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## Elevating The Response To Intervention Framework: Positioning Data To Forge Change Needed For Stronger RTI Practices

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A THREE-PART DISSERTATION:

PART 2

ELEVATING THE RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION FRAMEWORK: POSITIONING

DATA TO FORGE CHANGE NEEDED FOR STRONGER RTI PRACTICES

Tammy Saleem

Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

Submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements of  
Doctor of Education  
in the Foster G. McGraw Graduate of School

National College of Education

National Louis University

A THREE-PART DISSERTATION

ASSESSING RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION TIER II BY THE EXTENT TO  
WHICH TIER II SUPPORTS IMPACTED STUDENT GROWTH:  
THE STORY OF RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION (RTI) PRACTICES IN ONE URBAN  
SCHOOL DISTRICT


ELEVATING THE RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION FRAMEWORK:  
POSITIONING DATA TO FORGE CHANGE NEEDED FOR STRONGER RTI PRACTICES

DISTRICT SOLUTIONS FOR RESOURCE EFFECTIVENESS:  
A LOCAL EDUCATION AGENCY LEADERSHIP APPROACH

Submitted in partial fulfillment  
Of the requirements of  
Doctor of Education

Tammy Saleem  
Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

Approved:



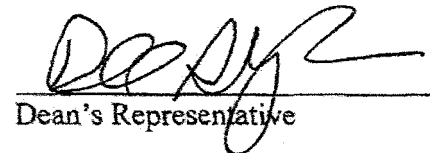
Chair, Dissertation Committee



Program Director



Member, Dissertation Committee



Dean's Representative

2-5-20  
Date Approved

R. Muller  
Dean

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## Abstract

The Change Plan study reflects an extended interest originating from the Saleem (2019) program evaluation study. The Saleem (2019) program evaluation revealed the absence of critical elements used to mobilize RtI supports and trigger adjustments to Tier II level interventions. Following the program evaluation were two meaningful action research activities including efforts of elevating the RtI framework and improving data collection forms. The plausibility of deep rooted factors continuing to exist in current RtI operations prompted research efforts of the Change Plan. Using Wagner's 4C's "As Is" and "To Be" diagnostic tools provided a lens into RtI orientations and sustained behaviors since its initial inception. Research design tools including a self-report survey revealed RtI practices were loosely aligned to the needs of the district.

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## Dissertation Organization Statement for Binding

This document is organized to meet the three-part dissertation requirement of the National Louis University (NLU) Educational Leadership (EDL) Doctoral Program. The National Louis Educational Leadership EdD is a professional practice degree program (Shulman et al., 2006).

For the dissertation requirement, doctoral candidates are required to plan, research, and implement three major projects, one each year, within their school or district with a focus on professional practice. The three projects are:

- Program Evaluation
- Change Leadership Plan
- Policy Advocacy Document

For the **Program Evaluation** candidates are required to identify and evaluate a program or practice within their school or district. The “program” can be a current initiative; a grant project; a common practice; or a movement. Focused on utilization, the evaluation can be formative, summative, or developmental (Patton, 2008). The candidate must demonstrate how the evaluation directly relates to student learning.

In the **Change Leadership Plan** candidates develop a plan that considers organizational possibilities for renewal. The plan for organizational change may be at the building or district level. It must be related to an area in need of improvement with a clear target in mind. The candidate must be able to identify noticeable and feasible differences that should exist as a result of the change plan (Wagner et al., 2006).

In the **Policy Advocacy Document** candidates develop and advocate for a policy at the local, state or national level using reflective practice and research as a means for supporting and promoting reforms in education. Policy advocacy dissertations use critical theory to address moral and ethical issues of policy formation and administrative decision making (i.e., what ought to be). The purpose is to develop reflective, humane and social critics, moral leaders, and competent professionals, guided by a critical practical rational model (Browder, 1995).

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## Preface

Prior to this dissertation study I had worked in the same school district that provided me with opportunity to study their Response to Intervention (RtI) resource. I was initially hired to fulfill the role of Director of Special Education and given the responsibility of RtI administrator. In the earlier part of my tenure as the RtI administrator, I learned that RtI had not evolved since its initial inception in 2012. I was not sure how its information led to current RtI practices. Having access to paperwork on the early RtI meetings and implementation determined an absence of RtI implementation plans describing its tiered protocols and procedures.

As such I believed that employing a contemporaneous approach to this research study, defined by targeting RtI practices consistent with staff employed during the 2015-2016 school year, the same timeframe that I had served as the RtI administrator, the results would be helpful to the current RtI administrator who was a longtime employee in the district. By pointing out my relationship with the data and participants along with any final recommendations, my intentions are to demonstrate a common pursuit for improvement and excellence in educational practices and experiences shared with district leadership and stakeholders.

Information that was accessible included early planning stages of RtI implementation included RtI defined terms and evidence of one professional development activity noted as “The Flipped Classroom.” According to Brame (2013) the “flipped classroom” described an instructional approach to learning whereby students exposed to new materials prior to classroom instruction via videos outside of class then arrived to class –able to experience information more deeply. No other information on

early RtI implementation was available to assist a new outside administrator to further RtI involvement and elevate its value to students and teachers.

Although I had acquired previous experiences with RtI as a team member in another school district those experiences were not transferable into the new school district. School building administration requested that no new changes were made to RtI current practices. As such, my responsibilities to RtI were characterized by a few referrals to special education early in the school year. As Special Education Administrator and District Representative responsibilities evolve from special education legislation, RtI in comparison was influenced by district efforts to support its student needs that became more prevalent by the end of the first semester, I was able to direct more time to RtI operations.

By designating more time to RtI, I was able to secure a needed professional development activity that focused on RtI orientation and practices of schools outside the district. Another activity that time permitted included an RtI needs assessment activity. The RtI assessment activity was purposed to attain an understanding of the current RtI tiered practices from staff. Prior to the assessment activities I understood that all teachers in the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grade levels provided students with Tier I and Tier II supports; RtI did not evolve to include meetings involving all relevant staff on student data. One teaching staff indicated they exchanged information about students between bell schedules. While the needs assessment gave voice to staff concerns useful for future planning, it also was indicative of staff needs in the area of using, selecting, and managing interventions.



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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

My primary interest in the Response to Intervention (RtI) evolved from professional experiences working with districts implementing these efforts. This section of the dissertation study allowed me to continue research on the same topic with a focus on elevating the value and utility of RtI within the context of the district and school leadership influence over operations. The Saleem (2019) Program Evaluation identified three critical findings that impacted RtI including limited staff held data skills, trending low RtI Tier II student score outcomes and less than one hundred percent alignment of staff consensus to RtI tenets. These findings represented underlying issues within the school setting having a concerning impact on RtI operations and as such was the focus of the current change plan study. Yet, not all of the findings noted in the Saleem (2019) study required additional research efforts to address immediate improvement efforts.

Richard Sagor (2000) noted that action research offered a positive opportunity to assist those taking responsibility for improving their actions. I participated with the current RtI administrator in action research activities designed to improve RtI including the revision of the RtI data collection forms as a prerequisite for elevating the RtI framework. As a result of revision activities teacher attention was drawn to collect and evaluate additional data needed to improve strategy plans for responding to student data. By improving data collection forms staff were directed to attend to additional processes added to the current RtI framework.

Danielson, Doolittle, and Bradley (2007) pointed out the relationship between the RtI framework and its capacity to facilitate practices and supports for students. These researchers noted the strength of the RtI framework was centered in its “infrastructure”

(632) being successful at enabling practices that supported students. In other words, the success of RtI framework was contingent upon the extent that it supported teacher practices and the needs of students. These areas were proposed to support improvements in RtI and particularly for Tier II processes. More specifically, the RtI framework activities incorporated staff involvement, collaboration, and decision making into data analysis processes to support a stronger RtI infrastructure. These improvement efforts marked meaningful differences in RtI operating processes described in the Saleem (2019) program evaluation study.

Approaching action research required my meeting with the district superintendent, and the current RtI administrator to discuss and plan data collection form revision activities and to determine ways to elevate the RtI framework. Leadership were positive about action research activities and the proposed benefit to RtI experiences. I met with the RtI administrator several times over the course of four months to discuss revisions to RtI data forms and to collaborate on ways to elevate the RtI framework. Sources used to inform the revision of data collection forms included several online RtI websites and speaking directly with RtI providers from out of state school districts. The purpose of speaking to other RtI providers was to gain any permissions needed to use forms stored on their individual district websites. These forms served as prototype later customized to reflect the needs of the revised RtI form templates. There were several versions of data collection forms that led to final data collection form templates. The revised collection form templates were presented to and approved by school board members and then added to the school board policy under the area of instruction. See Appendix B for the revised data collection form templates.

## **Statement of the Problem**

This is the second year and concerns for the low trending Tier II RtI scores revealed in the program evaluation (Saleem, 2019) were identified to study further in the change plan research. The revision of RtI forms and improvements to the RtI framework were positive actions. Yet an explanation for why staff and leadership operated RtI as it had over three years since its inception through the 2015-2016 school years was still unknown. The Change Plan research addressed underlying issues that shaped the setting which RtI operators implemented its supports. I envision the successfully initiated Change Plan will lead to RtI experiences customized to support the needs of all student in the district. This is the overarching goal for RtI. As such, I proposed the problem with RtI was centered in the unknown factors that shaped RtI since its inception. I proposed that by extending the study to learn more about staff and their engagement with RtI, different from the direction of study taken by the Saleem (2019) program evaluation, more information would be revealed leading to a potential solution.

## **Rationale**

Based on the Saleem (2019) program evaluation, RtI Tier II processes and data practices were constrained from its partial evolvement and limited types of data collected on RtI forms. In addition, there was no evidence the school or district had strategically planned for high expectations from RtI by positioning it as a change agent. RtI Tier II data had not emphasized specific uses of data derived from Tier II processes. Understanding RtI as a process for generating data as compared to an opportunity to use data in new ways along with its processes distinguished RtI from traditional education practices. Arguably the most meaningful element of RtI, its Tier II data usages, had not

evolved to the level of change needed to make a difference in learning experiences for all students. According to the Saleem (2019) Program Evaluation, many students who received Tier II level of RtI supports had not achieved meaningful skill growth as noted by score proximity away from the standard deviation means.

Lastly, my previous association with RtI where I once the former RtI administrator motivated me to identify barriers to its success previously unknown during my tenure in the leadership position. I believe this experience can encourage newly hired school administrators to take on challenges based on strategies presented in this Change Plan study. I also believe the Change Plan identifies a strategic point of entry or platform that a new administrator can utilize to learn more about programs their responsible for supervising. The Change Plan study is important as it allowed me to revisit an experience that required the strategy of research efforts rather than professional development to resolve. Change Plan activities can lead to the identification of meaningful professional development based on research compared to the choosing professional development activities that are not supported by research. Furthermore, as a potential district leader, the Change Plan experience can potentially elevate my professional stance from school leader to an experienced informed district leader over district programs and resources.

### **Goals**

The overarching goal for the change plan was to identify opportunities for leadership to support RtI with mindful changes for teachers and administrator professional growth. O'Conner and Freeman (2012, p. 297) compared early efforts of RtI to a journey on the "RtI highway":

A few schools seem to have found the ‘fast lane’ and are on cruise control, but some schools are feeling lost. Furthermore, some are looking for the next exit, as they are getting tired of the journey, and some are on the side of the road with a flat tire.

The targeted goal centered on resetting RtI practices in alignment with operations that support student success while also being decisive about the supports identified for staff and school administrators’ growth. By evaluating data for embedded opportunities to strengthen staff skills and experiences with data, leadership will increase awareness of meaningful professional development activities. The broad effect of the goal opens a pathway for district leadership to demonstrate its commitment and support for students, teachers, and all educational staff.

RtI research and leadership experts Stahl, Keane, and Simic (2013) explained that RtI is the point that translated policy into practice through its components. These researchers pointed out an example of RtI practice used strategic instructional practices. As RtI is embedded in instruction, it needs to forge new skill sets distinguishably different from traditional instructional practices prior to RtI. The researchers drew attention to the role and challenge of local education agencies to bridge any gaps between policy and practice (Stahl et al., 2013). The two most anticipated outcomes for the change plan to accomplish included gaining an accurate assessment of staff skill sets needed to provide RtI Tier II interventions, and gaining an understanding of possible obstructions prohibiting RtI from being translated into a successful practice.



## **School Demographics**

Data taken from three years of school demographics noted in the State of Illinois Interactive School Report Card illustrated the following trends consistent with the district in 2015 and trending information over three years from 2015–2017:

- The number of students is decreasing, trending around a total of 1,000
- Ninety-five percent of the students are eligible for free or reduced lunch
- The largest percentage of students are Black (54%)
- The second-largest percentage of the students are Hispanic (42.5%)
- Students defined by two or more races were 1.3%
- Others were less than 1%

Data extracted from the Illinois Report Card from school year 2015 to school year 2017 revealed the following:

- The trend of a decreasing percentage rate of teachers returning to work in the district from a high 90% in 2015 to 62% in 2016 and finally dropping to 49% in 2017.
- The decreased percentage rate of student mobility between school years 2015–2017. The State of Illinois Interactive Report Card

(<https://www.illinoisreportcard.com/District.aspx?districtId=07016156002>)

described as student mobility as the percentage of students who experienced at least one transfer in or out of the school before the first day in October and the last school day of the year, not including graduates” (p 1). The student mobility was reported at 16% in 2015, 14% in 2016 and 14% in 2017.

