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The Administrative Team's Role in One Elementary School in Implementing Response to
Intervention

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Abstract

Implementing an effective Response to Intervention (RTI) program at a school site requires school leaders to be active participants. A school administration team must be able to properly equip its staff with the tools necessary to offer high-quality, targeted instruction to all students. A review of research literature reveals that in order to effectively implement the RTI process at a school site, a school administration team must foster collaboration at the school site, have a professional development plan that is ongoing, and develop a relationship with parents and the community so they are involved in the process. While the literature offers clear examples of what administrators can do at their school sites to make RTI implementation a positive experience, the studies also reveal that without strong leadership involvement, teacher frustration can be high, and legal challenges can arise.

A qualitative analysis was conducted, to learn more about administrator and teacher perceptions in regards to the RTI process to ultimately determine what administrators can do to better support teachers. A study was conducted at one school site where 2 administrators and 7 teachers were interviewed. Findings suggest that at this particular school site, administrators and teachers were divided on their perceptions. Overall, both administrators did not see a problem with the current RTI program, while several teachers expressed frustration with the lack of collaboration and professional development at the school.

It is important for this research to be looked at closely by administrative teams at other school sites, so school leaders can get further guidance on how to best support their staff through RTI implementation, which can ultimately lead to student growth.

Keywords: RTI, Response to Intervention

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Administrative Team and RTI

Table of Contents

Administrative Team and RTI

Chapter 1: Definition of Problem

New school improvement plans are often met with teacher trepidation, as it is uncertain whether a plan will "stick." Without teacher and administrator buy-in, new school initiatives have a hard time coming to fruition. Response to Intervention (RTI) is not new to the world of education. It has long been around, often with different terminology. For years, school districts have been looking for ways to gather assessment data on their students, make decisions based on those data, and implement strategic instructional support that will target a student's specific area of weakness. Therefore, an effective RTI program must include strategic, data driven instructional support from all school staff and parents, if students are to effectively improve.

The mandates needed to trigger significant change when it comes to special education laws did not appear until the reauthorization of IDEA 2004 and No Child Left Behind (NCLB). The final regulations published in June 2005 are less about compliance and accountability and more about prevention and intervention. Both NCLB and IDEA require reliable screening and progress monitoring of evidence-based instruction. They also both require the use of data to match instructional interventions to areas of specific student need. Ideally, the process must show that low achievement is not due to lack of appropriate instruction (Searle, 2010).

In her book, *What Every School Leader Needs to Know about RTI*, Margaret Searle (2010) envisions the RTI framework as a three-legged stool. Leg 1 is an assessment process. Leg 2 is a tiered intervention menu. Leg 3 is a problem-solving process. Each leg must be in place for the framework to be stable. By approaching RTI in this way, it is clear to see the basic components that are needed in order to be effective. While it can vary with how this looks at a school site, the 3 legs should be there holding the program together.

Administrative Team and RTI

Searle (2010) indicates some common themes that tend to run through teachers regarding the RTI framework. The themes outlined are shared roles and responsibilities, increased progress monitoring, coordination of support and resources, team problem solving, and focused leadership. Turning our focus to leadership, Searle (2010) says, "One of the key differences between schools that approach RTI with passion and enthusiasm and those that tend to flounder is the leadership's ability to inspire people and maintain focus on a few priority issues."

The problem at hand is the level of administrator involvement in RTI implementation. Often, administrators are not actively involved in the process, they don't have clearly defined roles, and teachers are unable to speak up when they need support. Good leaders need to be working alongside their staff, helping to identify problems, resources, and answers. With this type of leadership in place, a school should experience an increase in student achievement.

Purpose of Study

While there are many studies on what is involved in effective Response to Intervention implementation, there is not a lot of research on the role of the administrative team. This study will seek to clarify that role, as well as provide administrators with some insight into teachers' perspectives and what specific support teachers say they need from administrators to be successful. Additionally, this study will look at the administrator perspective and determine if administrators are clear on their role and level of involvement needed when implementing RTI. This study will build upon the research discussed in the literature review. For the purpose of this study, the research questions that will be addressed are:

1. How are administrators exhibiting or not exhibiting the three main themes discussed in the literature review?

2. What support do teachers say they need from administrators to implement RTI effectively?

3. What is an administrator's perspective of their role in RTI implementation?

Preview of Literature

The literature reviewed identifies three main themes that administrative teams need to focus on when it comes to implementing RTI. These themes are: the importance of creating a culture of collaboration, ongoing professional development, and parental involvement. The focus of this study is to determine whether these three themes are present at the school being studied. The literature offers some teacher and administrator perspectives, which will serve as a guide for surveys and interviews in this study.

Bean and Lillenstein (2012) conducted a study of five elementary schools, where a climate of shared leadership was evident. This study focused on the importance of school leaders empowering their teachers, while also promoting collaboration. In all five schools studied, each school site principal was able to offer opportunities for teachers to collaborate and share their perspectives.

Hoover and Love (2011) conducted a pilot study among three schools, and looked at how administrators supported collaboration between general education and special education teachers. In all schools, team leaders were established at the school site, and teachers were able to plan Tier 1 and Tier 2 instruction together. By assigning teachers as team leaders, the collaboration became more meaningful, and all teachers were able to get a better understanding of the process.

Administrative Team and RTI

Murawski and Hughes (2009) discuss the benefits of co-teaching between the general education teacher and the special education teacher for student achievement. Administrators should support a co-teaching model, especially to address Tier 2 instruction and data-driven instruction.

In Leah Nellis' article "Maximizing the Effectiveness of Building Teams in Response to Intervention" (2012), Nellis discusses the idea of school leaders implementing RTI teams at a school site. Through these teams, clear roles and expectations were established, making it helpful for teachers to know their purpose.

The literature reveals that ongoing professional development is critical to the RTI process. Castillo et al. (2016) conducted a study that determined that teachers needed to be exposed to trainings and job-embedded coaching, in order to increase their RTI skills. Through this study, the authors suggest that the optimal design for training should include: (1) providing information on and building awareness regarding the need for new skills, (2) incorporating expert modeling of new skills within settings that approximate classrooms and schools, (3) establishing opportunities for continuous practice, and (4) collaborating to reflect on and improve skill application (Castillo et al. 2016).

Additionally, the literature reveals that administrators should have a professional development strategy planned out ahead of time, and the strategy should include scheduling sessions, teacher learning outcomes addressed, and indicators of mastery of RTI methods should be established. (Kratochwill,et al.,2017) In this five-year longitudinal study, the authors were able to present some professional development examples, all with active administrator participation.

Administrative Team and RTI

Meyer and Behar Horenstein (2015) conducted a study where they gathered data from teacher teams about their perspectives on RTI implementation at their school site. This study pinpointed areas of administrator weakness and demonstrated high levels of frustration among staff with low administrator involvement. In this study, teachers indicated specific support needed that they were not getting from school leaders. The main theme running through the study was that teachers needed more training, specifically in the areas of gathering and analyzing data collaboratively, using data for progress monitoring, and working effectively with the data warehouse.

Parental and community involvement is addressed in Byrd's (2011) article. Byrd stresses the importance of explaining RTI to parents so that is seems less complicated. Administrators should use their role as school leaders to be able to address the entire school, which includes parent groups.

Kashima et al. (2009) stress the importance of building trust between parents and school staff. The article points out the connection between strong relationships with families and students having a more positive attitude toward learning. An administrative team must continue to work to promote parent interest and involvement so that learning can continue at home.

Martin (2017) addresses legal challenges that can arise from parents not being involved or informed when it comes to RTI implementation. This article points out that lawsuits can occur when parents feel like the school is using RTI strategies as a way to avoid special education assessments. By keeping parents actively involved and part of the process, schools can avoid legal issues, because parents will be part of the decision making process for their child. It is important that administrators are able to emphasize to parents that they are part of the team when it comes to educating their child.

Administrative Team and RTI

Preview Methodology

The research for this study will be qualitative. I will be interviewing a principal and an assistant principal at a Kindergarten through sixth grade elementary school in Los Angeles County. The school has a high socioeconomic student population and with a high level of parent involvement. Interview questions with the administrative team will include what the RTI program looks like at their school site, what their perceived role is in its implementation, and their level of involvement. I will specifically question the school leaders about their focus on staff collaboration, professional development, and parent involvement.

After interviewing both site administrators, I will then send interview open-ended questions to teachers specifically in regards to how supported they feel in the process, the makeup of their RTI program, and whether the RTI program has the 3 legs that Searle (2010) refers to. I will also ask specific questions pertaining to the themes addressed in the literature, such as collaboration time given, professional development offered, and degree of parent involvement in the process. Additionally, I would like to know what teachers feel they need more of from their school leaders when it comes to implementation, so I will have interview questions asking for that specific feedback.

By conducting interviews with administrators and teachers, all three of my research questions will be addressed. I will learn about what RTI looks like at a school site, how administrators are exhibiting or not exhibiting the three themes, what support teachers say they need from their administrators, and what administrators see as their role in the process.

Significance of Study

This study will be unique, as there is not much research on teacher and administrator perspectives when it comes to RTI. There is significant research on what appears to lead to

effective implementation, however very few of the studies actually asked teachers and administrators if they feel successful in implementation. Through this study, teachers and administrators interviewed should be able to explain if they are implementing effectively and what they are using as their gauge. I'd also like to know what the plans are for moving forward into next school year, and if any changes are in the works. This study is significant, as teacher and administrator perspectives must weigh heavily when it comes to determining if and what changes are to be made. In general, the outcome of this research can help administrators and teachers learn from each other as they navigate through RTI implementation. Specifically, administrative teams should be able to read my research and get a clearer picture of what they can do to better support the school community throughout the process.

