

**General Education Teachers' Attitudes and Beliefs about Response to Intervention
Implementation: An Elicitation Study**

by

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Abstract

Response to Intervention/Instruction (RtI) has been implemented in schools for several years. The framework varies slightly from state to state and district to district. It also varies from school to school within school districts. Teachers are charged with implementing this tiered instructional approach. According to Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior, a person's willingness to engage in an activity can be dependent upon their attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control related to that activity. This elicitation study explored general education classroom teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions related to the implementation of the RtI process. It also explored the scope and frequency to which teachers report implementing the RtI process.

A qualitative study was conducted in the form of an online questionnaire followed by interviews. The questionnaire was used to elicit responses from participants regarding their attitudes toward advantages and disadvantages related to the process, people they believe would approve or disapprove (subjective norms) of their implementation of the process, and circumstances they perceived as allowing implementation or making implementation difficult (perceived behavioral control). Responses were coded into categories and arranged in themes in order to answer the research questions.

This study explored general education teachers' beliefs, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control as related to the implementation of Response to Intervention/Instruction at the pilot/exploratory level. The results for teachers' perceived advantages and disadvantages of RtI, circumstances that allow for implementation or make implementation difficult, and people who would approve and disapprove of the teachers' implementation of RtI were reported in the

findings. Furthermore, specific data related to some teachers' implementation of Tier II and Tier III intervention was reported.

The findings from this study could help school leaders better understand how teachers' perceptions and beliefs influence their practices related to RtI implementation. The findings can also help to influence current RtI policies and practices to better assist teachers and students. Furthermore, the results from this study could be used in future research in exploring the possible relationship between teacher beliefs and actual implementation.

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Chapter I: Introduction

With the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001, schools have worked to increase accountability for teachers and close academic achievement gaps among students (U.S. Department of Education [USDOE], 2001). Most recently, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), signed into law in December 2015, continues to focus on increasing student achievement while giving more control to the states and local school boards, realizing that there is not a one-size-fits-all solution to problems facing education today. The reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 2004 was designed to ensure students with disabilities are receiving the services they need (USDOE, 2004). The Response to Intervention/ Instruction (RtI) model give educators alternatives to the IQ discrepancy model for identifying students with specific learning disabilities and provides a framework for individualizing instruction to meet students' needs.

The reauthorization of IDEA states, “In determining whether a child has a specific learning disability, a local educational agency may use a process that determines if [the child] responds to scientific, research-based intervention as part of the evaluation process” (20 U.S.C. §1414[b][6]). Fuchs, Fuchs, and Stecker (2010) compared the perspectives on RtI based on both NCLB and IDEA and found that the purpose of RtI related to IDEA is two-fold: to provide early interventions for students at risk of falling behind or failing and serve as an alternative method for identifying students with specific learning disabilities. IDEA uses a standard protocol approach to RtI. In Tier I, the teacher uses a universal screener to screen all students at the beginning of the school year to identify students who are potentially at risk of failing. The identified students are monitored for five to eight weeks as the teacher provides evidence-based classroom instruction. Students who are considered nonresponsive to the general classroom

instruction are moved to Tier II, where they receive tutoring in a small group setting. This instruction is often scripted and based on a standard protocol. It is typically focused on core skill development. IDEA uses instruction in the intervention setting as an assessment of the student's capability of responding to effective instructional practices (Fuchs et al., 2010). At the Tier III level, students are provided a more individualized approach to instruction, often by the special education teacher. It is at this level that a determination of the need for special education services is often made.

In NCLB, RtI took a problem-solving approach. The purpose of RtI here is to provide standards-based general education instruction and form a bridge between general education and special education (Fuchs et al., 2010). The goal is to have accountability for everyone while holding high academic standards. The Response to Intervention/Instruction model continues to be implemented after the authorization of ESSA. It continues to be a framework for providing individualized instruction. While the framework has key components, states and districts continue to implement, document, and sustain the process differently. Tier I instruction is differentiated to meet the individual needs of all students in the classroom. In the NCLB model of RtI, Tier II instruction is still individualized for each student, but the teacher may consult with a building-level, problem-solving team to determine interventions to be implemented, and the effectiveness of the interventions (Fuchs et al., 2010). Tier III continues to provide individualized instruction, the teacher still consults with the building problem-solving team, but the interventions occur more frequently. Fuchs and colleagues (2010) indicated it is in this approach to RtI that a fourth tier exists and is generally related to the special education realm. The general education teacher is the faculty member charged with determining the need for interventions, implementing the interventions, and using progress monitoring data to determine

the effectiveness of the interventions. Teachers must be knowledgeable of the process to be able to implement it effectively. A teacher's beliefs, skills, and experiences are an important aspect of their ability to successfully implement the RtI framework in their classroom (Castillo et al., 2015).

The state of Alabama began using the RtI model at the beginning of the 2010-2011 school year. In Alabama, RtI refers to Response to Instruction; Nationwide, RtI refers to Response to Intervention. Alabama developed a state RtI protocol and handbook that explained the adopted components of the process (Alabama Department of Education, 2009). This handbook included an overall framework, description of the various tiers of instruction, and components; however, it did not provide a prescriptive implementation guide for school districts. Therefore, some implementation details varied by district. The state did not mandate a list of interventions to use, a program, or the forms required for documentation. Based on the state handbook, each district developed a RtI plan that aligned with state guidelines. This multi-tiered instructional process was then implemented within the schools replacing the Building-Based Student Support Team.

Research Problem

For several years, the RtI process has been implemented and studied nationwide (Bineham, Shelby, Pazey, & Yates, 2014; Fuchs et al., 2010; Mellard, McKnight, & Jordan, 2010). There have been many studies conducted on the concepts behind the method (see Fuchs & Deshler, 2007; Fuchs, Fuchs, & Vaughn, 2014), the components or best practices needed for successful implementation (see Denton, 2012; Gersten & Dimino, 2006; Greenwood et al., 2013; Hill, King, Lemons, & Partanen, 2012; Mellard et al., 2010; O'Connor & Freeman, 2012; Stahl, Keane, & Simic, 2013; Stuart, Rinaldi, & Higgins-Averill, 2011), and the implementation itself

(see Fuchs & Fuchs, 2007; Hill et al., 2012). A large amount of the research is based on early reading intervention or related to special education identification (see Bineham et al., 2014; Burns, Deno, & Jimerson, 2007; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006; Fuchs, Mock, Morgan, and Young, 2003; Graves & McConnell, 2014; Greenwood et al., 2012). However, there is little research on teacher beliefs and perceptions related to the implementation of the process, yet they are the ones responsible for its success or failure in the classroom. A teacher's beliefs about RtI could influence their ability or willingness to implement the process (Castillo et al., 2015).

Furthermore, the beliefs a school leader possesses and communicates can have an impact on the implementation of any new process (Sharratt & Fullan, 2009). This study addressed a research problem related to the lack of research conducted regarding general education teachers' beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes related to the implementation of RtI at all grade level ranges. Limited studies have been conducted on teacher perceptions related to RtI. These studies have focused on teacher perceptions and beliefs related to various RtI topics. Rinaldi, Averill, and Stuart (2011) conducted a three-year study to examine teacher perceptions related to RtI as a change agent in an urban elementary school. This study focused on teachers' perceptions of RtI as they developed and implemented a RtI problem-solving model with the research team through a school-university partnership. In a 2014 study conducted by Bineham et al., researchers sought to report on general education and special education professionals' perspectives related to general RtI descriptions, implementation, and confusion related to RtI. This nationwide study included participants representing various positions such as administrative, instructional, and support at the school and district levels from elementary and high schools. Hollenbeck and Patrikakou (2014) conducted a study that explored the attitudes and beliefs of various educational professionals within the state of Illinois related to confidence in different aspects of

RtI and attitudes toward RtI. In a study conducted by Castillo et al. (2015), researchers sought to examine educator beliefs related to RtI and determine if those beliefs aligned with the overall purpose of RtI. Educator was defined as instructional staff and included administrators, general education teachers, special education teachers, counselors, school psychologists, instructional coaches, and intervention specialists (Castillo et al., 2015). The study was conducted in elementary schools within the state of Florida. There are no known studies designed using the Theory of Planned Behavior to explore teachers' attitudes and beliefs concerning RtI implementation, nor are there any known studies that explore only general education teachers' beliefs related to different factors surrounding the implementation of RtI at all levels of education from elementary to high school.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this elicitation study was the Theory of Planned Behavior, which was proposed by Icek Ajzen in 1985. This theory seeks to explain the relationship between a person's intentions and actions. A central factor of this theory is the person's intention to perform a given behavior (Ajzen, 1991). According to Ajzen (1991), the intentions of a person are driven by motivational factors that influence behavior. This drive determines how hard a person is willing to try and determines the amount of effort they put forth to complete a task. "As a general rule, the stronger the intention to engage in a behavior, the more likely should be its performance" (Ajzen, 1991, p. 181). According to the theory, a person's decision to engage in a behavior is determined by three factors: attitude toward the behavior, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991). This theory is used to link a person's beliefs and behavior, therefore, it allows for the prediction of behavior based on a person's intentions and beliefs about the behavior. According to Ajzen (1985, 1991), predictive validity was increased

when perceived behavioral control was added to the model. Multiple studies establish the different constructs can be predictive of intentions and behavior (Ajzen, 1991). The Theory of Planned Behavior is used in conjunction with elicitation studies at the exploratory or pilot level when the participants are representative of the research population (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Ajzen 1991).

The Theory of Planned Behavior was an appropriate framework for this study because the purpose of this study was to explore teachers' attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral controls related to RtI implementation. This study sought to explore those beliefs and attitudes toward various factors of the implementation of RtI as an initial step in exploring the possible connection between those beliefs and actual implementation. This theoretical framework supports the idea that a person's willingness to perform a task is determined by their attitude toward the task, their perception of the pressure to perform the task, and how difficult or easy they perceive the task to be. According to the Theory of Planned Behavior, a teacher's beliefs, and attitudes toward RtI could affect their willingness to provide interventions to students. The Theory of Planned Behavior also indicates that in some situations, only a person's attitude toward the task can have a significant impact (Ajzen, 1991). By applying the Theory of Planned Behavior, a future research study might predict teachers' implementation of the RtI framework based on their attitudes and beliefs about RtI.

