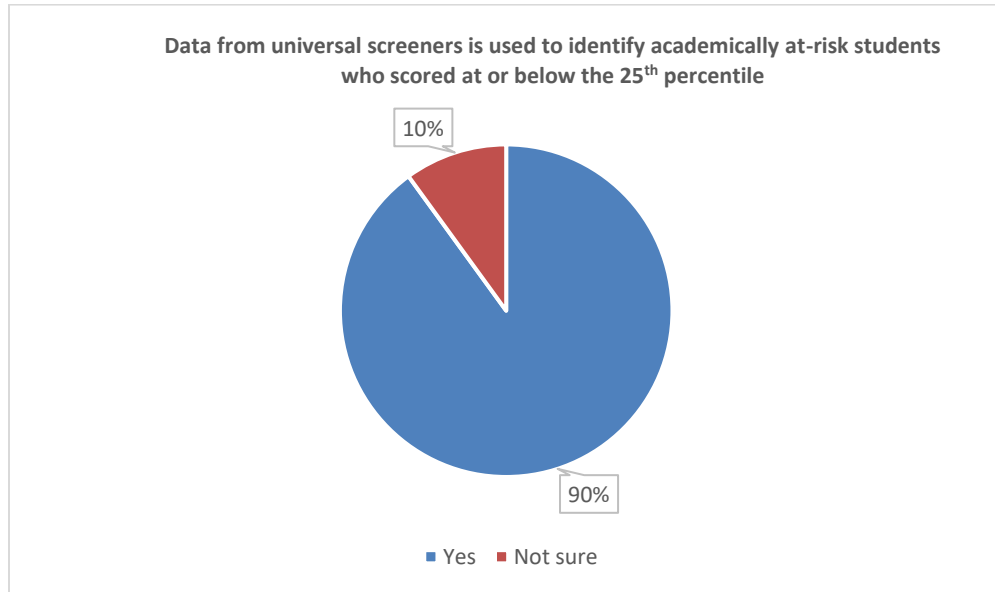


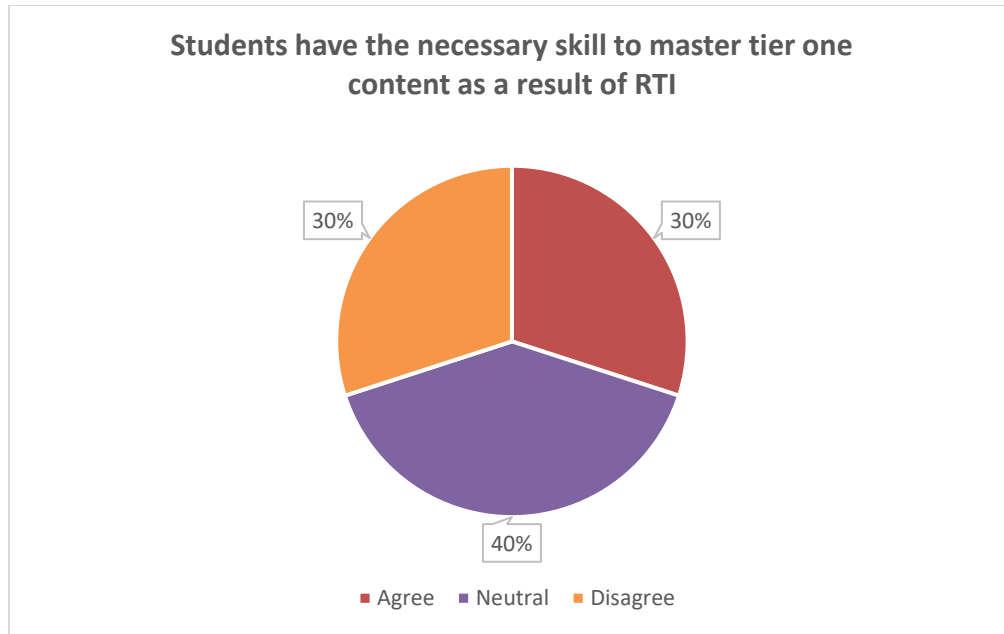
Table 9

Question 3: Students have the necessary skill to master tier one content as a result of RTI

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Agree	3	30%
Neutral	4	40%
Disagree	3	30%
Total	10	100%
Mean value = 2.00 Std. deviation = 0.816		

Figure 11

Students have the necessary skill to master tier one content as a result of RTI



From the table and chart above, 3 (30%) of the respondents believe that as a result of RTI, their students had the necessary skill to master tier one content, 4 (40%) of the respondent were neutral to their students having necessary skill while the remaining 3 (30%) disagreed that their students had necessary skill to master tier one content as a result of RTI.

