Implementing and Monitoring the Response to Intervention Process: The Special Educator Perspective

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Abstract

As a result of the varied implementation of Response to Intervention (RTI) and uneven occurrence of professional development, special education teachers struggle to adapt to new roles and responsibilities. The purpose of this mixed methods study was to explore the role of special education teachers in implementing and monitoring RTI, the role change of special education teachers as a result of RTI, and the professional development required to support special education teachers implementing RTI. The results suggest a need for greater collaboration between general and special educators in the areas of implementation, fidelity monitoring, and professional development.

Implementing and Monitoring the Response to Intervention Process: The Special Educator Perspective

The 2004 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) permits states, districts, and schools to use Response to Intervention (RTI) for determining eligibility for special education. This change in federal legislation spurred a ripple effect impacting the roles of administrative, related service, and instructional personnel (The National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities [NJCLD], 2005). For example, special education teachers' roles evolved to support general education students and teachers during the RTI process. As a result, special educators struggle to develop strong implementation and monitoring skills to ensure the fidelity of effective programming in the general education setting (Kovaleski, 2007). In addition, professional development is needed to train and support special education teachers in building and maintaining skills needed to implement and monitor RTI with fidelity (Hoover & Patton, 2008). Whereas teachers are the lynchpin of educational change (Fullan, 2001), the purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions of special educators related to role change, job-related responsibilities, and professional development needs in a mid-sized school district in the fifth year of RTI implementation. Specifically, it will explore areas for professional development that can enhance fidelity of implementation at the school and district levels. According to the National Center on Response to Intervention (NCRTI, n.d.), RTI is a school improvement effort

that integrates assessment and intervention in a multi-tiered instructional framework in order to increase student achievement and decrease interfering behaviors. In a RTI approach, schools identify at-risk learners, monitor student progress, provide research-based interventions, and adjust the intensity and nature of those interventions depending on a student's responsiveness. RTI can be used to determine students' eligibility for special education; however, it is not used consistently for this purpose. NCRTI defines fidelity as "the accurate and consistent provision or delivery of instruction in the manner in which it was designed or prescribed according to research findings and/or developers' specifications" (n.d.). Fidelity includes the following five elements: adherence, exposure, program differentiation, student responsiveness, and quality of delivery.

Special Educators and RTI

Collaboration among educators is crucial for meeting the needs of diverse populations of students in an RTI approach (see Cummings, Atkins, Allison, & Cole, 2008). In particular, special education teachers have knowledge of assessment, instruction, and individualized intervention; therefore, they are uniquely positioned to impact and assist schools implementing RTI (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2005). This is one factor that affects the workload of special education teachers. Although there is evidence of the changing role of special education teachers with the implementation of RTI (Cummings et al., 2008; Hover & Patton, 2008; Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2005), few studies exist (Fuchs, 2003). For example, Hoover and Patton (2008) concluded that additional research is needed to determine the extent to which special educators possess the skills and abilities required to implement RTI with fidelity. Furthermore, special educators' roles need to be investigated to determine the most effective ways to implement RTI given current demands in schools (Batsche, Kavale, & Kovaleski, 2007; Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2005). Without effective broadening and development of skills, fidelity of the RTI implementation process is at risk. Due to the nature of expanding and changing roles, special educators present a prime audience for targeted professional development related to RTI.

The Evolution of the Role of the Special Educator

Traditionally, special educators used a discrepancy approach to examine the identification of students with learning disabilities. In recent years, a major shift has occurred to an ecological approach of RTI that examines the relationship among student, environment, and instruction (Witt, 2006; Murawski & Hughes, 2009). A student's response to evidence-based intervention is now considered an effective method for determining disability status (Stecker, 2007). This is a considerable shift in thinking and one that suggests a need for professional development. For instance, general and special educators are expected to collaborate and co-teach in an effort to decrease the achievement gap (Murawski & Hughes, 2009). In an efficient and effective RTI process, collaboration and co-teaching provide students with a myriad of interventions in small and large group settings. However, as more traditional instructional service delivery models change to align with the RTI process so does the need for professional development to support the changing roles of teachers. An examination of teacher efficacy as related to RTI suggests that training experiences, integrated with school based assignments and on-sight follow-up over one school year, can enhance motivational skills efficacy and intervention skills efficacy of educators (Nunn & Jantz, 2008). The results of this study imply that greater clarity of roles and effective

professional development can increase an educator's perception of their effectiveness in increasing achievement.

In addition to skill sets and confidence levels of special education teachers, intervention fidelity is an essential component of the RTI process. Specifically, educators must effectively and strategically monitor and evaluate data collection in order to determine which interventions are successful for various populations of students.

Fidelity in the RTI Process

Fidelity exists when interventions are carried out with a high and consistent level of planning, data collection, and implementation (Kovaleski, 2007). In order to yield the benefits of RTI documented by researchers (VanDerHeyden, Witt, & Gilbertson, 2007), school-based practitioners must implement and monitor the RTI process with fidelity. However, there is little empirical work understanding RTI as it is implemented by school-based practitioners (Ardoin et al., 2005; VanDerHeyden et al., 2007). Ardoin et al. (2005) suggest that RTI may not be effective when implemented by front line professionals due to poor fidelity, inaccurate duration, and lack of frequency when compared to controlled research studies. Furthermore, researchers (Brown-Chidsey & Steege, 2005; Knotek, 2005; Kovaleski, 2007; & Kratochwill, Volpiansky, Clements, & Ball, 2007) have not yet sorted out how RTI will be best implemented in schools. Professional development is the key to implementation fidelity and actualizing the benefits of RTI cited in the literature (see Ardoin et al., 2005; Carney & Stiefel, 2008; VanDerHeyden & Witt, 2005; VanDerHeyden et al., 2007).

The Role of Professional Development for RTI Providers

Effective professional development is a critical element to implementation fidelity. Currently, professional development for practitioners implementing RTI varies greatly and occurs unevenly across schools, districts, and states (Hoover & Patton, 2008; Knotek, 2005). Kratochwill et al. (2007) suggest best practices for professional development and applied these best practices to RTI implementation and monitoring. Topics such as evidence-based interventions; multi-tiered intervention models; screening, assessment, and progress monitoring; administering interventions with a high degree of fidelity; support and coordinated efforts across all levels of staff and leadership within the school; and sustaining systems of prevention grounded in a RTI framework are recommended for RTI implementation so educators are able to successfully assume key roles at all tiers of RTI (Hoover & Patton, 2008).