Purpose Statement

In the eight years since implementing the RtI framework as a multi-tiered instructional approach in Alabama, there has not been a study to explore general education teachers' beliefs and attitudes related to the implementation of RtI. The purpose of this elicitation study was to explore the teachers' beliefs and attitudes related to the implementation of the RtI process. This

study also explored the scope and frequency of interventions teachers reported providing to their students. Furthermore, this study explored factors that may allow teachers to implement the process or hinder them from implementing the framework and providing interventions to students. The Theory of Planned Behavior suggests the more positive someone views a task or behavior, the more likely they are to participate in that behavior (Ajzen, 1991). This study could be used as an initial step in exploring a possible connection between teachers' beliefs and actual implementation.

Research Questions

Four research questions guided this study:

1. What attitudes do teachers report as important to their implementation of RtI?
2. What subjective norms do teachers report as important to their implementation of RtI?
3. What perceived behavioral control do teachers report as important to their implementation of RtI?
4. What scope and frequency do teachers report relative to providing RtI interventions for their students?

Significance of the Study

Response to Instruction is a process stemming from the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (USDOE, 2001; 2004). It is designed to be an early intervention process for students determined to be at risk academically and behaviorally based on multiple data points. There have been many studies conducted on the process and components of RtI, especially in the area of early reading intervention. However, there are limited studies on teachers' perceptions and

beliefs related to the implementation of RtI (Bineham et al., 2014; Castillo et al., 2015; Hollenbeck & Patrikakou, 2014; Rinaldi et al., 2011). None of these studies sought information regarding only general education classroom teachers' beliefs and attitudes, nor did they include teachers in all grade level ranges kindergarten through twelfth grade. Therefore, there is a gap in the research related to teachers' attitudes and beliefs about RtI implementation. General education teachers at all levels are responsible for the implementation of RtI and are often the ones to initiate the process.

Through an elicitation study, the researcher can gain information about teachers' attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control as it relates to the implementation of the RtI process. Elicitation studies are often the first phase in a larger research study to gain information regarding salient beliefs about a subject (Ajzen, 1991; Downs & Hausenblas, 2005). Through an elicitation study, the researcher can gain information about teachers' attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control as it relates to the implementation of the RtI process. The information from this questionnaire can lead to a better understanding of how teachers feel about the RtI process and possibly predict behavioral intentions. The information gathered in this elicitation study can also be used in future research and to inform current RtI practices and policies. A survey that could predict to what extent teachers will implement the process and the level of support they may require would allow problem-solving teams, administrators, and instructional coaches to focus their attention and resources on teachers who could benefit the most from them. This directed attention would allow instructional coaches and administrators to provide more in-depth and individualized professional development, as well as take a more hands-on approach with these teachers as they determine what students need intervention and the interventions that need to be implemented.

Definition of Terms

- Achievement – the academic or behavioral gains as evidenced by progress monitoring data or behavioral data
- Attitude Toward the Behavior – “the degree to which a person has a favorable or unfavorable evaluation or appraisal of the behavior in question” (Ajzen, 1991, p.188).
- Beliefs – a state of mind in which someone holds a statement to be true.
- Rate of Improvement (ROI) – the rate at which students make academic gains.
- Response to Intervention/Instruction (RtI) – “Response to Instruction (RtI) refers to an instructional framework that promotes a well-integrated system connecting general, gifted, supplemental, and special education services in providing high quality, standards-based instruction and intervention that is matched to students’ academic, socio-emotional, and behavioral needs” (Alabama Department of Education, 2009, p.1).
- Perceptions – how a person interprets or understands something
- Perceived Behavioral Control – a person’s perception of the level of difficulty related to performing a task (Ajzen, 1991)
- Salient Beliefs – beliefs a person considers to be important.
- Subjective Norm – the social factor of the theory of planned behavior that refers to a person’s intention to perform or to not perform a behavior based on perceived social pressure (Ajzen, 1991).

Organization of the Study

This chapter provides an overview of the study. The following chapters are devoted to further explaining the current literature, the methods used for the study, an analysis of the data

collected, and is followed by a discussion. Chapter Two presents an overview of the current literature related to the RTI process, framework, outcomes, and teacher perceptions. Chapter Three provides an explanation of the research design and methodology used to conduct the study. Chapter Four presents the study's findings. Chapter Five provides a summary of the study, conclusions drawn from the study, and recommendations for future research. The study concludes with a list of references and appendices.

Chapter II: Literature Review

This chapter presents an overview of the literature related to the Response to Intervention process. It provides an overview of the process and the framework of RtI, as well as providing information on necessary components and best practices. Response to Intervention at the secondary level is briefly discussed. Furthermore, it provides information about the expected outcomes of the RtI process and using the RtI process as identification for special education services. A description of leadership roles related to RtI at all levels and how leadership relates to the effectiveness of the process is provided. It is then followed by a discussion of teacher beliefs and perceptions of RtI and how they are related to the effectiveness of instruction and intervention based on student achievement, as well as providing information on the RtI decision-making process. The chapter concludes by providing examples of the Theory of Planned Behavior being used in educational research. The purpose of this literature review is to highlight past research related to the topic of RtI, discuss components related to RtI implementation, and explore research on teacher attitudes and beliefs related to RtI.

Introduction to Response to Intervention

In 2001, President Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Act, which increased accountability for schools and changed many federal guidelines (USDOE, 2001). In 2004, with the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (USDOE, 2004), there were new alternatives for the special education referral process (Stahl et al., 2013). This Act would require students to receive research-based interventions before the referral for special education services (Brendle, 2015). Through the reauthorization of this legislation, the federal government would require schools to use scientific-based practices and data-driven decision-making to improve student achievement and outcomes for students in the general education and

special education classrooms (Castillo et al., 2015). Due to these changes, Alabama implemented the Response to Intervention (RtI) framework replacing the Building-Based Student Support Team at the beginning of the 2010-2011 school year. In Alabama, RtI refers to Response to Instruction. Problem-Solving Teams replaced the Building-Based Student Support Teams and interventions replaced modifications or accommodations. There are specific definitions for the different components for the RtI process nationally and in Alabama alike. However, there is not a specific structure nationally for the RtI process, which leaves each state to interpret the process somewhat differently. Alabama has a Response to Instruction resource document that provides basic information about RtI, but the state does not have a specific instructional outline or documentation process that must be followed. Each school district used the state guidelines to develop a district plan. Therefore, the way RtI is interpreted varies from district to district and school to school. These differences have led to there being many variations of the framework. However, the purpose and some common components appear to be consistent throughout the research nationwide. Student movement among tiers is meant to be fluid as their needs change.

Overview of Response to Intervention

Response to Intervention is a framework schools use for providing individualized instruction and intervention for students. There are many definitions of RtI found in the literature. The National Center on Response to Intervention (2010) defined RtI as a process in which schools use assessment and intervention in a multi-tiered prevention program to reduce the possibility of students being identified as at-risk for poor learning outcomes by increasing student achievement and reducing the risk of behavioral problems. The Alabama Department of Education includes all types of educational services in their definition of RtI.

Response to Instruction (RtI) refers to an instructional framework that promotes a well-integrated system connecting general, gifted, supplemental, and special education services in providing high quality, standards-based instruction, and intervention that is matched to students' academic, social-emotional, and behavioral needs. RtI combines core instruction, assessments, and intervention within a multi-tiered system to increase student achievement and reduce behavior problems (Alabama Department of Education, 2009, p.1).

For this study, RtI is defined as “the practice of providing high-quality instruction/ intervention matched to student needs using learning rate over time and level of performance to make important educational decisions” (Batsche et al., 2005, p. 1). According to the literature, RtI has two purposes. The first purpose is to provide early intervention for students considered at-risk, and the second purpose is to provide a procedure for identifying students with learning disabilities based on more than an IQ test (Gersten & Dimino, 2006). Bineham et al. (2014) indicated that the purpose of RtI is to provide struggling learners with a series of interventions that will allow teachers to identify areas of academic concern. However, the Alabama Department of Education (2009) indicates “the ultimate purpose of the RtI process is to enhance the success of students with a variety of academic and/or behavior needs, rather than solely determine whether a student qualifies for special education services” (p.1).

Response to Intervention has been researched for several years to study the effectiveness of the program in increasing student growth and achievement. It is designed to target at-risk students in academic areas and students with behavioral concerns. Response to Intervention is designed to provide individualized instruction to bridge academic achievement gaps and challenge higher-achieving students. Response to Intervention is to be viewed and implemented

as a process rather than a program or an initiative for schools to have a positive outcome on student achievement. This process also provides a framework for a referral to the special education identification process when students are not successful in the general education classroom after receiving interventions. According to the RtI Action Network (2009), “RtI holds the promise of ensuring that all children have access to high-quality instruction and that struggling learners – including those with learning disabilities – are identified, supported, and served early and effectively” (p.1).

Response to Intervention Process

“Response to Intervention (RtI) models are one of the most common initiatives being implemented today to address concerns about all U.S. students having equitable access to general education, including students with disabilities, students from diverse cultural backgrounds, and students who speak English as a second language” (Stuart et al., 2011, p. 55). For more than a decade, the implementation of the Response to Intervention process has been occurring in many school districts across the country (O’Connor & Freeman, 2012). There are two approaches to the RtI process; however, the problem-solving model is the most widely used model for RtI, where the goal is to provide multiple points of data to provide a clearer picture of a student’s problems or needs (Fuchs et al., 2003). There are six steps in the RtI process that seem to be universal in the problem-solving model. The Problem-Solving Team, which includes the classroom teacher, must (a) identify the student’s problem, (b) analyze the student’s problem, (c) determine interventions to be implemented, (d) implement the agreed-upon interventions, (e) progress monitor to assess and evaluate student growth, and (f) make necessary changes to intervention as evidenced by progress monitoring data (Alabama Department of Education, 2009; Fuchs et al., 2003; Van Der Heyden, Witt & Gilbertson, 2007).

The RtI process can be difficult, and interventions must be easy to implement, as well as being provided reliably and accurately (Martinez & Young, 2011). In a 2011 study conducted by Martinez and Young in Texas, it was indicated that the RtI process could be difficult to implement because some teachers can find the identifying of students' problems to be troublesome. Eighty-seven percent of the respondents to the study indicated that the general education teacher was responsible for initiating the RtI process. This initiation often occurs after a student scores low on some form of screening assessment. Furthermore, the study also indicated that the planning of interventions and the evaluation of students could also be a difficult process for classroom teachers. Fifty-three percent of the teachers that participated in this study indicated that collecting data and evaluating it for the RtI process was difficult. Thirty-seven percent of the participating teachers questioned indicated that the RtI process took too much of their time. One teacher stated, "The documentation and preparation for the materials is the time-consuming aspect of RtI." (Martinez & Young, 2011, p. 50).