- More specifically, the 2017 report card included the following demographic data:

- a percentage rate of 27% described the mobility of White students,
  - a percentage rate of 20% described the mobility of Black students,
  - a percentage rate of 6% described the mobility of Hispanic students,
  - a percentage rate of 14% described the mobility of low income
  - a percentage rate of 19% described the mobility of students with disabilities
- A total of two school administrators/principals' turnover over the past six years (counting back from 2017)
  - District Teacher Demographics reflected a decreasing percentage of White teachers and a corresponding increase in the percentage of Black teachers between 2015 and 2017, and increase in the percentage of Hispanic teachers in one year followed by a steady number of Hispanic teachers thereafter:
 

2015 – Whites (67%), Blacks (22%) and Hispanics (11%)

2016 – Whites (59%), Blacks (26%) and Hispanics (12%)

2017 – Whites (50%), Blacks (36%) and Hispanics (12%)
  - Teacher retention rates between 2014 and 2017 reflected varied patterns in the percentage of teachers who returned to teach in the school district over three school years. According to the state report card information, which posted district information on Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) website, 2014–2015 showed 84% of the teachers returned to the district. In 2015–2016, the district report card showed 90% of the teachers returned to the district while in 2016–2017, the district report card showed 62% of the teachers returned to the

district, and finally, in 2017–2018, the district report card showed 49% of the teachers returned to teach in the district.

In conclusion, the school district demographic report reflected changes in teacher demographics along with changes in student demographics over the course of three specific school years post-RtI inception. This demographic information is important as it draws attention to the continuity of knowledge about RtI obstructed by a highly fluctuating staff of teachers based on retention rates. Equally importantly, the student demographic data pointed out the extent of diversity within a district consisting of two minority majority student races identified as Blacks and Whites. This is important as it draws RtI in closer to the realities faced by the district to address culturally responsive learning experiences when educating a diverse student body of two races.

# Baseline 4 Cs Analysis of RtI “As Is” Characteristics of District RtI Setting

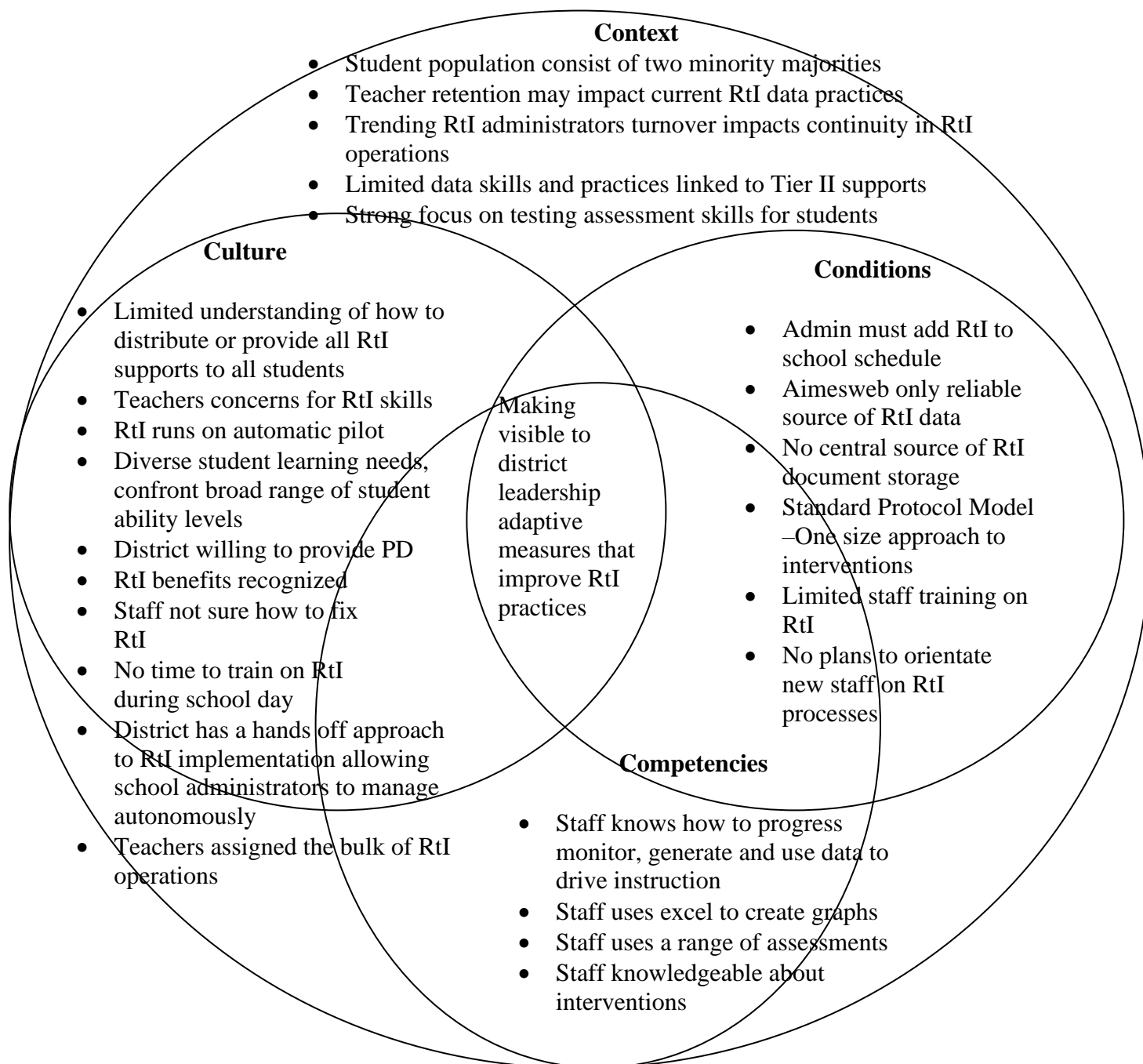


Figure 1: Baseline “As Is” Diagnostic Tool (Wagner et al., 2006)

Acronyms: RtI-Response to Intervention

## Baseline 4 Cs Analysis of RtI “To Be” Characteristics of District RtI Setting

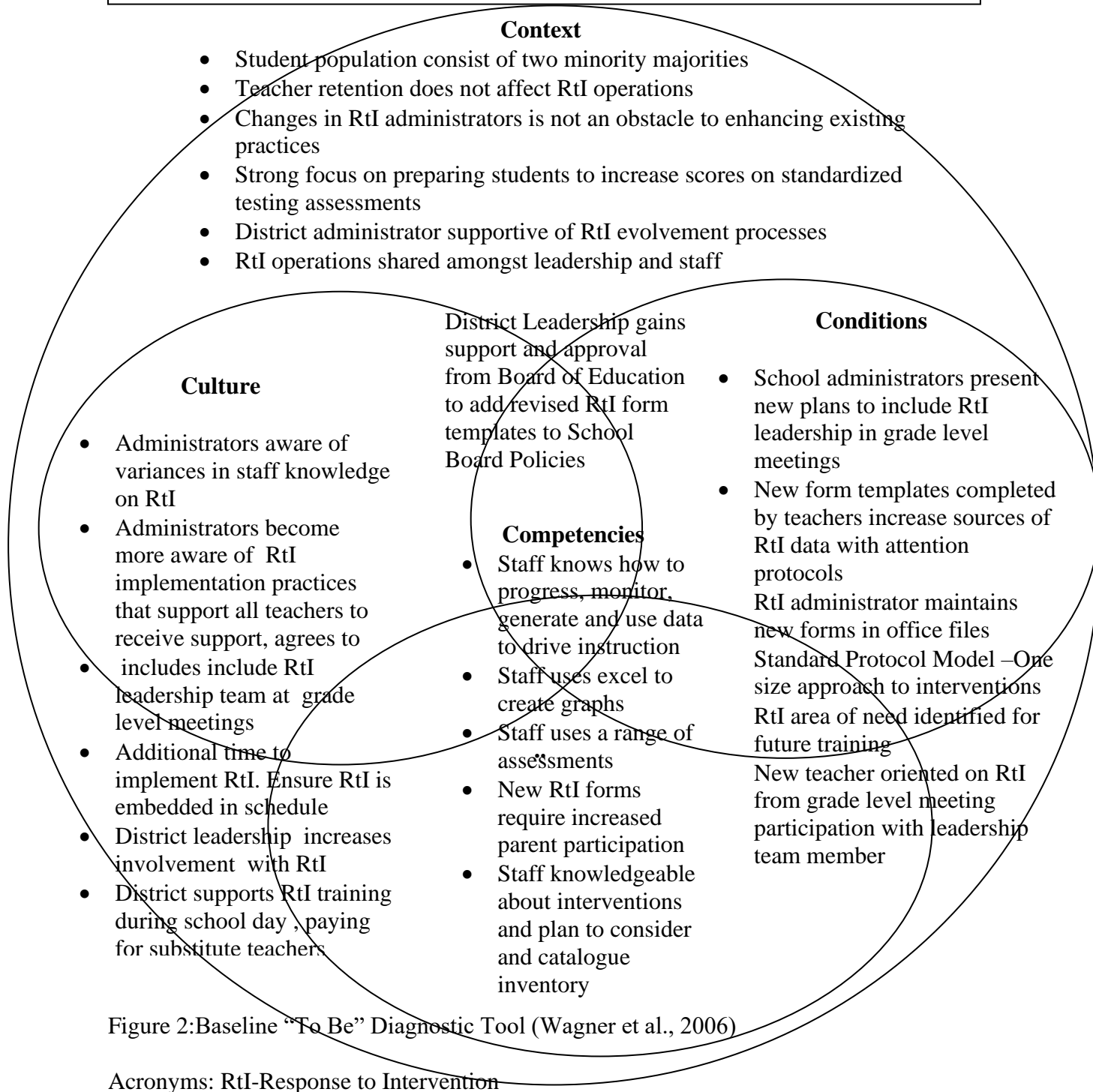


Figure 2:Baseline “To Be” Diagnostic Tool (Wagner et al., 2006)

Acronyms: RtI-Response to Intervention

## **CHAPTER TWO: ASSESSING THE 4Cs**

The Saleem (2019) program evaluation results for RtI practices in the Progressive School District (a pseudonym used to protect the confidentiality of staff consent to participate in this study) served as a catalyst for change plan activities. Information learned from the program evaluation was not the focus of the change plan although it provided an opportunity to further explore RtI concerns. Proposedly extenuating circumstances existent in the school setting of RtI influenced its impact on student growth.

School organizational change consultants, Wagner et al.(2006) explained the limitations to examining areas of change as a“cause and effect” linear operation, noting that the approach often fell short of providing greater insight into organizational operations. Put another way, while the review of school data provided a context to understand RtI practices, more information about the depth of implementation practices promised to provide greater insight into how staff perceived their practices of RtI. Wagner et al. (2006, p. 115) proposed conducting a diagnosis of organizational operations focusing on gathering information using an“As Is” and “To Be” approach. According to Wagner et al. (2006), the diagnostic approach tapped into sources that led to a holistic viewpoint of organizational practices useful for gaining a better understanding of the inner workings of an organization.

Wagner et al. (2006, p. 97) asserted that organizations operated as a system, which they defined as “a perceived whole whose elements ‘hang together’ because they continually affect each other over time and operate toward a common purpose.” Wagner et al. (2006) also proposed systems thinking about an organization manifested in the

context, culture, conditions and competencies that described organization settings. Furthermore, the school consultants postulated that the four lenses operated as a diagnostic tool used to assess organization effectiveness (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 97).

Change plan study efforts were aligned to the Wagner et al. (2006) systems thinking approach of dwelling deeper into problems to understand underlying issues. This study focused on learning about RtI Tier II operations and factors that coalesced within the district during its implementation. Unlike the Saleem (2019) program evaluation study that focused on data generated from RtI operations coupled with a teacher survey on RtI beliefs and RtI artifacts, the change plan delves deeper into RtI practices. By focusing on artifacts used in the implementation processes the human engagement with on RtI operations becomes more visible. The extent of adult influences on sustained status quo operations were unknown before the change plan. The potential for new information to emerge about leadership and the subsequent roles and relationships with RtI were possible by employing a tool designed to examine the 4C's of an organization. Wagner's 4Cs diagnostic tool examined content, culture, conditions and competencies in the setting that adults influenced or were influenced by as a result of working in a given work environment.

### **Context**

In 2012, the Progressive School District introduced RtI as a resource designed to support teaching and learning experiences. The school community that RtI targeted had a heterogeneous student population of predominantly two races. Public data sources, including the state of Illinois School Interactive Report Card data noted on the district

website, identified the two largest ethnic demographic student groups as Blacks and Hispanics.

According to the information noted on the district report card on mobility patterns for per race demographics, Black families were identified as having the highest mobility. In contrast, Hispanic families were reported as having the lowest mobility of races in the district. The information noted in the 2017 state report card listed mobility patterns for four student demographic groups starting from the highest to the lowest mobility percentages starting with blacks, followed by students with disabilities, low income and, ending with Hispanics.

The ISBE website also maintained and tracked district information on teacher demographics. Examination of ISBE data across three school years between 2015, 2016 and 2017 identified decreases and increases in teacher representation per race demographics. According to ISBE data between the school year 2015–2016, the proportion of White teachers in the district decreased by 11 %. The same data source indicated a 15.3 % decrease in the proportion of White teachers in the school district between school years 2016 to 2017. In comparison, teacher race demographics for Black and Hispanic teachers reflected a steady increase in the proportions of both races working in the school district across the 2015–2017 school years.