Knotek (2005) described and applied four levels of impact (Showers & Joyce, 1996) needed to implement a new innovation to the implementation of RTI. The four levels included the following: awareness, conceptual understanding, skill acquisition, and application of skills. Knotek (2005) explained that practitioners reached awareness when they could cite important features of the model. He noted that conceptual understanding was reached when practitioners articulated the difference between assessment for referral and assessment of interventions. He clarified that the skill acquisition level commenced when practitioners had an opportunity to practice simulations and receive feedback. Finally, he stated that practitioners demonstrated application of skills when they used professional development learning in real situations within

the schools. At this level, practitioners reflected on best practice, mistakes, or unexpected road blocks. Knotek (2005) concluded that professional development at each level is crucial for practitioners implementing RTI with fidelity.

The purpose of the current study is to investigate the role of special education teachers in RTI implementation and monitoring, explore how the role of the special educator changed as a result of RTI, and discover potential improvements to better support special education teachers through professional development. These findings may offer information that can inform educational professionals at the school and district level (see Gates, 2010).

Research Questions

1. What roles do special education teachers play in the fidelity of implementation and monitoring during the RTI process?
2. Has the role of the special education teacher changed as a result of RTI implementation and monitoring?
3. To what extent can professional development support special education teachers as they attempt to implement and monitor RTI with fidelity?

Design

In this study, the researchers used a mixed methods approach. Specifically, a sequential explanatory approach was used in which quantitative and qualitative survey data from phase one was collected and analyzed before qualitative interview and observation data from phase two (see Creswell, 2003). In the analysis, surveys, interviews, and observations received equal priority followed by a series of analyses to identify patterns in the data.

Setting

The study took place in one school district in southeastern North Carolina. North Carolina was one of 15 states implementing RTI in schools. In addition, North Carolina was one of the three states implementing a problem solving model approach to RTI. Although North Carolina was implementing RTI on a small scale, it had existing embedded professional development prior to and during RTI implementation. Finally, North Carolina used both the discrepancy and response to intervention models to identify students with learning disabilities (Berkeley, Bender, Peaster, & Saunders, 2009). One school district in southeastern North Carolina was selected as the study site because of district-wide implementation of RTI in elementary schools and professional contacts within the district that facilitated data collection. According to the North Carolina School Report Cards for the 2008-2009 school year, 99% of all elementary teachers in the district are fully licensed. In addition, 24% of all elementary teachers have completed an advanced degree, Master's or doctoral. In terms of experience, 19% have been teaching between 0 and 3 years; 33% have been teaching between 4 and 10 years; and 48% have been teaching more than 10 years (Education First, n.d.).

Participants

Participants for this study were special education resource teachers in elementary schools implementing RTI in the mid-sized school district in southeastern North Carolina. All

participants completed phase one, while only a small subset of participants completed phase two interviews and observations.

Phase one participants. Participants for phase one consisted of a self-selected sample from the study school district. The Executive Director of the Special Education and Related Services department supplied researchers with a list of all 32 elementary resource teachers in the district. Twenty-nine of the 32 resource teachers (90.63%) responded to the Perception of RTI Skills survey, which is discussed below. The survey participants were predominantly Caucasian females (n = 27), one African American female (n = *1*), and one Caucasian male (n = *1*). Although the participants represented a range of licensure areas, most (72%) teachers were licensed in Specific Learning Disabilities. The second most common licensure area was Intellectual Disabilities (41%). The participants ranged in number of years of teaching experience. Thirty-two percent of the teachers had between 10 and 25 years of experience. About the same number of participants had less than 10 years (23%) and more than 25 years (24%) of experience. Sixteen percent of the participants had less than 5 years of teaching experience. In fact, three participants (10%) did not have experience with the discrepancy model (DM). The DM requires that a severe discrepancy between student ability, or a score on an IQ test, and achievement, or scores on achievement tests, in order for a student qualify for special education as a student with a specific learning disability (SLD). While all of the participants had implemented RTI between 1 and 5 years, the majority (38%) had implemented it for 2 years.

Phase two participants. The researchers purposively selected the sample for phase two from the survey participants who completed phase one. Dane (1990) explained that purposive sampling allows the researcher to hone in on people or events that are crucial to the research. The sample for phase two consisted of six resource teachers who agreed to participate in one interview and three observations. All six teachers were Caucasian females. The researchers selected resource teachers with various years of teaching experience in an effort to create a sample representative of the population. The 6 phase two participants reported the following number of years of teaching experience: 6, 8, 19, 25, 26, and 37. Teachers with less than 5 years of experience in education were excluded from phase two because they did not experience the change in role from DM to RTI.

Instruments

Perception of RTI skills survey. The purpose of the *Perceptions of RTI Skills* survey (see Appendix A) was to identify professional development needs of special education resource teachers. This survey was copyrighted by the Florida Problem-Solving and Response to Intervention Project (2007). This survey was selected because it breaks down the complex processes of implementing and monitoring RTI into discrete, quantifiable, and measureable tasks to which special education teachers can relate. Modifications included the addition of open-ended questions soliciting demographic information, perceptions of role in implementing and monitoring RTI, and perceptions of professional development. In addition, some of the wording of questions was changed to reflect the North Carolina context because the original survey was used in Florida. Lastly, the researchers created an online version of the survey using an online survey tool.

Ten questions were included at the beginning of the survey addressing demographic information including the following topics: gender, race, job title, certification, employment status, teaching experience, and experience with RTI. Ten items in the middle of the survey asked participants to rate their skill levels pertaining to aspects of assessment, instruction, and intervention involved in RTI. Seven questions were included at the end of the survey to provide a reference by which to compare the responses from phase two. These questions addressed participant perception of role implementing and monitoring RTI with fidelity, role change, and professional development.

Validity. Researchers implemented a review of the literature to corroborate the alignment of the survey to the research. Additionally, a panel review was conducted to ensure the instrument measured the intended subject matter (Colton & Covert, 2007). Specifically, a panel of special education liaisons, with teaching and district level experiences using RTI, reviewed the survey for content validity and made minimal modification based on their feedback to insure clarity of the instrument.