Conclusion

Implementing an effective RTI process can lead to an increase in student achievement. It is important that this study addresses the specific role that school leaders play in the process, because in many ways, the administrators are the guiding force at the school site. Because of this, the administrative team must be on board with the process and contribute to the program. With strong leadership support in place, teachers will be given the necessary tools to build their capacity, students will then be offered high-quality instructional support, and school improvement will occur.

Through interviews with site administrators and grade-level teachers, the research questions will be addressed, and findings will determine whether one specific school is exhibiting the themes reviewed in the literature. Through my findings, I will also report what could create a successful program. Are administrators fostering an environment of collaboration among teachers? Are teachers being trained properly with ongoing, job-embedded professional

Administrative Team and RTI

development? Are administrators encouraging parents to be part of the decision-making process for their child? All of this needs to be taken into consideration when looking at whether the program is considered to be effective or ineffective, and whether teachers and administrators are feeling like *they* are successful in the program.

Definitions

Co-Teaching: When two educators share the same classroom and work together to plan, organize, instruct and make assessments on the same group of students.

 IDEA: Four-part piece of American legislation that ensures students with a disability are provided with Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) that is tailored to their individual needs. IDEA was previously known as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA) from 1975 to 1990. In 1990, the United States Congress reauthorized EHA and changed the title to IDEA (Public Law No. 94-142). Overall, the goal of IDEA is to provide children with disabilities the same opportunity for education as those students who do not have a disability.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB): U.S. Act of Congress that reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act; it included Title I provisions applying to disadvantaged students. It supported standards-based education reform based on the premise that setting high standards and establishing measurable goals could improve individual outcomes in education. The Act required states to develop assessments in basic skills. To receive federal school funding, states had to give these assessments to all students at select grade levels.

Response to Intervention (RTI): Approach to academic and behavioral intervention used in the United States to provide early, systematic, and appropriately intensive assistance to children who are at risk for or already underperforming as compared to appropriate grade- or age-level

standards. RTI seeks to prevent academic and behavioral failure through universal screening, early intervention, frequent progress monitoring, and increasingly intensive research-based instruction or interventions for children who continue to have difficulty. RTI is a multileveled approach for aiding students that is adjusted and modified as needed.

Shared Leadership: A leadership style that broadly distributes leadership responsibility such that people within a team or organization lead each other.

Tier 1 Interventions: All students receive core classroom instruction that is differentiated and utilizes strategies and materials that are scientifically research-based. Assessment in the classroom should be ongoing and effective in that it clearly identifies the strengths and weaknesses for each learner.

Tier 2 Interventions: Supplemental interventions may occur within or outside of the general education classroom. Progress monitoring occurs at more frequent intervals. Core instruction is still delivered by the classroom teacher, but small groups of similar instructional levels may work together under a teacher's instruction and/or guidance.

Tier 3 Interventions: For students who require more intense, explicit, and individualized instruction and have not shown sufficient response to Tier 1 and Tier 2 interventions. The interventions in this tier may be similar to those in Tier 2 except that they are intensified in focus, frequency, and duration. The instruction in Tier 3 is typically delivered outside of the general education classroom. Programs, strategies, and procedures are designed and employed to supplement, enhance, and support Tier 1 and Tier 2 instruction by remediation of the relevant area and development of compensatory strategies. If Tier 3 is not successful, a child is considered for the first time as potentially having a learning disability.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Response to Intervention (RTI) has been a way to offer strategic support in both the general education and special education settings at school sites. RTI gives educators the opportunity to look at student data and use these data to drive instruction. In an effort to bridge the gap between the low-performing students and the high-performing ones, RTI programs are being used in schools across the country. These programs aim to give students high-quality instruction that is meaningful for each individual student. In order to make this happen, administrative teams must work with staff to emphasize the importance of collaboration, patience, and adaptability when it comes to implementing RTI as a school-wide approach.

A school administration team is vital to implementing the RTI process at a school site, but how exactly do they accomplish that? School leaders are faced with the task of garnering support for all their initiatives from teachers, students, parents, and the entire school community. In order to implement any new program, it is important for a school leader to be at school with a healthy culture and a true shared belief in the school's mission and vision. Studies show that there are several commonalities among what school leaders must focus on when looking at implementing RTI at their school sites.

Through a review of literature on this topic, three themes have emerged as being important in guiding school leaders towards effective implementation of RTI at a school site. The first theme, is that a school administration team must create a culture of collaboration. All staff involved in the RTI process at a school site must regularly be working together, sharing data, and sharing their best practices. Administrators can encourage teacher teams to not only plan instruction according to the data, but to also create shared rubrics and formative assessments across the grade level. Research has shown that administrators have good results when they

Administrative Team and RTI

create a climate of shared leadership, therefore empowering their staff (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012). Through establishing RTI leaders, RTI teams, and encouraging teachers to take advantage of co-teaching opportunities, administrators can further emphasize the importance of staff working together, analyzing data, and sharing strategies, all with a common goal.

The second theme that emerges from the literature is that school leaders must dedicate time and resources to professional development for all staff. It is the responsibility of school leaders to dedicate time and resources for staff to be able to feel comfortable with the process and to understand what instruction needs to look like for the different learners in their classroom. The literature reviewed offers suggestions for administrators in regards to professional development when it comes to RTI. First, emphasis is placed on administrators having a professional development strategy prior to implementation. Second, some common essential elements should be included in the professional development plan (Kratochwill, et al., 2007). Lastly, it is important to hear the perspective of the teachers, and understand what they need from their school leaders, in order for them to feel confident with RTI implementation. The findings of a study presented reveal that lack of meaningful professional development leaves teachers frustrated and unable to fully commit to the RTI process (Meyer & Behar Horenstein, 2015).

Lastly, administrators must place emphasis on parental and community involvement throughout the RTI process. Administrators must have parental support of the program as a whole, as well support of specific strategies put in place for each individual student. The literature reviewed emphasizes that it is important for administrators to form relationships with parents and the community. Research has shown that there is a direct relationship between parent involvement and student achievement (Kashima et al., 2009). In order for parents to

become actively involved in the program, there must be a level of trust between the school and the parents. Once school leaders can earn that trust, parents will become more involved at school and with their children outside of school. Keeping parents involved and informed and building relationships and trust are important for avoiding potential legal challenges as well. It is important that while RTI is utilized to provide general education interventions, schools are not using it to avoid special education assessments and services. While RTI offers strategic support for students, other students may require more intensive services. School leaders must be careful to ensure that parents are part of the decision-making process, and that they are informed of their rights (Martin, 2017).

Because Response to Intervention models are widely used in schools today, and they contribute to an increase in student achievement, there is a clear need to review the literature presented in regards to administrators implementing RTI at a school site. While implementation at each school can look different, there are some clear commonalities that exist among them. Ultimately, the administrative teams cannot sit and watch from the sidelines. They must be on board, involved, and part of the team.

Culture of Collaboration

The first item that several studies and articles have in common when it comes to leadership implementing RTI has to do with the importance of school leaders creating a culture of collaboration. All staff involved in the RTI process at a school site, must regularly be working together, sharing data, and sharing their best practices. According to the study by Meyer and Behar-Horenstein (2015), teacher teams showed a significant increase in collaborative data-based decision making, once RTI was implemented at their school. These were interesting findings in this study, as other findings in this same study, indicated that the

school administrators were lacking support for teachers through implementation. However, this

was the one area where teachers saw an increase and where the school leaders did dedicate

substantial time. Additionally, dedicated staff collaboration time was found to be critical at

Meyer Elementary school in contributing to its ranking in the top five percent of all Michigan

schools (Atkins, 2016). At Meyer, teachers do whole grade level planning. They build

assessments together, design writing rubrics, and plan science projects together. The principal

schedules weekly planning meetings for teachers. During this time, administrators, the guidance

counselor, or another staff member stays with the students.

Shared Leadership

According to a study conducted by Rita Bean and Jennifer Lillenstein, "Response to

Intervention and the Changing Roles of Schoolwide Personnel" (2012), there was a climate that

supported and encouraged shared leadership in all five schools studied (Lambert, 1998). "The

principal served as the central person for promoting a risk-free environment, leading the effort in

establishing norms for collaboration, and facilitating shared responsibility and accountability.

Effective implementation of RTI required that principals involve teachers in making instructional

decisions as a means of effective management role (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012). This climate of

shared leadership that was evident in all five schools studied is vital. While the administrators

were key players in all of the schools, they were also able to empower their teachers. By doing

this, teachers were more focused on collaboration, which allowed them to feel like all the

students in the grade level were shared by all of the teachers in that grade level.

In the study by Bean and Lillenstein, two principals were interviewed, and they talked about

the leadership they assumed in helping grade-level groups develop norms for meetings, as a step

in their effort to establish the school as a learning community. The norms were posted in the

Administrative Team and RTI

meeting room and included items like start and end on time, respect the views of others, have a

focused agenda, and challenge ideas, not people. These norms were especially important,

as they were developed by the teachers. This offers a clear example of the administrators

empowering the teachers.

Additionally, the authors noted that the most frequently mentioned necessary skill

throughout their interviews with personnel was collaboration. "There was consensus that to

collaborate effectively, there must be a sharing of and value for diverse perspectives and

preparation to attain the larger goal of enhanced instructional decision making and improved

student outcomes" (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012). For all of the schools studied, the principals

provided opportunities for and promoted collaboration.

RTI Leaders

In "Supporting School-Based Response to Intervention: A Practitioner's Model," John

Hoover and Emily Love (2011) conducted a pilot study among three schools. This was an

interesting project, as it focused on how administrators cultivated RTI leaders at their school

sites. A portion of the study looked at collaboration and revealed that effective collaboration

needs to be handled carefully and must be ongoing. One issue that arose in this study was

collaboration between general education and special education teachers as they integrated Tier 1

and Tier 2 instruction. To resolve the issue, "teachers planned Tier 1 and 2 instruction together.