According to Burns et al., (2007), the problem is identified in Tier I by implementing a core curriculum and using a universal screener to identify potential problems. Once this takes place, the data are collected and analyzed to determine if there are individual problems or if the problem is class-wide or curricular based. If the problem is determined to be class-wide, then a change is necessary to the class-wide instruction, and possible interventions must be determined and implemented. After a given timeframe, benchmark assessments are given, and the results are analyzed to determine if the class is demonstrating adequate progress.

In the same model, Burns et al., (2007) indicated Tier II instruction should address the needs of five to ten percent of the students in a classroom. Data should be collected in the "defining the problem" phase that would indicate and provide an understanding of any problems

occurring. A list of evidence-based instructional strategies should then be developed that could be used for small group instruction. These evidence-based instructional strategies are then used to provide explicit instruction designed to target the areas of concern for the small group of students. Finally, some type of assessment is given to determine the students' progress based on the prescribed interventions. According to the authors, this should be done at least monthly (Burns et al., 2007).

When comparing Tier III, which is designed to address the needs of five to ten percent of the student population, to the Identify, Define, Explore, Act, and Look (IDEAL) problem-solving model, there were several similarities. This tier requires the teacher or team to gather additional data to identify and define the problem more clearly. A more extensive list of evidence-based intensive interventions must be identified and implemented to provide an individualized approach to instruction. These interventions align with the exploring and applying solutions sections of the IDEAL problem-solving model (Burns et al., 2007). Progress must be monitored more frequently in this tier. According to Burns et al. (2007), this should be frequent and occur at least twice a week.

The RtI process is extremely complex and requires many components to be effective and reach targeted outcomes. Importantly, the process rests on identifying problems, determining possible solutions, implementing solutions, and monitoring outcomes. If outcomes are positive, the implemented solutions can be continued and eventually discontinued. If the outcomes are not positive, the solutions must be revisited, and new ones implemented.

Response to Intervention Framework

There are two approaches to the Response to Intervention framework: a problem-solving approach and a standard treatment protocol. The problem-solving approach uses student data to

determine placement among a tiered model where students receive intervention based on their individual needs and are based on the information from NCLB. The standard treatment protocol does not individualize interventions and instruction to meet students' needs and more closely follows the model outlined by IDEA. When using this framework, teachers implement a predetermined group of interventions for a given time frame before assessing for effectiveness (Rinaldi, Higgins-Averill, & Stuart, 2011). After assessing for the effectiveness of the interventions, the students return to Tier I instruction or are moved to Tier III instruction.

Many schools choose to use the problem-solving approach because of the individualized approach it provides for the students. In order to implement the problem-solving approach successfully, the problem-solving team must identify a problem, select appropriate interventions to address the problem, have the correct staff members implement the chosen interventions, assess the effectiveness of the chosen interventions, and make necessary changes if warranted (Van Der Heyden et al., 2007).

The framework for the Response to Intervention model more often consists of a tiered instructional method or approach (Denton, 2012; Hill et al., 2012; Mellard et al., 2010; Stahl et al., 2013; Stuart et al., 2011). This concept is somewhat based on the public health prevention model (Mellard et al., 2010) and consists of a behavioral component that follows the same tiered concept (Saeki et al., 2011). The number of instructional tiers can vary; however, most RtI implementation frameworks consist of three to four tiers. The instruction becomes increasingly intensive as it progresses from Tier I to Tier III, with fewer students participating in each instructional tier. If a fourth instructional tier exists, it typically consists of some type of special education instruction. The increasing intensity in instruction includes using explicit instruction that is teacher-centered, providing instruction more frequently and for longer periods,

purposefully grouping students into smaller groups with similar needs, and allowing teachers with expertise in the subject to provide the interventions (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). The instruction received in the first three tiers is designed to occur in the general education setting and to be delivered by a general education teacher.

Tier I. Tier I instruction is instruction provided to all students in the general education classroom. It should be provided at all three tiers of the instructional model (Alabama Department of Education, 2009). The three tiers consist of the original lesson and grouping used for instructing all students provided by a general education teacher. Effective Tier I instruction should be differentiated instruction designed to meet the individual learning needs of all students in the classroom (Denton, 2012). Tier I instruction is provided using a high-quality core curriculum (Greenwood et al., 2013). Instruction should be standards-based, and it may be necessary for teachers to use supplemental materials to meet the needs of the students. Tier I instruction should also be research-based and include benchmark assessments that are given at least three times a year in each content area to help identify students needing intervention (Alabama Department of Education, 2009). About eighty percent of students in a classroom should be successful after the original instruction is provided (Alabama Department of Education, 2009; Mellard et al., 2010).

Tier II. Tier II instruction is designed to provide more intensive instruction for students who are identified as at-risk, typically about fifteen percent of the classroom population (Mellard et al., 2010). This level of instruction is skill-based and focused. Instruction for students should be differentiated based on various formal and informal assessments, which will allow for groups to be flexible, and educators can plan instruction to meet students' needs (Gersten et al., 2008). Tier II instruction should also be aligned with Tier I instruction and consist of explicit and

systematic instructional practices (Alabama Department of Education, 2009). Tier II instruction should be taught in a small group setting according to the skill deficiency (Alabama Department of Education, 2009, Denton, 2012, Fuchs & Fuchs, 2007) or in learning centers (Greenwood et al., 2013). Multiple researchers indicate different amounts of time in which Tier II intervention should take place. According to Denton (2012), Tier II instruction/intervention should occur between 3-4 times weekly for 20-40 minutes each session. However, according to Fuchs & Fuchs (2007), Tier II instruction should take place for a duration of 15-20 weekly sessions, designed more like tutoring sessions. Intervention should be evidence-based and provided by a highly skilled individual. If students are successful and make academic growth while receiving Tier II intervention, the team can choose to keep providing Tier II interventions for the student or move the student back to Tier I.

The Alabama Department of Education also sets guidelines for providing Tier II instruction for enrichment or gifted purposes. The purpose of Tier II instruction at the enrichment level is to enhance the instructional process for students who demonstrate mastery of content and skills, as evidenced by benchmark assessments. “Tier II instruction for enrichment should contain sufficient depth, breadth, and complexity to increase individual student skills and concept formation” (Alabama Department of Education, 2009, p.8). Students receive this type of instruction in small group settings through the enrichment programs in Alabama schools. These programs take on different names based on the school system, but all school systems have some type of enrichment program for students identified through standardized assessments.

Tier III. Tier III should be the most intensive of the instructional levels because it should be the most individualized and be provided outside of the general education classroom, preferably by a different teacher (Denton, 2012; Greenwood et al., 2013). The population of

students receiving Tier III instruction should consist of no more than about five percent of the classroom population and should be the students with the most intensive instructional needs (Mellard et al., 2010). The intensity of instruction increases because of the amount of time spent with the student increases, and the group size decreases (Alabama Department of Education, 2009). Tier III instruction should occur daily (Gersten et al., 2008). Materials used for Tier III intervention should be research-based and specialized to the individual needs of the student receiving the instruction (Alabama Department of Education, 2009). The Alabama Department of Education (2009) also indicated that decisions about Tier III services should be discussed and determined by a problem-solving team. After a reasonable amount of time receiving Tier III intervention, decisions must be made based on data collected through progress monitoring. If the student is making adequate progress as evidenced by progress monitoring data, the student could continue to receive intervention in a Tier II environment. However, if the student is showing no growth, the team may decide to refer the student for eligibility in the special education department.

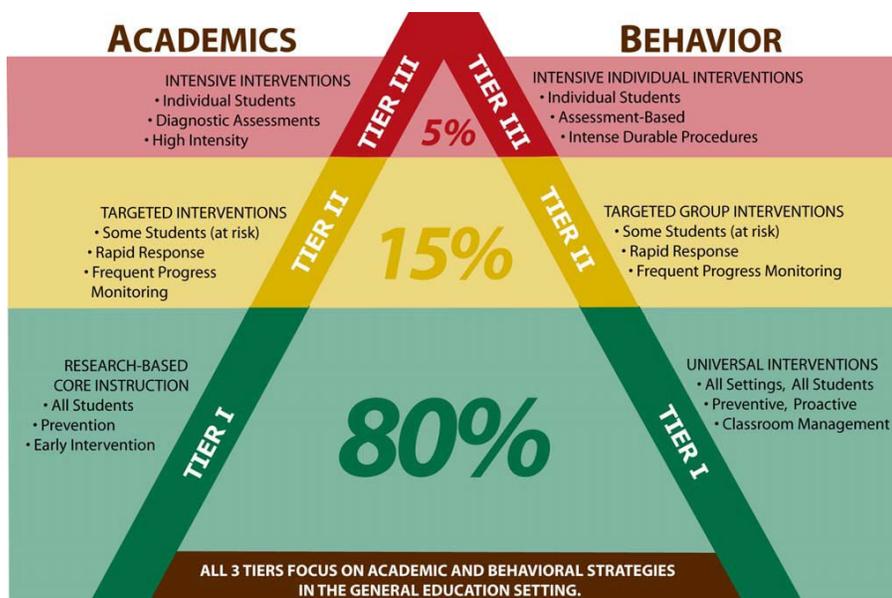


Figure 1. The RtI Three-Tiered Model (Alabama Department of Education, 2009, p.4)

All tiers of instruction should use instructional practices that are research-based to increase student achievement (Stahl et al., 2013), and there should be instructional alignment through the tiers (Hill et al., 2012). Student placement in the instructional tiers should be fluid as students progress academically or behaviorally, and their needs change (Mellard et al., 2010; Saeki et al., 2011).

Components of Effective Response to Intervention

There is not a set list of necessary components needed to implement the RtI process; however, numerous studies have been conducted on the various components of an effective Response to Intervention process (Denton, 2012; Gersten & Dimino, 2006; Greenwood et al., 2013; Hill et al., 2012; Mellard et al., 2010; O'Connor & Freeman, 2012; Saeki et al., 2011; Stahl et al., 2013; Stuart et al., 2011). Throughout the literature, there are some variances in what a necessary component is, but there are also some commonalities. According to the research, a list of necessary components can range from those that are implicitly recommended to those explicitly required by law (Zirkel & Thomas, 2010).