Reliability. Reliability, or the consistency of the measure, was established using Cronbach's Alpha (Kinnear & Gray, 2008) to determine internal consistency using a correlation coefficient to determine the relatedness of two mirrored items for each of the target concepts: professional development, fidelity, and role. The acceptable reliability for the survey instrument was 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978). The construct of professional development was supported with 5 comparisons. The comparisons and their Alphas are as follows: make data based decisions (.91), implement evidence based interventions (.70), implement socioemotional behavioral support (.60), differentiate instruction (.52), and collaborate (.19). The construct for fidelity earned an Alpha of .51, and the construct for role earned an Alpha of .38.

Special Education Teacher Roles in Implementing and Monitoring RTI Interviews. The purpose of the interviews was to determine the role of special education teachers in implementing and monitoring RTI. The researchers developed the nine-question interview protocol entitled *Special Education Teacher Roles in Implementing and Monitoring RTI* using results from a review of the literature to align with the research questions (see Appendix B). Through the survey, the principal investigator solicited information regarding special education teachers' perceptions of their role in RTI implementation and monitoring. In addition, questions were asked targeting special education teachers' perceptions of a potential role change from the use of the discrepancy model to use of RTI and professional development as it relates to role change.

Dependability, Credibility, and Transferability. In order to establish dependability, defined as consistency and stability over time (Miles and Huberman, 1994), the researchers designed the methods of this study to be congruent with the clearly written research questions. The principal investigator ensured that credibility was established by checking the accuracy of the transcribed interviews with the participants. In efforts to obtain a triangulation of data, both interviews and surveys were conducted. Finally, the researchers described the characteristics of the population and samples to enhance transferability, or readers' ability to apply elements of the present study to their personal experiences.

RTI: Monitoring for Fidelity Observations. The primary investigator conducted structured observations to gain information regarding how special education teachers monitor RTI with fidelity. The observation checklist entitled *RTI: Monitoring for Fidelity* (see Appendix C) was used as a tool for maintaining objectivity while observing special education teachers in the field. The observation checklist and observations allowed data to be collected through direct observations so information could be recorded immediately. Additionally, the primary investigator was able to explore topics that could have been uncomfortable for the participants to discuss (Creswell, 2003).

The researchers developed the checklist from a list of three areas of fidelity identified by the literature (The Iris Center, n.d.). The observation checklist is organized into the following three areas: the data collection method, the frequency of data collection, and the support systems used to maintain and improve implementation. The literature identified two evidences for each area. Using the observation checklist, the principal investigator indicated whether the evidence was observed, the nature of the evidence, and the context in which it occurred.

Dependability, Credibility, and Transferability. In order to establish dependability, trained reviewers conducted peer debriefing to enhance the accuracy of the accounts (Creswell, 2003). Specifically, they were provided with memos and observation checklists for review. Reviewers were selected based on their positions of leadership at the school and district levels, and each reviewer received 30 minutes of training on the debriefing process. Their insights allowed the primary investigator to see data from multiple perspectives. In efforts to check the strength and credibility of the data (see Creswell, 2003), rich descriptions were used to clarify researcher bias and memos provided a record of any researcher bias that was noted (Garson, 2011). In order to establish transferability for readers connecting the present results to personal contexts, the researchers compared the findings to those of previous research.

Researcher as instrument. Qualitative research is interpretive research that allows researchers to be involved in sustained and intensive experiences with the participants. Therefore, it is important to identify bias, values, and personal interests as researchers (Creswell, 2003). Efforts to monitor bias included measures such as a self-administered survey, an observational checklist, and an interview protocol.

Procedures

Perception of RTI skills survey. The primary investigator distributed a cross-sectional survey to all 32 resource teachers according to recommendations provided by Creswell (2003) to achieve a high response rate in addition to using email. Participants were e-mailed twice with links to an online survey before paper versions of the survey were distributed to each non-responder. Data were entered into the system manually and checked, if a paper version was used.

Special education teacher roles in implementing and monitoring RTI interviews. Once data from the survey was analyzed, the researchers solicited volunteers for phase two. The phase two interview helped to obtain information that was not reported and or could not be observed at a later date. Creswell (2003) noted the usefulness of interviews for providing historical participant information and allowing the researcher control over the line of questioning.

The individual, face-to-face interviews took place during school hours, in public school buildings, and in private rooms for confidentiality purposes. The principal investigator used an interview protocol to increase trustworthiness (see Appendix B). The interviews were audiotaped on a digital voice recorder and transcribed.

RTI: Monitoring for fidelity observations. The primary researcher observed the same six individuals who were interviewed and observations were conducted over the course of one month. Each participant was observed at a different time of the day to gain an understanding of the breadth of their role. An observational checklist (see Appendix C) was used in order to collect both descriptive and reflective notes as well as demographic information. Finally, documents that participants shared during their observations were analyzed.

Data Analysis

Data from the phase one survey was collected and analyzed by the primary investigator, followed by phase two observation and interview data. Finally, the Data were compared and integrated during the interpretation phase. Close-ended survey questions were examined using descriptive statistics and open-ended questions were analyzed for codes and themes. In the present study, themes are described as recurring patterns that pull together separate pieces of coded data. First codes were counted and then categories were determined to highlight any developing themes, using visual analysis.

Results and Discussion

How Do Special Education Teachers Implement and Monitor RTI with Fidelity?

Role size. Twenty-nine (100.00%) of phase one survey respondents indicated that they had at least a minor role in RTI, and 26 (89.66%) described their role as large or primary. Similarly, Cummings et al. (2008) posited that special education teachers possess knowledge of assessment, instruction, and individualized intervention and are instrumental in impacting and assisting schools as they implement RTI. In fact, in the present study, about half (47.62%) of the survey respondents from phase one was the chairperson, coordinator/facilitator, or co-chair of the RTI/Problem Solving Model (PSM) team for their respective schools. Phase two interview participants corroborated this pattern as more than half (62.50%) held similar leadership roles. Lau, Sieler, Muyskens, Canter, VanKeuren, and Marston (2006) noted the benefits of including special education teachers on collaborative decision making teams; however, the authors suggested that a general education teacher be the leader or co-leader of the team responsible for organizing and maintaining the RTI process.

