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Using Teacher's Understanding of RTI to Improve Student Growth in Reading

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## **Abstract**

Response to Intervention (RTI) models are becoming quite common in schools nationwide, making it more and more imperative that educators understand the RTI process and the effect it can have on education. The purpose of this mixed methods action research project is to see how a classroom-based approach to Response to Intervention affects reading growth of a selected group of struggling readers in first grade. Qualitative data was documented through the use of a teacher reflective journal and quantitative assessment scores were used to determine academic growth throughout the RTI process. The data collected throughout the study suggest that a classroom-based approach to RTI had a positive effect on student reading scores. The author also highlights two main research-based RTI reading strategies that were proven effective in a first grade classroom such as Direct Instruction (DI) and the Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI).

## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

Buzzwords, acronyms, and interventions are commonplace in the continuously changing education system. Keeping up to date with the best practices and research based material can seem quite daunting to an educator. Teachers are being held accountable for student success and it is the role of the educator to differentiate instruction and to adapt teaching to fit individual students' needs.

Response to Intervention (RTI) is one of those acronyms that has been used extensively throughout school districts over the last few years. Most teachers have heard of RTI, a large number of them have even implemented RTI into their classroom, but surprisingly, research has shown that few are strongly confident in their knowledge of how to effectively implement RTI into the classroom (Castro-Villarreal, Rodriguez, & Moore, 2014). Through personal struggles in the classroom with effective Tier 2 RTI guidance and interventions, I have seen the need to research this struggle in my own classroom.

With the recent implementation and widespread adoption of the Common Core Standards, RTI is becoming even more essential in our education system. With higher standards and an emphasis on deeper learning, students and teachers are going to be accountable for meeting those elevated expectations. It is in my opinion that if teachers are going to expect more out of students and educational staff then keeping educators up to date on effective RTI approaches, progress monitoring tools, and research based curriculum is a must. This point brings about the first step in this project which was to strengthen my understanding of RTI by researching different RTI approaches and the impact of higher quality instruction. I also document the success of my students throughout the school year on standardized tests, such as

the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) and the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS) assessments. A correlation can potentially be made between high assessment scores and the effectiveness of an RTI approach; however, teacher preparation and curriculum development opportunities play a key role in this development (Robinson, Bursuck, & Sinclair, 2013).

My initial interest in RTI stemmed from my own classroom struggles with the relatively new intervention initiative. Just like students, educators learn best by doing. The qualitative aspect of my action research took place in my first grade classroom with my own implementation of RTI in the area of reading. The teacher reflective journal that was utilized throughout the entirety of the 2014-15 school year included the challenges that my students and I faced, development of strategies used, learning about the RTI process, and the success that my students and I experienced along the way. It is my intention for this documented account of an RTI model at the primary level to serve a greater need beyond my own teacher development. The questions addressed throughout my study will add to a relatively new area of research that is still building.

Response to Intervention plays a very important role in our current education system. The importance of teacher knowledge in this area cannot go overlooked. The impact a teacher has on student success is undeniable. Throughout this action research I examined two RTI models and worked through the process of implementing an effective RTI reading intervention in my own class. Essentially, RTI cannot be completely understood until it is experienced in the classroom. Using those experiences at the classroom level can provide valuable information for a more seamless implementation of RTI. In the next chapter I will review the literature that formed the basis for my project.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Literature Review**

The topic of Response to Intervention (RTI) has been thoroughly examined and defined with an emphasis on researching a variety of effective RTI approaches. The literature review highlights the following topics: (a) RTI Legislation, (b) Implementation of RTI, (c) RTI Models, (d) Progress Monitoring and Data Collection, (e) Teacher's Role, (f) Strengths of RTI, and (g) Weaknesses of RTI.

#### **RtI Legislation**

To understand the background behind RTI, one first needs to know what it is. According to Bender and Shores (2007), "RTI is a process of implementing high-quality, scientifically validated instructional practices based on learner needs, monitoring student progress, and adjusting instruction based on the student's response" (p. 7). RTI seems like a relatively new concept but it can be linked all the way back to President Johnson and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) which was signed into law in 1965. The act brought about Title I funding that is used to supply educational resources for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. The act focuses on providing equal access to education, setting higher standards and accountability, and shortening the achievement gap. This particular act is still in existence today but better known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB). The implementation of RTI in the classroom is the attempt to shorten the achievement gap and intervene early.

The current reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEIA) highlights RTI as an alternative way to identify students as having a learning disability due in part to the rising concerns with the traditional discrepancy formula used to identify learning disabilities (LD) (Artiles & Kozleski, 2010). RTI was set in place by federal

law to help avoid the “wait to fail” method. The goal is to have all students receive high-quality instruction and intervention before being referred for special education services (Fisher & Frey, 2013).

### **Implementation of RTI**

There is not a uniform model that legislation embraces in regards to RTI implementation. Due to the diverse needs of different communities, the federal government provided very few details of the development of RTI procedures (Wixson, 2011). However, one aspect that stays relatively consistent through the research is the need for documentation. As Wanzek and Vaughn stated “A response to intervention model relies on the monitoring of students’ progress over the course of participation in increasingly intensive interventions” (Wanzek & Vaughn, 2010, p. 168). Interventions are research based and catered to the student’s individual needs. In terms of the process, “RTI most frequently involves a multi-tiered approach to the implementation of instructional modifications” (Wixson, 2011, p. 504), and the majority of approaches consist of three or four tiers (Artiles & Kozleski, 2010). Tier 1 is aimed at high quality instruction, Tier 2 generally focuses on a small group intervention, and Tier 3 provides an intensive intervention that goes beyond the point of simply being proactive and if necessary includes placement in special education (Orosco & Klinger, 2010).

**Tier 1 (High Quality Instruction).** Typically, Tier 1 is referred to as the core instruction that is given to all students in the general classroom. The overall goal is to have all students successful at Tier 1. Teachers are responsible for creating an environment that stimulates growth and independence. In an ideal world teachers and students will seamlessly flow through a series of direct teaching, guided practice, independent practice, and closure activities. The teachers will direct small group instructional lessons as they see fit dependent upon formative and

summative assessments. The key to highly effective learning is to provide research-based, differentiated instruction at the core. High quality instruction is provided to all students in the classroom. The core instruction within a classroom should be accommodating to at least 80% of the students, meaning that 80% of the students should be proficient in the classroom-based off the teacher's instruction (Wixson, 2011). In order for effective practices to be integrated into the RTI model, a strong core curriculum is needed, and effective practices need to be seamlessly included in everyday instruction (Berkeley, Bender, Peaster, & Saunders, 2009).

One particularly popular model of instruction is the Gradual Release of Responsibility Model outlined by Dr. Douglas Fisher. Throughout this model there's an emphasize put on focused lessons, guided instruction, collaborative learning, and independent work (Fisher & Frey, 2008). This model aims at creating independent learners who are confident and capable of handling tasks that they have yet to even encounter. Throughout Tier 1 teachers are continuously assessing and documenting student growth.