The process can vary from one school district to another or even from school to school within the same district. The individual schools use state and district policies or guidelines to design a process that can be tailored to meet the needs of the student population at a school. As the process can vary, so can the documentation used for the process because Alabama does not have a required set of RtI documents to be completed. The Alabama Department of Education did, however, develop the following protocol for RtI (a) complete a self-assessment to determine readiness for implementing RtI, (b) use assessment data to determine the instructional level of all students, (c) place student into tiered instructional levels based on assessment data,

monitor progress and provide instructional strategies and interventions, (d) provide Tier II intervention for students not successful in Tier I, and (e) problem-solving team intervenes with Tier III instructional needs and progress monitoring. In a 2010 study conducted by Zirkel and Thomas, Alabama was identified as having five guidelines that are explicitly recommended for implementing and sustaining the RtI process within the schools. Those guidelines are to (a) provide students with high-quality, research-based instruction within the general education classroom, (b) use a universal screener for screening academic and behavior problems, (c) continuously use progress monitoring tools or methods for tracking student progress, (d) implement multiple instructional tiers of increasingly intense instruction or intervention, and (e) implement fidelity measures in all areas.

Table 1 lists components that are determined necessary for a successful RtI implementation according to several studies conducted on the various components necessary for successful RtI implementation. The research studies in the table indicate common RtI components nationwide. The six components that were most commonly found throughout the research are also components outlined in the RtI handbook by the Alabama Department of Education.

Table 1

Common Components or Practices of Effective Response to Intervention

	Universal Screener	Tiered Model	Evidence-Based Instruction	Ongoing Measurement of Progress	Data-Driven Decision Making	Instruction Fidelity, Alignment, Intensity
Denton, 2012	X	X	X	X	X	
Gersten & Dimino, 2006	X	X		X	X	X
Greenwood et al., 2013	X	X		X	X	
Hill et al., 2012		X				X
Mellard et al., 2010		X			X	X
Saeki et al., 2011		X	X	X	X	X
Stahl et al., 2013	X	X	X			
Stuart et al., 2011	X	X	X	X		X

Universal Screener. “NCRTI [National Center on Response to Intervention] defines universal screening as brief assessments that are valid, reliable, and demonstrate diagnostic accuracy for predicting which students will develop learning or behavioral problems” (NCRTI, 2010, p. 8). Universal screeners are standardized assessments that are used to assist in the identification of students that are not progressing at the same rate as their peers in the classroom and are considered to be at-risk (Denton, 2012; Greenwood et al., 2013; Stahl et al., 2013). Data gathered from the universal screener provide a baseline to which progress monitoring can be compared.

The universal screener can be used for screening of academics or for behaviors (Gersten & Dimino, 2006; Stuart et al., 2011). Gersten and Dimino (2006) indicated that universal screeners should occur three times a year. The students’ results are compared to the expected

progression rates. Students who are falling slightly below level are monitored to determine if further intervention is needed. Those who are significantly below the expected progression level receive immediate action, and interventions are implemented (Gersten & Dimino, 2006).

Stahl et al. (2013) indicated that the purpose of the study was to investigate how a school district transitioned to the use of a RtI problem-solving model. The study was designed to determine the effectiveness of the RtI framework initiated by the special education office in an urban school district. The participants in the study are from three Title I schools within the school district. These schools were neighborhood schools with large populations of Hispanic, Latino, or African American students. School A had a population of 88% Hispanic or Latino students, with 32% of the population being English-Language Learners. School B had a population of 66% Hispanic or Latino students, 26% African American students, and 27% of the students were English-Language Learners. School C had a population of 89% African American students. All schools had at least 91% of students receiving free or reduced lunch. Nine teachers participated in the study, ranging in teaching experience from 1 year to 24 years. A larger study was conducted in K-2 classrooms, while this part of the study focused on first-grade classrooms and students. Two of the schools were fully implemented (meaning the schools had all the tools needed for a fully implemented RtI framework), while one school was partially implemented.

The study was conducted using a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview protocol. The researchers surveyed the teachers and then conducted follow-up focus group conversations. Researchers conducted 30-40-minute observations of the participating teachers' classrooms, and teachers completed weekly checklists on their literacy activities and instruction for the week. There was a tiered instructional model implemented, and the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) was used as the screener or standard assessment. The assessment was

given three times throughout the year, and an ANOVA was conducted using the implementation level as the between-subjects factor. Once the data was analyzed, it was determined that all the first graders showed significant gains between each DIBELS assessment. The number of special education referrals decreased significantly; however, it was noted it could be due to a teacher's misconception of how students are referred for and qualify for services.

Many schools administer the universal screener at the beginning of a new school year to students that received intervention services the previous year to determine where they are academically compared to the rest of their peers (NCRTI, 2010). This screening provides a starting point of data for the teacher at the beginning of the new school year. There has been much research conducted on the necessary components for an effective RtI framework. The use of a universal screener appears to be a supported component of an effective RtI framework (Denton, 2012; Gersten & Dimino, 2006; Greenwood et al., 2013; Stahl et al., 2013; Stuart et al., 2011).

Tiered Model. One of the most common components of the RtI process identified in the literature is the use of a tiered instructional model (Denton, 2012; Greenwood et al., 2013; Hill et al., 2012; Mellard et al., 2012; Stahl et al., 2013; Stuart et al., 2011). According to Mellard et al. (2012), there is no current research that exists indicating the effectiveness of one tiered model compared to another. Schools that have successful RtI implementation utilize multiple tiers of instruction or intervention using research-based practices (Martinez & Young, 2011). There is not an agreed-upon number of tiers that should be implemented during the RtI process. However, many schools follow the three-tier model. The instruction becomes increasingly intense and differentiated as the instructional tiers increase. Some schools use two tiers of instruction due to the lack of faculty to provide instruction at additional tiers, while others use a fourth tier of

instruction. This fourth tier of instruction involved a more individualized clinical approach to intervention services and included schools that use RtI for disability identification (Mellard et al., 2010).

In a 2010 mixed-methods study conducted by Mellard et al., the researchers examined RtI practices of more than 60 schools. Forty-one schools in 16 states were identified for the study as “having sufficient elements of an RtI model to participate in our study” (Mellard et al., 2010, p. 217). Once selected, the 41 schools answered extensive questionnaires and provided the researchers with access to the documentation that described their RtI process. The study focused on tiered instruction, the number of instructional tiers, the intensity of instruction, dosage, group sizes, and movement among tiers. The researchers found that 73% of the 41 schools in the study provided reading instruction five days a week. However, many of the schools reported that the intensity of instruction did not increase with instructional tiers, and few schools were providing more intensive instruction in addition to the general reading instruction. Mellard et al. (2010) stated, “We speculate that many schools do not vary the time in order to increase intensity because they view time as fixed or unchangeable in light of their daily administrative schedules...” (p. 220). The research states, however, that Tier II should be supplemental to Tier I and Tier III should be in addition to Tiers I and II.

There have been many studies conducted on using a tiered instructional approach to RtI. The tiered instructional model is the component of RtI that is most consistent throughout the research, as shown in Table 1. While there is not a prescribed number of instructional tiers, most schools use a three-tiered model. In the state of Alabama, all elementary students should receive 90 minutes of reading instruction in Tier I setting. Tier II instruction should consist of an

additional 30 minutes of intervention/instruction daily with Tier III instruction occurring multiple times a week in addition to Tiers I and II.

Evidence-Based Instruction. High-quality, evidence-based instruction has been identified as one of the core components of the successful implementation of the RtI process (Stuart et al., 2011). Stahl et al. (2013) stated, “To maximize the likelihood of student achievement, all tiers of instruction should apply instructional practices that have been substantiated by empirical research” (p. 352).

Districts should select instructional programs that have been validated by research as being successful in increasing student achievement in populations similar to the population of the school where the programs will be implemented (Stahl et al., 2013). Instructional programs and instruction should meet the needs of the students. Instruction should be purposeful and targeted at desired learning outcomes while increasing in difficulty throughout the lessons (Denton, 2012). Evidence-based instruction should include explicit instruction, opportunities for guided and independent practice, meaningful feedback, and instructional strategies that promote active engagement (Denton, 2012). Evidence-based instructional practices are changing rapidly as new research becomes available, and all faculty members involved in the RtI process should participate in regular professional development on the topic so the best instructional practices can be used for students (O’Conner & Freeman, 2012).

Denton (2012) stated that the use of core curriculum programs could help to ensure that the objectives/standards are being addressed using an evidence-based approach. When teachers veer from these programs, they are taking responsibility for ensuring students are receiving effective instruction that graduates from easier to more challenging content. Core evidence-based programs can provide an adequate foundation for students; however, teachers often must provide

supplemental lessons or practice for students. The teachers may also have to adapt lessons or pacing in programs that introduce concepts/skills too rapidly for the students to grasp.

Progress Monitoring. One of the essential components of a successful RtI implementation is continuous progress monitoring of student progress based on the instruction and interventions the students are receiving (Stuart et al., 2011). Progress monitoring of students should occur more frequently for students receiving additional instruction or interventions (Greenwood et al., 2012). It is up to individual school districts to determine the tools and assessments that they will use for progress monitoring purposes; however, the progress monitoring tools and assessments that are chosen by the district must be research-based (O'Connor & Freeman, 2012). Curriculum-based measures that are closely aligned with the instructional standards being taught can be used as progress monitoring tools (Denton, 2012). These measures are useful in comparing a student's performance to his or her classmates (Henley & Furlong, 2006). The use of curriculum-based measures allows teachers to determine learning discrepancies among students and also provides a tool to use for ongoing progress monitoring.

Progress monitoring provides a quantitative value for a student's rate of improvement (ROI), provides an opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of the instruction or intervention being provided, and allows teachers to create more effective individualized instruction based on the results (NCRTI, 2010). Progress monitoring data also provides information that can be used to compare a student's actual ROI to their expected ROI and make adjustments to the interventions being provided if necessary. Fuchs and Fuchs (2006) reported that progress monitoring should occur monthly for students receiving Tier II intervention and weekly for students receiving Tier III intervention.

In a case study conducted by Henley and Furlong (2006), the implementation of curriculum-based measures in a California school was researched. The study was conducted in an elementary school with a population of approximately 1,000 students in pre-kindergarten through fifth grade. The school was located in an urban area of Los Angeles, California. The school used a year-round calendar with three alternating schedules for students. The student population consisted of 99% Hispanic students, with 73% of the students being classified as English-Language Learners. The majority of the students, 95%, also qualified for free or reduced lunch. Curriculum-based measures were developed and administered in oral reading fluency once a quarter. The administration of these curriculum-based measures allowed teachers to identify which students were performing substantially lower than their peers. This knowledge allowed teachers to prioritize resources and provide students with the instruction they needed based on assessment data.