Duties. Phase one survey participants supplied 11 (21.57%) responses that described administering interventions, nine (17.65%) responses that referenced attending meetings, and eight (15.69%) responses that referenced progress monitoring. Hoover and Patton (2008) and VanDerHeyden et al. (2007) confirmed the three aforementioned duties. However, the authors identified the following additional roles for special education teachers that survey participants did not cite: an implementation fidelity monitor, a decision maker, and a screening and assessment organizer. Bartle (2009) found that special education teachers increased their

presence and provided instruction in general education classrooms more often as a result of RTI implementation; however, the data from the present study did not support the author's finding. Phase two interview participants identified working with administration six (25.00%) times. Similarly, Bartle (2009) found that special education teachers worked closely with their administrators to promote professional development, collaboration, trust, and increased accountability.

Responsibility for RTI. Phase two interviewees described responsibility for RTI in one of three ways: a special education effort (9), a collaborative effort (7), or a general education effort (4). For five (83.33%) of the interviewees, RTI was a special education effort. However, for two (33.33%) of the five teachers, over time general education became more involved resulting in a collaborative effort. One of the five teachers experienced RTI as a general education effort. Posney (Spectrum K12, 2008) explained that there is a misperception of RTI as a special education initiative. Rather, the RTI effort should be a unified approach characterized by a collaborative team and shifting from who is responsible to what needs to be done (Spectrum K12, 2008; Ehren, Laster, & Watts-Taffe, 2009). Ehren et al. (2009) defined collaboration as the joining of forces, pooling of resources, and sharing of expertise in order to meet shared goals for instruction and assessment. Special education students are no longer the concern of a narrow group of educators and parents; they are increasingly the responsibility of everyone (Bartle, 2009). The National Center on Student Progress Monitoring [NCSPM] (2008) states that prior to RTI, classroom teachers did not know what was happening with their students in special education. After RTI, general education teachers and special education teachers work collaboratively to create the best learning environments for all students. Brown-Chidsey and Steege (2005) argued that RTI is a general education initiative beginning and ending in general education.

Fidelity. Phase one survey participants identified two methods for indirectly monitoring for fidelity that phase two interview participants corroborated: review data notebooks and consult with school staff. According to Gresham (1989), monitoring tools fall into two major categories: indirect and direct. Indirect assessments included self-report, rating scales, interviews, and permanent products. Of the indirect methods, permanent products were the most reliable and accurate. In the present study, observation participants used permanent products when they reviewed data notebooks. They used interviews when they consulted with school staff.

Direct assessments included observing and recording teacher behaviors (Gresham, 1989). Neither survey nor interview participants directly monitored fidelity. Direct and frequent assessment of an intervention for fidelity is considered to be best practice (Johnson, Mellard, Fuchs, & McKnight, 2006; Berkeley et.al., 2009). Johnson et al. (2006) provided several observation checklists for this purpose. Barringer (n.d.) explained how to conduct direct observations for implementation fidelity. First, observers directly monitoring fidelity must be trained in structured observation, the intervention being monitored, giving feedback, and developing positive, supportive relationships with teachers. Second, although observers do not have to be in a position of power, administrators are ultimately responsible. Third, monitoring should occur frequently at the beginning and include immediate, brief, constructive, and written feedback. Once a protocol is established, monitoring should ensue less frequently; however, it should always happen when interventionists ask for help. Not surprisingly, for five of the six

(83.33%) observation participants, monitoring depended on teachers' requests for help or instruction. Berkeley et al. (2009) noted that lack of direct observations could potentially leave states open to due process challenges over the diagnosis of learning disability identified using RTI procedures.

Phase one survey and phase two observation participants documented attending meetings and phase one survey participants cited progress monitoring as strategies for monitoring for fidelity; however, phase two interview participants did not mention these activities. The researchers discovered that attending meetings was a strategy for monitoring for fidelity that the phase two interview participants used during observations. This was conflicting data from interview and observation participants who made up the same sample. Likewise, phase two interview participants included changing interventions as a strategy for monitoring for fidelity; however, phase one survey participants did not mention the activity. Berkeley et al. (2009) found that most state models do not include clear requirements for monitoring implementation fidelity. Johnson et al. (2006) recognized the importance of providing professional development and support to school staff monitoring for fidelity. They developed an Essential Task List for Fidelity of Implementation. One of the first items on the list was developing a fidelity data collection system that included both direct and indirect measures. Having such a list ensures a common language and shared practices for monitoring fidelity and decreases the likelihood of conflicting accounts.

How Has the Role of the Special Education Teacher Changed as a Result of RTI Implementation and Monitoring?

Degree of role change. In phase one, 25 (86.21%) of 29 survey participants indicated that their role changed (84.00%) or did not change (16.00%) as a result of the implementation of RTI. The data from phase two corroborated phase one data; five (83.33%) of six interviewees stated that they experienced a role change as a result of RTI implementation. Interview participants were asked to describe their degree of role change on a scale from one to ten. Their responses revealed a mean of 4.50 and a standard deviation of 2.51 indicating a moderate change in their roles. Cummings et al. (2008) stated that it is not the specific roles of special education teachers that needed to change, but rather the skill sets within those roles which needed to broaden. In the present study, three of the five teachers who described a role change also stated that their role has not changed. Factors contributing to this ambivalence were the size of the school, administrator influence, and preservice teacher training. Haar, Robicheau, and Palladino (2008) did not find the size of the school to be a factor influencing role change; however, they found that rural schools had difficulty meeting all of the students' needs in a RTI context. The authors reinforced the concept of administrator influence and recommended that administrator preparation programs prepare aspiring school leaders with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to allocate resources to ensure interventions can and will be implemented as recommended within a RTI model. Furthermore, they underscored the impact of special education teacher preparation programs by recommending that such programs include an understanding of intervention strategies, assessment of instructional strategies, data collection, and problem/solving decision making skills. Bartle (2009) concluded that practitioner roles in a RTI context will continue to shift overtime.

Impact on students. Of the phase one survey participants'16 responses that referenced the impact of RTI on students, nine (56.25%) responses mentioned providing interventions and progress monitoring to students without IEPs. Cummings et al. (2008) and the NJCLD (2005) concurred. The authors compared the role of the special education teacher from a historical context to a RTI context. They found that historically special education teachers provided intensive instruction to a relatively stable group of students within a given school year. Conversely, in a RTI context, special education teachers provided differentiated instruction to a variety of students and grouping was flexible and dynamic. The NJCLD (2005) identified providing more intensive interventions, mastering research based methods and materials, and providing them with fidelity to groups of various sizes in different environments.