Table 10

Question 4: My school of employment or district has provided adequate professional learning opportunities for educators to become knowledgeable about RTI and its framework

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Agree	3	30%
Neutral	4	40%

Disagree	3	30%
Total	10	100%
Mean value = 2.00 Std. Deviation = 0.816		

Figure 12

My school of employment or district has provided adequate professional learning opportunities for educators to become knowledgeable about RTI and its framework

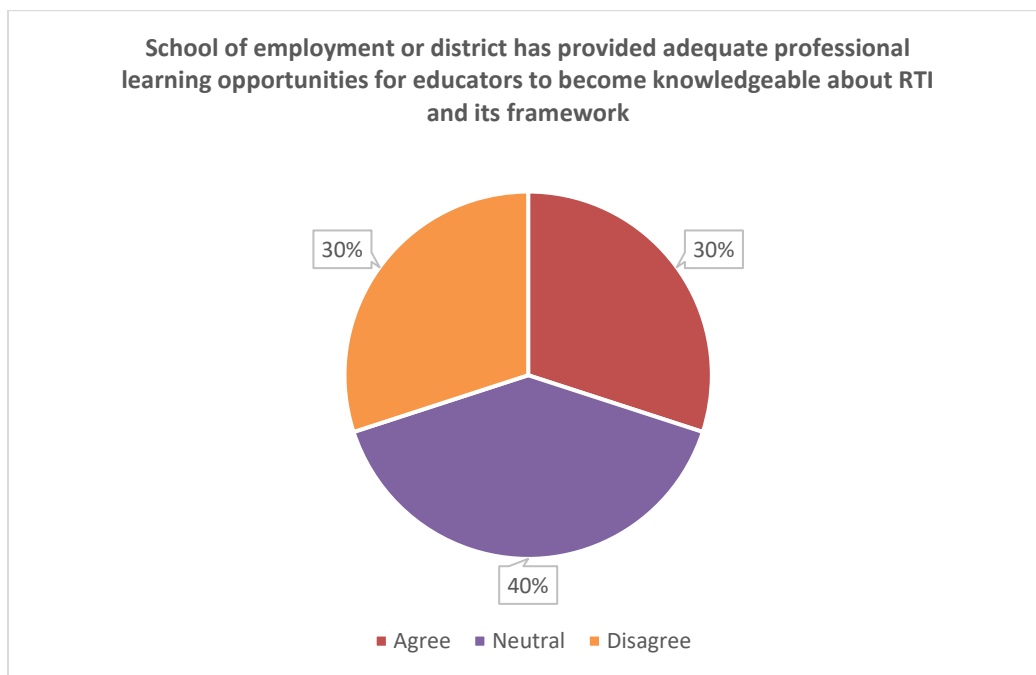


Table 11

Question 5: My school has put together collective library of effectiveness, research-based intervention ideas for common students' concern/deficit-- such as poor reading fluency, math, application and behavior.

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Agreed	4	40%

Neutral	2	20%
Disagree	4	40%
Total	10	100%
Mean value = 2.00 Std. deviation = 0.943		

Figure 13

My school has put together collective library of effectiveness, research-based intervention ideas for common students' concern/deficit-such as poor reading fluency, math, application and behavior.

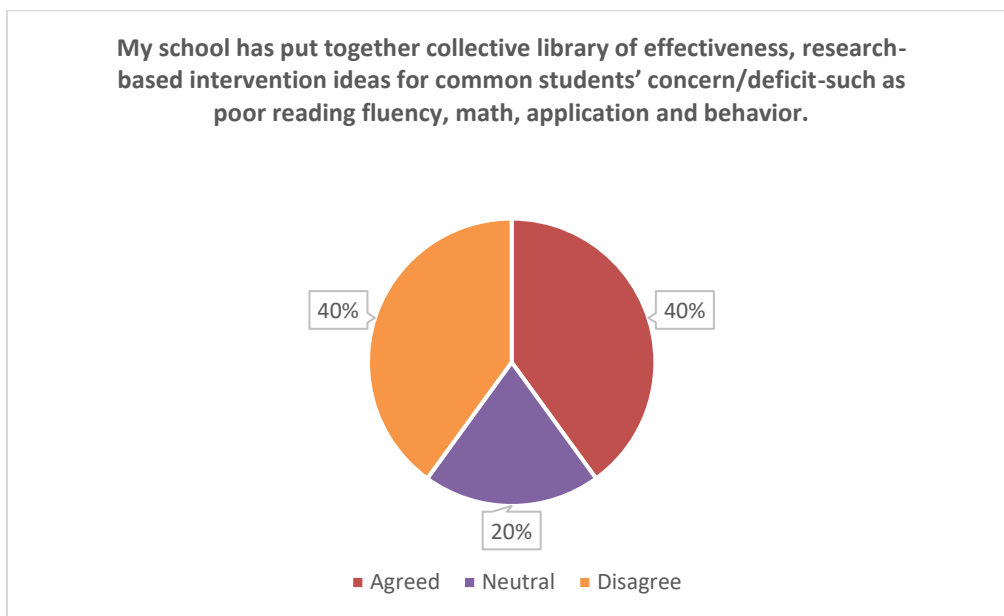


Table 12

Question 9: Students who are currently in RTI effectively use strategies learned in RTI to accomplish and complete grade level tier.