Progress monitoring is an essential component of the RtI process. This monitoring is the driving factor of the framework. The literature notes various methods of gathering data through progress monitoring. One way this can be done is through any type of standardized assessment. Data can then be used to make decisions about student instructional tiers.

Data-Driven Decision-Making. The RtI process requires a problem-solving team to make a series of decisions about a student's progress or lack of based on the data gathered through continuous and purposeful progress monitoring (Van Der Heyden et al., 2007). Collecting and analyzing data from various sources provides an ongoing picture of student growth (Greenwood et al., 2013; Mellard et al., 2010; O'Connor & Freeman, 2012; Saeki et al., 2011). O'Connor and Freeman (2012) stated, "Effective use of student outcome data is the

foundation on which RtI systems are built” (p.302). Student outcome data typically comes in two forms: baseline data and progress monitoring data.

The use of a universal screener is a common practice for gathering baseline data in the identification step of the process. Progress monitoring data is gathered throughout the RtI process and compared to the baseline data. Progress monitoring data can come from a variety of sources, such as DIBELS, standards-based assessments, and anecdotal classroom notes. The baseline data are compared to the progress monitoring data to determine if the interventions being provided are effective. The RtI process is designed to provide additional support to students before they fail a subject. The problem-solving team can use progress monitoring data, a list of specific interventions, and diagnostic information to form a clear picture of the progress or lack of progress the student is making (Gersten & Dimino, 2006). This information can help the team, which includes the classroom teacher, make decisions about the next steps that need to be taken for the student based on a comprehensive picture of the student’s ability and success.

When the data collected from various sources show growth, this is an indicator that the interventions being provided are effective. From this information, instructional changes can be made in order to enable students to continue to improve academically. Doing so provides evidence that the student’s lack of achievement was due to instructional factors and not from a lack of their mental or academic abilities (Rinaldi et al., 2011). Data-driven decision making is also used when the data reflect that students are not making progress. The team can use the progress monitoring data and compare it to the interventions being provided. Changes to interventions can be made at this point in an attempt to increase student achievement.

Instruction Fidelity, Alignment, and Intensity. Multiple authors identified the intensity or quality of instruction as a key component for Response to Intervention (Greenwood et al.,

2013; Graves & McConnell, 2014; O’Conner & Freeman, 2012; Turse & Albrecht, 2015). Greenwood et al. (2013) found that the quality of instruction impacts student success during the RtI process. It is imperative to utilize evidenced-based practices and services when providing intervention to students. “Evidence-based practices and interventions are continuously evolving as new scientific knowledge becomes available” (O’Connor & Freeman, 2012, p. 301). Therefore, teachers should continue to participate in professional development related to evidence-based practices and Intervention.

When providing intervention for students, teachers should focus more on the intensity of the instruction rather than the materials being used for instruction. The intensity is far more important than the materials or programs used for intervention purposes. It has been determined that students do not always receive interventions that meet their individual needs. The interventions should not only be research-based but also be culturally appropriate for the students receiving the instruction (Graves & McConnell, 2014). Interventions should be intentional, well-planned, and utilize the best instructional practices. They should be tailored to meet the needs of the individual students. The teacher does not have to use prescribed programs, but if a prescribed program is not going to be used, the teacher must use research-based strategies and resources that meet the needs of the students (Turse & Albrecht, 2015). Teachers may have to modify research-based strategies and materials because the materials and strategies are not always transferrable to culturally diverse populations (Graves & McConnell, 2014). Students have different instructional needs, and there are no one-size-fits-all instructional/intervention programs. Teachers must do what is necessary for the students in their classrooms.

Response to Intervention at the Secondary Level

Response to Intervention is a multi-tiered instructional framework rooted in early intervention for students not responding to reading instruction (Greenwood et al., 2012). There is limited research regarding the implementation of RtI at the secondary level and its effectiveness (Hill et al., 2012). Research suggests there is a lack of administrator knowledge regarding RtI and a reluctance from secondary teachers to change their instructional practices (Bartholomew & De Jong, 2017). Another concern with RtI at the secondary level is the potential scheduling problems, so students receive intervention but do not miss instruction in other classes (King, Lemons, & Hill, 2012). Students at the secondary level are continuing to struggle with foundational reading skills, and there is a need for an effective RtI model (Vaughn et al., 2008). Instruction is delivered differently at the secondary level than at the elementary level (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2005).

Tier I instruction varies from elementary school to middle and high school. According to Mastropieri and Scruggs (2005), instruction at the middle and high school level is teacher-centered, faster in pace, and driven by the end-of-year standardized tests. Furthermore, Vaughn and Fletcher (2012), indicated elementary school teachers were more confident in teaching reading and had a designated time to focus on core reading instruction, whereas, secondary teachers provide some vocabulary instruction but felt their primary focus should be on content. There are also more materials available for elementary reading instruction.

While the Tier I instruction varies from elementary to middle and high school, the instructional tiers remain the same. Research indicates there is need for the instruction to become increasingly intensive, but does indicate a need for students who require the most intensive instruction not to spend time in Tier II but advance directly to Tier III where they are receiving

instruction at all intensity levels (Fuchs et al., 2010; Vaughn et al., 2008; Vaughn and Fletcher, 2012). The use for progress monitoring is still an agreed-upon component for middle and high school (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Compton, 2010; Vaughn et al., 2008; Vaughn and Fletcher, 2012), but the use of a universal screener is not. Fuchs et al. (2010) indicated it did not make sense to use a universal screener and allocate resources for that because the academic deficits were already established by the time a student reached middle or high school. The components of the framework may vary for the secondary level, but the instructional process is the same.

Expected Outcomes related to Response to Intervention

The purpose of RtI is to provide individualized instruction and interventions to students considered at-risk of falling behind or failing. These interventions can be academic, or behavior based. By providing individualized instruction, it is expected that student achievement would increase; therefore, closing academic gaps between students receiving the Intervention and their peers. Another expected outcome for RtI is the reduction of students being falsely identified for special education services due to learning disabilities. An important aspect of RtI is the early identification of students who are identified as struggling learners so they can be provided with remedial instruction. The data collected through the RtI process can also be used for identifying students with learning disabilities (Bineham et al., 2014).

Student Growth and Achievement. Increasing student achievement by closing academic gaps is an expected outcome of the RtI process. By addressing academic concerns early, it is likely that there will be a reduction in the same student having problems later in their academic career (Turse & Albrecht, 2015). Reducing future interventions is done by determining interventions needed based on students' needs. When interventions are determined, a rate of improvement (ROI) is used to calculate the expected increase after a prescribed duration of

intervention services. The ROI is the rate in which a student is expected to make academic growth to “catch-up” to their peers.

Student growth and achievement are determined by a series of data points. Data is collected from progress monitoring tools over a prescribed duration. The data are analyzed, and an ROI is calculated. If the student is showing growth at or above the perceived ROI, then interventions are continued. If student growth is significantly above the ROI, interventions can be discontinued. However, if the actual ROI is significantly below the perceived ROI, the student’s interventions are changed, or further steps are taken to begin the pre-referral process for special education eligibility. Since the implementation of RtI, there has been a decrease in the number of students identified as having a learning disability (Samuels, 2010). The number of students identified as having learning disabilities has decreased from 6.1% in 2000-2001 to 4.6% in 2017-2018 of the special education population (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019).

Identification for Special Education. Before the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Act in 2004, students were identified with learning disabilities based on exhibiting a significant discrepancy between their potential achievement and their displayed academic achievement (Bineham et al., 2014). This discrepancy is also known as the IQ-achievement discrepancy model. The reauthorization of IDEA allowed for an alternative method for identifying students with learning disabilities. “RtI was created for determining whether struggling learners should be referred for more in-depth assessment for specific LDs” (Bineham et al., 2014, pp. 230-231). The RtI process is designed to provide evidence that students are receiving research-based instruction and interventions and how they respond to this instruction as an approach to identifying students with learning disabilities.

“Response to Intervention (RtI) is one way to determine and initiate placement in special education, and it directly affects the disproportional number of low-income and minority students referred to and labeled as requiring special education” (Graves & McConnell, 2014, p.88). The RtI process is designed to provide a more valid method of identifying students in need of special education services for learning disabilities (Gersten & Dimino, 2006). The process is set up to minimize the number of students being referred to the special education process and maximize the level of instruction provided in the classroom. However, it is also used in many school systems as an evaluation for possible special education services for students who do not make adequate gains with the implementation of tiered instructional strategies.

The RtI process, as part of IDEA, is implemented to reduce the wait-to-fail way of thinking. It provides an alternative for the identification of students with specific learning disabilities. Traditionally, students had to wait-to-fail before consideration was made for possible eligibility referral due to specific learning disabilities. The wait-to-fail method allowed students to get further behind as they moved from grade to grade without making adequate academic progress because a learning disability, using the IQ-discrepancy method for determination, typically did not appear until third grade (Fuchs et al., 2003). RtI provides an alternative by allowing teachers to gather data about a student’s responsiveness to appropriate instruction and intervention; therefore, not relying on a gap to appear between their ability level and achievement level. This alternative has also reduced the number of students incorrectly identified as having a learning disability. The use of RtI, as identification of learning disabilities, has increased the number of students receiving interventions that otherwise would not have received them under the IQ-Discrepancy model (Fuchs & Deshler, 2007). RtI helps to identify at-risk students and provides them with additional instruction/intervention. Students are identified based

on whether or not they are making progress similar to their peers and what is expected for their grade level. This insight allows students to receive additional instruction/support as soon as they begin falling behind rather than waiting for students to continue to fall far enough behind that there is a significant gap in their learning.

Leadership Related to RtI Implementation

Successful implementation of any program or process requires the support of the district-level and school-level leadership. It would be difficult to implement change without the support of those at the top. O'Connor and Freeman (2012) surveyed more than 700 school staff members and found that the staff reported that "leadership (or lack thereof) has been a substantial influence leading to the success or failure of their implementation efforts" (p. 299).

Of the 700 staff members surveyed, only 11% felt that district leadership was involved in school improvement tasks. Fifty percent of the 700 staff members disagreed that the district leadership was involved in school improvement actions. They found that there were three factors related to district-leadership to support the effective implementation and sustainability of the RtI process.

The three factors identified by O'Connor and Freeman (2012) were as follows: leaders' knowledge of RtI practices and principles, leadership structures, and organizational frameworks. Leadership knowledge refers to how much the district leadership knows and understands about the RtI process. District leaders must possess a working knowledge of the conceptual framework for RtI (O'Connor & Freeman, 2012). They need a clear understanding of the basic principles of RtI, the purpose, why it is used, and the process used for data-based decision making. When district leaders are not involved in RtI and are unaware of the basic principles and concepts, multiple change initiatives often compete for attention (O'Connor & Freeman, 2012).