At the early elementary level beginning reading is often the subject area that is in need of an intervention the most. Studies have shown that students who struggle to read early on in the primary grades will typically continue to struggle throughout the rest of their elementary years (Juel, 1988). It makes sense that a student who is unsuccessful with reading early on will inevitably fail to find the pleasure in it. RTI supporters assume that if students become proficient readers by the end of first grade, then they will remain good readers (Gersten & Dimino, 2006). In order to intervene right away and reduce the "snowball" effect, RTI is designed to minimize the educational gap.

The current wave of consistent RTI adoption by most districts comes on the heels of a change in educational standards. The Common Core, or "Uncommon Core" referred to by

Smith, Appleman, and Wilhelm (2014), brings about higher standards. Most states throughout the US have adopted these standards and stand behind the idea of creating more common goals throughout the country. In order to insure students are up to the challenge of meeting these standards a well-structured response to intervention system can make all the difference. Students who are subsequently in an area of education limbo and waiting to fail can now be made priority and pushed into succeeding in the general classroom or rightfully receiving special education services.

Before RTI becomes a main focus of any classroom it is important for a teacher to assess the impact of their actual teaching. All students should be receiving a high-quality education provided by a qualified professional to ensure that their difficulties are not due to inadequate instruction. Students need to develop their expertise in all aspects of reading and writing, including oral language, phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension (Frey & Fisher, 2006). The skills of a teacher and how they use their time throughout the day truly matter and can make a lasting impact on students and their achievement.

The importance of high quality instruction was evident in a study conducted by Kerins, Trotter, and Schoenbrodt (2010). The authors compared results from Tier 1 (classroom only) to a Tier 2 intervention, further explained below. The study involved 23 first-grade students who were identified according to the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) assessment as having below average reading abilities and/or poor phonemic awareness. The students were randomly divided into two groups. Both groups received classroom instruction (Tier 1), however, one group also “received explicit phonemic awareness training with the speech-language pathologists and multi-sensory reading instruction from a special educator,” which was the Tier 2 intervention (Kerins, Trotter, & Schoenbrodt, 2010, p. 287). The surprising

results were that both groups demonstrated overall improvements; there was no significant difference in reading efficiency between the two groups. The effective teaching during the core instruction in the classroom was enough; students were able to excel without the use of an intervention. This study highlights the importance of providing high quality education.

**Tier 2 (Small Group Instruction).** Students who do not make adequate progress during Tier 1 in response to general instructional methods move on to a tier that is much more targeted and intensive based on an area of weakness. This more intensive tier is referred to as Tier 2.

Groups usually range from 1-6 students. During Tier 2 students are put into smaller instructional groups and supplemental instruction is given either by the classroom teacher or a specialist. Assessment takes on a much more significant role “at this level, as results allow schools to determine students’ baseline abilities and whether they are responding to additional instruction (Graner, Faggella-Luby, & Fritschmann, 2005)” (as cited in Kerins et al., 2010, p. 288). It’s important to note that students who are receiving Tier 2 intervention are still required to partake in all Tier 1 instruction. If a student responds to the Tier 2 intervention and is making adequate progress then they are returned back to solely receiving Tier 1, but are closely monitored. If a Tier 2 intervention is still not producing the desired results then the intervention itself needs to change. After multiple strategies and techniques are used to stimulate growth and deemed unsuccessful, educators will begin to look toward Tier 3.

**Tier 3 (Intensive Intervention).** If a student is still not making adequate progress they will proceed to Tier 3 which is the most intensive of tiers (in a three tier model) and often leads to LD evaluation (Kerins, Trotter, & Schoenbrodt, 2010). The group size at this stage is vital to the success of the student. Some students may require 1:1 instruction or may take part in a small group of two (Denton, 2012). While a student is in Tier 3 they will continue to take part in both

Tier 1 and 2. The data gathered through the RTI process plays a significant role in the LD referral process.

### **RTI Models**

Legislation does not specify any right or wrong model for RTI making it difficult to research effective approaches. However, the lack of regulations regarding RTI can lead to creative approaches made specific to each school or district's needs. One constant among RTI delivery is the collaborative, integrated effort by general education, special education, and other support services (Fletcher & Vaughn, 2009). RTI operates from a model of disability identification that aims to rule out poor instruction as a reason for student underachievement (Graner et al., 2005). All models also typically require high quality instruction, progress monitoring, and multi-tiered interventions. The structure of an RTI model can be connected back to one of two approaches, the problem-solving model or the standard protocol model, or possibly a hybrid of both (Berkeley et al., 2009).

The problem-solving approach and standard protocol approach are very similar in the fact that they emphasize the importance of core instruction, highlight the need for early intervention, rely on progress monitoring to inform decision making, use evidence-based interventions, and ultimately reduce inappropriate special education referrals. However, the problem-solving approach or a hybrid of the two approaches has been favored by practitioners while researchers favor the standard protocol model (Berkeley et al., 2009). The problem-solving approach utilizes a team for selecting appropriate interventions for each student whereas the standard protocol method leaves the decision making up to the person who is delivering the intervention. An individualized plan for intervention is better suited for a problem-solving approach; students could possibly receive a variety of interventions to determine what works best for them.

Advocates of a problem-solving model understand that a good match between the intervention and the student is the best recipe for success. On the other hand, during Tier 2 the standard protocol method calls for a standardized treatment that is administered to a group of students by an educator who is trained to implement the specific treatment with fidelity (Fuchs, Mock, Morgan, & Young, 2003).

The key to a successful RTI implementation is figuring out what works best for the students in a particular district. One such method would be the Diamond Model which was created by an elementary public school located in the northeastern United States (Green, Matthews, Carter, Fabrizio, Hoover, & Schoenfeld, 2012). The Diamond Model serves a dual purpose, focusing on learners who struggle as well as learners who exceed grade-level expectations. A universal screener was used three times a year to double-check reading levels. Tier 1 was a daily 90-minute block of differentiated literacy instruction (Green, Matthews, Carter, Fabrizio, Hoover, & Schoenfeld, 2012). Students who were struggling in Tier 1 or excelling based on screening were moved to Tier 2 Intervention or Tier 2 Enrichment. Students who were still struggling or excelling with the implementation of Tier 2 were then advanced to Tier 3 intervention or Tier 3 enrichment. The Diamond Model prides itself on making all kids shine. The uniqueness of this model was its equal emphasis on providing enrichment for the students who were excelling. This model is a perfect example of creating a structure that works best for a school's individualized culture.

However, the resources allocated to individual schools can vary drastically from state to state and even from school to school within a district. There are schools that have to make the best out of the resources that they possess. A study was conducted by Fuchs, Compton, Fuchs, Bryant, and Davis (2007) that showed the efficiency of a secondary intervention (Tier 2) that

modeled a small group tutoring method. The tutoring program was conducted by research assistants four times per week, 45 minutes per session, outside the classroom (Fuchs et al., 2007). The first grade students participating in the study took part in activities involving sight word and letter-sound recognition, decoding, echo and choral reading, and speed games. Students who took part in the treatment group showed a significant increase in word identification fluency, they out-performed the controlled group on both a progress monitoring measure and several standardized tests (Fuchs et al., 2007). A valuable piece of information from this study was the longitudinal results that indicated students who received the tutoring support maintained their academic gains throughout the following school year. Although this program was conducted by research assistants, it seems very adoptable to schools that have a relatively modest budget. School-based practitioners and classroom teachers could lead a tutoring based tier 2 intervention that errs on the side of preventative practice.