Tier 2 was implemented as push-in instruction in the general education classroom. Subsequent

team meetings included follow-up discussions of Tier 1 and Tier 2 strategies" (Hoover & Love,

2011). With a focus on collaboration and cultivating RTI leaders at the school site, the

administrators were able to effectively address the issue and offer their teachers a more thorough

understanding of Tier 1 and Tier 2 instruction.

Administrative Team and RTI

Co-Teaching

"When meeting the needs for RTI implementation, teachers need to actively collaborate with their colleagues to make sure that (a) lessons are research based, (b) lessons address the wide variety of needs in the general education classroom, (c) lessons ensure access to the general education curriculum for diverse learners, (d) ongoing data collection and progress monitoring is occurring, and (e) students in Tiers II and III are able to receive specialized and more individualized instruction in small groups. Co-teaching becomes a powerful means of meeting the goals of RTI" (Murawski & Hughes, 2009). In their article, "Response to Intervention, Collaboration, and Co-Teaching: A Logical Combination for Successful Systemic Change," Murawski and Hughes (2009) discuss co-teaching between a general education teacher and a special education teacher to have a positive impact on student achievement throughout the RTI process. With administrative support, and creative scheduling, adopting a co-teaching model for RTI, offers some profound benefits, one of the main ones being a smaller student to teacher ratio. This is an especially important piece of Tier 2 instruction, therefore co-teaching could help to satisfy that. Additionally, by offering a co-teaching option to teachers, administrators are essentially providing teachers with an extra professional to help develop instruction, analyze data, and ensure that instruction is differentiated and intensive.

RTI Teams

Teams are an important part of RTI implementation, and school sites often have teams that consist of general education teachers, special education teachers, and other specialized support staff. RTI teams can function at the school-wide level or on the level of individual students or groups of students. In Leah Nellis' article, "Maximizing the Effectiveness of

Administrative Team and RTI

Building Teams in Response to Intervention (2012), Nellis offers several strategies for maximizing team effectiveness. The author discusses the importance of being clear on the RTI process and procedures for staff; sharing in problem solving and leadership with administrators; ensuring that the team knows its purpose, membership, and roles; and engaging the team in ongoing reflection to monitor effectiveness. Administrators were found to be important players on the team, however, teachers indicated that they preferred school leaders to share their leadership role with staff, therefore developing leadership among the entire team. This idea of shared leadership correlates with the study by Bean and Lillenstein (2012), where shared leadership was evident in all five schools studied. The five schools also had a strong focus on creating a culture of collaboration when implementing RTI.

Professional Development

Studies confirm that ongoing professional development is critical as an administration team looks at RTI implementation. It is the responsibility of school leaders to dedicate time and resources for staff to be able to feel comfortable with the process and to understand what instruction needs to look like for the different learners in their classroom. Important topics for RTI professional development could include an overview of RTI, understanding how to use assessment data, understanding and using formative assessments in the classroom, working in RTI teams, and differentiating instruction (Renaissance, 2016). Additionally, Castillo et al. (2016) found that direct, intensive trainings and job-embedded coaching would likely increase educators' RTI skills. Findings in this study indicate the critical need for specific and useful professional development for teachers in order to build their capacity to effectively implement RTI.

Administrative Team and RTI

Professional Development Strategy

Implementing RTI, as in any educational initiative, requires an effective professional development strategy. "Professional development should be job-embedded to provide support as needed throughout the school year" (Renaissance, 2016). Professional development should begin in advance of implementation, either during the summer months, or prior. While developing a strategy for professional development, the school leadership team must handle all arrangements for the specific trainings throughout the year, and prior to finalizing the professional development plan, administrators should have a clear picture of specific areas of training that staff will require.

Three Essential Elements of Professional Development

In "Professional Development in Implementing and Sustaining Multitier Prevention Models: Implications for Response to Intervention" (Kratochwill, et al., 2007), Brown-Chidsey and Steege (2005) made recommendations specifically pertaining to training educators to use RTI methods. In their study, they emphasize that there are three essential elements: schedule, teacher learning outcomes, and indicators of mastery of RTI methods. First, the authors suggest scheduling several sessions for RTI training for school staff. The first session should be the longest, giving an overview of RTI for all staff. This would be a session offered so that everyone knows the plan and expectations. Subsequent sessions would cover more specific details and components of the program. Additionally, the authors recommend that separate sessions are held to address curriculum. Objectives for each session should be clearly stated at the beginning and the end. The authors refer to these essential elements as "learning outcomes." The final element should address some way to determine whether teachers are implementing RTI as intended. The authors suggest integrity training in sessions to reduce teacher anxiety regarding being measured by how well they are implementing the interventions.

Administrative Team and RTI

During a five-year longitudinal study conducted by six research centers across the country that were implementing RTI models (Kratochwill, et al., 2007), the centers summarized some professional development examples: Training generally built upon and worked with preexisting programs at the school sites. Role-plays, group discussions, and case studies were used for training. Collaborative problem solving was promoted. Co-teaching, mentoring, and coaching were used during implementation. Mentoring also was ongoing, as well as in-class support. Observations and self-reflections regarding implementation, and student achievement data were used to measure outcomes. Additionally, the centers indicated that the school leadership team members would engage in "frequent self-assessment activities to prompt a desired practice, evaluate and reinforce current practice, and identify future training needs" (Kratochwill, et al., 2007). When administrators are actively involved in the professional development activities and constantly evaluating and re-evaluating effectiveness, they are much more prepared to pinpoint specific areas that staff need support in, and the professional development becomes much more meaningful.

Additionally, the article points out specifically that "professional development structures that include groups of teachers from the same school, department, or grade result in greater change in teacher practice than structures that train individuals drawn from many schools" (Kratochwill, et al., 2007). RTI implementation is a major change to a school and instructional program within a school, and it is important for the professional development activities to be conducive to those changes. This ties in nicely to RTI requiring strong collaborative practices among teachers and staff, therefore making it seem like the logical step would be to have collaborative professional development on a smaller scale, with teachers

Administrative Team and RTI

who are already working together as a team at the school site. Strong administrator support of this type of ongoing professional development is needed at the school site.

Teacher Perspective

In "When Leadership Matters: Perspectives From a Teacher Team Implementing Response to Intervention," the authors conducted a study in which they gathered information about teacher team perspectives regarding RTI implementation, in order to more fully understand how school and district leaders can provide support. They used focus groups and principal interviews for the study (Meyer & Behar Horenstein, 2015).

The findings of the study revealed high levels of frustration among teachers. Teachers were frustrated with the lack of time provided to them to get everything done. They did see the value in collaboration, but often time for collaboration was limited. Teachers expressed that they would love to be able to share ideas and strategies, but they also needed time to plan instruction.

The main theme that centered around the frustration was "not knowing" (Meyer & Behar Horenstein, 2015). Teachers were uncertain about RTI processes, their changing roles, how to use data to drive instruction, and strategies to help students that continued to struggle. Teachers became increasingly frustrated by a lack of professional development and support from school leaders.

Through conversations with teachers, the researchers were able to get a clear idea of what kind of training was needed for staff. Teachers wanted more opportunities to learn how to use data on a collaborative level, as well as for progress monitoring. This is an area where an administrative team probably doesn't realize teachers need training in. However, analyzing data does not come naturally to everyone, and if this is a new practice for teachers, they need some training to fully develop confidence in it.

Administrative Team and RTI

In this study, teachers were given initial professional development in RTI, but they noted that there was never any follow-up training or any kind of ongoing reflective practices to ensure consistent implementation. Teachers reported that they would have liked their administrators to have followed up more and to have provided more training during the work day.

Because of the lack of professional development, teachers developed "coping strategies" in order to learn. They began to collaborate among each other, asked lots of questions, initiated their own professional development opportunities, and learned from observing other teachers. While teacher frustration was high, with the lack of administrator support and training, the study did reveal that teachers were motivated to learn about RTI, and in the end, wished that their school leaders would have taken a more active role, visited classrooms more often, and engaged teachers in meaningful dialogue about how to meet the needs of their students.

Parental and Community Involvement

Another key area that a school administration team must focus on when implementing RTI is parental and community involvement. There are two important pieces to including parents and the school community in RTI. First, the program must have their overall support. Second, parents must support decisions made for individual students (Renaissance, 2016). According to Byrd (2011), school leaders should be educating and involving parents in RTI because RTI can be complicated, sometimes special education referrals can be an outcome of RTI, and research shows that parent involvement is correlated with positive outcomes for parents and students. Byrd goes on to say that school administrators have the power to talk about RTI to the entire school, including parent groups (2011). Thus, a school administration team can support the RTI process through educating the school community as a whole.

Administrative Team and RTI

Powerful Relationships and Trust

"The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP, 2005) state that cross-culturally, when families are involved in students' educations, the benefits reach not only the students, but also the educators, as well as families" (Kashima et al., 2009). The article, "The Core Components of RTI: A Closer Look at Leadership, Parent Involvement, and Cultural Responsivity," further explains that when a strong relationship between families and the school is formed, students show more positive attitudes toward learning and school, higher achievement, improved behavior, increased homework completion, more participation in academic activities, higher rates of school attendance, and fewer placements in special education (Kashima et al., 2009).

Prior to a school leadership team implementing RTI, a relationship built on trust must be formed between the home and school. Studies have found that there is a correlation between higher student achievement and higher levels of trust between parents and school staff members (Kashima et al., 2009).