Another factor that added context to the setting of RtI operations was teacher retention trends. The Illinois State Interactive State Report Card described retention as the “percentage of full time teachers who return to the same school year to year” (<https://www.illinoisstatereportcard.com>). District demographic data showed the school district experiencing a steady increase in the percentage rates of teacher retention across



school years 2015, 2016 and 2017 (see School Demographics section). Issues that surround race and education in public schools include academic achievement and disproportionality. RtI must address both concerns through its influence over educational experiences.

### **Culture**

Familiarity with teacher assumptions about current RtI practices emerged experiences from working closely with teachers in a former school administrator. Teacher held assumptions about RtI were influenced by experiences and routines provided by the school and reinforced by school administrators. For example, school administrators observed data generated from teacher practices including routine progress monitoring activities, weekly lesson plans that determined teachers provided Tier I Core instruction, and information noted in lesson plans indicating the presence of Tier II supplemental instructional activities noted by small instructional grouping of students. Although RtI practices were prevalent, RtI experiences had not led to success indicated by achievement of high academic outcomes for all students. Teacher assumptions about RtI emerged as questions and uncertainty around its operational processes and practices to lead to success for students.

The Saleem (2019) program evaluation noted limited opportunities for staff engagement with data, although teachers provided RtI as a daily support for students. Assumptions about teacher interactions with various RtI levels were important to understand in order to move forward and improve the current level of supports. Teachers were responsible for the heavy lifting of RtI implementation noted by Tier I and Tier II instruction and supplemental instruction tasks. Implied here daily RtI practices generated

important data useful for short data cycle assessments and necessitated the practice of meeting as a collective staff of RtI providers. In addition to experiences that described teacher practices with RtI was the conditions of teachers working in isolation to their peers. Implied here, some assumptions about RtI experiences were not visible, yet may have existed considering the practice of teachers conducting RtI in isolation to their peers.

Wagner et al. (2006) pointed out that various ways of engagement were reflective in the assumptions held by school staff. According to Wagner et al. (2006), assumptions were “invisible” (p 102) practices noted as “shared values, assumptions and quality of relationships...present in school operations” (p 102). The As Is diagnostic tool provided the structure to sort out assumptions that circulated among staff and administrators about RtI that arguably were less visible. Two assumptions voiced by staff during my administrative tenor included the lack of time to implement RtI processes (including scheduling meetings) and questions raised by teachers around its utility to support district goals for academic achievement objectives.

### **Conditions**

Many conditions sustained RtI at its current level of operation. Wagner et al. (2006, p. 101) defined conditions as “the external architecture surrounding student learning and the tangible arrangements of time, space and resources.” The As Is diagnostic tool highlighted the condition of teachers working in isolation and more specifically pointed out the distance between teachers between their peers. The impact of working without peer feedback was unknown. When teachers worked in isolation, the presumption was that teachers could manage the extra work RtI added to their

responsibilities involving decisions and understanding data without peer input. Conditions including the absence of collaborative activities with the other staff, unmonitored data decision-making practices and the absence of RtI substantive paperwork to track skills rather than scores also contributed to the current state of RtI operations, yet the extent was unknown.

### **Competencies**

Wagner et al. (2006) explained that staff competencies were reflected in their conceptualizations of practices through skills. My informal experience with teachers in the district helped me to identify their strengths in the areas of lesson planning, engaging in grade level weekly meetings and using annualized testing outcome scores to plan instructional activities. Through my experiences in the district, I also found that most staff were aware of numerous intervention tools owned by the district, yet were not able of the criteria needed to select interventions aligned to student needs. Most staff exhibited skills used to navigate Excel software, such as creating graphs and visuals that provide a clearer understanding of student growth areas per assessment result. The current reality of RtI operations noted by assumptions and organizational actions reflected an operation responsible for shaping Tier II processes.

In conclusion, The Wagner et al. (2006) 4Cs, diagnostic tool provides a pathway to further exploration of teacher assumptions about current RtI experiences. Rather than limiting the change plan focus on improving RtI Tier II practices with data the addition of the 4Cs diagnostic tool promises to unfold new information around the human impact on RtI operations. Thus the change is not limited to address the RtI instrument but also those responsible for working through its platform. Lastly, the change plan viewed

through the lens of a district tool implicates district leadership and its role to cultivate new relationships with RtI and with staff.

## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Overview**

Efforts to ensure Change Plan activities alignment to the ideals of Patton's (2008) Utilization-Focused Evaluation influenced the selected research methodology. The methodology needed to include methods of obtaining information that explained how they used to information to make decisions about student supports. For example, the results of Saleem (2019) program evaluation implicated RtI Tier II interventions as having somewhat a positive albeit limited influence on student growth. Yet less was known about the exact level of understanding staff held about RtI data and opportunities to use data consistent with each level of RtI supports. Less was known about the extent of staff responsiveness to data. The focus of obtaining additional data on staff and the RtI operation as a support was important as it increased insight into their understandings about important decisions with data. I selected and distributed the published self-report survey instrument entitled "The Perception of RtI Skills" to gain additional insight into how staff explained and viewed their RtI skillsets.

Finally, the information learned from Saleem (2019) program evaluation findings along with the Wagner et al. (2006) 4Cs diagnostic tool enabled a deeper level of understanding for RtI operations. District leadership along with the RtI administrator and team leaders would benefit from learning about the range of experiences offered to staff by the current data collection tools. The information obtained from the analysis of RtI templates and forms had implications for future improvement with the potential for increased student outcomes. In addition to examining RtI forms and templates to assess the skill sets used to perform RtI Tier II processes, the researcher methodology purposely

added a tool for evaluating the types of staff skills that offered insight into staff capacity to perform all RtI Tier II processes and expect successful outcomes.

### **Participants**

Patton (2008, pp. 203, 206) explained the Utilization-Focused Program Evaluation and embedded a problem-solving approach addressed change and changing conditions. Hence, the participants invited to participate in the study represented a pool of teaching staff (also referred to as staff) currently responsible for implementing RtI supports, while also representing a few staff that acquired time working in the district and experience with RtI. By controlling for staff, selecting only those experienced at implementing RtI supports I was able to gain access to staff that had similar experiences and access to information that shaped practices used to operate RtI. Only 5 invited participants returned their consents to participate in the RtI study out of the 11 teaching staff invited to share information about their understandings of RtI. The 11 invitees ranged in position from school psychologists, reading specialists and 9 teachers of third-, fourth- and fifth-grade students. Eleven possible school staff had anywhere from limited to decades of experiences with RtI. All the invitees were females.

Outside of the criteria that participants possessed experience as RtI providers there were no other criteria to screen participants. I had a limited understanding of their RtI skill sets. As the previous administrator in the district returning to conduct dissertation research, it was important to me that participants felt safe. As such, using a published self-report survey as opposed to a self-created survey instrument offered a more authentic, transparent and nonthreatening approach to gain consents. I believed

participants trusted my intentions and felt dutiful and that their participation would support improvements to future RtI experiences.

### **Data Collection Techniques**

Two techniques employed to collect data/information for this study included a RtI form assessment and a self-report survey instrument. The first data collection technique involved evaluating RtI templates and forms used during the 2015-2016 school year. By evaluating RtI templates and forms information emerged about forms and their alignment to the needs of the RtI processes RtI processes. By evaluating RtI forms more information emerged about the role forms had to mobilize the RtI system of supports. Five RtI forms collected from the current RtI administrator included the RtI Tier III Form Template, the Pre-Referral Form Template, the 2015–2016 Aimes web Curriculum-Based Measurement Report Criteria with embedded universal screening data, samples of the progress monitoring forms and the RtI transition form.

The second data collection technique involved using a survey instrument entitled the “Perception of RtI Skills Survey,” which collected information about staff RtI skill sets and decisions. I also proposed the impact of both data collection techniques would corroborate the rationale behind the current data skill development levels. The self-report survey instrument posted on the Florida Problem Solving /Response to Intervention Project (FPS/RtIP) ([www.floridarti.usf.edu](http://www.floridarti.usf.edu)) website was purposed to collect information about staff perception their own RtI skills. Information from the self-report survey also added more context to the Wagner’s 4C diagnosis by utilizing staff perceptions of their RtI skills terms to further examine the needs of the RtI in the district.

I received permission from the FPS/RtIP to use the perception of the RtI skills survey in this study and also to make modifications as needed to align with the study purpose. Items 12, 17 and 19 were slightly modified to ensure the items were relevant to the school district RtI practices. For example, for Item 12, the term, “Dibels” was replaced with “Aimes Web.” Staff members were informed that each survey item required approximately two minutes to complete.

Finally, directions for returning the instrument included placing the survey back into the original manila envelope and a safe cabinet for storage. Neither surveys nor envelopes contained any information that would have revealed any individual participant identity. Returned surveys sealed in a larger envelope were then stored in a safe cabinet for pickup by the researcher. Surveys were collected three weeks from the initial distribution date. Forty-five percent of the surveys were returned, that is, five of eleven.

### **Data Analysis Techniques**

#### **Response to Intervention Form**

I selected two data analysis techniques to evaluate data collections. The (FPS/RtI) Evaluation Tool Assistance Manual (2016). The FPS/RtI is an online RtI resource with links to the Perception of RtI Skill survey, its publishers and a source for guidance for implementation of survey instruments. I chose to use the Critical Components Checklist (CCC)) (see Appendix A) posted its website as it represented an organizational tool useful for evaluating RtI form content. More specifically, the CCC tool allowed me to assess the degree of efficiency for RtI processes based on the types of data RtI forms required for completion. RtI forms represent the starting point of RtI supports based on



information collected and used to identify student needs, notate decisions and plans to provide RtI supports and information detailing the management of interventions.

The CCC organized data to reflect attention to four processes—including problem solving, problem analysis, intervention development and implementation and program evaluation/RtI. The CCC included a scale that determined the degree of presence per the four RtI components represented by artifacts, including forms and various data. Evaluation of the degree of operations for all RtI processes per were possible from the analysis technique directed at RtI artifacts. The results of the analysis was also proposed to reveal the extent to which RtI artifacts informed future professional development activities

The following analysis technique was applied using the CCC, and conducted by check listing each of the RtI permanent documents by their titles to corresponding component areas noted the CCC and purposed to facilitate RtI processes. The CCC included a rating function for each document with three scales—including “Present = 1, Partially = 2 and Absent = 3.”

RtI researcher scholars, Ball and Christ (2012) emphasized the importance of collecting sufficient data for districts, noting that it supported their conceptualization of resources and interventions. Subsequently, targeted information on data collection forms either provided evidence of sufficient operations within a tiered support process or pointed out deficiencies leading to concerns for a specific tier support. This area of the analysis also had implications for assumptions held about RtI as noted in the 4C area under the subheading of culture. The CCC tool provided a method for assessing data form that focused on the information needed to mobilize individual RtI processes. The

CCC tool also provided information useful to increase staff understanding about their individual skill sets including strengths and weaknesses. Most importantly, the CCC tool was important as it showed alignment of forms to stages in RtI implementation and the absence of forms implicated orientation of less developed or used RtI practices. This was an important focus of the Change Plan.

### **Perception of RtI Skills Survey**

Survey contributors, Castillo et al. (2015) explained the purpose of the perception of the RtI skill sets survey as being two-fold. Castillo et al. (2015) explained the survey was primarily designed to generate information about individual staff capacities to implement RtI. Second, the researchers explained another purpose of the survey was to inform and identify possible professional development activities.

The FPS/RtIP website posted The PS/RtI Evaluation Tool Technical Assistance Manual on its website. The manual noted two data techniques useful to analysis response data represented by the various factor domains. The PS/RtI manual also explained the value in using this technique included being able to identify patterns of RtI skills within a specific academic domain and identifying individual needs of staff per any areas indicating the need for supports. In summary the data analysis activities revealed a sample of district RtI skill set capacities, a sample of staff individual skill set needs and strengths, and informed future professional development activities.

The first data analysis involved computing the score ratings for each participant, then all sums were added for a grand total followed by dividing the total by the number of items included per each domain. The Perception of RtI Skills Survey version used in the study targeted four distinct areas where RtI was used to support students: 1) the

perceptions of RtI skills applied academic content, 2) the perceptions of RtI skills applied to behavior content, 3) the perceptions of data display skills and 4) the perception of technology skills used to perform RtI processes (per the earlier version of the survey). The second area in the survey focused on behavior and was not included in the analysis. RtI had not evolved to include behavioral supports also referred to as Multi-tiered Support System (MTSS). The results were and shared with the school administrators.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: THE RELEVANT LITERATURE**

In this section, I delved further into themes that emerged as a result of the 4Cs inquiry. Based on the 4Cs query activity, four areas of concern emerged surrounding the RtI under study, including a). historical educational initiatives; b).; similarities in challenges to Educational Change initiatives and Response to Intervention; c). Teacher Capacities and their Effect on RtI Processes; and d) leadership and RtI Success. Throughout the research, the term-implementation was conceptualized as the provision of RtI supports. While the study focused on change plans for one RtI, articles that included a focus on implementation often devoted time on explaining how the framework forged change with general education teachers and as such were included in the literature review.

### *Historical Educational Initiatives*

Sansosti and Noltemeyer (2008) explained the 1983 “A Nation at Risk,” a publication initiated education reform changes in public education with high expectations and set new standards of reform for learning experiences provided to all students, including students with disabilities. The Center for Education Reform (n.d.) pointed out that after the 1983 Nation at Risk report, efforts on school improvement were narrowly directed at accountability rather than a more encompassing approach that cultivated student and teacher behaviors, school culture and school environment for increased learning. Childress et al. (2009) further pointed out the relationship of reform success to efforts driven more by commitment than by a compliance work to enhance success. Sansosti and Noltemeyer (2008) and Danielson, Doolittle and Bradley (2007) were in agreement that the 2004 Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act education policy was a significant reform initiative distinguished by its clear

objective to disrupt and transform educator practices from the effect of RtI implementation.