### **Progress Monitoring and Data Collection**

Frequently assessing student performance is an important component of the RTI process. Along with that comes the importance of team decision making (Shapiro, Hilt-Panahon, Gischlar, Semeniak, Leichman, & Bowles, 2012). A team is established to make RTI decisions and decide who is in need of an intervention. Teams will typically look at a variety of data sources to make ultimate decisions. A universal screener is one of the data sources used; it is administered at least three times a year to all students. Teams will also look at unit assessments and district benchmarks to gather more data on individual students. If a student is already in a tiered intervention the progress monitoring data is a set of information to determine if the student is responding to individualized instruction. Students who become part of a Tier 2 intervention must have proper documentation of intervention times and strategies. Progress monitoring must

occur throughout the duration of an intervention; a typical intervention will last about nine weeks with progress monitoring occurring approximately every three weeks. An additional and often ignored data source is the judgments offered by teachers as a function of their ongoing, formative, and informal observation of instruction (Shapiro, Hilt-Panahon, Gischlar, Semeniak, Leichman, & Bowles, 2012). Whether its assessment scores or teacher input; the documentation obtained through the RTI process becomes very vital when considering a targeted intervention in Tier 3 and possible LD referral. It's important for teachers to view RTI as a general education initiative as opposed to a special education one.

### **Teacher's Role**

The key to effective RTI implementation is making sure teachers are informed about the process and confident in their delivery. The NCLB act states that teachers need to be highly qualified in the area that they teach. RTI is in a sense a type of special education service that general education teachers may not be highly qualified in teaching. Teachers are required to identify students in need of intervention, choose the intervention that will meet the students' needs, decide on an appropriate form of progress monitoring, and collaborate with special education staff on preventative measures which would have been solely the responsibility of special education teachers prior to the implementation of RTI. The weight of screening students for a learning disability falls on the regular education teacher, who is most likely untrained in the complexities of special education (Goodman & Webb, 2006). Regular education teachers are responsible for the development and application of Tiers 1 and 2 in consultation with the special education teachers.

### **Strengths of RTI**

As addressed earlier, RTI can serve multiple purposes. Students who are gifted can excel

in an RTI model that provides enrichment opportunities. Students who are struggling can get the help they need immediately instead of experiencing failure first. Another strength that has been argued is that “RtI has the potential to reduce racial inequalities in disability identification rates” (Artiles & Kozleski, 2010, p. 949). RTI can even accommodate for the needs of students who are gifted with LD; the differentiation techniques used to address individual needs can cater to the most unique cases (Yssel, Adams, Clarke, & Jones, 2014).

There is a shift in education, educators need to commit to thinking that some students may be difficult to teach, but that does not label them as unable to learn. The biggest obstacle building wide is giving students what they need (Tilly, 2007). Quality instruction needs to take precedent over cases where “school personnel are accustomed to referring children to special education and looking for within-child deficits rather than examining the instructional context and other factors that can affect student’s learning (Harry & Klingner, 2006)” (as cited by Orosco & Klingner, 2010, p. 270). Strengths of RTI are the emphasis put on high quality instruction, the prevention of over-identification for special education, and the influential role of the teacher.

### **Weaknesses of RTI**

The adoption of RTI is a relatively new wave in education although it has been in effect since the change in the IDEA act in 2004. Many districts are now enforcing the use of RTI but often teachers are not equipped with the correct training to execute the research-based instruction. A perfect example of a deficits-based RTI literacy model was illustrated in a case study conducted by Janette Klingner and Michael John Orosco in 2010. This study focused on Latino English Language learners who were having reading difficulties in an urban elementary school setting. These students became part of an RTI intervention that inevitably failed to

produce reliable data. The teachers did not have enough training in conducting an ELL RTI group; therefore, the students experienced little success (Orosco & Klingner, 2010). This could also be the result of teachers responding differently to instruction. According to Gerber (2005), “an unavoidable fact is that teachers can differ significantly despite the quality of their professional preparation” (p. 520). A teacher’s attitude toward RTI and overall competency in regards to the process and skills being taught can play an impactful role in a student’s success. Gerber shared similar reservations to those of Gersten and Dimino (2006), “a child could be a nonresponder due to the teacher’s lack of skill or training or failure to implement the RTI system regularly and with fidelity” (p. 103).

According to a study conducted on teachers’ perceptions and attitudes about Response to Intervention in their schools, teachers identified inadequate training, lack of time, and insufficient resources as barriers to an effective RTI program (Castro-Villarreal, Rodriguez, & Moore, 2014). Thirty-eight percent of teachers in this study indicated that they were confused at the way the tiers worked. They were unsure of the time required for an intervention and when and how the intervention should be assessed. Twenty-six percent of teachers also reported that lack of time was an issue in their current RTI model. Teachers didn’t have the time to document data and implement the intervention; teachers were concerned that the Tier 2 instruction and constant testing were taking away valuable time with the full group. The open-ended questions were interpreted accordingly and the study concluded that most teachers surveyed did not demonstrate comprehensive knowledge of components of RTI systems based on their inability to formulate an accurate definition of RTI. Resources must be allocated to provide professional for general educators to improve their skills in order to offer a dynamic RTI model for all students (Rodriguez & Denti, 2011).

Robinson, Bursuck, and Sinclair (2013) also conducted a study on implementing RTI in two rural elementary schools. The study was conducted through a survey and classroom observations. They concluded that finding evidence based instruction proved very challenging. The funding issues and lack of recruiting and retaining highly effective teachers was a detrimental problem. In regards to overall implementation and support, they found that “state supported professional development was crucial to first year implementation of the pilot projects” (Robinson, Bursuck, & Sinclair, 2013, p. 5). The study had a number of limitations (only two schools that were both from rural environments, no random sampling, and survey results were viewed through the eyes of the authors), but there seemed to be unanimous agreement among teachers in the study that there was a lack of support provided to the buildup of the implementation of RTI.