One example of a powerful relationship among family, school, and the community comes from a CEEP site visit for the RTI Implementation Study at Walkerton Elementary (Kashima et al., 2009). At the school, many activities are organized to promote a positive relationship including a Title I night for families, family field trips, Kindergarten summer school for the lowest-achieving students, a summer reading program that rewards children with coupons donated from community businesses, and coordination with a local church for volunteer student services. The community gives back to the school through donations for low-income students, including the Pack-a-Backpack program, in which community members donate a backpack filled with school supplies for students in need. This type of relationship among school, parents, and

Administrative Team and RTI

community is initiated by the school leadership team, contributes to effective RTI implementation. The effects of parent and community involvement are far reaching.

Additionally, an administrative team must work with their teachers to consistently look for ways to keep parents interested and involved. When it comes to RTI, it is important that parents understand the process and what they can do at school and at home to work alongside the teacher in partnership. School leaders can coordinate activities, such as informal breakfasts or discussion groups, encourage parental involvement in attending and planning the trips, frequently update parents through printed materials or online, and continue to ask for feedback from parents. Additionally, the authors recommend school leaders meeting parents out in the community, for example at a local community center, church or library, for informal talks. Overall, school leaders must take the time to talk with parents about their opinions and understandings about student learning (Kashima et al., 2009).

Legal Challenges

It is important for the administrative team to facilitate parental involvement throughout the RTI process in order to avoid potential legal challenges that can arise. When it comes to individual students who require intervention, involving parents in decisions to move to Tier 2 or Tier 3 is at least prudent if not legally required (Renaissance, 2016). This is especially the case for students requiring a special education evaluation, and not simply a range of intervention options. A parent has a right to request an evaluation and can initiate legal actions against a school that fails to act on their request (Martin, 2017).

There are some distinct types of legal cases that currently illustrate the tension between RTI and special education identification. One example would be the parent approaching the school with concerns about their child and questions about initiating an evaluation. The school

Administrative Team and RTI

responds by providing interventions through RTI, but takes no action on the requested

evaluation. The school basically ignores the request, and the parents initial legal action, as they

received no answers on their request for evaluation. The school is operating under the

assumption that the RTI program is enough to satisfy this parent, when in fact, the parent is

legally entitled to the evaluation (Martin, 2017).

Another type of case is when the parent requests a special education evaluation, but after

speaking with the school, agrees to their proposed interventions. The school does not properly

address the request for evaluation through documentation. The parent files a legal action,

alleging that the school did not follow proper protocol for addressing their request for evaluation.

This is an example of school staff encouraging parents to accept the interventions offered,

instead of a referral, when in fact, if the parent requests it, the school must comply (Martin,

2017).

The last type of case outlined offers an example of the school providing interventions over a

period of time with the parents' agreement, but in the end, conducts a special education

evaluation when it is determined that the student is not responding to interventions offered. The

parents seek legal action, claiming the school took too long to decide to evaluate (Martin, 2017).

While implementing interventions for struggling learners through RTI is a common approach

for schools, school leaders must be careful to avoid disputes with parents, and respect their

rights. School leaders must actively involve parents as partners in the decisions regarding

interventions and the timing of special education evaluation. Some suggestions offered are to:

provide parents with detailed information on the different regular education interventions

available, meet with parents to discuss options, make clear to parents their right to request an

evaluation, reach a consensus in a collaborative manner, share progress data frequently with

parents, maintain follow-up communication regarding progress or lack of progress, determine if

the current course of action is still appropriate, and document all steps taken to involve parents

(Martin, 2017). By following these steps, and making parents partners in the process, parents

will be able to see that the school is working as a team to address the needs of their child, and

they will therefore trust the process and the program, hopefully avoiding any legal challenges.

This idea of developing trust between school staff and parents, continues to resonate as an

important piece to effective implementation of the RTI process (Kashima et al., 2009).

Conclusion

An administrative team at a school site is vital to effective implementation of the RTI

process. After reviewing literature, it is evident that administrators must focus on three main

areas when looking at implementation: collaboration, professional development, and parent and

community involvement. School leaders should encourage staff coming together, looking at data

together, planning together, and even teaching together. This does not come naturally to

everyone, and an administrative team must work closely with all teachers to foster this

collaborative culture at the school site. An administrative team must also recognize the

importance of ongoing professional development and strategize for the most effective ways to

offer it to staff. Training should be reflective with coaching and mentoring embedded within.

Lastly, administrators must gain the support of parents and the community. Parents need to be

kept informed and up to date regarding interventions offered. This must be a team effort, and

school leaders should be including parents in the team decisions throughout the process.

After reviewing the literature, many of my inquiry questions have been answered, but there is

still more work to be done. The literature offers numerous suggestions for how the

administration team supports the RTI process, and I presented the findings of that question. The

question of what teachers say they need from administrators for support is answered in the

literature as well, however, it seems that more research is needed in this area. Teacher

perspectives can be powerful, and I would like to investigate them further. Also, it would be

helpful to examine what parents need from administrators to help support implementation at

school and at home. In looking at the inquiry questions regarding what can an RTI program

looks like at a school site and how can an effective RTI program impact a school as a whole,

further research is needed. Moving forward, I will be focusing on one school that is considered

to be implementing RTI effectively and determine if the administrative team is focusing on the

three main themes, and the effect it is having on the school as a whole. There is a need to

continue research in this area, as strong administrator support can have an impact on school

culture, teacher job satisfaction, and ultimately, student achievement.

Chapter 3: Methodology

After presenting research about how school administrators can contribute to effective RTI implementation, further research that applies to teacher and administrator perspectives must be conducted. Research has shown that teacher frustration stems from "not knowing" (Meyer & Behar Horenstein, 2015) or lack of proper training. This study further determines teacher feelings about RTI.

School-wide RTI implementation often looks different from site to site. The issue at hand is not necessarily the design of the program, rather what administrators are doing to support teachers and families. The current research focused on one elementary school. The basic components of the program at the site were looked at, administrators were spoken to, along with teachers from Kindergarten through sixth grade, to get their thoughts and ideas. The purpose of the study was to investigate an elementary school, describe what is and is not happening when it comes to implementation, and determine what administrators could do to support the process.

Design

This study was conducted using a general approach to qualitative research. The approach allowed for researcher objectivity. The data spoke for themeselves, allowing the answers to the research questions to emerge as time went on. This approach was a good method to use to answer the research questions, as information gathered was based on peoples' thoughts and opinions. To be able to answer the research questions, it was necessary to explore how administrators viewed their roles versus how teachers viewed the administrators' roles. While the qualitative data collected were subjective, they did offer some useful insight into administrator and teacher perspective.

Administrative Team and RTI

In his book, *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*, Robert Weiss (1995) discusses why qualitative interviews and surveys are relevant. He says that "Because each respondent is expected to provide a great deal of information, the qualitative interview study is likely to rely on a sample very much smaller than the samples interviewed by a reasonably ambitious study. Their analysis will rely less on counting and correlating and more on interpretation, summary, and integration." Based on this research, it quickly became clear that qualitative interviews were necessary to be able to get a full story from each participant, and not simply answers to standardized questions.

Data were collected from two sources: administrators and teachers. Interviews were conducted with both groups. The interviews revealed the participants' perspectives as well as their thoughts about what improvements were needed, if any. Then, a comparison was made between the interview data from both groups.

Participants

The study was conducted with a total of 9 participants. There were 2 administrators, the principal and assistant principal, along with 7 classroom teachers. One teacher from each grade level Kindergarten to sixth grade was chosen to participate. All participants in the study resided in Southern California, in Los Angeles County. All participants were middle to high socioeconomic status with teaching credentials as well as advanced degrees.

Interviewing both site administrators was important to the study, as it was important to get perspectives from each of the school leaders to see if there were any gaps in their understanding of their roles. Grade-level teachers were chosen at random, making it easier to get a variety of

Administrative Team and RTI

authentic teacher perspectives. Had the sample of participants not been random, results may have reflected teacher bias in some way.

The consent process involved approval of the IRB from CSUSM, speaking with the site administrators, getting their approval to conduct the study, and a signed letter of approval from the school principal. Consent from the school site was granted, with the condition that the school name, staff names, and student names be kept anonymous.

Setting

The elementary school studied is located in Southern California, in Los Angeles County. The school is situated in a suburb of Los Angeles. The school is made up of students from middle to high socioeconomic backgrounds. Families are predominantly Caucasian and Asian (SARC, 2015-2016). RTI is currently being implemented at this school site, therefore the setting is conducive to the study. The teachers interviewed were classroom teachers who had been offering tiered support all year long. Because of the demographics of the school in which the study was conducted, this could have impacted the findings. The school is extremely high performing, particularly due to the educational levels of the parents, who are actively involved. There isn't as big a need for tiered intervention support as there would possibly be in a lower performing school where students may be underserved and parent involvement may be low. Had the study been conducted in a school with different demographics, outcomes may have been different. For example, teacher frustration levels may have been higher due to them needing more support in their classrooms for their struggling learners.

Interviews for both administrators and grade-level teachers took place at the end of the school year. This gave participants a chance to reflect on the school year as a whole and to

Administrative Team and RTI

articulate how they would like to move forward in the process for the following school year.

Timing proved to be important to this study, as interviewing at the end of the school year gave

teachers and administrators a chance to look at the program and determine what they would do

differently.

Instruments

Based on Turner's article, "Qualitative Interview Design: A Practical Guide for Novice

Investigators (2010), it was determined that the interviews would be standardized open-ended

interviews. The interviews were structured in terms of the wording of the questions.

Participants were asked identical questions that were worded so that responses were open-ended.

By questioning in this way, participants were able to provide as much detailed information as

they could, and the researcher was able to ask many probing questions to follow up.

The questions also provided the researcher with authentic feedback. Open-ended interview

questions were able to pull more information out of the participants than "yes or no" questions.

Interview questions allowed the participants to offer thoughtful and constructive feedback.