On the transformation of educational change, Sansosti and Noltemeyer (2008) studied literature on educational change reported by various researchers and found that researchers generally favored a three-phase model of change. They noted that the three-phase model of change consisted of initiation, implementation and institutionalization phases. They explained that the initiation phase involved processes and decisions for proceeding with change; the implementation phase II involved the initial experiences in the implementation of educational changes, which the projected timeframe is the first two to three years of implementation; the institutionalization phase III consisted of sustaining and maintaining new education program initiatives.

*Similarities in Challenges to Educational Change Emerge With Response to Intervention*

According to Sansosti and Noltemeyer (2008), phase II, the implementation phase of change was made vulnerable by four external influences, including a). overall acceptance by all stakeholders that change is needed; b). stakeholders' ability to gain clarity on the goals and procedures leading change processes; c). complexities around various implementation phases and d). "Quality and practicality" of the initiative itself as perceived by staff to transform practices aligned to the expectations for initiatives proposed by policymakers.

Furthermore, Sansosti and Noltemeyer (2008) noted that educational programming failed to yield expected change due to "limited implementation success" (p 56) These researchers also found that while studies did not include an explanation for the limited implementation phenomenon, studies did implicate the top-down model of

change to initiate education reform as a major factor. According to Sansosti and Noltemeyer (2008), two areas of change that RtI implementation relied upon for its success yet considered vulnerable to its errors included a). school systems and b). individuals. Delving further into potential issues surrounding RtI implementation, Sansosti and Noltemeyer (2008) noted that instruction informed by evidence-based practices and skill sets by highly qualified teachers had more propensity to yield successful RtI implementation outcomes than instruction without evidenced practices. Danielson et al. (2007) recognized that RtI practices could yield success, yet cautioned that success from those same factors was contingent on RtI to drive a paradigm shift in how educators utilized components to guide and inform instructional experiences for students. The same researchers also pointed to all elements of RtI implementation, including evidence-based interventions, multi-tiered intervention models, screening, assessment, progress monitoring along with capacities to administer interventions with a high degree of integrity and supporting and coordinating efforts across all levels of staff and leadership as a totality of implementation effects to impact success.

While numerous researchers have studied RtI and provided descriptions of its core components, the Association of Special Education Teachers (n.d.) went further in its description of RtI by explaining more about the RtI framework and how it can facilitate supports through staff decision-making activities. According to the Association of Special Education Teachers(n.d.) report, RtI forged changes in general education practices by shifting the focus from struggling students to interventions/instructional strategies selected to address their academic or behavioral struggles. Erickson, Noonan and Jenson (2012) explored factors that influenced the quality of RtI from taking root in

schools and found that the relationship between intervention and treatment effectiveness centered on the RtI framework capacity to provide high-quality instructions and tiered interventions aligned to the needs of all students.

In their research studies on RtI programs, Hughes and Dexter (2011) found that many RtI approaches implementation failed to launch critical components, including Tier II and III supports and/or failed at monitoring tiered supports through processes, and finally failed to establish measures for growth in and between Tier II and Tier III supports. Hughes and Dexter (2011) cautioned that increased occurrences of disproportionality were linked to flawed and/or partially implemented RtI program components and processes and contributed to an increase in the number of students eligible for special education services. In their examination of RtI implementation done at schools and of RtI studies, Hughes and Dexter (2011) established a positive correlation between RtI capacity to increase student outcomes and RtI implementation in its entirety. In contrast, Warren and Robinson (2015) pointed out that while students received academic and/or behavioral RtI supports, and teams collaborated, RtI processes neglected to provide teachers with supports, therefore impacting the successful delivery of instruction. Erickson et al. (2012) agreed with many other researchers who vehemently argue educators need to possess substantive knowledge and implementation skill sets to successfully deliver RtI. Artiles, Bal and King-Thorius (2010) postulated RtI was constricted to operationalize its processes by narrowly focusing on teaching strategies and within-child factors RtI instruction essentially reproduced status quo instruction practices.

### *Teacher Capacities and their Effect on RtI Processes*

O’Conner and Witter-Freeman (2012) studied flawed leadership practices pointing out how leadership tended to confuse “doing RtI” as described by compliance practices with RtI implementation. According to researchers, RtI tools and routines to improve disparaging cultural practices and beliefs about student potential to learn needed to be addressed during RtI evolution of processes.

Gerber (2005) examined additional factors for RtI implementation involving teacher-student dyadic relationships and argued that student responsiveness to instruction is sensitized by teachers’ motivation to employ resources to support their learning. Gerber (2005) further posited that student responsiveness to instruction is a critical factor impeding successful learning experiences. Gerber (2005) contended that teacher’s limitations to teach all students are a reflection of their intolerance to support the needs of students whom they found difficult to teach. O’Conner and Witter-Freeman (2012) offered a working definition of RtI that made the explicit connection between data and resource allocation to improve student learning. O’Conner and Witter-Freeman (2012) envisioned RtI implementation as the force behind continuous school improvement, education reform and changes in educational thinking and practices.

Meyers and Behar-Horenstein (2015) studied RtI implementation and proposed that the greatest barrier to effective change was the limited knowledge base teachers were observed to possess during grade level meetings. According to Meyer and Behar-Horenstein (2015), RtI implementation required that teachers possess skill sets needed to draw on grade level data to make decisions about the consistence of student learning with RtI Tier II levels of support.



More specifically, Meyer and Behar-Horenstein (2015) made two determinations about teacher and their RtI implementation practices, including 1) teachers were uncertain about their analytical skills sets as grade level team members and 2) teachers were unaware of RtI resources in schools. Meyer and Behar-Horenstein (2015) found that while teachers were convinced of the positive effect RtI could have on student academic growth, barriers to RtI implementation effectiveness were more linked to variables that impacted processes rather than the processes themselves.

Danielson et al. (2007) studied issues surrounding RtI implementation and explained RtI's success as a function of "capacities" that tended to vary among individual teachers. In describing successful RtI implementation, Danielson et al., (2007) identified critical skill sets associated with teaching and instruction and central to RtI implementation including; knowledge of evidence-based interventions, multitier interventions models, screening, assessment, progress monitoring, administering interventions with a high degree of integrity, support and coordinated efforts across all levels of between staff and leadership. Erickson et al. (2012) explored factors that influenced the quality of RtI implementation and identified similar factors as the ones identified earlier by Danielson et al. (2007) with the addition of staff capacity to select appropriate interventions as a significant indicator of implementation success.

#### Leadership and RtI Success

Data evaluators, Perkins and Engelhard (2011) examined data use within the context of school leadership decision practices and noted the effect of intervention choice to render either substantive or less than substantive data experiences. Perkins and Engelhard (2011) were concerned by the influences that politics and community had over

the selection of interventions used in schools and questioned the quality of data interactions made available to staff from selected interventions. According to Perkins and Engelhard (2011), interventions were positioned to serve specific uses—to address accountability and to communicate information about student learning per education policy mandates.

Perkins and Engelhard (2011) cautioned that leaders should be mindful of data with the appearance of objectivity and numerical precision to inform decisions. They recommended including other assessment outcomes along with qualitative data to address accuracy for the interpretation of data communicated to broad stakeholder audiences. Perkins and Engelhard (2011) also argued that the processes of transitioning data into information were susceptible to producing misleading information used at the local school level while at the same time satisfying criteria set by state and federal level policy. Perkins and Engelhard (2011) reminded school leadership of the importance of their data outcomes to inform decisions about educational practices designed to increase student learning.

In light of Perkins and Engelhard(2011) above findings on data to inform practices is the work of Danielson et al. (2007), which highlighted a relative concern about data. According to Danielson et al. (2007), research generally did not include culturally diverse student samples as mirrored in many school student demographic populations. Danielson et al. (2007) pointed out that since research, which claimed to be “evidence-based,” failed to include culturally diverse student samples, the practice raised questions about whether subsequent instruction and/or interventions were effective to

yield sufficient opportunities to learn or respond to student subjected to those types of learning materials.

In their book, authors Childress et al. (2009) examined Montgomery County Public School (MCPS) activities surrounding organizational change under the new leadership of Superintendent Jerry Weast. According to Childress et al. (2009) the MCPS change plan began with the review of staff past data use practices. The authors noted that past decisions around data usages had directly impacted the learning experiences of their Hispanic and Black minority student populations. Childress et al. (2009) noted that when Montgomery County Public School leadership reviewed data to understand the disparaging achievement between races for most of its schools, they found that the staff team behaviors needed to make appropriate educational decisions informed by data were questionable and pointed out the need for training to change questionable data usage practices. Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh and Terry (2009) and Childress et al. (2009) lamented the low expectation and beliefs about student capacity has adversely influenced educator practices and often contributed to low student outcomes.

Education researcher and author James Spillane (2012) drew attention to education policymakers use of certain language in policy text. According to Spillane (2012) policymakers used language such as “data use” and “data-based decision-making” (p 113) with the presumption that practitioners possessed all of the data skills needed to process information and guide decision-making activities. Spillane (2012) and Perkins and Engelhard (2011) both noted the danger of data to lead to “unintended and negative consequences.” Perkins and Engelhard (2011) further explained that the failure of practitioners to correctly interpret data led to misguided decisions. Spillane (2012)

proposed schools utilize an organizational framework approach to examine data usage performance in order to deepen understandings of how to use data in decision-making activities.

According to Spillane (2012), when data is the mediator of an educational practice and is included in a routine organizational construct, the possibility to transform school work practices is greater than if data was not embedded into routine schedule practice. Spillane (2012) and Perkins and Engelhard (2012) tended to agree that data was a compelling force to incite change in educational practices. Spillane (2012) suggested utilizing activities where data and staff interactions occurred in school organization routines, such as grade level meetings, provided a mechanism to transform “work practices” (p 116) to meet standards through student achievement data.

Organizational consultants, Heifetz, et al. (2009) cautioned that planning for implementation of new practices required a diagnosis of the change before the implementation of a strategy. Heifetz et al. (2009) explained change as managed by either a technical and/or an adaptive element. According to Heifetz et al. (2009), technical change was consistent with the action of defining the problem and identifying solution(s) for the purpose of restoring order and maintaining norms.

Adaptive change, on the other hand, centered on leadership attention to several concerns, including identifying challenges that an organization must anticipate, preparing the best way to frame questions and issues; acknowledging external threats to change and concerns of disorienting current roles; strategically pacing the introduction of new change in order to counteract resistance; preparing for the emergence of conflicting forces in response to change; preparing to challenge norms and allowing challenges to emerge.

Furthermore, Heifetz et al. (2009) warned of consequences when plans failed to consider the human element in solutions and when making adaptations without diagnosed circumstances. Accordingly, Heifetz et al. (2009, pp. 69–70 ) stated, “The failure to take into account the diagnosis of the human aspects of adaptive challenges and the tendency to treat the diagnostic task like any other analytical expert task that can be separated from the cultural and political human dimensions of the situation, is a primary cause of low implementation rates...”

In their study on leadership practices, Heifetz et al. (2009) also determined that organizations were generally more accepting of conditions described as dysfunctional rather than deciding to take the risk to initiate change to offset those conditions. Important was the understanding of leadership tendencies around change, Heifetz et al. (2009) pointed out that organizations choose not to invite change because of the risks of unpredictable consequences and possible losses. To drive change, Heifetz et al. (2009) explained that organizations would need to focus on espoused values as a safe gamble to get behind as opposed to proliferating information that stirred up mixed responses around the reality of unattained values. Heifetz et al. (2009) noted further that adaptive leadership needs to demonstrate skill sets for confronting the unknown, accepting risks and uncertainty. The organizational consultants further asserted significant adaptive changes target:

- Change that positions an organization to thrive
- Approaching change processes with consideration to norms, values and processes that facilitate an organization to thrive
- Conceptualizing “thrive” from the perspective of multiple stakeholders in

order to build capacity throughout the organization

- Respecting and identifying stakeholder valued nonnegotiable heritage for preservation while directly identifying areas for change that would have the least harmful impact on an organization as possible to reach new goals and outcomes
- Understanding that change is experimental and could lead to furtherimprovising
- Accepting that change will differ in capacity to achieve new outcomes from the unchanged with the new adaptation also causing loss, and defensive responses and the ability to counteract the negative impact of change on people
- Anticipating the need for leadership to be perseverant and result in new norms upheldby new processes in order to achieve new outcomes, opportunities and expected new distress

Heifetz et al. (2009) recommended utilizing the strategy of getting “on the balcony” to obtain an objective view of a problem. Heifetz et al. (2009) asserted this strategy allowed one to assess human relationships within an organization and the effect of less visible barriers to take root. Leadership consultants Heifetz et al. (2009) further noted that choosing the appropriate intervention positioned people to confront adaptive challenges. The consultants cautiously on the volatility of identifying effective interventions from the interpretation of the challenge moving from technical to adaptive, benign to conflictual or individual to systematic. Finally, Heifetz et al. (2009) asserted that leadership needed to distinguish technical approaches from adaptive challenges noting that the latter required expertise to guide change as compared to the former, which required leadership to guide change.

Wagner et al. (2006) identified the three levers of change, which include data, accountability and relationships that useful to initiate a “whole-system change” toward school improvement. According to Wagner et al. (2006), data provided leverage to impact understanding and draw attention to problems coupled with motivating and inspiring efforts to generate sustainable plans for change. On accountability, Wagner et al. (2006) envisioned new accountability efforts, including “new purpose, mission and commitment to change” as the mechanisms to disrupt avoidance of ownership and responsibility for student learning failures.