### **Summary**

Overall, researchers would agree that RTI interventions when paired with high quality instruction can be very beneficial to academic success (Green et al., 2012; Gersten & Dimino, 2006; Wanzek & Vaughn, 2010; Wixson, 2011; Yssel et al., 2014). However, there seems to be a recurring theme that teachers are not feeling confident and fully knowledgeable on how to effectively address RTI within their classroom (Robinson et al., 2013; Castro-Villarreal et al., 2014). Whether it’s a lack of resources, teacher development, or time within the classroom, teachers are in need of further support. RTI research is new to the scene; it is imperative that studies are highlighted to provide teachers with a clearer direction on how to develop a successful RTI model within the classroom. The literature reviewed in preparation for this study has made a vast impact on my knowledge of the RTI process. One of the main questions remaining is whether or not my increased understanding of the RTI process will play a role in

my classroom RTI implementation. The following study will provide an actual qualitative analysis of an RTI model in action.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Methods**

The purpose of this mixed methods action research project was to see how a classroom-based approach to Response to Intervention (RTI) affects reading growth of a selected group of struggling readers in first grade. The qualitative portion of this study was gathered through the use of a teacher reflective journal that documented the highs and lows of the RTI process. The quantitative share of the study was student assessment data that was documented periodically throughout the school year to assess student growth and subsequently the effectiveness of the RTI approach. This study was conducted throughout the 2014-15 school year, September 2, 2014 to June 10, 2015 in a first grade classroom.

Throughout chapter 3 the methods used in this action research study will be presented. The areas of focus will be the context of the study, participants, questions for the project, procedures, instruments for data collection, and overall analysis.

### **Context**

The quantitative portion of the study took place in my own school of employment. The school is located in a suburban school district in Southeastern Wisconsin. Relatively new to the full implementation of RTI, teachers have been conducting a classroom-based RTI reading approach for the past two years (2012-2014). The in-depth qualitative analysis of reading growth in response to RTI will be conducted in my first grade classroom.

### **Participants**

The qualitative analysis I conducted in my classroom consisted of three first grade student participants. The three participants of the study were selected at the beginning of the year based on their PALS and district benchmark scores in reading. For ease of reference

throughout the qualitative process, each student was given a pseudonym to insure their anonymity. All three participants were of first grade age (6-7), any other gender and/or race specifics are not pertinent to this particular study.

## **Questions**

The research required for this project was driven by questions pertaining to educator knowledge of RTI and an overall desire to develop an effective RTI model in my classroom. The project as a whole is broken down into two coexisting sets of data collection that have developed from different main questions and sub-questions. The initial question that was examined through informal conversations with my peers prior to the classroom-based RTI implementation was:

1. What research based strategies have worked well for a reading RTI intervention?

In order to increase my odds of a successful RTI implementation it was vital for me to take the time to gain insight from my peers. I was interested in finding out what intervention techniques had worked in the past for my colleagues. Their input and guidance gave me a starting point to conduct further research and inevitably shape on my own unique RTI implementation.

The main qualitative portion of this study was documented through the use of a reflective teacher journal. The following questions were developed to reflect on the RTI process and provide insight into an effective RTI model:

2. What did I learn about the RTI procedures in my school, and how does the process help to inform and improve my classroom instruction?
3. What were the most challenging features of RTI for me? What aspects did I excel in?
4. What strengths and challenges did I observe in my students?

In addition to the qualitative documentation I relied on the quantitative data obtained through

continuous progress monitoring to address each student's strengths as stated in question 4.

### **Procedures**

Prior to the start of the 2014-15 school year I met briefly with 12 early elementary level teachers from my school to gain insight into how they conduct RTI in their classroom. The information gathered through these informal meetings helped to launch a qualitative action research project in my classroom that centered on establishing an effective RTI reading approach.

The qualitative data collection began in early October with the start of the classroom RTI reading group. In order to decide on participants for the study, a number of assessments were administered at the start of the year: PALS reading assessment, district benchmark running records, and informal classroom observations. Students who are struggling to meet beginning of the year expectations for first grade were ideal candidates for the study.

In addition to the core instruction received in Tier 1, participants in this study received approximately 90 minutes per week of RTI reading support in a small group led by me (the teacher). During small group participants worked on phonemic awareness, phonics, reading fluency, and comprehension. The weekly RTI planning was based on participant's individual needs. In order to keep track of reading progress throughout the year the following assessments were administered and results were quantitatively recorded: PALS reading assessment (Sept., Jan., and May), the district reading benchmarks (Sept., Nov., Feb., and May), and DIBELS (weekly). I have included the data collection timeline that I followed throughout the school year to provide a visual that highlights the in-depth assessing that took place (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1

*RTI Data Collection Timeline for the 2014-15 School Year*

| Dates         | Description  |
|---------------|--|
| End of August | Consulted with primary teachers on effective RTI strategies.   |
| Sept. 9       | Administered beginning of the year running record (district benchmark) and documented results.   |
| Sept. 29      | Administered PALS reading assessment (beginning of the year benchmark) and documented results.   |
| Oct. 3        | Determined reading RTI group based on PALS reading assessment scores, beginning of the year running record, and informal teacher observations.                               |
| Oct. 6        | Began reading RTI group, documented progress and formative assessments, used teacher reflective journal to annotate. Administered DIBELS Nonsense Fluency assessment weekly. |
| Nov. 10       | Administered end of first trimester running record (district benchmark) and documented results.  |
| Jan. 12       | Administered PALS reading assessment (mid-year benchmark) and documented results   |
| Feb. 9        | Administered end of second trimester running record (district benchmark) and documented results.   |
| May 11        | Administered PALS reading assessment (end of the year benchmark) and documented results.   |
| May 26        | Administered end of third trimester running record (district benchmark) and documented results.  |

Throughout the school year I kept a teacher reflective journal that not only documented the growth of the participants, but also highlighted areas of struggle and triumph. The journal and assessment data recorded throughout the year played a role in validating the effectiveness of the RTI reading approach that was used in my classroom.

### **Data Collection Instruments and Analysis**

Data from four instruments were collected for this project. I recorded observations in a Teacher Reflective Journal and the 3 following classroom assessments were used as progress monitoring tools throughout the 2014-2015 school year: PALS Reading Assessment, running record district assessments, and DIBELS.

**Teacher Reflective Journal.** Qualitative data during my RTI implementation in my classroom was collected by means of a teacher reflective journal. The journaling process began with the first RTI reading session (Oct. 6, 2014) and ended with the conclusion of the 2014-15 school year. Throughout the reflection process I addressed the following questions and concerns:

- What did I learn about the RTI procedures in my school, and how does the process help to inform and improve my classroom instruction?
- What were the most challenging features of RTI for me? What aspects did I excel in?
- What strengths and challenges did I observe in my students?

I independently analyzed the data obtained from the teacher reflective journal. The written information was categorized into broad areas that addressed the questions brought about by the study. Specific quotes and examples that support the research questions were highlighted and referenced back to in the results portion of this project.

I also recorded data from three classroom assessments to document student growth.