Since the study took place at the very end of the school year, it was difficult to meet

classroom teachers and administrators in person. The study was therefore conducted online.

This added to the anonymity of the study, which encouraged more honest responses. Responses

were easily collected on a spreadsheet once participants submitted them.

Response to Intervention and You

A Teacher Interview

1. What are you currently doing for interventions in and out of the classroom?

Administrative Team and RTI

2. What type of professional development have you had for RTI? If you haven't had any, what would you like to have?

3. How often are you given collaboration time to discuss strategies and struggling learners? Do you feel like it's enough?

4. How are parents encouraged to become involved in the decision-making process when it comes to interventions with their children?

5. Do you feel successful as a teacher in the current RTI practice at your school? If yes, explain why. If no, explain what support you need to be more successful.

6. Do you feel like your students have been successful in the current RTI practice at your school? If yes, explain what you use to gauge success. If no, explain what you feel the students could use to make them successful.

7. Will you continue with the same plan for next year? If no, explain what you will be doing differently next year.

Response to Intervention and You

An Administrator Interview

1. What is the current RTI process at your school?

2. What type of professional development have you offered teachers for RTI? If you haven't had any, what would you like to have?

3. How often are you giving teachers collaboration time to discuss strategies and struggling learners? Do you feel like it's enough?

4. How are parents encouraged to become involved in the decision-making process when it comes to interventions with their children?

Administrative Team and RTI

5. Do you feel like your teachers are successful in the current RTI practice at your school?

    If yes, explain why. If no, explain why not.

6. Do you feel like your students have been successful in the current RTI practice at your

    school? If yes, explain what you use to gauge success. If no, explain what you feel the

    students could use to make them successful.

7. Will you continue with the same plan for next year? If no, explain what you will be doing

    differently next year.

Procedures

Steps to conduct the study were chosen based on administrator and teacher availability at

the end of the school year. Online interview questions were sent to the 7 grade-level teachers

and 2 site administrators through Google Forms. It was necessary to gather all data in a very

short period of time, roughly 1-2 weeks, as the school year was wrapping up, and teachers would

soon be unavailable. The researcher is an outsider with data collection from this school site,

which made data collection at the end of the school year even more challenging.

Analysis

Data were collected from the interviews and compiled into groups of information and coded.

The codes derived from consistent phrases, expressions, or ideas that were common among the

participants. While the findings are reliable due to the random sampling and open-ended

questions, coding can be subjective, based on how the researcher codes comments. Therefore,

this could have had an impact on the findings. This analysis was a good match for the research,

as it allowed for the researcher to organize and easily see common perspectives and different

perspectives from both administrators and teachers. The coded data were then put into a chart to

give a visual representation of the patterns that emerged. Additionally, with the emerging

Administrative Team and RTI

patterns through coding, the researcher was able to analyze the data by writing up brief narratives and presenting them.

Conclusion

A qualitative study through interviews was needed to be able to answer the research questions presented. Through open-ended interview questions, 2 site administrators and 7 grade-level teachers were able to provide authentic feedback, which allowed the researcher to look at responses through both an administrator and teacher lens. The questions of what RTI looks like at the school site, how/if administrators are exhibiting the three themes the literature says are crucial, the supports teachers say they need from their administrators, and what administrators believe their role to be in implementation were addressed. At the conclusion of the study, data were analyzed, allowing answers to the research questions to emerge.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis

The purpose of this study was to address the problem of low administrator involvement in RTI implementation. The research conducted offered insight from both administrator and teacher perspectives, shedding light on some of the real issues at hand. The intent of the study was to be able to look at the data collected, reflect on what one administrative team was currently doing, and determine if that was in line with what teachers felt they needed to be successful, and if they felt like it was contributing to student success. The literature reviewed in Chapter 2 revealed the three main themes that administrators must be aware of when they are implementing RTI at a school site: collaboration, professional development, and parent and community involvement. These themes were embedded into the interviews, to determine if they existed at the school being studied. The interviews conducted aimed to answer the research questions in regards to how administrators were exhibiting the three main themes addressed in the research, what support teachers felt like they needed from their administrators to successfully implement RTI, and what administrators perceived to be their role in RTI implementation.

This chapter will present the data that were collected and coded in chart form, and narrative form to illustrate the administrator and teacher perspectives that emerged and some extreme differences that were evident between administrators and teachers. Lastly, there will be an interpretation of the data, which will demonstrate that this study was able to answer the research questions and prove that the field of education could benefit from this study.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Data were collected from both administrator and teacher interviews, in order to gain diverse perspectives, as there is often a disparity between how teachers and administrators see things. Questions focused on administrator and teacher knowledge of the current RTI program at the

Administrative Team and RTI

school, knowledge of professional development offered, effective collaboration time, level of

parent involvement, teacher success, student success, and next year's plan. Interview questions

were geared toward answering the research questions and to determine any inconsistencies

among administrators and teachers.

The data was collected through Google Forms. Both administrators and teachers were

emailed links to the interviews, and given a week to respond. Responses were collected over the

course of the week and downloaded on an Excel spreadsheet for analysis.

In all, 7 teachers were sent interview questions, and all 7 responded. 2 administrators were

sent interview questions, and both administrators responded. Once collected, all responses were

then coded and displayed in chart form. Responses were coded on a 0-100 point scale. The

researcher developed a rubric to assign a numerical code to individual responses.

Score	Criteria
0-10	No answer given, the answer was not related to the question, or the participant did not support the question.
11-20	Minimal knowledge and/or support of the subject matter.
21-30	Response expressed very little knowledge by the participant. Participant seemed unaware of the program as a whole.
31-40	Response was confusing to the researcher, yet demonstrated some knowledge.
41-50	Response lacked a clear understanding of the program, and participant expressed frustration with the subject matter.

Administrative Team and RTI

| Score	Criteria
51-60	Knowledge was basic, and answer indicated participant was torn between what they knew and how they felt.
61-70	Participant answered the question with some details. Overall, response lacked clear details.
71-80	Response was average, and participant did not feel strong in their opinion or knowledge.
81-90	Demonstrated knowledge, but lacked significant details. Was overall satisfied with their knowledge and the program in general.
91-100	Strong answer with clear knowledge of the question and program. Participant did not express any doubts.
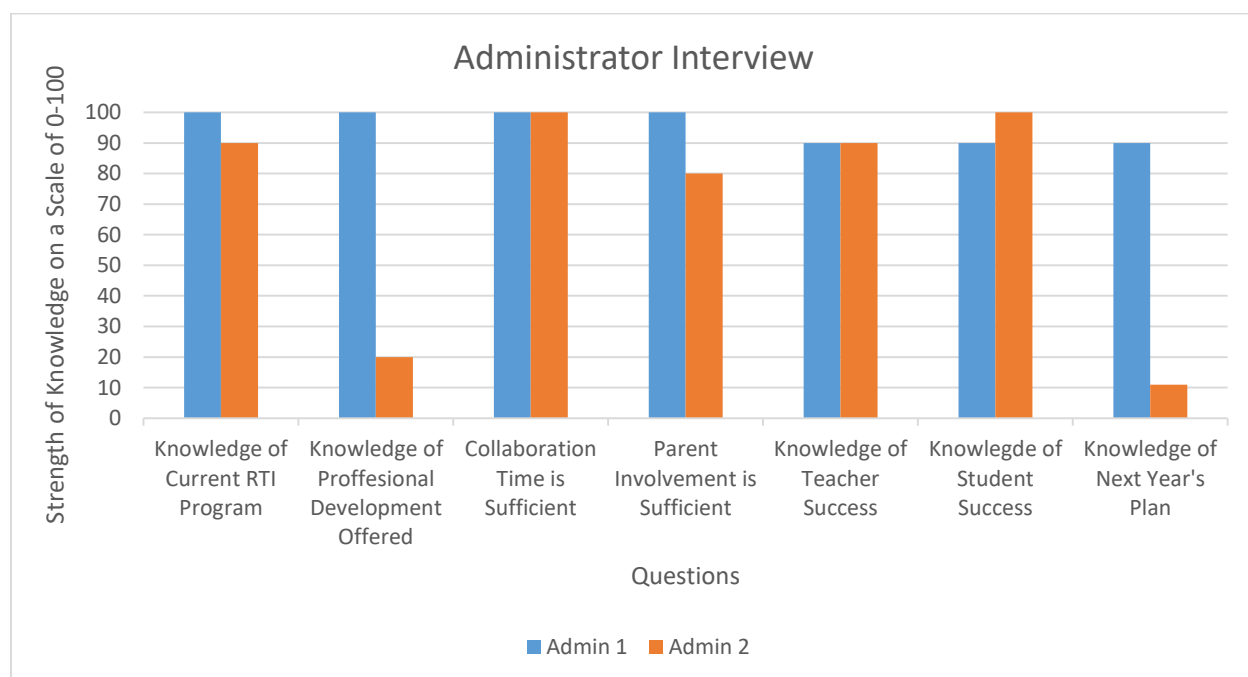
Figure A: Administrator Interview
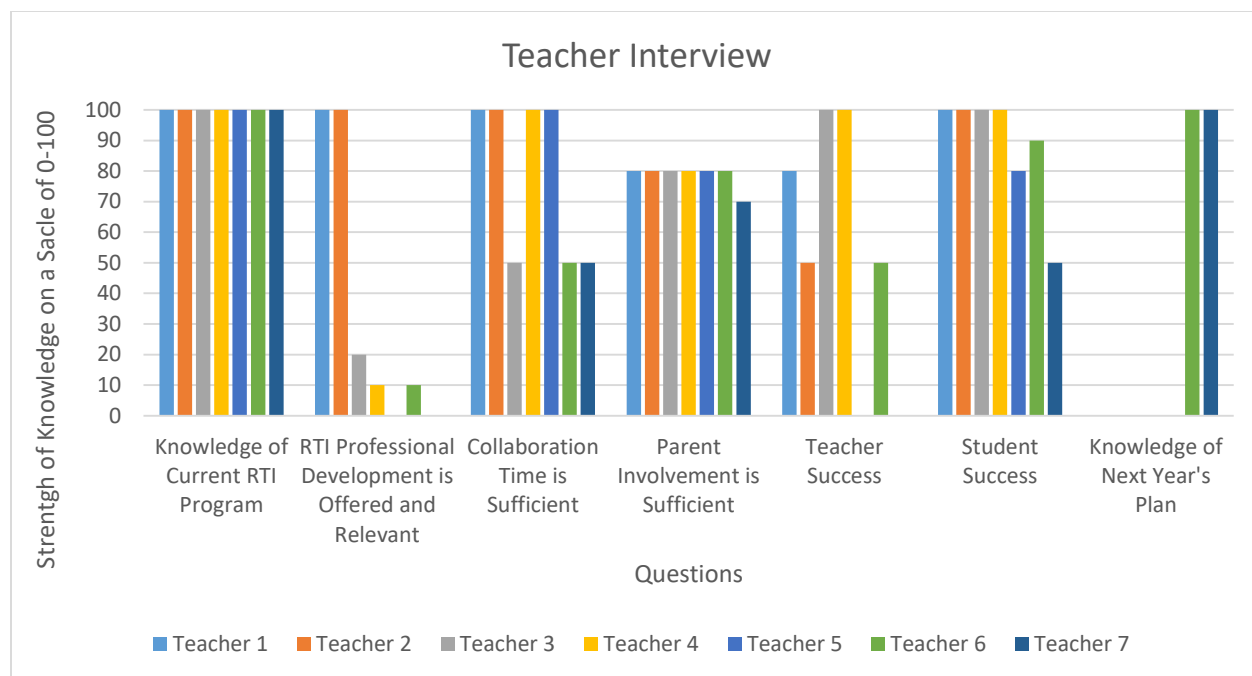
Administrative Team and RTI