O’Connor and Witter-Freeman (2012) studied leadership options to forge macro-level changes within school systems and determined that student outcome data mobilized changes in RtI practices; yet needed further processing to support decision-making activities. According to O’Conner and Witter-Freeman (2012) and Ball and Christ (2012), effective assessment procedures and staff capacity to use data were critical components for their influence to impact instructional decisions. O’Conner and Witter-Freeman (2012) identified that leadership supports to build momentum and success of RtI implementation include incorporating decision-making activities into school organizational routines and guarding against micromanagement leadership behaviors that take control of building leadership capacity.

### **Barriers Preventing RtI Data to Inform Implementation Processes**

Ball and Christ (2012) studied weaknesses in RtI problem-solving model processes, which they argued were caused by improper alignment of assessments to inform decisions. They posited that decisions should be defined first before selecting an assessment tool, and so on, and further warned against collecting data without knowing

how it will be used. Ball and Christ (2012) stressed the importance of RtI to collect sufficient data for each of the multiple units of analysis consistent with a multi-tiered approach in order to examine student performance at the level of patterns, trends and across all students and significant subgroups. Furthermore, Ball and Christ (2012) reminded practitioners that RtI was not a “one size fit all approach.”

RtI researchers Stahl, Keane and Simic (2013) investigated the difference in RtI educational practices of three schools in utilizing resources and found that significant differences in staff efforts to forge change in educational practices were associated with varying degrees of staff persistence and differences in the problem solved when employing essential RtI components. They also found differences in student outcomes have less to do with the partial or full implementation status of RtI and more to do with employing a facilitator as a resource to guide staff. Stahl et al. (2013) also raised concerns surrounding the standardized protocol RtI model of supports to have cultural and linguistically implications or constrictions to address the needs of diverse students.

Stahl et al. (2013) explained that RtI implementation was operationalized through one of the two intervention models, including the standardized (treatment) protocol model and the problem-solving model (PSM). These researchers found differences between the levels staff involvement with RtI components between the individual RtI models. For example, Stahl et al. (2013) explained the difference between in how intervention selections were made. According to the researchers, the standard protocol model utilized predetermined interventions. In comparison, intervention selections determined by the PSM model involved staff decision making via a team consisting of



various processes including managing the evaluation procedures, identification of student need processes and monitoring of data processes to determine interventions.

Researchers VanDerHeyden and Gilbertson (2007) studied RtI models of implementation practices and found that schools often failed to adhere to rules and practices consistent with individual Standardized Treatment Protocol (STP) and the Problem Solving Model (PSM) RtI models. King and Coughlin (2016) argued in favor of the problem-solving RtI model and noted the Tier II support level is more enabled as a support for struggling students from processes consistent with the PSM model than the STP model.

On the issue of introducing a solution to manage historical educational issues, Bishop et al. (2009) compared the Maori education reform initiatives and the education reform initiatives history of US minorities noting similarities in challenges to reform success . According to Bishop et al. (2009) educational disparities facing indigenous Maori students in New Zealand were sustained after reform initiatives due to unresolved underlying problems in the education system. Bishop et al. (2009), postulated both education systems shared the similarity of failing to delineate “the existing framework of perceptions and beliefs” (p 6). Furthermore the researchers explained the innovation (reform initiative) had assimilated into unchanged and existing beliefs and perceptions that sustained the trajectory of school failure.

## **Conclusion**

In summary, contributions of every researcher included in the literature review exemplified compelling cases to consider when planning changes of improvement for RtI. One significant example included the case made by Sansostiand Noltemeyer (2008)

for institutional phases where sustainability issues resolved. Furthering the focus of attention on change success, Education Reform Researchers, Childress et al. (2009) studied the Montgomery County Public Schools reform efforts led by Superintendent Jerry Weast in the late 90s. According to these researchers, the historical trajectory of district past practices served as a useful source to guide future change. Three areas of concern have emerged from the results of the literature review. Specifically, Hughes and Dexter (2011) explained that implementation concerns that emerged at Tier II and Tier III were consistent with improper implementation practices. The impact of their research helped to identify two areas of review to inform change plan activities, including attention to bringing visibility to RtI Tier II processes for staff and leadership capacity to evoke change using tools which impacted all staff and installed new systems to distribute supports. Essentially, the literature drew attention to the RtI framework reemphasizing its function to systematically position staff in general education classrooms to examining interventions and make data decisions; the literature review also identified the role of leadership to evoke change through RtI tools.

The research of Bishop et al. (2009) brought to light the impact of what they termed as “an existing framework of perceptions and beliefs” for its impact to derail change efforts and sustain status quo practices in their studies on academic equity plight of the Maori, the indigenous population in New Zealand. As a result of the Bishop et al., (2009) research the third area of review, staff perception of their own skill sets, was selected to gain insight into how RtI was understood and the need to start change by assessing staff own perceptions to leverage change by minimizing known impediments to staff capacity through their own admission.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

### **Forms Assessment Analysis**

The forms used to operationalize RtI served important and critical functions in implementation processes. RtI data forms directed staff to address types of data useful to guide decision-making activities and added more insight into experiences that shaped their practices, particularly those aligned to Tier II processes. The structures put in place to manage RtI supports included data forms, yet it did not include a framework designed to mobilize supports. Lastly, the 4Cs “As Is” diagnosis drew attention to staff assumptions about RtI and potential constraints around its practices. As such, data forms were targeted for examination to provide greater insight into the proposed planning and implementation of RtI practices.

The Florida Problem Solving/RtI Project provided access to online RtI planning resources per their website. One specific tool, serving the change plan analysis was the CCC (<http://floridarti.usf.edu>). Basically, the CCC operated as a data organizational tool aligned to RtI processes emphasizing the role of data collection forms and subsequent data to inform data decision-making processes. According to RtI research scholars Ball and Christ (2012) and the FPS/RTI, four problem-solving tasks mobilized decision-making processes based on information contained in RtI forms. The four processes included problem identification, problem analysis, progress monitoring and program evaluation demonstrated RtI implementation as a framework mobilized by data, and data decisions on supports for students.

Table 1 illustrates the CCC (<http://floridarti.usf.edu>) organizational tool including a description of each of the four RtI processes as a guide for assessing the RtI data

collection forms. Based on the CCC checklist three ratings were used to determine the presence of the form to align with the corresponding process. Three ratings used to assess RtI forms included present = 1, partially present = 2 and, absent = 3. By applying the FPS/RtI CCC checklist I was able to assess the RtI forms used to implement RtI.

RtI scholars who Ball and Christ (2012) emphasized the criticalness of decision-making alignment to four RtI Components, these researchers indirectly noted the need for the RtI construct (including forms) to support its processes including, problem identification, problem analysis, progress monitoring, and program evaluation included content needed for staff to attend to the proper collection of data. The CCC checklist also included the four RtI components to indicate the organization of RtI implementation. Several RtI form practices were revealed about staff engagement with components based on the assessment of RtI forms assessment using the CCC checklist.

Table 1: *Critical Components Checklist*

<b>Table 1: Critical Components Checklist</b>		
Component	1 = Present 2 = Partially Present 3 = Absent	Document or Sources Used to Implement 2015–2016 Response to Intervention
<b>Problem Identification</b>		
PI-1. One or more replacement behaviors were identified.	1	a. Pre-Referral Form.
PO-2. Data describing current and expected levels of performance were collected.	1	a. Pre-Referral Form b. Curriculum-Based Measurement report (R- CBM) c. Universal Screening Data
PI-3. A gap analysis was conducted to determine the appropriate tier of instruction	1	a. Universal Screening Data b. Criterion Transition Report c. Progress Monitoring Improvement Report

(continued)

<b>Problem Analysis</b>		
PA-1. Hypotheses developed across multiple domains.	1	a. Pre-Referral Form
PA-2. Hypotheses were developed to determine if the student was not performing the replacement behavior because of a performance and/or skill deficit.	1	a. Pre-Referral Form
PA-3. Data were used to determine viable or active hypotheses for why the replacement behavior was not occurring	1	a. Pre-Referral Form
<b>Intervention Development and Implementation</b>		
IDI-1. Short-and long term goals were clearly stated in relation to the benchmarks.	1	a. Progress Monitoring Form
IDI-2. Interventions were developed to address barriers identified by verification hypotheses.	1	a. Pre-Referral Form
IDI-3. An intervention plan specifying the logistics of intervention(s) selected was provided	2	a. Tier III Intervention Form (see Appendix)
IDI-4 Data were provided demonstrating that the intervention plan was implemented with integrity	3	The area was not determined as RtI had not evolved to include this process
IDI-5. Intervention support plan with personnel was developed	3	No form developed to track this activity-RtI not evolved to include this process
<b>Program Evaluation /RTI</b>		
PE-1. Criteria for positive RtI were defined	1	a. Curriculum-Based Measurement (R-CBM) Report Criteria Values Data b. Progress Monitoring Form
PE-2. Progress Monitoring Data were collected/ scheduled.	1	a. AIMS web Access Progress Monitoring Forms Generated.
PE-3. A decision regarding the student's RtI was documented.	3	a. Information absent on discussion or decision. Notifications of RtI tiered support per Universal Screening Data b. Notifications per CBM Report Criteria Values Data
PE-4. A plan for continuing, modifying, or terminating the intervention plan was provided.	3	a. No documents available to note action plans in response to intervention effectiveness

The assessment suggested an existing practice of using one RtI form to serve multiple purposes across several components of RtI processes. For example, the Pre-Referral form was used across Problem Identification, Problem Analysis and Intervention Development and Implementation components. Information contained in RtI forms also The CCC checklist of RtI forms assessment also raised concerns for the absence of implementation documentation. Based on the absence of RtI forms noted in the Intervention Development and Implementation component area, there was no evidence that practice of maintaining intervention documentation was an established norm. In other words there was no data to support and inform decision making related to Tier II intervention activities. The CCC checklist of form assessment did reveal a form was used to collect data related to Tier III level of intervention supports.

The CCC review of RtI forms also provided a context to determine the degree that RtI forms served all processes. For example, Table 1 includes the “Intervention Development and Implementation “(IDI) component consisted of five areas. According to the CCC evaluation, only two areas were sufficiently represented in RtI forms including, IDI-1, and IDI-2. The remaining areas, IDI-3, IDI-4, and IDI-5 were not sufficiently addressed by RtI forms. IDI areas targeted interventions and RtI forms provided evidence of decision making related to the adjustments and selections of interventions. Finally, as RtI forms also facilitated its processes the lack of forms arguably created conditions that challenged RtI implementation practice uniformity.

### **Interpretation of Critical Components Checklist**

The overall results from the CCC checklist assessment activity revealed the extent that RtI forms aligned to each of the critical RtI processes and the extent that processes

that required more data were supported by sufficient forms. As VanderHeyden, an RtI scholar (n.d., p. 1) explained the difference between RtI implemented following a clear set of procedures and RtI implemented, using unclear procedures noting the latter implementation description led to “unreliable effects” (p 1). According to VanderHeyden (n.d.) RtI problem solving models generally operated under informal and non-specified procedures. VanderHeyden (n.d.) suggested that RtI teams acted to norm practices by either using verbal accounts of student learning and needs or utilizing data to support decision making activities. Results of the CCC RtI form assessment noted the absence of forms used to implement Tier II practices. The school selected supplemental instruction for its Tier II supports and teachers provided supplemental instruction supports independent of a collaborative team experience. Conditions of teachers with busy workloads operating as single providers of RtI without team support arguably supported their possibly using verbal accounts of intervention experiences shared with other teachers for convenience.

RtI researchers Ball and Christ (2012) explained that although RtI Components were informed by data, sufficient amounts of data were needed to support the human element of decision-making processes. I interpreted sufficient amounts of data to refer to the amount of data collected using a small number of forms to cover four component processes. The RtI form assessment noted the absence of forms requiring narratives in support of Tier II processes. Furthermore the absence of this data suggested the RtI framework was not fully extended to support Tier II activities and make use of its data in activities such as team meetings. The results of research activities also determined that RtI operated without clear procedures therefore increasing the possibility of having an

adverse impact on timely staff skill development needed to attend to all components of RtI processes.

In conclusion the RtI form assessment results revealed the extent to which RtI forms supported all four areas of a complete operation. The results suggested that RtI operations were constrained by the absence of forms leading to less data. RtI that operated on less data reflected a framework structure that was not set up to support each of the tiered levels of RtI. Noted earlier, a framework consisted of tiers of support and processes within each tier used to guide and inform decision making activities. Campsen (2013) explained that intervention activities included discussions about effect of interventions beyond scores. Suggested from intervention activities was the importance of corresponding data collection forms needed to document any changes made by individual teachers or teams. As staff provided Tier I and Tier II RtI supports within the context of their own classrooms in isolation to team meetings, little information was known about their individual practices across RtI processes.

Lastly, although results suggested the need for creating and adding additional data forms to the processes these changes only supported improved implementation rather than a successful RtI operation. Fletcher and Vaughn (2009), mindful of the purpose of RtI, pointed out its role to support educational experiences for all students, particularly for students identified as at risk for academic failure. More concerning, the absence of data in any one tiered level of support reduces the capacity of RtI to generate data used in the identification of students with disabilities. Finally, the RtI form Assessment activity determined the presence of forms for each tiered level of support. Yet without a framework to mobilize intervention activities the quality of forms unnoticed by teams of



RtI providers raises the potential for less data collected and used for decision making on the student intervention supports.