**DIBELS.** The Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy (DIBELS) assessments are short, one minute, individually administered, standardized fluency measures of the basic skills involved in early literacy, designed to be used with kindergarten – 6<sup>th</sup> grade students (Good & Kaminski, 2002). The seven subtests are: Initial Sound Fluency (ISF) and Phonemic Segmentation Fluency 15 (PSF) – measures of phonemic awareness; Letter Naming Fluency (LNF) – a measure of alphabetic knowledge; Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF) – a phonics measure; Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) – a measure of reading speed and accuracy; Word Use Fluency (WUF) – a measure of vocabulary; and Retell Fluency (RTF) – a comprehension measure. These tests can be used for screening purposes, administered three times yearly (fall, winter, and spring) and for progress monitoring, given every 1–

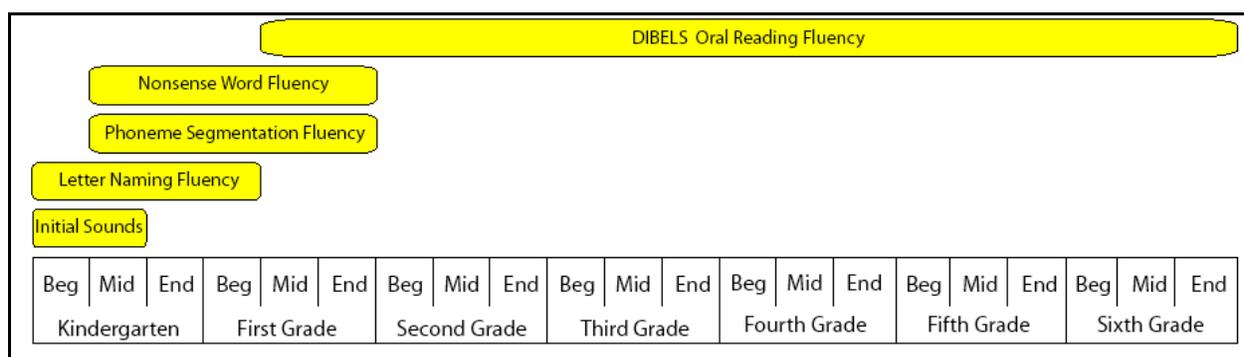
4 weeks. In this particular study I focused on utilizing the Nonsense Word Fluency and Oral Reading Fluency subtests to evaluate the effectiveness of my RTI group.

I began documenting Nonsense Word Fluency data after the first week of the RTI reading implementation. I administered the 1-minute timed assessment at the end of each week, this process continued for 11 total weeks. To measure growth I computed change for each student by subtracting each student's week 1 score from their week 11 score. The score increase was then converted into a percentage by dividing it into 100 which was the target score. In order to calculate the group growth from week 1 to week 11, I simply added up all three student's percentage change and divided that percentage by the number of students that took part in the Nonsense Word Fluency assessment, which was 3 (see Table 4.1).

After week 11 of the RTI implementation my focus switched from Nonsense Word Fluency to Oral Reading Fluency. According to the DIBELS implementation time frame, by mid-year first grade students should be progress monitored in the area of Oral Reading Fluency (University of Oregon, Center on Teaching and Learning, 2012) (see Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1

*Recommended DIBELS Measures*



I administered the 1-minute timed running record Oral Reading Fluency assessment at the end of each week dependent upon student attendance. This process continued for 12 weeks. The high target goal for this assessment was to read 70 words per minute correctly. To measure

growth I calculated change for each student by subtracting each students week 12 score from their week 24 score and then converted that total into a percentage by dividing by 70 which was the targeted score. In order to calculate the group growth from week 12 to week 24 I added up both students' percentage change and divided that percentage by the number of students who took part in the Oral Reading Fluency assessment, which were 2 (see Table 4.2).

**PALS Reading Assessment.** The Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS) is a screening instrument used to measure young children's knowledge of important literacy fundamentals. The instrument focuses on phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, knowledge of letter sounds, spelling, concept of word, word recognition in isolation, and oral passage reading (Invernizzi, Meier, & Juel, 2010, p. 5). For this study I chose to utilize the data obtained from the Word Recognition in Isolation task. This portion of the assessment focuses on vocabulary and provides a list of 20 words that correspond to the core reading vocabulary encountered in first grade.

The word recognition in isolation task was administered in a 1-on-1 setting 3 times throughout the school year (Sept., Jan., and May). In analyzing this data I took a look at how many words were identified correctly at the beginning of the year (Sept.) verses how many words were identified correctly at the end of the year (May). The change for each student in my reading RTI group was converted into a percentage by taking their beginning of the year score, subtracting it from their end of the year score, and then dividing that difference by 20. A similar method was used to figure out the growth of the group as a whole (see Table 4.3).

**District Running Record benchmark assessments.** The district running record benchmarks were adopted from the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) program created by author Joetta Beaver and Celebration Press. The Developmental Reading Assessment

provides teachers with a method for assessing and documenting primary students' development as readers over time. Its purpose is to identify students' reading level, defined as a text on which students meet specific criteria in terms of accuracy, fluency, and comprehension (Beaver, J, & Celebration Press, 2002). In this study I chose to focus on the reading accuracy data obtained through this assessment.

The district running record benchmark was administered four times throughout the school year (Sept., Nov., Feb., and May). A proficient standard for each assessment was set at 95% accuracy. I administered each running record assessment in a one-to-one setting that allowed observation and conversation to take place without interruption or distraction. Each required benchmark increased in difficulty as the year went on. In order to determine accuracy of each benchmark I took the number of words read correctly by each student and divided it by the total number of words possible for the benchmark. When analyzing results I looked for a steady increase in progress as the year went on (see Figure 4.1).

## Chapter Four

### Results and Discussion

The results of this study are organized by quantitative progress monitoring data and qualitative data in response to my Teacher Reflective Journal. This section concludes with connections made to the initial research questions.

#### Quantitative Results

In order to determine if the RTI model I implemented in my classroom was effective I administered a series of progress monitoring assessments throughout the school year. DIBELS was the most frequent assessment I used in my RTI group, with the majority of its administering occurring weekly, however, data collection was slightly impacted by student attendance. DIBELS nonsense word fluency (1-min readings of alternate forms of consonant vowel consonant (CVC) pseudowords) began early on in October and ended in mid-January. A target goal of 100 correct letter sounds per minute was set to reflect a high end of the year expectation. Angela, Eric, and Claire (all participants were given assumed names) showed measureable growth in their ability to segment letter sounds, as a group their nonsense word fluency improved by 29% (see table 4.1).

Table 4.1

*Students' DIBELS Scores on Correct Letter Sounds per Minute for Nonsense Word Fluency:*

*Target Goal 100/min*

| <b>Student</b>       | <b>Week 1</b> | <b>Week 11</b> | <b>Change</b>  |
|----------------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|
| Claire               | 27            | 63             | + 36 %         |
| Angela               | 29            | 52             | + 23 %         |
| Eric                 | 21            | 51             | + 30 %         |
| <b>Group Average</b> | 25.67         | 55.33          | + <b>29.67</b> |

Based on classroom observations, RTI group work, formative assessments, and summative assessment scores, Claire was dismissed from the RTI reading group prior to the switch in DIBELS data collection. She was making adequate progress in the classroom and it was decided that a more individualized focus on my two remaining RTI members would be beneficial.