In phase two, three (50.00%) interview participants yielded four (30.77%) responses citing not being effective special education teachers to students with IEPs. The NJCLD (2005) acknowledged this challenge. They contended that the new instruction, assessment, documentation, and collaborative activities required by RTI present new challenges for all education professionals including special education teachers. Haar et al. (2008) also found that special education teachers struggled to fulfill their changing roles. In the present study, two (33.33%) interviewees yielded four (30.77%) responses indicating that students with IEPs were getting their needs met regardless of their special education teachers' role change. One teacher used grouping strategies and the other used stronger planning and preparation to meet the challenge of addressing the needs of all students. Harr et al. (2008) also found that special education teachers indicated a need for a non teaching "intervention specialist" role. According to Reschly and Gresham (2006), four factors that impact teachers' abilities to be successful at RTI implementation are intervention complexity, required materials and resources, perceived and actual effectiveness, and interventionists. Implementation fidelity is more likely when interventions are easy to implement; materials and resources are at one's fingertips; teachers' beliefs and teaching styles are compatible with RTI principles; and the number, expertise, and motivation of interventionists are appropriate.

Impact on profession. In the present study, the phase one survey participants identified four factors that changed within their professional environment as a result of RTI implementation: time, paperwork, meetings, and collaboration. Cummings et al. (2008) also found that RTI impacted the professional environment for special educators. In the present study, 11 (37.93%) of the 29 responses from the survey participants supporting the impact on profession sub category regarded time. Haar et al. (2008) found that special education teachers did not have the time to address both special education and general education issues. To address the lack of time required to implement RTI, Lau et al. (2006) suggested that administrators build time for RTI team members to plan, train, meet, and evaluate into the school schedule. In the present study, 11 (24.14%) responses referenced the completion and monitoring of paperwork. Haar et al. (2008) recommended the reduction of paperwork for the successful implementation of RTI. In the present study, five (17.24%) responses concerned meetings. Lau et al. (2006) found that decision making teams benefited from the collaborative efforts of special education teachers; however, meetings necessitated a time commitment. While two (6.90%) responses in the present study cited increased consultation and interaction, one (3.45%) response referenced being less involved. Cummings et al. (2008); the NCSPM (2008); and Hoover and Patton (2008) documented that increased collaboration among special educators and school staff is necessary to

implement RTI. However, the NJCLD (2005) cautioned that school cultures treating general education and special education as separate will face a challenge developing the interdependence essential to RTI implementation.

Phase two interview participants provided 12 (52.17%) positive responses and 11 (47.83%) negative responses regarding the impact that RTI had on special education as a profession. Of the 12 positive responses, three teachers provided six (50.00%) responses that referenced helping oneself, and two teachers provided six (50.00%) responses that referenced helping others. In terms of helping oneself, Lau et al. (2006) found that RTI benefits special educators in the following ways: planning assessments, writing IEPs, and designing the students' instructional program if they are found eligible for special education. For instance, special education teachers looked at previous interventions and results when planning academic assessments. Also, successful interventions were turned into IEP goals rather than repeating less successful strategies.

The NCSPM (2008) outlined benefits for students, parents, and school personnel. In a RTI model, all students were progress monitored at least three times per year instead of annually. Also, parents felt that they were a part of the school instead of disconnected. Lastly, both general education teachers and specialists provide interventions and progress monitoring as opposed to the previous model in which general education teachers did not receive support from specialists.

Of the 11 negative responses provided by the phase two interviewees, three (50.00%) teachers added eight (72.72%) responses that referenced less time, and two (33.33%) teachers added three (27.27%) responses that referenced more duties. In terms of less time, Haar et al. (2008) found that special education teachers expressed concerns about their role in RTI; the teachers stated that they needed more time to work on interventions. In terms of more duties, Hoover and Patton (2008) stated that the skills needed for special education teachers to implement RTI are similar as the ones required for the DM; however, the skills required for RTI are far more extensive than those of the past. Cummings et al. (2008) described the many different hats that special educators wear in a RTI model.

How Can Professional Development Support Special Education Teachers as They Attempt to Implement and Monitor RTI with Fidelity?

Supporting strategies. Phase two interview participants identified the following as important strategies for supporting professional development: initial and ongoing training sessions, learning by doing, and collaboration among schools. First, interview participants overwhelmingly noted that ongoing professional development is crucial. Specifically, they identified initial training for new teachers and refresher courses for veterans. Kratochwill et al. (2007); NJCLD (2005); and The Iris Center, (n.d.) recommended that schools have plans in place to address training protocols for new staff. In addition, the authors recommended that schools provide veteran staff additional booster sessions that help them to stay current and maintain skills. Second, phase one survey participants indicated learning by doing as an important supporting strategy for professional development, and phase two interview participants concurred. Similarly, Knotek (2005); Showers and Joyce (1996); and The Iris Center (n.d.) underscored the importance of including opportunities for practice and application of skills in

their professional development models. The cycle of learning, practicing, and reviewing is central to professional development related to RTI (Brown-Chidsey & Steege, 2005). Furthermore, professional development sessions in which participants sit and listen to experts are ineffective (Bartle, 2009). Likewise, in preservice special education teacher training, Hawkins, Kroeger, MustiRao, Barnett, and Ward (2008) emphasized the importance of field experiences.

Teacher recommendations for improvement. Phase one survey participants most often (26.47%) cited the need for professional development related to specific, research based interventions such as Hill Center methodology, strategies for centers, and differentiated instructional techniques for students with behavioral challenges, and ADHD/ADD. Kratochwill et al. (2007) cited the lack of training in implementation of evidence-based practices as a significant challenge to the implementation of RTI. Haar et al. (2008) found that all stakeholders (general education teachers, special education teachers, and administrators) referenced the need for professional development and training on interventions. In the present study, survey participants specified the need for interventions right at one's fingertips. Reschley and Gresham (2006) concurred. They noted that if interventions are complex or if materials and resources are substantial, then fidelity of implementation is greatly reduced. In the present study, phase one survey participants mentioned the need for collaborative efforts among schools, and phase two interview participants agreed. For example a phase one survey participant suggested a pubshare for successful interventions. A pubshare as used in this context refers to shared, virtual storage space for collaboration among school personnel. Brown-Chidsey and Steege (2005) and Haar et al. (2008) documented the importance of time for co-planning and meaningful collaboration between general and special education personnel across all grade levels within a school. To date, researchers have not documented specific recommendations for collaborative partnerships among schools.