Leadership structures were the second factor related to district leadership. Leadership structures include the routines already in place at the district level that drive their decision making. School districts need routines and procedures for decision making. The districts with the greatest RtI success are ones that allow the process to guide their decisions (O'Connor & Freeman, 2012). They can do this because they have established clear guidelines that incorporate the use of data, research, and knowledge of their staff.

Organizational frameworks were another important factor identified in the discussion of district leadership. The organizational framework simply describes the way a system approaches a problem. The authors discussed the systems change model (Curtis, Cohen, & Castillo, 2009). This model includes three stages in which the organizational framework is built. The stages are consensus building, infrastructure development, and implementation. O'Connor & Freeman (2012) discussed a fourth stage they felt needed to be added. This stage was sustainability because there is a need for strategies to be able to be generalized and maintained. The district leadership must have a clearly defined plan for where the system is going.

Hollenbeck and Patrikakou (2014) conducted a study to examine the beliefs, knowledge, and attitudes of school staff members related to RtI after the state of Illinois set an implementation date deadline for RtI. There were 145 participants in the study representing multiple positions within the school. There were school psychologists (29%), general or special education teachers (25%), administrators (23%), speech-language pathologists (17%), and 6% that identified as others that participated in the survey. Seventy-nine percent of the participants held a master's degree, and 70% of them had five years or more of experience in their related fields.

The participants complete a survey that was comprised of four sections. The survey contained questions related to the participants' demographics, professional development, and training related to RtI, their perceived level of confidence as related to RtI, and their beliefs about RtI related to their students, practice, and school. The findings from the study indicated, "School professionals who had confidence in their leadership, including a positive, knowledgeable principal and other informed leaders, had more favorable attitudes about RtI and its intended benefits" (Hollenbeck & Patrikakou, 2014, p. 71). Positive, knowledgeable leadership is imperative in the success of any change initiative or process.

District Leadership. Policies about Response to Intervention are developed at the district level using the guidelines set by the state. District leaders should have a working knowledge of the RtI framework and the rationale behind the framework (O'Connor & Freeman, 2012). Districts use various resources to develop and implement the RtI framework at the school level. For the decision-making that is influenced by the framework to be successful, the district leadership must be aware of RtI practices. One reason for this is the call for evidence-based instruction.

The district leadership often determines the programs and initiatives to be implemented in daily instruction. Therefore, they must be knowledgeable about what evidence-based instruction is as not to implement programs or initiatives that are in conflict with the RtI process. Leadership at all levels is imperative to successful implementation and sustainability of RtI, moreover, district leadership must have a clear understanding of the process and a well-designed plan to implement it within the schools (O'Connor & Freeman, 2012).

School Leadership. In a study conducted by White, Polly, and Audette (2012), "Multiple participants reported on the critical role of the principal in the success of the RtI effort at the

district and school level” (p. 85). Furthermore, in a study conducted by Hollenbeck & Patrikakou (2014), the common variable that impacted the teachers’ attitudes towards RtI was the perception of leadership in the school on the topic. Teachers who had principals who were knowledgeable, informed, and positive about the RtI process had more favorable attitudes toward it themselves. The commitment and enthusiasm for the process play a key role in the success of the process within the school. The school leadership should be knowledgeable about the RtI process. However, it is not necessary that the principal or assistant principal chair the school problem-solving team. In the same study, the principal wanted to implement RtI a team effort; therefore, they chose not to chair the RtI Leadership Team but remained an integral part of the implementation process (White et al., 2012).

Problem-Solving Team. The Problem-Solving Team, sometimes referred to as the RtI Leadership Team is a valuable school resource in the implementation of the RtI process. The Problem-Solving Team chooses the interventions to be implemented, the team then collects student work samples that illustrate the effectiveness of the interventions, and the interventions are modified according to the analysis and current student needs (Carney & Stiefel, 2008). The problem-solving approach requires that the teachers are knowledgeable in the process, interventions, and materials. It also requires teachers to trust in the leadership of the team. Schools should have faculty members who serve on their problem-solving team for Response to Intervention that participate in ongoing professional development concerning evidence-based practices. The members of the Problem- Solving Team should participate in on-going professional development to stay abreast of the continuously changing intervention practices.

Teacher Beliefs and Perceptions Related to RtI

Teacher beliefs, skills, and experiences play a critical role in their ability to implement RtI interventions (Castillo et al., 2015). According to the National Directors of Special Education (2005) “one of the foundational beliefs necessary to support RtI implementation is that we can effectively teach all children” (as cited in O’Connor & Freeman, 2012, p. 304). Stuart et al. (2011) also provided evidence that teacher perceptions and feelings about Response to Intervention play a vital role in the successful implementation of the process. The more confident the teachers became in their ability to provide interventions and progress monitor, the more comfortable they became holding higher expectations for their students. Setting and communicating high expectations for the students is also important in the process. The importance of teacher beliefs is often overlooked, and there is a lack of instrumentation available to evaluate the teachers’ beliefs as related to RtI (Castillo et al., 2015). However, a Beliefs on RtI Survey was developed as part of three-year program evaluation (Castillo, Hines, Batsche, & Curtis, 2011).

Teacher efficacy also impacts the implementation of the RtI process. Teacher efficacy is how a teacher believes he or she impacts the students (Nunn, Jantz, & Butikofer, 2009). Research shows that teacher efficacy is related to many aspects of education, including student achievement, student motivation, behavior management, and helping students develop their self-efficacy (Nunn et al., 2009). Teachers with a high perception of self-efficacy tend to use teaching strategies that allow students to learn more effectively; therefore, they are more successful with low-achieving students (Sharma, Loreman, & Forlin, 2012). Furthermore, teachers with low self-efficacy spend a great amount of time focusing on topics or tasks of non-academic content and used less effective teaching strategies, which in turn, kept students from learning at their fullest

potential (Sharma et al., 2012). Increased teacher efficacy is related to increased satisfaction with the RtI process, which includes collaboration, decision making, and outcomes. Teacher efficacy is also linked to higher perceptions of improved interventions and their outcomes (Nunn et al., 2009).

Teacher Concerns Related to Response to Intervention

In a 2011 study conducted by Rinaldi et al., there was a list of concerns identified that affected the teacher's perceptions of the RtI process. These concerns were a time for planning, the responsibility of instruction, development and use of assessments, and progress monitoring. Teachers wanted to make sure the RtI model implemented was individualized to meet the needs of their school. These concerns are universal among teachers implementing RtI and can determine how effective the process is in improving student achievement.

Time. One concern that affects teacher perception of RtI is the amount of time needed to analyze data and plan interventions adequately. Teachers must have enough time to plan effectively. The RtI process is designed to be a collaborative process between various instructional providers in the school setting, such as the general education teacher, special education teacher, reading specialist, and English-language learner specialist. The school counselor can be essential in collaborating on behavioral needs. Allowing teachers and other school staff members to have common planning time to determine the type of instruction and intervention to be provided is essential (Rinaldi et al., 2011). The teachers also need time to analyze data and determine changes that need to be made. Doing so helps to ensure students are getting the instruction or intervention they need to be successful, and all instruction and interventions are truly individualized.

Responsibility of Instruction. The second concern that affects teacher perception of RtI is the responsibility of instruction. This responsibility can be overwhelming for teachers and cause them to have a negative perception of the RtI process, therefore, reducing their effectiveness in the classroom. The responsibility for instruction falls to various staff members within the school, depending on the instructional tier and the student's needs. Splitting responsibility can increase the positive nature of teacher perception. General education teachers provide Tier I instruction; however, Tier II instruction can be provided by a reading specialist, intervention specialist, English-language learner specialist, or the general education teacher. Tier III instruction can be provided by any of the previously mentioned staff members but may also be provided by a special education teacher (Rinaldi et al., 2011). Sharing the instructional responsibilities allows for students to receive instruction in various methods and allows for general education teachers to focus on the majority of the students in the classroom.

Assessment and Progress Monitoring. The third concern related to RtI was focused on assessment and progress monitoring. The type of assessment and the frequency of progress monitoring should be defined as part of the school's RtI model. A general education teacher stated, "RtI has been instrumental in getting to analyze and address our core instruction so that all of us are on the same page" (Rinaldi et al., 2011, p. 47). This cohesiveness would not have been possible without the use of student assessment and progress monitoring data.

Teacher Decision Making Related to Response to Intervention

Teachers make many decisions related to students and instruction daily. One of the major components of RtI, as previously discussed, is data-driven decision making. Teachers must use student data to inform their instructional decisions and practices. Teachers make decisions about

the core instruction provided in Tier I and the interventions provided in Tiers II and III. These decisions should be based on student data and evidence-based instructional practices.

Instruction

The teachers in the study used their progress monitoring data to improve their differentiation practices (Rinaldi et al., 2011). Doing this helped to strengthen their core curriculum. Teachers can also use progress monitoring data to improve the way they present Tier I instruction, not just to monitor student progress of students receiving additional instruction or interventions. This practice benefits all students in the classroom and increases teacher effectiveness. Instruction can be much more effective, and positive teacher perception can increase when teachers know the needs of the students, including their learning styles (Rinaldi et al., 2011).

Intervention

According to Fuchs and Fuchs (2006), intervention serves two purposes; to provide students with early intervention in areas identified as at-risk such as reading, math, or behavior and to provide a valid avenue for assessing student needs. The teacher begins selecting interventions based on student needs, as evidenced by achievement data. These interventions can be a program purchased by the school. After providing instruction for a prescribed amount of time, the teacher selects a validated progress monitoring tool and systematically monitors the student's responsiveness to the interventions being provided. The teacher then makes revisions to the interventions based on the data collected. The teacher may set new goals if the current ones have been met or may choose to intensify the interventions.

Quality of Instruction and Intervention

According to Turse and Albrecht (2015), quality instruction is necessary for every step of the RtI process. Quality instruction consists of “materials, methods, and tools that are validated by research” (Turse & Albrecht, 2015, p.86). Teachers must use quality instructional tools and methods to ensure that the instructional materials used are considered to be effective in meeting the academic needs of the students. Teachers should have the flexibility to choose instructional tools, methods, and materials used during instruction and intervention; however, these instructional tools and methods must be evidence-based and designed to meet the individual needs of the students (Turse & Albrecht, 2015).