Figure B: Teacher Interview

Figure A presents the data collected from the administrator interviews. While interviews

were anonymous, the principal and assistant principal were questioned. The principal is a

seasoned administrator with an extensive background in curriculum and instruction. The

assistant principal is also a seasoned administrator, but had far less experience and training in

instruction. The three themes discussed in the literature review were present within the data

collected. Administrator responses revealed that both administrators at the site had somewhat

different perspectives on what was happening with RTI at the school site and whether or not the

three themes were being exhibited. There was a variation in responses to their knowledge of the

current program at the school. Administrator 1 seemed more confident and knowledgeable in the

answers, and Administrator 2 appeared to be more unsure. Knowledge of professional

development offered also revealed substantial differences. Administrator 1 seemed very

knowledgeable about professional development offered, while Administrator 2 described

professional development as "staff meetings." Both administrators felt like teachers were given

enough collaboration time and that parent involvement was sufficient. Additionally, both

administrators expressed that they knew that their teachers and students were successful under

the current model. As for next year's plan, Administrator 1 had knowledge of a new RTI

program being implemented district-wide that would include professional development and

teacher collaboration. Administrator 2 had no knowledge of this plan.

The administrators interviewed shared some insight and perspective through their responses.

It was important to address the research questions within the interviews, and actively seek

answers to those questions. When asked about professional development offered, Administrator

1 said, "We have a meeting at the start of the school year to review all services in place for

students and the processes for accessing services -- specifically RTI tiers, personnel (headed by

our RSP teacher), the SST process, and IEP process and related services."

When asked the very same question, Administrator 2 said, "We have held multiple staff

meetings to discuss district and site parameters." Administrator 1 was able to offer specific

details in regards to professional development. Administrator 2's response demonstrated little

knowledge of specifics. Overall, both responses indicated that the school as a whole has not

invested in outside training in RTI for their staff. Furthermore, Administrator 1's response

indicates that professional development is not ongoing, as it is mainly a meeting at the start of

the school year.

When asked if the administrators felt like their teachers felt successful with the program,

Administrator 1 responded, "Yes -- I feel that we have a pretty successful system."

For the same question, Administrator 2 responded, "I generally believe the teachers are

Administrative Team and RTI

successful because they genuinely work hard to track students in need of additional support and

ensure the support is provided. There is a small number of students who continue to be less than

successful with the support provided." Administrator responses indicated that they felt like

teacher success was strong, and the current system was working for everyone.

Figure B presents the data collected from the teacher interviews. The three themes

discussed in the literature review were present within the data collected. Of the 7 teachers

interviewed, 2 felt strongly about their knowledge of professional development offered for RTI.

Two teachers did not feel like they were aware of any professional development or training

offered at all. Three teachers felt like that had received training, but when they described the

training, it was not specifically RTI training. All 7 teachers felt like some collaboration time was

offered. Four teachers felt like the time given for collaboration was enough, while 3 teachers

expressed that they would like more time to meet with their teams and discuss strategies. All 7

teachers felt like there was a good degree of parent involvement, however most commented that

they involved the parents during conference times twice a year, and not much more than that. In

regards to teacher success, 3 teachers overall felt successful, while 4 teachers expressed that they

struggled with the current program in place. As for student success, 4 teachers expressed that

their students were consistently demonstrating success through observations each school day.

Three teachers felt like while there was some student success happening, other students were not

making gains, based on their classroom observations. When asked about their knowledge of next

year's RTI plan, 2 teachers responded that they were aware of a new district-wide program for

RTI, while 5 teachers were not aware of any changes happening.

The teachers interviewed shared some insight and perspective through their responses. It was

important to address the research questions within the interviews, and actively seek answers to

those questions. When asked about professional development offered, teacher responses were varied. Teacher 7 offered an interesting perspective by saying, "We had training in RTI strategies about ten years ago. It was basically on the structure of RTI. It would be helpful to review what RTI should look like as the training was before many teachers were hired. In addition, having instructional assistants trained in the best practices for struggling learners would help." Other teacher responses reflected the lack of professional development in RTI offered for the teachers at the school. Some responses indicated that several of the teachers were unaware of what RTI training looks like, as their answers were about trainings, but not specific to RTI.

Questions pertaining to collaboration time also were received with varied degrees of responses:

Teacher 3: "We have time during PLC, which is weekly to biweekly. Some teachers don't want to take the time to analyze data and group students based on their needs."

Teacher 4: "We are given plenty of time to collaborate to discuss strategies. Yes, it is definitely enough time."

Teacher 7: "We have collaboration time during our Friday PLC times. That gives us about 2 to 3 meetings a month. There are so many things that need to get covered during that time, that there is very little time left to discuss strategies. Usually, the most that happens is students get placed in groups. Hearing what other teachers are doing to assist the students would be incredibly beneficial."

Overall, responses indicated that while some teachers were content with the collaboration time provided, others expressed frustration with there not being enough time. Some teachers also indicated team members added to the challenge, as some did not want to take time to look at

Administrative Team and RTI

data and come up with clear plans to meet the needs of all students in their grade level.

Questions in regards to teacher success in the current program also produced mixed responses:

Teacher 3: "Yes, when our team analyzes data, groups students according to need, and administers specific instruction to target learning needs, I feel very successful."

Teacher 5: "No. I feel that I need more time one on one or in small group with my students."

Teacher 6: "Sometimes I do and sometimes I don't. I feel I need to do a better job progress monitoring my students who struggle by having goal setting conferences periodically with parents to create a specific plan that monitors specific, attainable goals."

Teacher 7: "No, I do not think the system we have now is successful. It is set up with curriculum specialists pulling and working with the lowest students. I feel that the specialists should work with the average or higher students while the teachers work with those that are struggling. We send our students off to the other classroom with fingers crossed and there is very little growth made. Students working in groups of 3 to 1 for 3 days a week should make significant progress and that is not happening. I feel it is a disservice to our kids. Within our groups in class, the model of leveling for a specific standard has been helpful and I have seen positive growth in students during this time. I am able to feel successful in those groups, but worry about my students who are gone."

Overall, responses when it came to teacher success were at two extremes. Some teachers felt very successful with the current program, while several teachers expressed frustration with the system, and their success within it. Comparing administrator responses and teacher responses in this particular category revealed a disconnect between the administrative team and the teachers at

the school site. Both administrators expressed that they felt like the teachers were very successful within the current program, while more than half the teachers interviewed expressed frustration and feeling less than successful.

Interpretations

To make sense of the findings, the researcher first looked at just administrator responses. This allowed patterns to emerge between just 2 administrators. What quickly became clear was that one administrator was more knowledgeable than the other. Overall, both administrators had knowledge and confidence in the current RTI program. Administrator 2 was less sophisticated in answers and was unable to answer some of the questions to the degree that she should have. For example, Administrator 2 was not able to elaborate on the changes for next school year's RTI plan. Additionally, Administrator 2 could not offer many details in regards to type of collaboration that teachers are involved in. When asked about professional development offered, Administrator 2 could not offer specific examples. This of course was all subjective, based on the researcher's interpretation of answers.

Next, the researcher looked at teacher responses. Patterns that emerged from teacher responses centered around professional development, collaboration, teacher success, and next year's plan. For those 4 questions, the 7 teachers were divided in their responses. Some expressed that everything was great in each of those areas, while others expressed frustration and wanting change.

When comparing both administrator and teacher responses together, some main issues became clear. First, ongoing professional development in RTI was not happening at the level that it should be. Second, while administrators thought the collaboration time was sufficient,

Administrative Team and RTI

several teachers felt like it wasn't enough and was not being used effectively. Third, administrators were confident that teachers were feeling successful with the current RTI program, yet several teachers were struggling. Lastly, the district was implementing a new RTI program for the next school year, however, out of 9 staff members questioned, only 3 knew about it. A disconnect between administrators and teachers was evident.