### **Perception of RtI Skill Survey Analysis**

This analysis activity directed staff to reflect on individual skill sets and practices used in the implementation of RtI. This analysis was important as it provided insight into staff decision making practices across three factor domains.

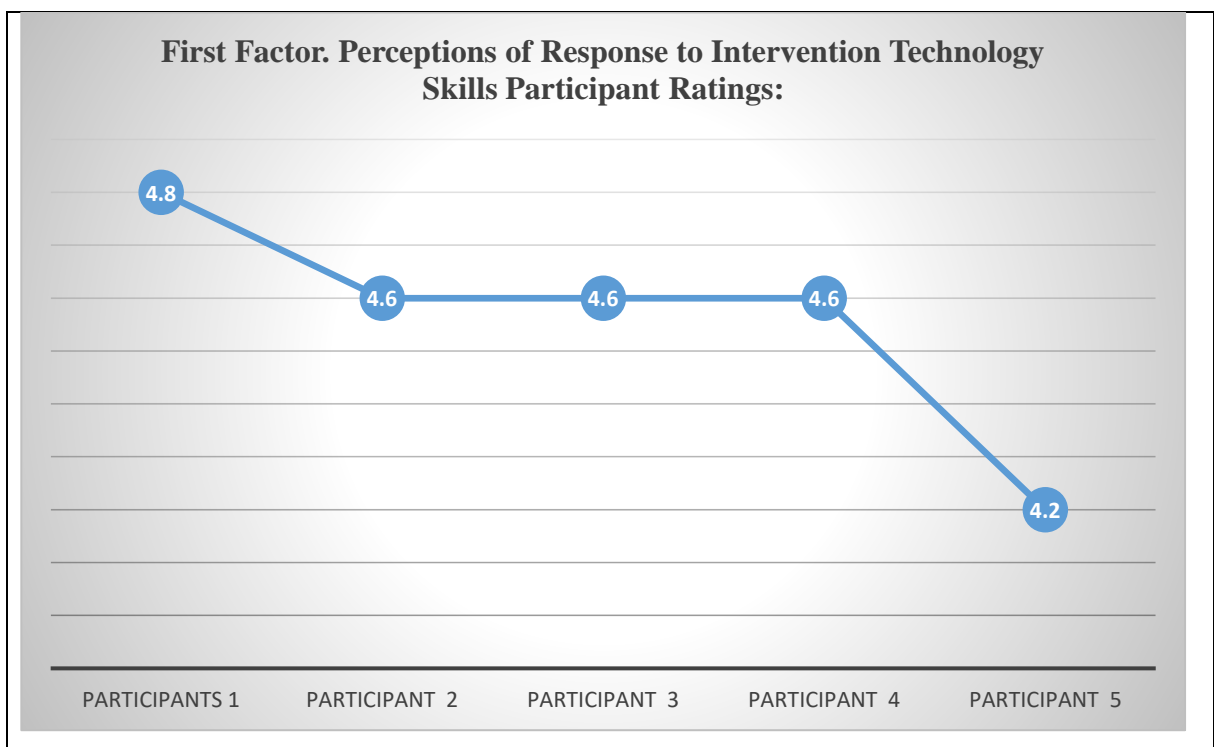


Figure 3: First Factor- Graph A

This activity was also important to address the overarching goal of this study to inform leadership of professional growth opportunities needed for teachers and administrators in their work with RtI and students.

The Perception of RtI Skills analysis illustrated in Figure 3. Represents the First Factor Perceptions of RtI Skills Applied to Academic Content domain. This domain focused the 24 survey items including: 1a, 2a, 3a1, 3b1, 3c1, 3d1, 3e1, 3f1, 4a, 5a, 6a, 7a, 7c, 7e, 8a, 9a, 10a, 11a, 12a, 15, 16, 17a, 17b, and 17c. Figure A also shows a 3.8 median rating sending a message to the district noting this domain does requires little or some professional development. Also notable, the First Factor data focused on RtI skills related specifically to tiered supports and supplemental interventions. For example, In the First Factor, survey item 3f1 asked staff to assess their awareness of the criteria used to identify a student as needing Tier II supports (3f1). Survey item 9a, asked staff to assess if they were capable of using gap data to make decisions involving core instruction and Tier II supplemental instructional experiences. The majority focus of survey items in the First Factor targeted staff understandings of the usage of specific data to inform decisions that impacted academics.

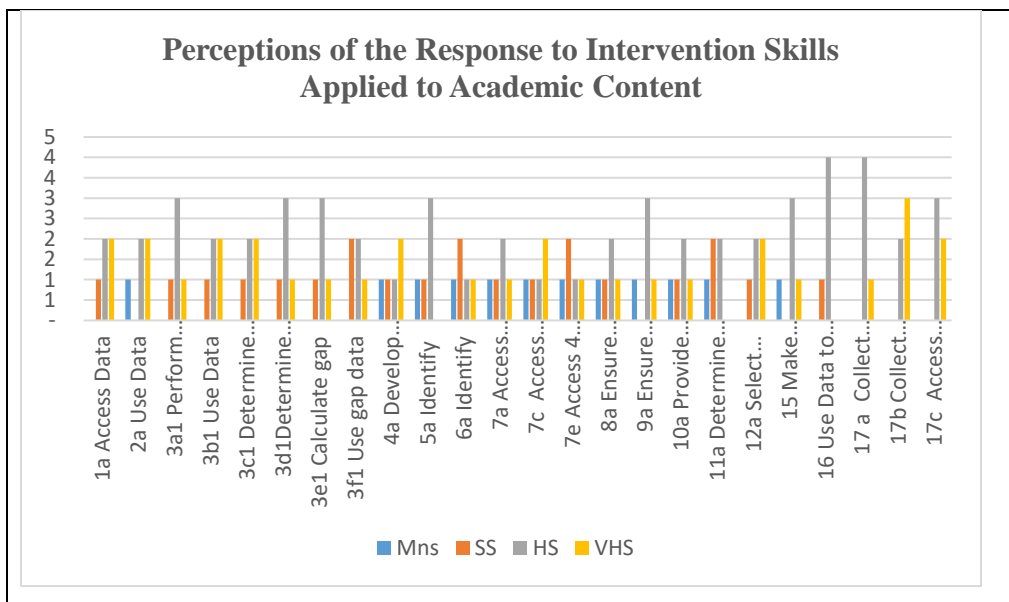


Figure 4: Perceptions of Response to Intervention Skills -Graph B

Figure 4, Graph B illustrates an overview of each of the 24 survey items included in the First Factor domain area offering a comparative view for the range of participant responses to each of the items. According to Graph B the order of ratings from the most to the least amount included Highly Skilled (HS), Very Highly Skilled (VHS), Some Support (SS) and the least rating of Minimal needed Supports (MnS). Overall the majority of staff perceived their skills to apply Academic Content the range of some to no supports to implement RtI skills noted per specific survey items. In comparison, a number of staff perceived needing supports to implement RtI skills noted per specific survey items.

*Figure 5* Graph C, illustrates the Second Factor domain: Perceptions of Data Display Skills. This domain focused on five survey items including, 13a, 13b, (13c- duplicate survey item), 13d, 13e, and 14.

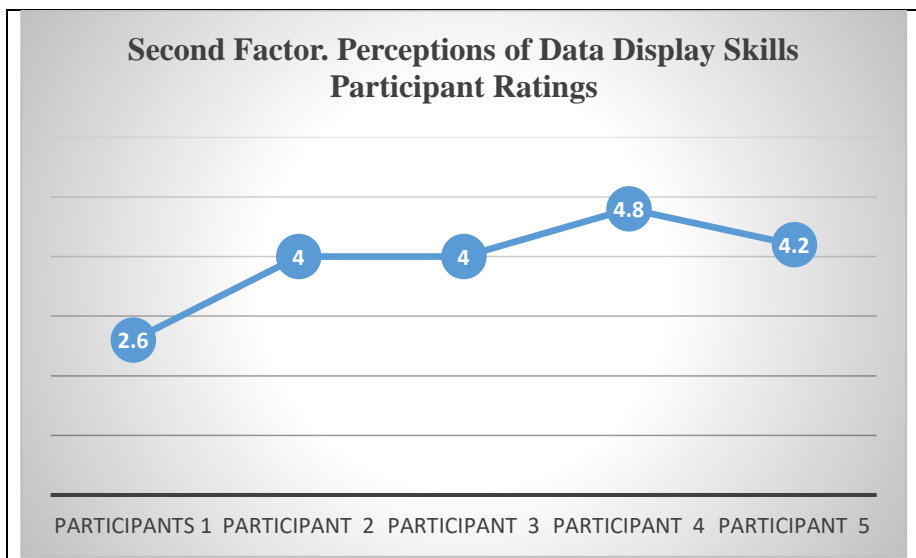


Figure 5: Second Factor- Graph C

Graph C data shows a 4.0 median rating that indicated to the district this domain requires a little or some professional development to ensure all staff compare to the

majority can successfully implement RtI. Also notable, the Second Factor data focused on creating graphs to display RtI data used illustrate numerical data results. Graphs created using computer software such as Aimesweb and Excel required staff to know how to navigate these programs and enter RtI data its software. Lastly, the majority of staff reported needing to create a display to illustrate RtI data.

Graph D shows a 4.6 median rating that indicated the district capacity for technology skills were at the high range within the need little support response scale. The Third Factor focused on four survey items including 19a, 19b, 19c and 19e (19d omitted for its focus on behavior). The technology that RtI enlisted to implement supports referred to access to software programs. My experience working in the school included staff using various software platforms to access and interact with student information including, Power School, and Aimesweb.

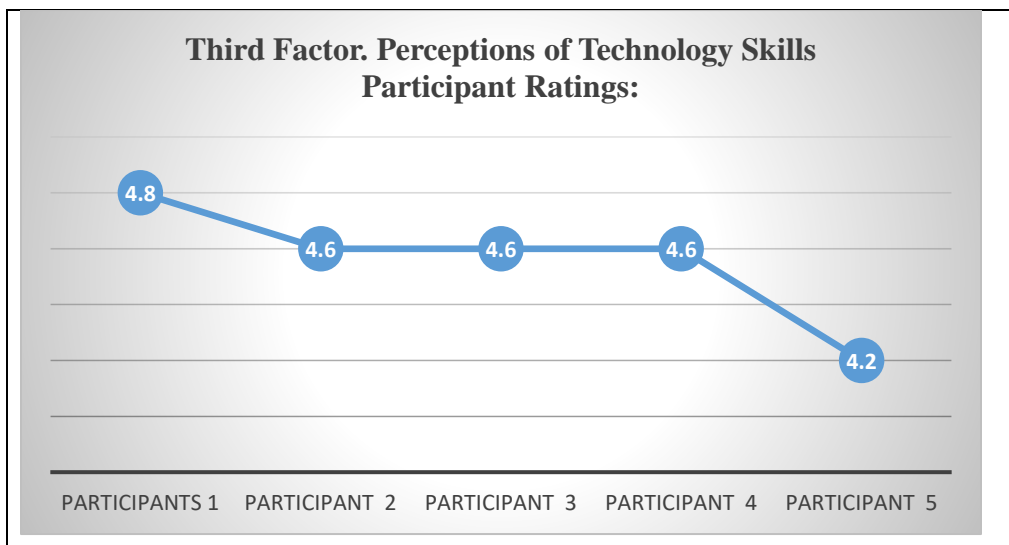


Figure 6: Third Factor -Graph D

Power School was used to manage various types of student information such as attendance, grades, and discipline was assessable to staff daily. Aims Web in

comparison, although second online software was specifically used to manage RtI progress monitoring, store and operate universal screening processes, and for generating various RtI report data. Both online resources provide online training as needed to ensure successful operations by staff.

### **Interpretations of The Perception of RtI Skill Survey Results**

The results of The Perception of RtI Skills Survey revealed weaknesses in staff capacity to interpret data in addition to a weaknesses in selecting follow up actions after reading concerning data outcomes. Many of the items represented actual decisions faced by staff about student educational experiences and invited required staff to justify a choice of tiered supports. RtI Action Network researchers Ahram, Stenbridge, Fergus and Noguera (n.d.) noted that implementation was often an area that was problematic for schools. According to Ahram et al., (n.d) uneven skill sets and insufficient functioning of data management systems often impeded successful RtI outcomes. Ahram et al. (n.d., p. 4) also lamented that systems were often “underutilized or ineffective.” Operating RtI with a range of positive and negative staff skill sets can have an adverse effect of corresponding RtI experiences. Figure 4. Graph B illustrates individual participant response results for four survey items. Each survey item involved data usages related to interventions consistent with Tiers II and Tier III levels of supports. The number of staff who indicated their data skills required a level of support to implement RtI are noted at the end of each of the four identified skills as follows:

2a. Use data to make decisions about individuals and groups of students for the core academic curriculum (3).

4a. Develop potential reasons (hypotheses) that a student or group students is/are not

achieving desired levels of performance (i.e., benchmarks) for academics (3)

9a. Ensure that the proposed interventions plans are supported by the data that were collected for academics (4)

11a. Determine if an intervention was implemented as it was intended for academics (5)

As a result of the survey analysis specific information about participant capacities to manage various RtI operations emerged with implications for leadership training. RtI had operated for over three years without making changes to its initial implementation practices. RtI Consulting Specialist in RtI Implementation, Susan Hall (n.d.) asserted that schools often ran into pitfalls when implementing RtI by underestimating the complexities of change such as RtI on teacher practices. Hall (n.d) identified pitfalls that schools confronted when implementing RtI, one major pitfall included “jumping in without a comprehensive implementation plan.” According to Hall (n.d.) planning successful RtI demands that attention is given to those teachers responsible for implementing practices. By examining specific RtI artifacts and staff perception of their RtI skills a greater context was revealed for the influence of limited teacher skill sets on RtI operations. Yet equally important, this research effort revealed RtI studies tended to focusing on teachers when examining issues with implementation. Few RtI articles and studies noted behind the scenes operations to target improvements beneficial to the district.