Our RTI group took a change in direction around mid-January the students' transitioned from taking the DIBELS Nonsense Word Fluency to the DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency. Students were given 1 minute to read a grade level passage, both Angela and Eric showed similar growth from their first passage results to their last. Together they averaged an increase of 34.5% toward the end of the year high proficiency goal (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2

*Students' DIBELS Scores on Words Correct per Minute for Oral Reading Fluency:*

*Target Goal 70/min*

| <b>Student</b>       | <b>Week 12</b> | <b>Week 24</b> | <b>Change</b> |
|----------------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|
| Angela               | 24             | 48             | + 34.28%      |
| Eric                 | 18             | 42             | + 34.29%      |
| <b>Group Average</b> | 30%            | 64.28%         | +34.28        |

Throughout the school year all students took part in two mandatory progress monitoring assessments which were used in part to identify students in need of an intervention and also track student growth. The PALS reading assessment was administered in October (Fall), January (mid-year), and May (Spring). The students were scored on their letter sounds, sight word recognition, reading fluency, and comprehension. The data I focused on in terms of RTI importance was their sight word recognition. The maximum target goal for first grade is to identify 20 sight words correctly. All three group members showed a significant amount of growth from Fall to Spring, on average they were able their initial score by 75% (see Table 4.3).

Table 4.3

*Students' Scores of Words Read Correctly on the PALS First Grade Sight Word List:*

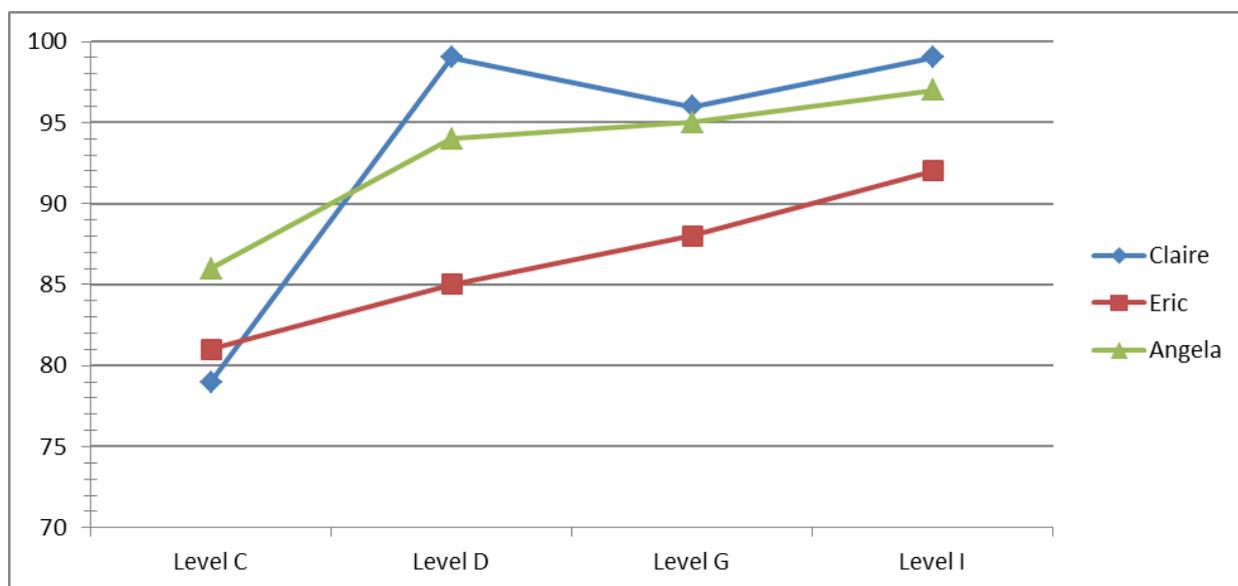
*Target Goal 20 Words*

| <b>Student</b>       | <b>Fall Scores</b> | <b>Mid-Year Scores</b> | <b>Spring Scores</b> | <b>Change</b> |
|----------------------|--------------------|------------------------|----------------------|---------------|
| Claire               | 3                  | 10                     | 18                   | + 75%         |
| Angela               | 2                  | 10                     | 18                   | + 80%         |
| Eric                 | 0                  | 11                     | 14                   | + 70%         |
| <b>Group Average</b> | 8.33%              | 51.66%                 | 83.33%               | + 75%         |

The district benchmark was another progress monitoring assessment that was administered to all first grade students. Upon entering first grade students are expected to be proficient at a guided reading level C according to the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA). Students are deemed proficient if they are able to read at the required level with at least 95% accuracy. All three students in my RTI group were reading significantly below expectancy when initially tested in the Fall. By the end of Trimester 1 students are expected to read at a guided reading level D with 95% accuracy. At this point Claire had improved her reading accuracy by 20%, this benchmark contributed to her dismissal from Tier 2. As the year went on the guided reading levels increased and by the end of the year 2 out of 3 of my RTI group members were above proficiency in terms of reading accuracy (see Table 4.4). On average the group improved their reading accuracy by 14% starting off the year with 82% accuracy at a level C to finishing up with year with 96% accuracy at a level I.

Figure 4.1

*Students' Reading Accuracy on District Running Record Benchmarks (First Grade)*



The data obtained through progress monitoring confirms that students who took part in the RTI reading group showed adequate growth throughout the school year. This growth could be attributed to the intervention. An equally important source of data collection was my Teacher Reflective Journal. In the following section I will address questions relating to my journal findings.

### **Qualitative Results**

A teacher reflective journal was kept throughout the entirety of the 2014-15 school year. The journal focused on the implementation of a Tier 2 reading RTI group conducted in my first grade classroom. The journal followed the journey of three individual students who were identified early on in the school year as prime candidates in need of a reading intervention. This selection took place in October based on the students' PALS early literacy scores. PALS is a state mandated early phonological awareness screener that provides a comprehensive assessment

of young children's knowledge of the important literacy fundamentals that are predictive of future reading success. A team of three first grade teachers, the building principal, reading specialist, and school psychologist all weighed in on the RTI group decision making. Since the Tier 2 intervention was going to be handled at the classroom level by the classroom teacher, each first grade teacher was going to have a small reading group of their own students. From the key assessments it was clear from day one that I had three students in my class that were significantly lower in reading than the rest.

My goal from the beginning was to keep the intervention group small to provide as much individualized attention as I possibly could. All three students were struggling, but for somewhat different reasons. Through my reflective journal I accounted for the individualized plans that I set in place for each student and the road we took to get there. Throughout the year I re-assessed and tracked these three struggling readers. Although Angela, Claire, and Eric were part of the same intervention group, their journeys and successes were much different.

***What research based strategies have worked well for a reading RTI intervention?***

This study originally started with a much broader intent. My initial focus was to see if there could be a correlation made between teacher competency in the area of RTI and student test scores. In preparation for this study I had developed a Response to Intervention survey that I had planned to distribute to cooperating schools to assess their knowledge of the RTI process (see Appendix A). Through months of independent research in the area of RTI I had decided to change course and center the focus of my study on developing my own effective classroom-based RTI model. However, despite my change in direction, the idea of conducting a survey to gain insight into the RTI process was not completely abandoned. I still had the desire to learn from my colleagues and figure out what research based strategies were proven effective for them

in the past.