It is important to note that at this particular school site, student achievement was high. Therefore, responses to the question in regards to student success were affected. Both administrators and teachers responded that they felt like students were successful with the current RTI program in place. Some teachers felt like students were not as successful as they could be because their lowest students were not being given as much attention as the average or above-average students. This was an interesting issue that came up in this study, and perhaps conducting this it at a lower-performing school would have different responses.

The data collected would be useful to an administrative team implementing RTI so that they can ensure that they are setting their teachers and students up for success. The researcher of the study was mainly an outsider, as she was not on staff. However, the researcher was somewhat of an insider, as her children attended the school, and she was aware of the current RTI program and its shortcomings. This could have impacted the interpretations, as the researcher felt like the current program was less than desirable prior to conducting the study.

Conclusion

The data presented in this chapter offered administrator and teacher insights and perspectives in regards to RTI implementation at one school site. The data collected and analyzed provided answers to the research questions and revealed the degree to which the three themes were present, what teachers needed from administrators to feel successful, and what administrators

Administrative Team and RTI

saw as their role in RTI implementation.

Throughout this chapter, the data showed that at the school site being studied, not all three themes were fully present, teachers needed more support from administrators, and not all administrators knew what their role was. While student achievement was not significantly affected, the fact that the school studied was a high-performing school could have affected the data.

The perspectives provided from both administrators and teachers throughout this study, gives further proof that the three themes researched must be fully present in a RTI program so that both teachers and administrators can feel successful. The following chapter will offer some recommendations and lessons learned from this study, so that administrators can use this research as a resource for school-wide implementation.

Administrative Team and RTI

Chapter 5: Recommendations/Lessons Learned

Throughout this study, RTI implementation was researched with a focus on the administrative team. The problem that exists is the presence of low administrator involvement when it comes to RTI implementation at a school site. Administrators often are unaware of what RTI should look like and what their participation should look like. This leads to teacher frustration, as the teachers need more support from their school leaders. The school leaders must take on an active role when it comes to RTI implementation, but often they don't know how to do that. Research questions were developed to be able to help future administrators as they look to implement a new program or to modify an existing program at their school site. It is important to look at how administrators are exhibiting the three main themes of collaboration, professional development, and parent involvement. It is also critical to find out from teachers what support they need from their administrators to be able to feel successful with implementation. Lastly, it is necessary to get an administrator's perspective in regards to their role at the school site. These questions have to be asked and answered in order to conclude the study, and offer insight for future administrators.

Results of this study were mixed, and interestingly enough, findings did not necessarily land in one direction. This chapter will provide a findings summary, findings interpretation, findings in context, some lessons learned, and any limitations to the study.

Finding Summary

Results produced from administrator interviews, revealed that both administrators at the school site, had different perspectives of the program and their role. Administrator 1 appeared to be very knowledgeable in regards to the current program, professional development, parent

involvement, and next year's plan. Administrator 2 appeared to be less knowledgeable about the program, professional development, parent involvement, and next year's plan. This disconnect is concerning, as it is important that both administrators on the team be equally knowledgeable about the program and about support offered for teachers. Both administrators felt like they were providing adequate collaboration time for teachers, yet they weren't able to elaborate on their role with that. Ultimately, administrators should be part of collaboration time and ensure that teachers are using that time most effectively. While Administrator 1 was knowledgeable about staff meetings to discuss RTI at the beginning of each school year, neither Administrator 1 nor 2 could provide examples of other professional development or training opportunities for teachers. In terms of parent involvement, both administrators felt like there is adequate encouragement of parent involvement at the school site.

All in all, the administrators studied demonstrated knowledge about the program happening at the school site, yet their involvement appeared minimal. It appeared almost as if they didn't realize just how big a role they must play in order to make the program effective.

Overall findings from teacher interviews suggest that teachers were divided on the issue of RTI and support provided from school leaders. The most interesting findings to the study come from questions about professional development, collaboration time, and teacher success. Teachers express that professional development was nearly non-existent, yet they would appreciate the training and tools. Half the teachers interviewed felt like collaboration time was sufficient, while the other half felt like the time was not used well, and many teachers at the school struggled with collaboration. Additionally, only 2 teachers interviewed felt successful with the current program, while 5 were struggling and would like to see it change.

Administrative Team and RTI

Looking at both administrator and teacher results together reveals that administrators at this particular school site do need to be looking more at their role in RTI implementation and how to support their teachers better so they can feel successful. Based on their responses, it is clear that the administrative team was not aware of the best practices when it comes to RTI implementation.

Finding Interpretation

The first research question hypothesized a correlation between administrators exhibiting the three main themes and teachers feeling successful in the program. If administrators are focusing on: collaboration, professional development, and parent involvement, then teachers should feel well supported and prepared to meet the needs of all of their learners. The data collected from the interviews demonstrated that the administrators were not fully involved in the process, and while the themes were present, they didn't appear to be a focus. Interview responses from teachers indicated that some felt successful, while many did not. This leads us to speculate that if the three themes were fully present, and administrators were key players in the program, perhaps teachers' feelings of success would be higher.

The second research question aimed to discover what support teachers need from administrators as they navigate RTI in their classroom and at the school site. Responses revealed two main areas that teachers would like support in. Collaboration time and professional development appeared to be controversial subjects, as several teachers feel strongly that they needed more support in those areas. Several teachers expressed that training specific to RTI would be beneficial for the entire staff. Other teachers indicated that collaboration time needs to be run better, and time spent sharing strategies is greatly needed.

Administrative Team and RTI

The third research question hypothesized a connection between what administrators perceive their role to be in RTI implementation, and teacher success. If administrators aren't sure of their roles and how to support their teachers, then teachers won't receive the support they need, and they'll struggle to feel successful in the program. Administrator responses indicated a disconnect between the two administrators and their perceived roles. While one administrator appeared very knowledgeable, the other administrator came across as unsure of the program and process. Overall, both administrators did not take ownership of their roles in the program.

Findings in Context

This section will make connections between the variables researched in the current study and the results of previous studies and research. The relationship between administrators' focus on professional development and collaboration and teacher satisfaction with the current RTI program and the relationship between administrators' perceived roles and teacher satisfaction with the current RTI program will be discussed.

Administrators' Focus on Professional Development and Collaboration and Teacher Satisfaction

In "When Leadership Matters: Perspectives from a Teacher Team Implementing Response to Intervention" (Meyer & Behar Horenstein, 2015), findings revealed that teachers were frustrated with being uncertain about the RTI process at their school and that they didn't understand their changing roles, how to use data to drive instruction, and strategies to help students that continued to struggle. Teachers became increasingly frustrated by a lack of professional development and support from school leaders. Through conversations with teachers in that particular study, researchers discovered that teachers wanted more opportunities to learn

how to use data for collaboration, and progress monitoring. That particular study reveals some

similarities to the current study. Both schools offer some initial professional development for

staff, yet there is no follow-up training or ongoing reflective practices to ensure consistent

implementation. Additionally, teachers in the Meyer & Behar Horenstein 2015 study and the

present study exhibited frustration from administrators not following up more with more training

throughout the work day.

In Kratochwill et al.'s five-year longitudinal study conducted from six research centers

across the country, that were implementing RTI models (2007), administrators were actively

involved in the professional development activities and constantly evaluating and re-evaluating

effectiveness. This allowed for the professional development to become much more meaningful.

In the current study, administrators are removed from professional development, and limit

training to staff meetings at the beginning of the school year. Interview responses from teachers

suggested that several would welcome meaningful training, as they are unsure of the program. It

is also important to note that one teacher commented that training was greatly needed at the

school site, as professional development hadn't been offered in the last 10 years. This particular

teacher expressed frustration with the current program, and the lack of support.

According to a study conducted by Rita Bean and Jennifer Lillenstein, "Response to

Intervention and the Changing Roles of Schoolwide Personnel" (2012), the authors determined

through their interviews with personnel that collaboration was critical. "There was consensus

that to collaborate effectively, there must be a sharing of and value for diverse perspectives and

preparation to attain the larger goal of enhanced instructional decision making and improved

student outcomes" (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012). For all of the schools studied, the principals

provided opportunities for and promoted collaboration. In the current study, teachers

interviewed expressed mixed feelings. Some teachers felt like collaboration was encouraged and

sufficient, while others were frustrated with the collaboration time and felt like it wasn't being

used in the way it was intended. Administrator responses in the current study suggested that they

do provide substantial collaboration time, but ultimately leave it up to the teachers to determine

the level of collaboration that is happening. These findings lead the researcher to believe that the

administrators at this particular school site could be doing more to promote effective

collaboration.

Administrators' Perceived Roles and Teacher Satisfaction

In a study conducted by Rita Bean and Jennifer Lillenstein, "Response to Intervention and

the Changing Roles of School Wide Personnel" (2012), "The principal served as the central

person for promoting a risk-free environment, leading the effort in establishing norms for

collaboration, and facilitating shared responsibility and accountability." The two principals

interviewed in that particular study spoke about leadership they assumed in helping teachers

structure collaboration meetings. School personnel in that study indicated that they felt

supported and that implementation was successful. In the current study, administrators

interviewed gave conflicting responses when asked about what they are doing to promote

collaboration, professional development, and parental involvement. As a reminder, this school is

a high-performing school in a community with strong parental support, so while a strong RTI

program is still important, it is clear that administrators do not see it as a top priority. Responses

to questions indicate that administrators understand the importance of the three themes

researched, however they are not actively seeking ways to involve themselves with them. They

seem to think that all themes are present on their own and don't necessarily require their

leadership. Interestingly enough, some teacher interviews suggested that while all three themes

Administrative Team and RTI

were present, several teachers would like some leadership to step in and provide some structure

and guidance. Several teachers expressed frustration over this.