This research supported improvement activities for teachers in addition to identifying areas of improvement for district and school leadership in the area of operations. Operations involved district and school leadership plans to manage RtI implementation. As such, information derived from the RtI form assessment and

Perception RtI Skills Survey can support comprehensive change as its designed to buildthe capacity of teachers, administrators, and district leadershipto better manage RtI operations and implementation.

## **CHAPTER SIX: A VISION OF SUCCESS (TO BE)**

### **Introduction**

If my organizational change plan were realized the vision of success would include explicit roles and responsibilities for all teachers identified as RtI providers, in addition to school administrators, and district leadership. The training for each RtI provider will be aligned to an explicit role. Training would be assigned to support the development of specific skill sets expected for each provider to possess. In order to improve areas of concern raised in the change plan study, it is imperative that stakeholder, practitioners and leadership learn information about RtI components, processes and operations . Shared knowledge on all RtI processes among multiple stakeholder groups supports assurance in operations across all implementation experiences. In addition, assigning RtI training for multiple stakeholders reduces uncertainty in practices, beliefs and can be a mechanism for increasing continuity in practices. The vision of success centers on distinct investment in the form of training over a course of time or retraining for each of the three school/district stakeholders across all facets of RtI implementation and operations.

### **Context**

One of the most critical changes in this 4C centered on expanding data skill sets to strengthen the Tier II level of supports. As RtI tiered levels of supports are embedded into instruction to signal intervention activities teachers of students whom received RtI supports will be provided with comprehensive training designed to change and sustain new data practices. The change plan research results indicated staff needed more training on RtI and how to use data to implement supports for each tier they were assigned to



implement. I propose utilizing the services of a certified RtI coach. In addition, teachers needed to gain more knowledge about resources. By assessing intervention utility teachers, administrators, and all other RtI providers will be empowered to select those interventions most appropriate to support students improve reading fluency. Teachers across all grade levels that provide RtI supports will also need to be involved in reviewing interventions and proposing a few for districts to purchase based on performances with similar student groups. This activity will also empower teachers to assume more ownership over supports and build confidence allowing teachers to become the experts on interventions needed in their district to support students.

Finally, teachers would receive training on classroom strategies that supported the diverse student populations enrolled in the district. Attention for training at each tiered level of supports would ensure equity in learning opportunities for all students. Keeping in the forefront the overall goal of RtI to improve education experiences for all students brings to the mind concerns of special education policy makers. Special education policy makers identified one non-negotiable area that had to be met in order to advance considerations for special education services and it centered on adequate instruction. RtI has a role in ensuring adequate instruction through its processes, tiered support and intervention experiences. Adequate instruction therefore must be protected using RtI processes.

### **Culture**

If the organizational change plan were realized the RtI administrator would be responsible for leading and delegating all RtI operations with the help of an RtI leadership team. School administrators would also be responsible for five RtI tasks

including a) the management and storage of RtI files, b) identifying trained materials for RtI protocols and tiered support procedures, c) and exploring RtI resource websites for the purpose of planning activities and d) leading the development of RtI data forms aligned to each tiered level of supports including the areas for teacher narratives on student learning.

The culture in which RtI operated described teacher needs to facilitate successful implementation of all processes. As teachers are required to possess adequate RtI skills leadership must be prepared to lead their success. Leadership must have a meaningful role for in RtI to ensure practices are aligned to RtI. Leadership will need to become experts in RtI processes in order to set standards and clear expectations for skills needed by staff. Staff survey findings of their perceived RtI skill sets suggested staff were allowed to implement RtI while believing their skills were not sufficient.

This finding raises concerns that school administrators needs to increase involvement in RtI. Some, rather than all, of the RtI procedures, received the attention that included monitoring staff through data created from practices and data noted on forms. Action research activities included the revision of data collection forms which the district adapted as its permanent RtI data collection tools in the school governance policy section of board policies. In addition to improving data collection tools this efforts will provide administrator leadership with documents to review as one method of assessing staff skills. School administrators will also need to receive data skill training, and training in all five areas mentioned earlier to increase the utility of RtI to support district academic goals for students. School administrator will need to learn RtI from the

perspective of a school administrator having the capacity to identify broad patterns and trends.

Finally, the vision for the change plan would be realized if district leadership became involved with promoting RtI. By promoting RtI as a valued source with high expectations for its impact on student success and growth across all tiered support processes teachers and parent stakeholders would increase their belief in RtI. District leadership would support high expectations for RtI by funding quality intervention for all students including those identified by diverse subgroup population. District leadership would also increase its involvement by adding RtI to the list of items on the agenda of the superintendent as a strategy to increase awareness for RtI successes, challenges, review the proposals to changes supports. Finally, district leadership will ensure any change in administrator turnover does not disrupt the continuity of information by creating documents that illustrate its RtI blueprint for implementation. By delegating the creation and distribution of RtI packets that summarize its RtI operations, protocols, and procedures to new administrators a gap in knowledge during the transition between administrators is less likely to occur.

Overall, the changes in district culture must be led by district leadership. District leadership must demonstrate leadership by identifying actions that position RtI as a valuable resource in the district. Based on strategies for adaption, as noted in the strategies and actions sections, staff will develop new attitudes towards RtI from future planned training and coaching with attention to given to staff needs for success across all RtI processes. In the literature review, Bishop et al. (2009) emphasized the perils of reform when existing beliefs and perceptions were not managed and allowed to persist

alongside reform efforts. The goal here must include uprooting embedded adverse beliefs suggesting complacency by demonstrating authentic concerns for staff that build trust and new relationships. This goal starts with learning the beliefs and perceptions of staff and school administrators, and followed up with plans that provide clarification and redirection as led by district leadership.

### **Conditions**

If the organizational change plan were realized several conditions that support RtI would be identified, addressed, and assigned to the administrator responsible for supervising RtI. In addition, RtI would be allocated a specific non-negotiable time for daily implementation, and be assigned in the master schedule for holding collaborative meetings used to discuss a variety of data and make decisions on student interventions and placement in tiered level of support. The change plan would also consider and identify a method for the orientating new staff on RtI. The RtI administrator would delegate the task of overseeing student outcomes per each Tiered experience, and proposing the model of RtI implementation if concerns arise for resistant student growth.

The RtI framework introduced through action research activities was designed to systemize the flow of intervention supports as a step toward improvement with expectations the current RtI leadership will adjust to the needs of the current student population if needed. The framework designated time for RtI leadership team members to attend grade level meetings with the entire meeting focus on RtI. The framework also involved scheduling Tier III supports for students through a pullout practice in a separate classroom. As a result of the added RtI framework leadership team members were identified and assigned to grade level meetings. This activity will be revised as needed by

school administrators and shared with district leadership. Another activity designed to improve conditions for RtI includes either purchasing an online software package for storage and access to various student data or at noexpense to the district. This activity requires the determination of a secure location for RtI document storage made accessible to school leadership and teachers.

### **Competencies**

If the organizational change plan were realized the district would ensure all RtI providers and school administrators had access to tools that support skill sets needed to operate RtI processes. The change plan would also ensure that all adults would also be able to deliver supports and possess an expanded level of data skills needed to interpret student learning struggles accurately. RtI administrator would be responsible for ensuring staff trainings were available as needed to support teacher expanded use of data manage RtI processes more effectively. The survey outcomes indicated that staff needed stronger skills to determine and identify RtI support best suited to support student needs. Leadership skills to distinguish the skill sets staff have and need to operate RtI or any resource are critical to ensure staff are competent to manage all student needs. Leadership ability to build staff capacity is critical to create a team of professionals and add value to district experiences with RtI.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN: STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS FOR CHANGE**

A final and necessary action needed if the change plan were to be successful involves following explicit strategies and actions. This approach enables the replacement of former practices in exchange for new practices better aligned to the specific needs of students. In order to facilitate a guided transition of change between the “As Is” and “To Be” diagnosis, I have proposed a series of capacity building professional development activities designed to address the needs of teachers, school administrators and district leadership in terms of acquiring specific skill sets and increasing competency levels as outlined in section five. Consideration was given to the researcher perspective on leadership ability to lead change. The researcher perspective avoids following a narrow pathway to the change that fails to consider those leading change. Finally, although the change plan evolved around RtI implementation, those not directly involved with implementation were included for their role in less visible RtI operations.

Many RtI research scholars—including O’Conner and Freeman (2012), Sobel and Steele (2009), Sansosti and Noltemeyer (2008) and Meyer and Behar-Horenstein (2015)—agreed that leadership is key to initial efforts of successful RtI operations. Yet the latter two scholars Sansosti and Noltemeyer (2008) and Meyer and Behar-Horenstein (2015) pointed out the significance of RtI leadership to lead departure from traditional educational normed experiences to new innovative RtI practices. Sansosti and Noltemeyer (2008) described RtI as a school reform effort that worked by improving the skill sets of all staff thus reliant on the efficiency of all to arrive at a fully implemented RtI.

I was able to uncover significant weaknesses of the partially implemented RtI in Progressive School District described by minimal efforts used to reach successful outcomes. Yet while teacher and administrator turnover trends may not be factors directly controlled by district leadership, indirect factors of support can influence RtI experiences and, possibly, decisions to remain in the school. Heifetz et al. (2009) argued that new norms may not have been the desired priority of school leaders, therefore, the status quo was protected by virtue of implementation practices described by compliance. Heifetz et al. (2009) also offered another angle to understand challenges to organizational change suggesting differences between technical problems and adaptive challenges would support or prevent planned successes.

Heifetz et al. (2009) explained that learning was the lever needed to achieve the desired change. Identifying the need for Tier II data collection forms and the need to schedule RtI practices into the school calendar were possible with a few technical changes to current school institutional practices. Yet, the remaining two changes needed for RtI understudy to facilitate leadership to lead were adaptive in nature and required professional development activities to facilitate learning in the identified areas of context and competencies.

One of the critical acts of mindfulness included in change plan activities focused on leadership being mindful of RtI to create a nurturing and safe space for staff to speak and reflect on their practices. Heifetz et al. (2009) noted that adaptive change must include training activities sensitive to staff ability to facilitate new outcomes. This resonated with the needs of staff in the RtI understudy due to the norming of the initial version of RtI in school rituals. As per the RtI understudy analysis of practices, teachers

essentially will need to get rid of old skill sets and replace them with new skill sets from the RtI experience.

On training, Drago-Severson (2009) identified “teaming structures,” which included nurturing conditions designed to build supportive learning teams. According to Drago-Severson (2009), team structure success was based on particular features designed to guide adult learning and development. The following features were selected for their relevance to changes plans for the RtI under study:

- Learning and emphasizing that staff learn the art of focusing on framing questions over the practice of answering questions
- Making collaboration possible and meaningful by ensuring data, time to collaborate and so on, are well present and well considered
- Using protocols to analyze and discuss data and identifying team member roles

Drago-Severson (2009) cited McTighe (2008) for his recommendation about the role members of a team should address, including a critical friend, analyst of student work and continuous learner. Each of the roles were self-explanatory, noting actions that facilitated change in engagement at meetings among staff in the understudied RtI.

The Strategy/Action Plan noted in Table 2 identified four strategic activities for the change plan to accomplish. Strategy 1 is purposed to facilitate opportunities for district leadership to demonstrate commitment and genuine involvement in RtI implementation. Strategy 1 includes district leadership communicating high expectations for RtI implementation through actions taken to raise awareness of the value RtI and its role to support district goals for academic achievement. Strategy 1 actions were identified to cultivate the environment of a district that embraced and supported RtI. Leadership



and teachers are responsible for RtI effectiveness. Strategy 2 outlines district leadership responsibility of including RtI into the master organizational schedule in addition to ensuring school administrators designates collaborative meeting schedules. a positive school environment to provide and receive RtI experiences. Strategy 3 is designed for district leadership to take the lead at tracking and keeping pace with the skill sets within the district. This strategy is designed to ensure district leadership maintains awareness for talent leaving and arriving into the district in order to ensure RtI can operate successfully. Strategy 4 and 5 are designed to build strong culture for RtI to exist including a focus on creating a trusting and caring work environment. Finally, Strategy 6 is designed to demonstrate to staff that they are valued their self-reflections are important to facilitate necessary change to elevate RtI as a respected and valued resource. This is an activity designed to maintain RtI at a level of success and to ensure barriers are not allowed to flourish take root and change norms.