Quality Tier I instruction includes the use of a variety of learning strategies, differentiation to meet the students’ individual needs, and constructive feedback during instruction. Quality instruction is also founded on a set of high academic standards and expectations (Graves & McConnell, 2014). Reading instruction should be composed of instruction in the five key areas of reading: phonics, phoneme awareness, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Instruction should be standards-based and not program-based to meet the needs of individual students.

Quality, effective Tier II instruction is based on the student’s need to understand the importance and purpose of the skills being taught (Graves & McConnell, 2014). The teacher providing the intervention should demonstrate and model the skill for the students in the intervention group. The teacher should also check for understanding throughout the lesson. Quality Tier II instruction often consists of a standard protocol, an explicit, direct-instruction lesson that is skill-specific. Students are grouped by skill deficiencies when receiving Tier II instruction so that the instruction can focus on specific skill development.

Quality Tier III instruction is provided in a one-on-one setting. It is more intensive than previous instruction and requires the teacher to provide the interventions to do so by using various modeling techniques. Tier III instruction focuses on a specific skill or portion of a skill and use materials or methods that are evidence-based. Quality instruction is essential in determining a student's academic capability. The lack of quality classroom instruction must be ruled out in order to determine if the student is receiving instruction at the level necessary for their success.

Theory of Planned Behavior

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) was developed as an extension of the Theory of Reasoned Action. The difference between the two theories is the addition of perceived behavioral control in the Theory of Planned Behavior. The three constructs of this theory are a person's attitude toward the behavior, the subjective norm, and the perceived behavioral control. In general, an attitude that is favorable toward the behavior, a positive subjective norm, and a greater perceived control will result in a higher intention to perform the behavior. The Theory of Planned Behavior is a widely used theory for predicting human behavior. In 2010, the theory was cited 4, 550 times in studies and articles (Ajzen, 2011). The theory is often cited about behavior related to the health field; however, there are cases where it has been used in the educational field (Yin & Sin, 2015; Demir, 2010).

Yin and Sin (2015) sought to determine a principal's intentions related to inclusive education using the Theory of Planned Behavior. In Hong Kong, the implementation of inclusive education has not progressed in recent years. "The variables under investigation in the present study include principals' attitudes towards inclusive education, perceptions of important others' opinions about inclusive education, perceptions of professional training for staff

involved, intentions towards inclusive education, and the inclusive policies in their schools” (Yin & Sin, 2015, p.207). In this study, 209 principals in Hong Kong completed the questionnaire. The results of the study indicate that intention and perceived behavioral control are significant predictors of behavior, intending to be a stronger predictor than perceived behavioral control.

In a 2010 study, Demir used the Theory of Planned Behavior as a framework to determine teachers’ likelihood of using the internet for professional development purposes. The study was conducted in Turkey. Two-hundred twenty-one teachers participated in this study by completing the questionnaire. Items on the questionnaire used a five-point Likert scale. The teachers answered questions related to their attitudes about using the internet for professional development, perception of others related to whether the internet should be used for professional development and perception of availability of skills and resources needed for using the internet for professional development. The results of the study indicate that attitude and perceived behavioral control have significant effects on the intention to participate in the behavior. There was a link between behavioral intention and the use of the internet. In this study, it was noted that the attitude was the strongest predictor of the behavior.

Elicitation studies are often used in conjunction with the Theory of Planned Behavior. The purpose of an elicitation study is to gain valuable information related to a person’s behavioral, normative, and control beliefs (Downs & Hausenblas, 2005). Elicitation studies are conducted to gain information about salient beliefs using open-ended questions. According to Conner and Armitage (1998), elicited beliefs are predictive of a person’s attitudes. The results from elicitation studies are often used to develop questionnaires that can be used for further research.

Conclusion

Response to Instruction is a complex process with many variables. In recent years, guidelines have been set by federal and state entities, which influenced individual districts' adoption of the framework. One of the most overlooked aspects of successful implementation of the RtI process is the teacher's perception of the process. Teacher perception is one of the least studied but most influential components of successful implementation.

Chapter III: Methods

This chapter provides information about the research methods used in this study. It opens by giving a summary of the research design, the population and sample, and the method used for choosing the sample for the study. The chapter then provides information about the instrumentation used in the study and the method used to collect and analyze the data. The chapter concludes by providing limitations to the study.

Research Questions

Four research questions guided this study:

1. What attitudes do teachers report as important to their implementation of RtI?
2. What subjective norms do teachers report as important to their implementation of RtI?
3. What perceived behavioral control do teachers report as important to their implementation of RtI?
4. What scope and frequency do teachers report relative to providing RtI interventions for their students?

Research Design

The research design used in this study was an elicitation study. Elicitation studies are a form of qualitative research. According to Roberts (2010), “Qualitative studies generate words that describe people’s actions, behaviors, and interactions, whereas quantitative studies generate numbers derived from questionnaires, tests, and experiments.” (p. 170). The purpose of this elicitation study was to explore teacher’s attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions as they relate to the RtI process and providing interventions to students. Elicitation studies are used in conjunction with the Theory of Planned Behavior as an exploratory stage for further research (Ajzen &

Fishbein, 1980). The combination of data allows the researcher to gain insight into the participants' salient beliefs about their attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control toward a subject (Conner & Armitage, 1998; Downs & Hausenblass, 2005). An elicitation study was an appropriate method to use because the research focused on obtaining information related to beliefs about the RtI process as an initial research step. While there have been studies focused on teacher beliefs related to RtI (Bineham et al., 2014; Castillo et al., 2011; Castillo et al., 2015; Stuart et al. 2011), there have been no know elicitation studies on the subject.

This study was a two-part elicitation study that consisted of an online questionnaire followed by an interview. Participants for the online portion of the study were recruited via email. Principals across the state of Alabama were emailed and asked to forward the questionnaire link to their teachers. The online questionnaire was designed to elicit responses about teachers' attitudes and beliefs related to the implementation of RtI. According to Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), the first five to nine responses provided are to be considered salient beliefs.

Further research indicated that the top five beliefs are salient (Elliot, Jobber, and Sharp, 1995; Van Der Pligt & Eiser, 1984). The open-ended format of these questions allowed participants to respond freely, and they were not limited in the length or number of responses they could provide. The last question on the survey allowed participants to provide contact information if they were willing to participate in a follow-up interview. Participants for the interview portion of the survey were contacted via the email address they provided on the online questionnaire. Interviews were conducted via face-to-face or on Zoom using an interview protocol. These interviews were audio-recorded with the permission of the participants. The interviews were used to gather more in-depth information about teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and

practices related to RtI, as well as the scope and frequency to which they implement the RtI framework. Interviews were used to triangulate the data and assist in providing validity to the study. According to Creswell (2013) and Schwandt (2007), triangulation is the gathering of data from multiple sources and using multiple methods to establish validity.

The results from the elicitation study were used to explore teachers' beliefs and perceptions related to the implementation of RtI. General education teachers' salient beliefs about RtI implementation were identified. The results from this study were used to make recommendations for current RtI practices and policies. The data from this study could also be used in a future study to explore the possible connection between a teacher's attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control and their actual implementation of the RtI process.

Participants and Sampling

This study was designed to gain insight into teacher attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions related to RtI. Due to the nature of the study, participants for the study needed to meet certain criteria. The criteria were as follows:

1. Teachers must be currently employed in an Alabama public school.
2. Teachers must be in a classroom and currently providing intervention to students.
3. Teachers are willing to participate and be open with their responses.

Purposeful sampling was used for this study because RtI procedures vary slightly by district and state. I am familiar with the RtI procedures in the state of Alabama. The participants for the interview were selected based on their responses to the questionnaire. Creswell (2013) stated, "The concept of purposeful sampling is used in qualitative research. This means that the inquirer selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study" (p. 156).

Permission was obtained from the Auburn University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Services in Research to conduct the study and collect data (Appendix A). A copy of the Alabama Department of Education directory was obtained from the state website. This document was used to obtain principal emails for all principals within the state of Alabama. An email was sent to all principals in the state of Alabama with information regarding the study and a link to the online questionnaire (Appendix B). Principals were asked to send the email to the teachers in their schools and email the researcher to confirm it had been sent. Responses are needed from various teachers in various districts to reach saturation of data. A total of 37 principals responded, stating they had forwarded the email to their teachers. There is no way of knowing if the other principals forwarded the email to their teachers or not.

There were principals from five districts that emailed and stated approval from the district level would be needed to participate in the survey. An email was sent to the necessary administrators at the district level to request permission for the teachers in their districts to have the ability to participate in this study. Three of the districts did not approve participation in this study, stating they had already participated in several studies. Two districts approved the participation for the study and forwarded that approval to their principals. There was also one individual school principal that responded by stating they would not participate in the study. Once all online questionnaires were collected, there were 97 participants who completed all or part of the survey. Participation in this study was voluntary.

Participants for the interview portion of the study were selected from the online questionnaires they submitted. The final question on the questionnaire asks participants to provide their contact information if they are willing to participate in a follow-up interview. A total of six interviews were conducted. There were three interviews for the grade level range

kindergarten through fifth grade and three interviews for the grade level range sixth through eighth grade. However, participants for the ninth through twelfth-grade level range were not willing to participate once the interview portion of the study was being conducted. Participants from the online questionnaire who provided contact information indicating they were willing to participate in the interview did not respond to interview invitations sent to them.

Instrumentation

This elicitation study was designed using The Theory of Planned Behavior as the theoretical framework. A questionnaire was developed using the guidelines from the *Theory of Planned Behaviour Questionnaires: Manual for Researchers* (Francis et al., 2004). The questions are focused on the attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control of teachers as they relate to the RtI process (see Table 2).

Table 2

Elicitation Study Survey Questions Used in the Present Study

Attitude
1. What do you believe are the ADVANTAGES of the Response to Intervention/Instruction (RtI) process?
2. What do you believe are the DISADVANTAGES of the Response to Intervention/Instruction (RtI) process?
3. Is there anything else you can associate with your own view about the RtI process and providing interventions?
Subjective Norm
4. Are there any individuals or groups that would APPROVE of the way you implement the RtI process and/or choose and implement instructional interventions for students?
5. Are there any individuals or groups that would DISAPPROVE of the way you implement the RtI process and/or choose and implement instructional interventions for students?
6. Is there anything else that you would associate with what others consider being acceptable or not when providing instructional interventions through the RtI process?
Perceived Behavioral Control
7. What factors or circumstances allow you to implement the RtI process and interventions to students?
8. What factors or circumstances make it difficult or impossible for you to implement the RtI process and interventions to students?
9. Are there any other issues that come to mind when you think about implementing the RtI process and providing interventions for students?