Variable	Frequency	Percent
----------	-----------	---------

Yes	4	40%
No	3	30%
Not sure	3	30%
Total	10	100%
Mean =1.90 Std. deviation= 0.876		

Question 6: Have you ever attended RTI data chat meetings and have actively participated in providing transferrable skills and problem-solving strategies

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Agree	9	90%
Neutral	1	10%
Total	10	100%
Mean = 1.10 Std deviation= 0.316		

Figure 14

Students who are currently in RTI effectively use strategies learned in RTI to accomplish and complete grade level tier.

Students who are currently in RTI effectively use strategies learned in RTI to accomplish and complete grade level tier.

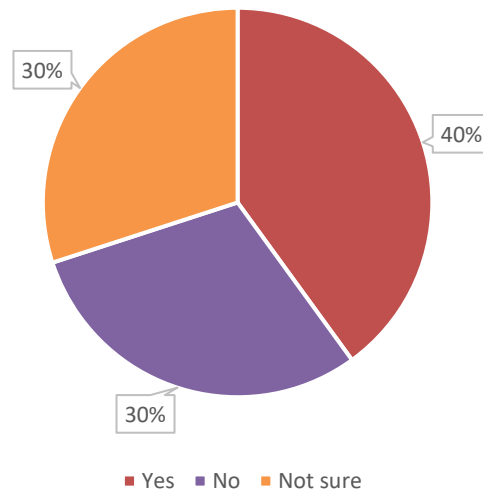


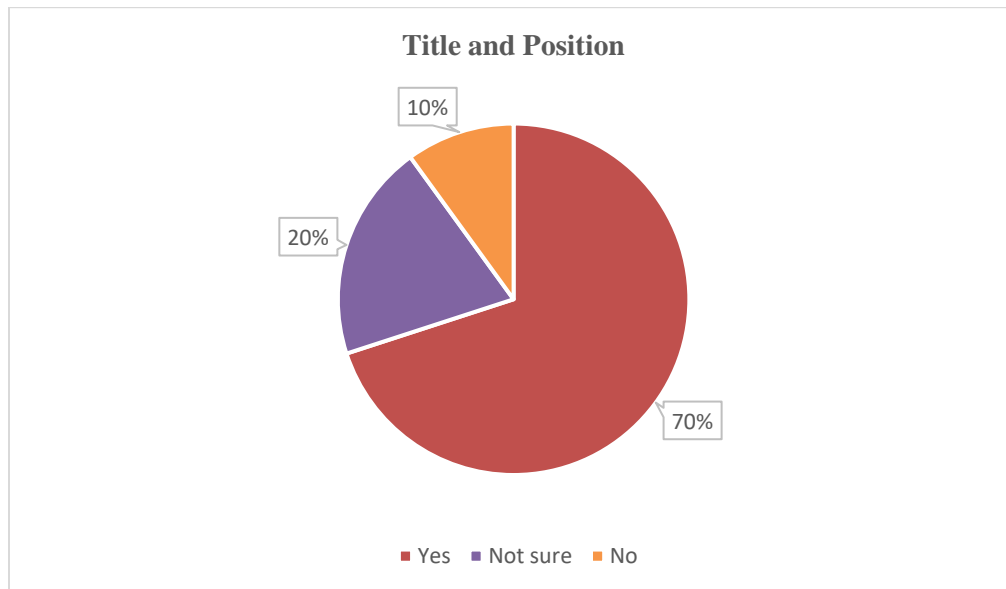
Table 13

Question 10: My title and position does not include a RTI official label.

Category	Frequency	Percent
Yes	7	70%
Not sure	2	20%
No	1	10%
Total	10	100%
Mean Value =1.40 Std. Deviations=0.699		

Figure 15

Title and Position



Appendix J

Timeline of Action Plan

June

- The administration team would select and approve of strategic professional development courses for the faculty and staff.
- The administration team, if approved, would hire instructional floaters.

July

- General education teachers in the content area of reading and RTI interventionists would participate in professional development courses related to rigorous instruction and the transferability of skills.
- Student resources would be purchased. Comprehension kits would be assembled.

August

- General education teachers in the content area of reading and RTI interventionists would plan and create an instructional map to promote parallel instruction of topics, themes, and units.
- Students return to school and begin to use purchased resource materials

September-April

- Teachers and stakeholders incorporate effective instruction in all settings which promote the transferability of reading skills
- Instructional floaters would enter daily both classroom environments, helping students to use the strategies and scaffolding support from the RTI setting into the general education setting.
- Administration would conduct monthly fidelity checks and monitor parallel teaching.

- Check in meetings would occur on school professional development days between administrators, general education teachers, and interventionists to assess progress.

April

- Students take as a summative assessment, state mandated tests.

May

- The researcher will review the data from the state mandated tests, survey teachers and interventionists, and also speak with teachers on the advancement of the transferability of reading skills.
- The researcher will comprise a report for the leadership team to have as a data sheet to help guide decisions for the upcoming year in the area of reading.