Table 2: *Strategies and Actions*

1. Cultivate a broad shared belief for the value of RtI processes communicated throughout the school community of parents, teachers, administrators and students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• District leadership will reintroduce RtI communicating its value to the school stakeholders along with identifying activities that draw more attention to its value and purpose</li> <li>• District leadership will add RtI to staff monthly agenda and administrative team weekly agenda recognizing its worth, capturing implementation in progress and promoting its use to transform educational experiences</li> <li>• Contract a RtI coach twice a month to cultivate all stakeholder understandings of RtI, offer support during implementation of Tier II, use of data to identify supports and to support intervention selections</li> </ul>
2. Create an educational environment that embraces RtI by establishing norms for scheduling times.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• District leadership will add protected time to the schoolmaster schedule along with collaborative meetings needed to implement all processes</li> <li>• School administrators will ensure RtI forms support new data collection practices to inform will support high-quality decisions for interventions.</li> <li>• Teachers will engage in training designed to improve instructional strategies that facilitate education</li> </ul>

	<p>equity for all students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School administrators will review and provide feedback to staff on their narratives and other data created to make the case for student supports.</li> <li>• All teaching staff, grade level administrators, student support staff, participating in paid professional development activities centered on producing guidance materials designed to explain the goal of step by step processes and locating online Rtl resource to plan activities along each of the tiered processes.</li> </ul>
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<p>3. Leadership will take stock of staff current RtI skill sets by evaluating their current work and practices.</p> <p>4. Staff will identify areas of skill need and school administrators will review and have the final determination on the most appropriate professional development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure timely after school paid professional development opportunities exist for training when needed.</li> <li>• Ensure training during school days using substitutes in order to address teacher training provided by an RtI consultant coach.</li> <li>• Ensure new staff have access to orientation experiences and/or refreshers on the implementation practices consistent with RtI Tier II and other processes in the district.</li> </ul>
<p>5. Create opportunities to promote positive relationships with staff and school administrators. This strategy facilitates staff voice to weigh in on identified changes and opportunities to project future growth for RtI aligned to student needs</p> <p>6. Creating opportunities for staff and school administrators to review student demographics and decide on strategy for interventions and all RtI tiers. The entire school staff will receive training on creating materials that are culturally connected to student learning styles consistent with race, gender, and any other prevalent influences on their ways of learning and knowing information.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• District Leadership will conduct or commission an RtI needs assessment activity designed for staff to flesh out concerns for the current RtI delivery model and to solicit feedback on ways to increase Tier II outcomes for struggling students before implementing practices outlined in the change plan.</li> <li>• Teachers, administrators and district leadership will become sensitive, creative and strategic at delivering RtI supports across all tiers in order to support all students.</li> <li>• Hire RtI coaching with expertise in cultural relevant approaches to learning and experiencing education directed at teachers and all adult RtI providers.</li> </ul>

### **Final Thoughts on the Change Plan of the RtI Understudy**

Since the time of the change plan study, several of the technical solution activities were addressed and embraced by the district as noted in the study through Action Research activities. A few examples included incorporating RtI meetings into grade level meeting times bi-weekly and action plan research activities with goals of creating adequate data collection tools. The data collection tools and document templates revised and approved by the district superintendent provided new expectations for RtI. Finally, they were also adapted into school board instruction policy and elevated the RtI framework to support flow of implementation processes.

The Strategy Action chart identified specific actions for district leadership to lead with the goal of increasing visibility and presence of district administration in RtI spaces. In closing, while the number of survey participants represented a small sample of participants, it was reflective of at least half the number of staff in the one school district that provided RtI support. I caution that the findings of this study cannot be generalized into practice by other school districts, as the conditions of RtI implementation will always differ with respect to the difference in school communities, teaching staff, student population and school district priorities. A final thought, most RtI studies focus on areas for teacher improvement with less involving change involving various hierarchal levels of school/district administration. The change plan study included training and changes for all levels of leadership. By expanding change efforts to encompass all levels of leadership in addition to teachers and paraprofessionals, I believed this approach prepares the district to pivot future efforts toward effectiveness in the near future once implementation levels are attained in accordance to change plan activities.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### Perception of RtI Skill Set Survey(adapted version)

##### Perceptions of RtI Skills Survey

*Directions:* Please read each statement about a skill related to assessment, instruction, and/or intervention below, and then evaluate YOUR level within the context of working at a school/building level. Where indicated, rate your skill separately for academics (i.e., reading and math) and behavior. Please use the following response scale:

**1**= I do not have this skill at all (**NS**)

**2**= I have minimal skills in this area; need substantial support to use it (**MnS**)

**3**= I have this skill, but still need some support to use it (**SS**)

**4**= I can use this skill with little support (**HS**)

**5**= I am highly skilled in this area and could teach others this skill (**VHS**)

(continued)

The skill to:	NS	MnS	SS	HS	VHS
1. Assess the data necessary to determine the percentage of students in core instruction who are achieving benchmarks (district grade-level standards) in:					
a. Academics	1	2	3	4	5
b. Behavior	1	2	3	4	5
2. Use data to <i>make decisions</i> about individuals and groups of students for the:					
a. Core academic curriculum	1	2	3	4	5
b. Core/Building discipline plan	1	2	3	4	5
3. Perform each of the following steps when identifying the problem for a student for whom concerns have been raised:					
a. Define the referral concern in terms of replacement behavior (i.e., what the student should be able to do) instead of a referral <i>problem</i> for:					
• Academics	1	2	3	4	5
• Behavior	1	2	3	4	5
b. Use of data to define the current level of performance of the target student for:					
• Academics	1	2	3	4	5
• Behavior	1	2	3	4	5

(continued)

The skill to:	NS	MnS	SS	HS	VHS
c. Determine the desired level of performance (i.e., benchmark) for:					
• Academics	1	2	3	4	5
• Behavior	1	2	3	4	5
d. Determine the current level of peer performance for the same skill as the target student for:					
• Academics	1	2	3	4	5
• Behavior	1	2	3	4	5
e. Calculate the gap between student current performance and the benchmark (district grade level standard) for:					
• Academics	1	2	3	4	5
• Behavior	1	2	3	4	5
f. Use gap data to determine whether core instruction should be adjusted or not whether supplemental instruction should be directed to the target student for:					
• Academics	1	2	3	4	5
• Behavior	1	2	3	4	5

(continued)

The skill to:	NS	MnS	SS	HS	VHS
4. Develop potential reasons (hypotheses) that a student or group of students is/are not achieving desired levels of performance (i.e. benchmarks) for:					
a. Academics	1	2	3	4	5
b. Behavior	1	2	3	4	5
5. Identify the most appropriate type (s) of data to use for determining reasons (hypotheses) that are likely to be contributing to the problem for:					
a. Academics	1	2	3	4	5
b. Behavior	1	2	3	4	5
6. Identify the appropriate supplemental intervention available in my building for a student identified as at risk for:					
a. Academics	1	2	3	4	5
b. Behavior	1	2	3	4	5
7. Access resources (e.g., internet sources, professional literature) to develop evidence-based interventions for:					
a. Academic core curricula-----	1	2	3	4	5
b. Behavior core curricula-----	1	2	3	4	5
c. Academic supplemental curricula-----	1	2	3	4	5
d. Behavior supplemental curricula-----	1	2	3	4	5
e. Academic individualized intervention plans-----	1	2	3	4	5
f. Behavior individualized intervention plans-----	1	2	3	4	5
8. Ensure that any supplemental and/or intensive interventions are integrated with core instruction in the general education classroom:					
a. Academics	1	2	3	4	5
b. Behavior	1	2	3	4	5

(continued)

The skills to:	NS	MnS	SS	HS	VHS
9. Ensure that the proposed interventions plan is supported by the data that were collected for:					
a. Academics	1	2	3	4	5
b. Behavior	1	2	3	4	5
10. Provide the support necessary to ensure that the intervention is implemented appropriately for:					
a. Academics	1	2	3	4	5
b. Behavior	1	2	3	4	5
11. Determine if an intervention was implemented as it was intended for:					
a. Academics	1	2	3	4	5
b. Behavior	1	2	3	4	5
12. Select appropriate data (e.g., Curriculum-Based Measurement, <b>Aimes Web</b> , behavior observations) to use for progress monitoring of student performance during interventions:					
a. Academics	1	2	3	4	5
b. Behavior	1	2	3	4	5
13. Construct graphs for large group, small group, and individual students:					
a. Graph target student data-----	1	2	3	4	5
b. Graph benchmark data-----	1	2	3	4	5
c. Graph benchmark data-----	1	2	3	4	5
d. Draw an aimline-----	1	2	3	4	5
e. Draw a trendline-----	1	2	3	4	5
14. Interpret graphed progress monitoring data to make decisions about the degree to which a student is responding to intervention (e.g., positive, questionable or poor response)	1	2	3	4	5
15. Make modifications to intervention plans based on student response to intervention.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Use appropriate data to differentiate between students who have not learned skills (e.g., did not have adequate exposure to effective instruction, not ready, got too far behind) from those who have barriers to learning due to a disability.	1	2	3	4	5

(continued)

The skill for:	NS	MnS	SS	HS	VHS
17. Collect the following types of data:					
a. Curriculum-Based Measurement-----	1	2	3	4	5
b. Aimes Web-----	1	2	3	4	5
c. Access data from appropriate district or schoolwide assessments-----	1	2	3	4	5
d. Standard behavioral observations-----	1	2	3	4	5
18. Disaggregate data by race, gender, free/reduced lunch, language proficiency, and disability status	1	2	3	4	5
19. Use technology in the following ways:					
a. Access the internet to locate sources of academic and behavioral evidence-based interventions.-----	1	2	3	4	5
b. Use electronic data collections tools (e.g., Power School)-----	1	2	3	4	5
c. Use Progress Monitoring -----	1	2	3	4	5
d. Use Power School / School Wide Information System for Positive Behavior Support-----	1	2	3	4	5
e. Graph and display student and school data-----	1	2	3	4	5
20. Facilitate a Problem Solving Team (Student Support Team, Intervention Assistance Team, School-Based Intervention Team, and Child Study Team) meeting.	1	2	3	4	5

## Appendix B

### Revised RtI Data Collection Forms

#### GRADE LEVEL RTI TEAM MEETING PROTOCOL

**Referring teacher must bring the following items to the meeting:**

- Completed Intervention Worksheet
- Current state/classroom curriculum based /District assessment results
- Current progress monitoring, and benchmark results
- Current work samples indicating both positive and negative work
- Current attendance
- Current grades, progress report, report card
- Notes from parent conferences

**Team must select a timekeeper.**

##### **STEP 1: Assess Teacher ConcernsAllotted Time: 5 minutes**

Checklist of Concerns. Prioritize for discussion no more than 3 concerns, check all that apply.

<input type="checkbox"/> Reading Fluency	<input type="checkbox"/> Attentiveness	<input type="checkbox"/> Lack of Exposure
<input type="checkbox"/> Active Listening	<input type="checkbox"/> Behavior-SEL	<input type="checkbox"/> Poor Study Habits
<input type="checkbox"/> Verbal Expression	<input type="checkbox"/> Phonemic Awareness	<input type="checkbox"/> Directions
<input type="checkbox"/> Decoding	<input type="checkbox"/> Time Management	<input type="checkbox"/> Low participation
<input type="checkbox"/> Sight Words	<input type="checkbox"/> Note Taking	<input type="checkbox"/> Organization
<input type="checkbox"/> Letter-Sound	<input type="checkbox"/> Asking Questions	<input type="checkbox"/> Memory

##### **STEP 2: Inventory student strengths and talents. Allotted Time: 5 minutes**

List student's strengths, talents, preferred activities, or incentives that motivate the student.

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##### **STEP 3: Review Background/Baseline Data Allotted Time: 5 minutes**

Review any background or baseline data collected on the student (i.e., attendance and office disciplinary referral records, student grades, direct observation data, parent conference notes, counselor notes, interventions provided and results, etc.).Notes:\_\_\_\_\_

##### **TIERED SUPPORTS TEACHER PROVIDES TO STUDENTS**

**Describe Tier I differentiation strategies provided for students in your classroom:**



- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_
- d. \_\_\_\_\_

**Name and describe Tier II intervention provided for students in your classroom:**

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**Name and describe Tier II small group instruction activities provided for students in your classroom:**

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**How many of your students receive Tier III interventions? \_\_\_\_\_**

**How have you integrated strategies/suggestions made by the RtI provider to support Tier III students in your classroom?**

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(continued)

STEP 4: Set Academic and/or Behavioral Outcome Goals and Method for Progress Monitoring	
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TIER II INTERVENTION GOAL 1:

Time Allotted: 5 minutes

1. Describe in measurable, observable terms the academic deficits and/or behavior that is to be changed:
2. What is the target date to achieve this goal?
3. Is the goal for the academic and/or behavior listed in number 1 to be increased or decreased?  

IncreasedDecreased
4. What is the goal (level of proficiency) that the student is expected to achieve by the date listed in number 2 above?
5. What measures will be used to monitor student progress:
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.
  - d.
6. How frequently will this student goal be monitored? (weekly? daily? etc.)
7. Who is responsible for monitoring this student goal?
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.

TIER II INTERVENTION GOAL 2:

Time Allotted: 5 minutes

1. Describe in measurable, observable terms the academic deficits and/or behavior that is to be changed:
2. What is the target date to achieve this goal?
- (continued)
3. Is the goal for the academic and/or behavior listed in number 1 to be increased or decreased?  

\_\_\_\_\_ Increased\_\_\_\_\_ Decreased
4. What is the goal (level of proficiency) that the student is expected to achieve by

the date listed in number 2 above?

5. What measures will be used to monitor student progress:
  - a.
  - b.
6. How frequently will this student goal be monitored? (weekly? daily? etc.)
7. Who is responsible for monitoring this student goal?
  - a.
  - b.

TIER II INTERVENTION GOAL 3:

Time Allotted: 5 minutes

1. Describe in measurable, observable terms the academic deficits and/or behavior that is to be changed:
2. What is the target date to achieve this goal?
3. Is the goal for the academic and/or behavior listed in number 1 to be increased or decreased?  
\_\_\_\_\_Increased                      \_\_\_\_\_Decreased
4. What is the goal (level of proficiency) that the student is expected to achieve by the date listed in number 2 above?
5. What measures will be used to monitor student progress:
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.
6. How frequently will this student goal be monitored? Weekly / daily / \_\_\_\_\_
7. Who is responsible for monitoring this student goal?