The surveying aspect of my study took on a much more informal approach. I consulted with 12 other teachers at my school (1 reading specialist, 3 kindergarten teachers, 2 first grade teachers, 3 second grade teachers, and 3 third grade teachers) on what reading intervention strategies they have used in their classroom in the past to stimulate reading growth. There was a resounding support for the Fountas & Pinnell Leveled Literacy Intervention System (LLI) (Fountas & Pinnell, 2010). Luckily, this was a program that our school had purchased the year prior to this study. Teachers were impressed with the layout of the program; each lesson was systematically designed and paired with a leveled book.

Direct Instruction was another approach that was highlighted by a few teachers and supported by our school reading specialist. Reading Mastery by McGraw Hill Education is actually the direct instruction approach that our reading specialist utilizes during a lot of her Tier 3 interventions. For students who are yet to qualify for Tier 3, teachers reported finding success with the direct instruction model in the classroom because of its targeted instruction on phonic skills.

Other less frequent responses from my peers included Raz-Kids, Words their Way, and Read Naturally. Every teacher seemed to have a slightly different approach to running an intervention which held true to what I was seeing in my research that there is no “one” elite way to run an effective RTI intervention. The variety of responses I had received prior to the beginning of the 2014-15 school year gave me a great starting point when deciding upon how I was going to implement an RTI structure in my classroom.

***What did I learn about the RTI procedures in my school, and how does the process help to inform and improve my classroom instruction?***

My school committed to fully implementing RTI at the beginning of the 2012-13 school year. However, the initial structure was much different than it is now. As a staff we originally decided upon a grade-level based RTI structure that provided additional Tier 2 support for students who were struggling to meet the benchmarks in reading and math. At each grade level one teacher was designated to run the RTI group. The teacher in charge of leading the intervention decided on appropriate material, developed lessons, and conducted the progress monitoring. Students were pulled out of the classroom for approximately 20 minutes a day to receive their Tier 2 intervention. At the end of the 2012-2013 year, we reflected upon our first full year of RTI implementation and decided something needed to change. We were not seeing the results that we had hoped for. We began taking a look at other RTI approaches that would better meet the needs of our students.

At the beginning of the 2013-14 school year we had switched to a classroom-based approach to RTI. One of our main concerns with the grade-level approach was that the teacher running the RTI group didn't know enough about the academic demands of the students he or she was providing an intervention for because the groups were composed of students from other classes within the school. We inevitably went with the classroom-based approach because as teachers we felt like we could provide the most meaningful student centered interventions for our own students within our classroom. This approach also required no pull out; we were able to fit in an intervention within our school day while providing supplemental activities for the other students in our class.

Although this new method of RTI seemed isolated in regards to the fact that it was

individualized dependent upon each classroom, a team was created and progress monitoring checkpoints were put in place to track student progress. Tier 2 became our main focus. We (first grade teachers, the building principal, reading specialist, and school psychologist) met 3 times a year (subsequently after each PALS assessment) to discuss the progress or lack of progress being made by the students in our classroom. Eligibility for Tier 2 interventions was decided upon and potential candidates to track for Tier 3 were highlighted.

The progress monitoring that was mandated throughout the school year really helped to keep me on track. I was held accountable for the success of my students and that was all reliant on the effectiveness of the intervention I was implementing into my classroom.

***What were the most challenging features of RTI for me? What aspects did I excel in?***

For me, the most challenging aspects of the RTI process were keeping strict to the purpose of RTI. I am blessed to work in a district that exceptionally exceeds expectations year after year. I don't often have a large number of students in my class that struggle academically. The year of this project I had three students who stood out as clearly struggling more than the rest based on initial assessments and observations. Two of those students had extenuating circumstances at home that I truly believe were having a negative impact on their education. My RTI group took on a preventative focus; I was not going to wait for these students to fail before they could get the help they needed.

At times it was difficult to stick to the schedule that I had put in place for RTI. The structure of the literature block, especially for struggling students, plays a significant role in academic success. Even though my model was classroom-based and I ultimately control the pace of the day, there were some days when trying to fit in 20 minutes to run an intervention was

impossible. Typically I would see my RTI reading group during our daily reading centers which were modeled after the Daily 5. While the rest of the class was busy rotating through reading centers I pulled my RTI group for a “double dose” and on these days they would have approximately 40 minutes of small group reading instruction with me, 20 minutes as Tier 1 and 20 minutes as Tier 2.

I believe that I truly excelled in centering my lessons on the needs of each individual student. Although I started out with 3 struggling readers, I was quick to discover that they all had their individual strengths and weaknesses. A “one-size fits all” intervention was not going to work. I needed to make sure that my Tier 1 and Tier 2 curriculum were complimentary and collaborative. I utilized the direct instruction model, our LLI kits, and a variety of word work and decoding activities to build their phonemic awareness and fluency.

***What strengths and challenges did I observe in my students?***

All 3 students showed improvement both academically and socially throughout the school year. They came in as significantly below level readers (see Table 4.4) and ended up making great gains in closing that gap. One of the main strengths of all 3 students in my RTI group was their positive attitude toward the experience. They were all willing to complete the work necessary at school, however, there were a few challenges faced throughout the year when trying to establish collaborative connections from home-to-school. It was evident as the school year went on as to which students were being challenged with enrichment activities outside of the length of the school day. The number of minutes a child actually sits down and reads has a huge impact in their success as a reader (Taylor, Frye, & Maruyama, 1990), there’s no disputing the fact that the RTI intervention had an impact on the success of the students. The targeted

early intervention helped these struggling readers.

I noticed throughout this process that my students were not only making academic but social gains as well. They felt confident reading in a small group setting. They were experiencing success and I loved seeing their faces light up when they truly understood something. It was exciting to see them start to volunteer to read in front of the whole class, they were proud of their accomplishments. At the end of the year I ask my two remaining RTI students if they felt like the intervention helped them become better readers and they believed that it did. They enjoyed being a part of a small group that didn't make them feel inferior. They were all confident in their own way and it showed. The best endorsement a teacher can receive is through the actual students they are trying to help.

## Chapter Five

### Conclusion and Recommendations

The goal of this action research study was to see how a classroom-based approach to Response to Intervention (RTI) affects reading growth of a selected group of struggling readers in first grade. In this study I hoped to identify teaching strategies that help struggling students become more confident readers. One of my most useful takeaways from this study was the successful implementation of the Fountas and Pinnell's (2010) Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI) program.

LLI fit seamlessly into my classroom-based approach to RTI. The students enjoyed reading both fiction and non-fiction literature. From a teacher's stand point, the word work portion of the intervention was strong and deliberate. The general flow of word work activities fit with the needs of my students. I was also impressed with the layout of the close reading and clear directions outlined in the lesson plans. The only pitfall I experienced with the program was the inability to catch students up if they missed school. The program is rather fast paced and doesn't spend a lot of time on one particular skill. RTI requires a lot of documentation and a consistent schedule, due to unplanned interruptions there were times when LLI was not in agreement with a Tier 2 intervention.