Three areas of professional development. When asked to rate themselves on a scale (no skill, minimal skill, some skill, very skilled, or very highly skilled) in respect to 40 target skills required to implement RTI with fidelity, all 29 phase one survey respondents rated themselves as very skilled or very highly skilled in one area: collaborate with colleagues. Cummings et al. (2008) described the collaborative role that special educators play in a RTI context. The authors explained that special educators are often called on to consult with general educators and specialists.

In the current study, 40 skills were organized into three areas: skills of strength, skills of maintenance, and skills of focus. To be classified as a skill of strength, more than 80% of phase one survey participants identified themselves as very skilled or very highly skilled. To be classified as a skill of maintenance, between 60% and 80% of phase one survey participants identified themselves as very skilled or very highly skilled. To be classified as a skill of focus, less than 60% of the phase one survey participants identified themselves as being very skilled or very highly skilled. The six skills of focus require additional attention and include the following: implement social, emotional, and behavioral support; draw a trendline; graph peer data; graph and display student and school data electronically; collect DIBELS data; and use electronic data collection tools (e.g., PDAs). Knotek (2005) documented that the implementation of RTI requires education professionals to acquire and bolster their skill sets; the skills needed to

successfully implement RTI range from simple to complex. The six skills of focus are discussed below.

Thirteen (44.83%) of the phase one survey participants rated themselves as having no, minimal, or some skill with implementing social, emotional, and behavioral support. One (3.45%) participant identified herself as having minimal skill in this area, and 12 (41.38%) participants had some skill. Hoover and Patton (2008) identified the role of implementing socioemotional and behavior supports as one of five essential roles for special educators within a RTI context. This role involved working with students who display a range of social, emotional, and behavioral challenges. Hawken, Vincent, and Schumann (2008) noted that conducting functional behavior assessments and behavior support plans were recommended components of effective Tier 3 behavior support. However, schools found it difficult to implement this level of support for 5% of their population due to the time and resources required.

Twelve (42.86%) of the phase one survey participants rated themselves as having no, minimal, or some skill with drawing a trendline and graphing peer data. Two (7.14%) participants identified themselves as having minimal skill with drawing a trendline, and three (10.71%) identified themselves as having minimal skill with graphing peer data. Ten (35.71%) participants and nine (32.14%) participants had some skill in those areas respectively. Knotek (2005) cited charting and graphing data as a specific skill needed for the implementation of RTI. Kratochwill et al. (2007) identified the knowledge and skills necessary for weekly progress monitoring of students as an important learning outcome.

Fifteen (51.72%) of the phase one survey participants rated themselves as having no, minimal, or some skill with collecting DIBELS data. Two (6.90%) participants indicated no skill, and six (20.69%) indicated minimal skill. Seven (24.14%) participants described some skill. According to the NCSPM (2008), historically, valid, reliable Data were not collected frequently over time to inform instructional decisions. However, in a RTI context, student data from curriculum based measurement is used to plan instruction and ensure that progress occurs frequently. Knotek (2005) cited conducting a curriculum based measurement in reading as a specific skill needed for the implementation of RTI. Although there are various metrics that assess student knowledge, fluency, and accuracy with academic tasks, DIBELS is a popular system of curriculum based measurement for monitoring student progress (Good, Kaminski, Simmons, & Kame'enui, 2001).

Eighteen (62.07%) of the survey participants rated themselves as having no, minimal, or some skill with using electronic data collection tools (e.g. PDAs). Three (10.34%) participants cited no skill, and five (17.24%) cited minimal skill. Ten (34.48%) participants responded with some skill. Similarly, 22 (75.86%) of the survey participants rated themselves as having no, minimal, or some skill with graphing and displaying student and school data electronically. One (3.45%) participant communicated no skill, and eight (27.59%) communicated minimal skill. Thirteen (44.83%) participants declared some skill. According to the NCSPM (2008), historically, report card grades were ineffective tools to measure student progress. However, in a RTI context, web based assessments such as DIBELS and data management systems such as Aimsweb can now track progress. Lau et al. (2006) recommended the use of technology in the RTI process such as web-based forms, online data collection, and free secure access for teachers after work from home. Burns (n.d.) provided evidence that technology made RTI implementation easier and more

likely to occur for the four essential components of RTI: high quality instruction, tiered instruction/intervention, ongoing student assessment, and family involvement. In fact, technology has the potential to ameliorate the existing time and behavior barriers identified by the participants in the present study. Furthermore, Burns (n.d.) implored schools to commit the resources to train staff because few teachers are well trained in technology applications.

Limitations

Three limitations were noted in regards to this study. First, the small size of the sample for the survey may have impacted results. Charter (2003) noted that small sample sizes can yield unstable alpha coefficients. Second, the self selection for interview and observation participants presented a limitation. Knotek (2005) concurred stating that most research in the area of RTI has been done with self-selected teachers who volunteer for a study that seems interesting to them. Third, this investigation focused on one school district to limit the variability inherent in differing approaches to RTI implementation across states, districts, and schools. Thus, these findings may not generalize to the broader population. However, they provide an interesting examination of current RTI implementation challenges with which special educators struggle.

Implications for Future Research

Rigidity versus flexibility. Balancing rigidity and flexibility in RTI implementation presents another area for future research (NJCLD, 2005). Rigidity increases the likelihood that successful frameworks can be researched and replicated. Flexibility allows school leaders to work with their existing resources and strengths to implement a version of RTI that works best for their students and school staff. The present study depicts the significant yet unique roles that special educators embody within their individual schools. Bartle (2009) posited that there will be confusion in the field until school buildings have a universal understanding as to each person's role. Future research into whether a consistent role can be developed for special educators in a RTI context is needed. Based on that research, educational leaders can determine whether one universal job description for special education teachers can be developed in order to facilitate implementation fidelity of RTI.

Special educators as fidelity monitors. The phase one survey participants did not identify themselves as implementation fidelity monitors, and this pattern was evidenced by phase two interview participants. This finding illustrates the need for districts and schools implementing RTI to provide explicit training to special education teachers in the area of monitoring for fidelity (see Brown-Chidsey & Steege, 2005; Kratochwill et al., 2007) as implementation fidelity is crucial to intervention success (see Ardoin et al., 2005; Kovaleski, 2007; VanDerHeyden et al., 2007). Topics including pertinent definitions, methods, frequency, and support systems are crucial to include in such training. Ehren et al. (2009) argued that a shared language is essential to implementation fidelity. Thus, specific learning outcomes include a common language and shared practices among practitioners. It is possible that there is a lack of a common understanding and language regarding fidelity that, once established, might yield different results. Ehren et al. (2009) suggested awareness, clarification, and common ground as avenues for developing a shared language. Kovaleski (2007) suggested that more research is needed to understand how treatment fidelity can be realistically accomplished.