Lessons Learned

I began this study with a general interest in RTI and what teachers need to implement it

effectively within their classrooms and at their school site. I took a particular interest in the RTI

program at my children's school, as I felt that although it is a high-performing school, it seems

like more can be done to support all learners, but especially the struggling ones. This study has

demonstrated that even at a high-achieving school, gaps exist, and teachers still need

administrators to give them the tools to promote student growth and educator growth.

Through focusing on the three main themes critical to successful implementation, I have

learned that even if those themes are present, administrators must be present as well. Interviews

with teachers have taught me that some are still unsure as to what RTI should look like, and

others are frustrated with knowing what it could look like, but are not seeing that at their school.

While there are some good things happening when it comes to RTI at the school site, my overall

impression is that it the program must change to meet the changing needs of the staff and the

community.

An interesting discovery made during the course of this study is that the program is

undergoing a major change for the following school year. The district has hired an outside

company to train and implement RTI districtwide. Teams will be formed at school sites, and the

program will look much different than it does now. It would certainly be interesting to conduct a

follow-up study a year from now, and see if teachers are more comfortable with the program and

with their success within it.

Administrative Team and RTI

Limitations

There are some limitations to the study in regards to interviews, participants, and data analysis. Due to the time of year the study was conducted, the last week of the school year, interviews were conducted online. It became near impossible to schedule in-person interviews during the last week of school, so teachers were sent interview links through email. While responses were thorough enough to answer the research questions, in-person interviews would have been more in depth, body language could have helped to gain more insight, and follow-up questions would have been easier to administer. Additionally, teachers are very busy during that time of year, so some may have rushed through their responses. Several teacher responses were short and offered little insight.

By choosing this particular school to study, there are some limitations, that should be noted. The school is high achieving with overall high teacher and parent satisfaction. This limited the data collected, as there is not an extreme need for intervention support. Conducting this study at a different school site would have provided different results. A follow-up study comparing this school to a lower performing school, would be something worth looking at as a next step.

Data analysis was subjective. I created the rubric, which may have looked different had it been generated by a different researcher. After analyzing the data, I would have wanted to have explored the administrators' perceived roles a bit more. While I was able to answer the research question with the responses provided, looking back, I would have asked administrators more specific questions about their role. Had I been able to conduct in-person interviews, I would have definitely included more specific details in follow-up questions. The limitations of the online interviews were apparent and affected the study as a whole.

Administrative Team and RTI

Conclusion

This study examined the administrative team's role in implementing Response to Intervention (RTI) at one school site. It looked at best practices that are critical for effective implementation and then brought those concepts into one school site to determine if they were present. The study aimed to discover the presence of those best practices, what further support teachers require from administrators, and lastly, what administrators felt their role was, versus what the best practices say their role should be. The study found the school to be implementing RTI with some presence of themes researched, yet the overall findings suggest that administrators must be more involved at this particular school site. While some teachers reported being satisfied overall, others expressed that they worry that the current program was failing the teachers and students. Additionally, administrators were unsure of their role in the process, making it nearly impossible to fully support their teachers.

This study not only enforces the magnitude of the role of the administrator when it comes to RTI implementation, but also the enormity of an administrator's role as the leader of the school when it comes to both operations and instruction. An administrator must be aware of the impact they have on teacher growth and student growth when they are preparing to take on a leadership role. They cannot sit on the sidelines. The teachers need their school leaders to be key players on the team, and that will trickle down to better teaching and better learning.

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Appendix 1

California State University
SAN MARCOS

The Administrative Team's Role in Implementing Response to Intervention

Invitation to Participate

Dear Teacher,

My name is Rebecca Rose and I am a student in the Masters in Educational Administration program at California State University San Marcos. You are invited to participate in a research study of Response to Intervention. You were selected as a possible participant as a representative of your grade level. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study. You must be 18 or older to participate in the study.

STUDY PURPOSE:

The purpose of this study is to clarify the role of the administrative team in RTI, and to gather feedback in regards to what teachers need from school leaders to help with implementation.

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS:

If you agree to participate, you will be one of 7 teachers and 2 administrators who will be participating in this research.

PROCEDURES FOR THE STUDY:

If you agree to be in the study, you will be emailed a series of open ended interview questions to respond to, that should take no longer than 20 minutes.

RISKS AND INCONVENIENCES:

There are minimal risks and inconveniences to participating in this study.

- Time
- Confidentiality

SAFEGUARDS:

To minimize these risks and inconveniences, the following measures will be taken:

- Time

Administrative Team and RTI

- o 20 minutes
  - o Interviews will be sent through email, so you can complete it at a convenient time in a place that is private.
- Confidentiality
  - o To safeguard these, the information collected will be locked in a secure file cabinet or drawer, and the digital information will be stored in a password protected computer. Care will be taken not to reveal participant identity through specific stories that only they know.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Your responses will be anonymous.

The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications but your name will not be used. Results will only be shared in aggregate form and your information will not be identifiable.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION:

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part or may leave the study at any time. Leaving the study will not result in any penalty. Your decision whether or not to participate in this study will not affect your current or future relations with your school.

BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THE STUDY:

There are no direct benefits to participation in this study, however, your participation will help give administrator's a view from the teacher's perspective when implementing RTI, so that they can determine what they can do to make teachers feel more successful with the program.

ALTERNATIVES TO TAKING PART IN THE STUDY: If you decide not to participate in this study, you have the option to decline.

INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATION:

You will not receive payment for taking part in this study.

CONTACT INFORMATION AND SIGNATURES:

If you have questions about the study, please call me at 818-667-6898 or e-mail me at rose045@cougars.csusm.edu. You will be given a copy of this form for your records. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the IRB Office at irb@csusm.edu or (760) 750-4029.

PARTICIPANT'S CONSENT:

By signing below, you are giving consent to participate in the study.

_____   _____   _____

Participant Signature   Printed Name   Date

Administrative Team and RTI

Appendix 2

California State University
SAN MARCOS

The Administrative Team's Role in Implementing Response to Intervention
Invitation to Participate

Dear Administrator,

My name is Rebecca Rose and I am a student in the Masters in Educational Administration program at California State University San Marcos. You are invited to participate in a research study of Response to Intervention. You were selected as a possible participant as a member of the administrative team. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study. You must be 18 or older to participate in the study.

STUDY PURPOSE:

The purpose of this study is to clarify the role of the administrative team in RTI, and to gather feedback in regards to what teachers need from school leaders to help with implementation.

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS:

If you agree to participate, you will be one of 7 teachers and 2 administrators who will be participating in this research.

PROCEDURES FOR THE STUDY:

If you agree to be in the study, you will be emailed a series of open ended interview questions to respond to, that should take no longer than 20 minutes.

RISKS AND INCONVENIENCES:

There are minimal risks and inconveniences to participating in this study. These include:

- Time
- Confidentiality

SAFEGUARDS:

Administrative Team and RTI

To minimize these risks and inconveniences, the following measures will be taken:

- Time
  - o 20 minutes
  - o Interviews will be sent through email, so you can complete it at a convenient time in a place that is private.
- Confidentiality
  - o To safeguard these, the information collected will be locked in a secure file cabinet or drawer, and the digital information will be stored in a password protected computer. Care will be taken not to reveal participant identity through specific stories that only they know.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Your responses will be anonymous.

The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications but your name will not be used. Results will only be shared in aggregate form and your information will not be identifiable.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION:

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part or may leave the study at any time. Leaving the study will not result in any penalty. Your decision whether or not to participate in this study will not affect your current or future relations with your school.

BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THE STUDY:

There are no direct benefits to participation in this study, however, your participation will help give administrator's a view from the teacher's perspective when implementing RTI, so that they can determine what they can do to make teachers feel more successful with the program.

ALTERNATIVES TO TAKING PART IN THE STUDY: If you decide not to participate in this study, you have the option to decline.

INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATION:

You will not receive payment for taking part in this study.

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Administrative Team and RTI

PARTICIPANT'S CONSENT:

By signing below, you are giving consent to participate in the study.

_____   _____   _____

Participant Signature   Printed Name   Date

Administrative Team and RTI

Appendix 3

Response to Intervention and You

A Teacher Interview

What are you currently doing for interventions in and out of the classroom?

What type of professional development have you had for RTI? If you haven't had any, what would you like to have?

How often are you given collaboration time to discuss strategies and struggling learners? Do you feel like it's enough?

How are parents encouraged to become involved in the decision making process when it comes to interventions with their child?

Do you feel successful as a teacher in the current RTI practice at your school? If yes, explain why. If no, explain what support you need to be more successful.

Do you feel like your students have been successful in the current RTI practice at your school? If yes, explain what you use to gauge success. If no, explain what you feel the students could use to make them successful.

Will you continue with the same plan for next year? If no, explain what you will be doing differently next year.

Administrative Team and RTI

Appendix 4

Response to Intervention and You

An Administrator Interview

What is the current RTI process at your school?

Your answer

What type of professional development have you offered teachers for RTI? If you haven't had any, what would you like to have?

Your answer

How often are you giving teachers collaboration time to discuss strategies and struggling learners? Do you feel like it's enough?

Your answer

How are parents encouraged to become involved in the decision making process when it comes to interventions with their child?

Do you feel like your teachers are successful in the current RTI practice at your school? If yes, explain why. If no, explain why not?

Your answer

Do you feel like your students have been successful in the current RTI practice at your school? If yes, explain what you use to gauge success. If no, explain what you feel the students could use to make them successful.

Your answer

Will you continue with the same plan for next year? If no, explain what you will be doing differently next year.