While there were only three students in my RTI reading group, there were 14 other first grade students in my classroom. The students who were not a part of the RTI group were working on a portion of the Daily 5 (another reading program). Typically I was able to provide an intervention that fit into my daily routine. Through my research I came across a study conducted by Werts, Carpenter, and Fewell that addressed the barriers and benefits of response to intervention. Out of 207 respondents to the survey, 45% believed that RTI was a very

burdensome process (Werts et al., 2014). I will admit that if I were to have taken a survey based on RTI previous to doing the research required for this study, I too would have looked at RTI in a somewhat negative light. It's difficult to support something that you lack the overall understanding of. Appropriate training in the area of RTI is an absolute must if an effective RTI implementation is expected to take place (Castro-Villarreal, Rodriguez, & Moore, 2014).

Right now, there are no specific guidelines to follow in regards to RTI implementation. School districts and states have the freedom to implement a model that works best for them, but the potential downside of that would be the inability to collect data that shows a direct connection to the RTI approach being implemented. Without stringent guidelines put in place it is important for school districts to provide proper training in regards to interpretation and application of the RTI process (Gersten & Dimino, 2006; Castro-Villarreal et al., 2014; Mesmer & Mesmer, 2008). It was evident throughout the year after conversations with my peers that I wasn't alone in the feeling of being underprepared to lead an effective RTI reading group. The concerns that I had were legitimate concerns that were being felt by other highly qualified teachers at my school. I simply was unaware of what programs were assessable to me and have been proven successful in the past. As a future study I would like to take a look at quantitative data and see if there can be a true correlation made between student test scores and teacher understands of RTI and effective implementation of the RTI process; to aid in this future study I could utilize the RTI Teacher Survey that I created (see Appendix A).

My classroom-based model of RTI focused on the reading data obtained from 3 students taking part in an RTI reading group. Although a small group size is ideal for an RTI intervention, the results are much harder to use when making generalizations and inferences. Future studies may benefit from data obtained by a variety of teachers utilizing the same research

based interventions. Also, the qualitative interpretation of the student's progress is heavily dependent on the individual skills of the researcher and more easily influenced by the researcher's personal biases and idiosyncrasies.

This study highlighted the use of two RTI strategies, LLI and DI. A major emphasis was but on the effectiveness of the Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI) program. Data from this study was taken from a suburban school. A different school setting could in fact impact the success of the program; a wider demographic of student participation would be beneficial.

The data I obtained from this study was not only beneficial for my own professional development, but was useful for other staff members and the students who were directly involved in the study. Overall, my implementation of an RTI group in my classroom proved to be successful based on qualitative and quantitative data. The students identified early on in the school year as in need of a reading intervention showed consistent growth. Their success was documented through the use of universal screeners, district benchmarks, and formative assessments. Through the use of research-based interventions and a strong core curriculum I was able to address the reading concerns in my classroom. However, I feel that success within the classroom came in part from me having a firm understanding of the RTI process. The research that was necessary for this study to occur strengthened my familiarity and comfortableness with RTI. To me this study reiterates the fact that knowledge is power. A successful implementation of any program stems from the initial understanding of what is being implemented.

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## Appendix A

RTI TEACHER SURVEY CREATED FOR FUTURE USE

**Demographic Information**—Please respond to the following demographic questions based on your status during the 2013-2014 school year.

1. What is your gender?

- Male  
 Female

2. How many years have you been teaching?

- 1-5 years  
 6-10 years  
 11-15 years  
 15+ years

3. How many years have you been teaching in your current school district?

- 1-5 years  
 6-10 years  
 11-15 years  
 15+ years

4. What grade level did you teach during the 2013-2014 school year? \_\_\_\_\_

5. What is the highest level of education you have attained?

- Bachelor's Degree  
 Master's Degree  
 Doctorate Degree

**Please answer the following questions to the best of your knowledge.**

1. I have received training on RTI.  Yes  No

a. If yes, how many hours?

- 1-3 hours  4-6 hours  7-9 hours  10-12 hours  13-15 hours  16 + hours

2. RTI is required by law.  True  False

3. RTI can be used to identify students with learning disabilities.  True  False

4. Students can start the RTI process at any tier.  True  False

5. Tier 1 consists of the majority of students.  True  False

6. RTI can only be used to address reading difficulties.  True  False

7. Only students who are at-risk need to be assessed in an RTI model.  True  False

8. How are students who are in need of an intervention identified? (Check all that apply)

- Academic screening data

- \_\_ Referral by teacher, parent, or administrator  
 \_\_ Other (specify)
- 

9. What is the typical amount of time to implement an intervention in your school before determining the intervention is not effective? \_\_\_\_\_ weeks

10. How many hours/minutes a week are set aside for RTI reading intervention?  
 \_\_\_\_\_

11. What do you use to collect academic data for screening or progress monitoring purposes?  
 \_\_\_\_\_

12. What are your general thoughts about RTI? Your response may include anything from concerns you have to how it affects you and your students.  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Please use the following scale to respond to each statement.**

**1** – Strongly Disagree; **2** – Disagree; **3** – Neither Agree nor Disagree; **4** – Agree; **5** – Strongly Agree

- |  |           |
|--|-----------|
| 13. I understand the RTI process   | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 14. The purpose of the RTI process is the identification of students with disabilities.                                  | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 15. Using an RTI framework results in fewer referrals to special education.  | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 16. Progress monitoring data should not be used to make instructional decisions.   | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 17. Progress monitoring is an essential component in measuring student success using an RTI framework.                   | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 18. Benchmark testing of students is a critical component in making data based decisions to improve student performance. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 19. Progress monitoring data should be collected at least weekly.  | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 20. I utilize my students' progress monitoring data to change my classroom instruction.                                  | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 21. I feel prepared and confident to implement the RTI framework.  | 1 2 3 4 5 |

22. My school utilizes a Student Support Team to facilitate the RTI framework. 1 2 3 4 5
23. Since the implementation of the RTI framework, I have changed my instructional practices in the classroom. 1 2 3 4 5
24. I have time daily to provide small group and one to one instruction for every student in my classroom who needs intervention according to the RTI framework. 1 2 3 4 5
25. My school has the necessary resources, including personnel, to support and implement an RTI framework effectively. 1 2 3 4 5
26. I have access to appropriate curriculum and materials for interventions when needed. 1 2 3 4 5
27. My district has provided professional development and support for using an RTI framework. 1 2 3 4 5
28. My district provides ongoing support to sustain the RTI framework. 1 2 3 4 5
29. My district provides opportunities for regular and special education teachers to collaborate. 1 2 3 4 5
30. RTI has reduced the number of students I refer for special education services at my school. 1 2 3 4 5
31. The percentage of my students who meet benchmarks on formative assessments (DIBELS, PALS, etc.) has increased with the implementation of the RTI framework. 1 2 3 4 5

*Thank you for taking the time to fill out this survey. Your efforts are greatly appreciated.*