In addition to monitoring for fidelity, special education teachers must be prepared for their impending, informal leadership roles. For instance, 29 (100.00%) phase one survey respondents indicated that they had at least a minor role in RTI, and 26 (89.66%) described their role as large or primary. Because special educators assumed a large role in the RTI process, it is crucial to develop their leadership skills in this area. Billingsley (2007) recognized the important role that special education teachers have in reforming schools. In the author's single case study, a special education teacher had an impact on the practices across an entire school district. Special education teachers are uniquely prepared to be leaders because their training includes opportunities to study collaborative processes, consider their own communication skills, develop knowledge about how to deal with conflicts, and work effectively with others. Billingsley (2007) calls for special education teachers to have an active role in the design and implementation of mentoring programs; the present study indicates the need for special education teachers to have an active role in the design and implementation of RTI models. Future research is needed to understand how effective district administrators support and develop special education leaders.

Responsibility for RTI. For the majority (83.33%) of the phase two interviewees, RTI was a special education effort. However, two interviewees reported that their schools were moving towards a collaborative effort, and one interviewee described RTI as a general education effort. Haar et al. (2008) found that RTI is viewed by stakeholders as an opportunity for school systems to move from a dual system (general education and special education) into a unified system that can more effectively meet the needs of all students. Federal, state, district, and school leaders should continue to clarify the misperception that RTI is the responsibility of special education and promote a unified approach through strategies such as differentiated instruction and inclusive education.

Preservice special education teacher preparation. The testimony of one teacher implies the efficacy of diagnostic prescriptive teacher training related to the implementation of RTI. Future research into the impact of the different avenues of teacher preparation on the implementation of RTI is needed. Findings could yield information helpful to leaders hiring special education teachers.

In this study, there was a similar pattern evidenced by phase one survey participants and phase two interview participants: about half of the special educators were the chairperson, coordinator/facilitator, or co-chair of the PSM team for their respective schools. Similarly, in a case study of three schools (Bartle, 2009), all three special education teachers stepped forward to take on informal leadership roles. This finding indicates the need for teacher preparation programs to prepare future special education teachers for assuming these leadership roles in a RTI model. By requiring coursework in both leadership and RTI, teacher preparation programs will equip preservice teachers for their impending careers. Hawkins et al. (2008) documented the success of preservice field experiences for special education undergraduates placed in a Kindergarten setting. Future research is needed to determine how school districts can partner with institutions of higher education to provide sites for clinical practice that can serve as both inservice and preservice training opportunities.

In this study, the researchers investigated the role of the special education teacher as it relates to implementation, fidelity, and professional development. The findings revealed that special education teachers have a large role in RTI implementation, they monitor fidelity indirectly, and they are competent in the majority of the skills required for successful RTI implementation. Armed with this research, school leaders will continue to grapple with challenging decisions regarding resource allocation, implementation fidelity, and consensus building as they implement RTI in their schools, district, and states. For instance, whereas the responsibility for RTI tends to be delegated to special or general education, how can educational leaders develop a unified effort? Also, if special educators are not directly monitoring RTI for fidelity, is someone else monitoring it? Or, is it not being monitored? To what extent are special education teacher preparation programs responsible for preparing preservice teachers to implement socioemotional and behavioral support, use curriculum based measurement, chart and graph student data, and use technology to implement RTI? Research on these questions and others that emerge will determine the longevity of RTI as a prevention and identification model for the construct of SLD.

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Appendix A

Survey: Perception of RTI Skills

1. Select one:
   - ☐ Male
   - ☐ Female

2. What is your race? _____

3. What is your current position?
   - ☐ Resource Teacher
   - ☐ Other (please specify):_____

4. Please Share your current areas of NC teacher licensure.
   - ☐ Specific Learning Disabilities
   - ☐ Exceptional Children: General Curriculum
   - ☐ Exceptional Children: Adapted Curriculum
   - ☐ Behaviorally/Emotionally Handicapped
   - ☐ Cross Categorical
   - ☐ Mentally Handicapped
   - ☐ Severely/Profoundly Handicapped
   - ☐ Other (please specify): _____

5. What is your employment status?
   - ☐ Full-time one school
   - ☐ Full-time more than one school
   - ☐ Part-time one school
   - ☐ Part-time more than one school

6. Including this year, how many years of teaching experience do you have? ____

7. Including this year, how many years have you been in your current position? ____

8. Including this year, how many years have you been implementing RTI? ____

9. Do you have experience using the discrepancy model (15 points difference between IQ and achievement) to identify students for special education?
   - ☐ Yes
   - ☐ No

10. Please describe you role in RTI implementation and/or monitoring at your school(s).
    - ☐ No role
    - ☐ Minor role
    - ☐ Some role
    - ☐ Large role
    - ☐ Primary role

Directions: Using the following scale, circle your answer.

1 = No Skill (NS)
2 = Minimal Skill (MS)
3 = Some Skill (SS)
4 = Very Skilled (VS)
5 = Very Highly Skilled (VHS)

11. To what degree do you have the following skills?	NS	MS	SS	HS	VHS
Make data based decisions	1	2	3	4	5
Implement evidence based interventions	1	2	3	4	5
Implement social, emotional, and behavioral support	1	2	3	4	5
Differentiate instruction	1	2	3	4	5
Collaborate with colleagues	1	2	3	4	5

12. To what degree do you have the following skills?	NS	MS	SS	HS	VHS
Use data to make decision about individuals and groups of students	1	2	3	4	5
Monitor RTI to ensure it is implemented as intended	1	2	3	4	5

13. To what degree can you perform each of the following steps when identifying the problem for a student?	NS	MS	SS	HS	VHS
Define the referral concern	1	2	3	4	5
Use data to define the current level of performance of the target student	1	2	3	4	5
Determine the desired level of performance	1	2	3	4	5
Determine the current level of peer performance for the same skill as the target student	1	2	3	4	5
Calculate the gap between student current performance and the benchmark	1	2	3	4	5

Use data to determine whether core instruction should be adjusted or whether supplemental instruction should be directed to the target student	1	2	3	4	5

14. To what degree do you have the following skills?	NS	MS	SS	HS	VHS
Develop potential reasons (hypotheses) that a student or group of students is/are not achieving desired levels of performance (i.e., benchmarks)	1	2	3	4	5
Identify the most appropriate type(s) of data to use for determining reasons (hypotheses) that are likely to be contributing to the problem	1	2	3	4	5
Identify the appropriate supplemental intervention available in my building for a student identified as at-risk	1	2	3	4	5

15. To what degree can you access resources (e.g., Internet sources, professional literature) to develop evidence-based interventions for the following?	NS	MS	SS	HS	VHS
Core curricula	1	2	3	4	5
Supplemental curricula	1	2	3	4	5
Individualized intervention plans	1	2	3	4	5

16. To what degree do you have the following skills?	NS	MS	SS	HS	VHS
Determine appropriate interventions for each member of a group of students: core, supplemental, or intensive	1	2	3	4	5
Ensure that the proposed intervention plan is supported by the data that were collected	1	2	3	4	5

Provide the support necessary to ensure that the intervention is implemented appropriately.	1	2	3	4	5
Determine if an intervention was implemented as it was intended	1	2	3	4	5
Select appropriate data (e.g., Curriculum-Based Measurement, DIBELS, EOG, behavioral observations) to use for progress monitoring of student performance during interventions	1	2	3	4	5

17. To what degree do you have the following skills needed to construct graphs for large group, small group, and individual students?	NS	MS	SS	HS	VHS
Graph target student data	1	2	3	4	5
Graph benchmark data	1	2	3	4	5
Graph peer data	1	2	3	4	5
Draw an aimline	1	2	3	4	5
Draw a trendline	1	2	3	4	5

18. To what degree do you have the following skills?	NS	MS	SS	HS	VHS
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
Make modifications to intervention plans based on student response to intervention	1	2	3	4	5
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 a learning	1	2	3	4	5

disability					
Facilitate a Problem Solving Team	1	2	3	4	5

19. To what degree do you have the skill to collect the following types of data?	NS	MS	SS	HS	VHS
Curriculum-Based Measurement	1	2	3	4	5
DIBELS	1	2	3	4	5
Access data from appropriate district- or school-wide assessments	1	2	3	4	5
Standard behavioral observations	1	2	3	4	5

20. To what degree do you have the skill to use technology in the following ways?	NS	MS	SS	HS	VHS
Access the internet to locate sources of academic and behavioral evidence-based interventions.	1	2	3	4	5
Use electronic data collection tools (e.g., PDAs)	1	2	3	4	5
Graph and display student and school data electronically	1	2	3	4	5

21. What percentage of your time is spent implementing and/or monitoring RTI?
☐ 0% ☐ 25% ☐ 50% ☐ 75% ☐ 100%

22. Please describe your role as it relates to implementing RTI at your school.

_____

_____

23. Please describe your role as it relates to monitoring RTI to ensure it is implemented as intended.

_____

_____

24. Please describe any changes in your role that you have experienced as a result of the shift from the discrepancy model to RTI.

_____

_____

25. What professional development activities have helped you most in implementing and monitoring RTI?

_____

_____

26. What professional development activities would you like to receive to help you implement and monitor RTI in the future?

_____

_____

27. Is there anything else that you would like to add? If so, use the space below to respond.

Thank you for your participation. If you have any questions, contact Leigh Gates at lkh8345@uncw.edu

Appendix B

Interview: Special Education Teacher Roles in Implementing and Monitoring RTI

Introduction:
Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. I appreciate your time and expertise.

1. Including this school year, how long have you been implementing RTI?

2. Do you have specific roles and/or responsibilities related to the implementation of RTI?
    a. What are they?

3. Do you have specific roles and/or responsibilities related to monitoring RTI implementation? [What I mean by monitoring is ensuring that it is being implemented with fidelity, or the way that it was intended to be implemented.]
    a. What are they?

4. Has your role as a Resource Teacher changed with the implementation of RTI?
    Yes Response:
        i. On a scale from 1 to 10, to what degree has your role changed?
            1. In what ways has your role changed?
                a. Can you describe specific examples?
            2. What effect has your role change had on students with IEPs?
    No Response:
        i. What are your roles and responsibilities?
        ii. I have a list of stakeholders. After I name each one, can you tell me if their role has changed and how it has changed?
            3. students, parents, general education teachers, general education teacher assistants, special education teacher assistants, school psychologists, speech language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapist, social worker, principal, assistant principal
        iii. I have a list of 5 different areas. After I name an area, can you describe your roles and/or responsibilities in that area, if any?
            4. Data Driven Decision Making
            5. Evidence-Based Instruction
            6. Differentiation
            7. Collaboration
            8. Socio-Emotional and Behavioral Supports **(GO TO Q9)**
            9.
5. In your opinion, what are the positive outcomes as a result of your role change?
    a. Can you describe specific examples?

6. In your opinion, what are the drawbacks as a result of your role change?
    a. Can you describe specific examples?

7. Have you received professional development that has assisted you in your role change?
    Yes Response:
        i. Can you provide specific examples of the professional development that addressed role change?
            a. Specifically, how did it help you with your role change?
        ii. Could it have assisted you more?
            a. In what ways could it have assisted you more?
    If not,
        i. Do you think that staff development focused on changing roles as a result of RTI would be beneficial?
            Yes Response:
            2. For what reasons do you think that it would be beneficial?
            No Response:
            3. For what reasons do you think that it would not be beneficial?

8. Is there anything else that you would like to share?

Thank you for taking your time to speak with me about RTI.

Appendix C
Observation Checklist: RTI: Monitoring for Fidelity

METHOD	FREQUENCY	SUPPORT SYSTEMS
Directly **observe and record** behavior	at a minimum **three times per year** (coinciding with the universal screenings)	Providing **ongoing professional development and support** **Allocating resources** that enable teachers to implement RTI.
Indirect assessment: **1. self-reports,** **2. interviews,** **3. student work samples, and** 4. **an interpretation of existing data**	Depending on factors such as: **1. Teachers' experience levels** **2. Teachers' requests for help or instruction** 3. **Outcomes of previous fidelity checks**	(Proactive) **Assess teachers' needs at the start** of the RTI implementation, and provide training and resources accordingly. (Reactive) Provide **additional professional development, in the form of coaching or mentoring** if the fidelity data indicates that a teacher is not implementing the RTI procedures correctly.