Data Collection

According to Dillman, Smyth, and Melani-Christian (2014), electronic surveys are the fastest growing form of surveying due to their speed and low cost related to online surveys. This type of survey allows responses to be gathered from large numbers of respondents in a short amount of time, and at little to no cost. Auburn University provides access to Qualtrics to all graduate students and faculty at no additional cost.

Data were collected for this study using Qualtrics, which is an online survey program, for the questionnaire portion of the study. The program allowed me to collect data without identifying participants. An email was sent to potential participants, and they were asked to participate in the study by answering the questions on the questionnaire. The first question on the questionnaire was the consent to participate in the study and was a required question. The second question was also required, and it identified the participants' grade-level range.

Responses for the remaining questions were not required. According to Dillman et al. (2014), requiring participants to respond to questions can decrease the number of participants and can create a situation where participants feel they must lie if they do not know how to answer a question. The questions were presented in the same order for all participants. The participants submitted answers anonymously online. The last question on the questionnaire asked for participants to provide contact information if they were interested in participating in a follow-up interview related to RtI. Participation was voluntary and contact information did not have to be provided to submit the survey.

Once the data were collected from the questionnaire portion of the elicitation study, potential interview participants were contacted via email. Interviews were scheduled with willing participants. These interviews were conducted both in a face-to-face format, as well as

using Zoom due to distance. The interview questions followed an interview protocol (Appendix C) and allowed for more in-depth information related to participants' RtI practices. Participants participating in Zoom interviews were emailed the Informed Consent (Appendix D) prior to the interview. The participants signed the informed consent and emailed it back to the researcher. At the beginning of the interview, participants were asked if they had any questions about the study, process, or consent. They were also asked if they consented to participate in the study. Interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of the participant. Participants' names and school names were not used in the interviews.

Data Analysis

The questionnaire was designed based on the Theory of Planned Behavior. Questions were designed to focus on the attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control as it relates to teachers implementing the RtI process and providing interventions to students. Each idea was initially coded as an individual response. Those individual codes were compared, contrasted, and grouped through content analysis (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Francis et al., 2004; Schwandt, 2007). The content analysis focuses more on the content of the response than the form of the response (Schwandt, 2007). The data were then organized into themes that emerged from each set of questions related to attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control.

For the questionnaire, the data was uploaded to ATLAS.ti and coded. Each of the participants' responses were coded individually. All ideas within each response were coded to show that the participants were not restricted to the number of responses they could provide. According to research, the first five responses are considered to be salient beliefs (Elliot et al., 1995; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Van Der Pligt & Eiser, 1984). The coded responses were then

compared, categorized, and grouped according to themes. The codes were arranged in descending order and placed into tables for further analysis. The same steps were followed with each of the three sets of questions (attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control).

For the interviews, the audio files were uploaded to an online transcription service where they were transcribed and were available for access through a secure portal. I read the transcripts, and hand-coded them by identifying individual ideas. The codes were then arranged into categories and themes. The data from the interviews were compared to the data from the online questionnaires to explore similarities and differences. A table was developed to show data related to the scope and frequency of RtI implementation.

To triangulate the data, the data from the online questionnaire and interviews were compared to determine common themes related to teachers' attitudes and beliefs of the implementation of RtI. When common themes are found in different sources of data it provides validity to the findings by triangulating the data (Creswell, 2013). Triangulating data allows the researcher to check for the integrity of conclusions drawn during analysis and examine those conclusions from more than one perspective (Schwandt, 2007).

Limitations

This study sought information regarding the implementation of RtI as it is related to general education teacher beliefs. The identified limitations of the study are that it took place within the state of Alabama and was limited to current classroom teachers. The first part of the study was conducted in various schools across the state of Alabama. The interviews were conducted based on the participant's willingness to participate and their grade level range.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore general education teachers' beliefs and attitudes

related to the implementation of the RtI process. An elicitation study was conducted to elicit ideas related to teachers' attitudes toward RtI, the subjective norms, and the perceived behavioral control. Follow-up interviews were conducted in order to gain more information about teachers' perceptions and beliefs of RtI and how often they are providing interventions to students. The data from the survey was used to determine salient beliefs of general education teachers related to RtI implementation.

Chapter IV: Results

The purpose of this elicitation study was to explore general education teachers' attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral controls related to the RtI process and its implementation. From the survey and interview data, general education teachers' salient beliefs were identified as they related to advantages and disadvantages of RtI, the factors that allow them or implement the process or make it difficult to implement the process, and people they felt would approve or disapprove of their implementation practices. Research questions in this qualitative study were based on the Theory of Planned Behavior. The questions were as follows:

1. What attitudes do teachers report as important to their implementation of RtI?
2. What subjective norms do teachers report as important to their implementation of RtI?
3. What perceived behavioral control do teachers report as important to their implementation of RtI?
4. What scope and frequency do teachers report relative to providing RtI interventions for their students?

Participant responses to questions centered around the three constructs of the Theory of Planned Behavior and interview questions that allowed me to gain an understanding of teachers' perceptions and beliefs related to Response to Intervention/Instruction. In this chapter, a summary of the data from the questionnaire will be reported in table form, and then each table will be discussed in further detail. The tables have been divided based on the three constructs of the Theory of Planned Behavior. The first table (Table 5) represents data related to attitudes, the second table (Table 6) represents data related to subjective norms, and the third table (Table 7) represents data related to perceived behavioral control. Following Table 7, the data from the

interview portion of the study is presented. The interview data is arranged and presented in themes, which emerged when coding the interview data.

Participants

Participants for this elicitation study were kindergarten through twelfth-grade general education teachers from various regions across the state of Alabama. They were current teachers in the 2018-2019 school year at public schools within the state of Alabama. Participants in the study were responsible for providing Tier II and/or Tier III instruction to students. For this study, participants were asked to identify the grade level range in which they were currently teaching because the RtI process varies by grade level range.

School names, years of experience, gender, and other identifying data were not collected because the questionnaire was designed to be anonymous. This demographic data was not relevant to the purpose of the study because it would not impact participants' attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control related to the implementation of RtI. It was important for the participants to feel their responses were completely anonymous because implementing RtI is part of the job responsibilities of a general education teacher. If the teachers did not feel their responses were anonymous, they might not have responded honestly or at all. The questions asked for teachers to respond honestly to information related to advantages and disadvantages, people that would approve or disapprove of their implementation, and factors that allowed them to implement the processor made it difficult to implement the process. In order to gain honest information related to these questions, the teachers needed to know their answers could not be identified, as evidenced in some of the responses asking if they would be willing to participate in a follow-up interview. One participant stated, "No, because I'm not tenured," and another participant stated, "No, I don't want to rock the boat."

There was a total of 97 participants in the questionnaire portion of the study who answered all or part of the nine open-ended response questions on the questionnaire. Participants were all general education teachers for students in kindergarten through twelfth grade. There were 20 (20.62%) participants that taught in the kindergarten through the second-grade level range and 27 (27.84%) participants that taught in the third through the fifth-grade level range for a total of 47 (48.46%) of the participants from the elementary level. Furthermore, there were 32 (32.99%) participants that taught in the 6th through 8th grade level range (middle school) and 18 (18.56%) participants who taught in the 9th through 12th grade level range (high school).

According to the Alabama State Department of Education website for the 2017-2018 school year, there are 1,060 (46.87%) elementary schools, 733 (31.98%) middle schools, and 499 (21.77%) high schools. The data for the 2018-2019 school year was not available at the time of this study. A Chi-square test was done to compare the percentage of questionnaire participants from each grade level range to the percentage of schools for each grade level range in the state of Alabama. It was determined that the p-value was 0.756. This value indicated there was not a statistically significant difference in the percentages when comparing participants to schools. The percentage of schools can be compared to the percentage of teachers to determine participant representation because the percentages are proportional. A larger percentage of schools requires a larger percentage of teachers to staff it and likewise with smaller percentages of schools and teachers. The percentage of schools and teachers at each grade level range declines as the grade level range increases due to an increased student-teacher ratio. Therefore, it could be considered that the participants were a good representation of the teachers within the state of Alabama, and the results of this study could be generalizable.

There were six participants in the interview portion of the study. For this portion of the study, there were also no identifying data collected because it was not relevant to the study. The focus of this study was on teachers' attitudes and beliefs related to RtI implementation. Collecting demographic data would not have altered the outcome of this study. There were three participants from the kindergarten-fifth grade range and three participants from the sixth-eighth grade range. There were no interview participants from the ninth-twelfth grade range. These participants were from schools located throughout the central portion to the southeastern portion of Alabama from various school districts. There were two questionnaire respondents for the ninth-twelfth grade range that stated they would be interested in participating in an interview but did not respond when contacted via email to participate.

Responses

This study had 97 participants respond to all or part of the nine open-ended questions on the questionnaire portion of the study. These nine questions were formed around the three constructs of the Theory of Planned Behavior. The first three questions addressed the participants' attitude toward RtI, the next three questions addressed subjective norms, and the final three questions addressed the participants' perceived behavior control related to the implementation of RtI. The questions were presented in a fixed order for all participants. Table 3 shows the number of participants who answered each question.

Table 3

Number of Participants per Question

Number of Participants per Question	
Question 1: Advantages	97
Question 2: Disadvantages	94
Question 3: Other associated with your view	75
Question 4: Approve	83
Question 5: Disapprove	70
Question 6: Associated with others' views	54
Question 7: Allow	67
Question 8: Difficult	67
Question 9: Other issues that come to mind	58

The participation for each question ranged from 58 for “other issues that come to mind” to 97 for “advantages.” There were 44 participants who answered all nine of the questions. All participants answered the first question of the survey. The participants were not required to answer every question, and they were not limited in the number of responses they could give for each question. According to Dillman et al. (2014), requiring participants to answer questions can decrease participation or force untruthful responses to get to the next question or finish the survey. Within each category, more participants answered the first two questions related to each construct than answered the “other” question, which asked for additional information. This response indicated they did not have anything to add beyond what was already stated in their initial salient responses (Elliot et al., 1995; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Van Der Pligt & Eiser, 1984).

The number of participants answering questions decreased from the questions related to attitudes to those related to perceived behavioral control. Participant attrition varied from question to question with the highest participant count being for question one and the lowest for question 6. However, attrition overall decreased as the questions progressed, which is to be

expected on a constructed response survey. As represented in Tables 5 and 7, the participant responses were similar, indicating it is possible that participants viewed these categories similarly and therefore felt the responses were similar. There were similar coded responses for advantages and circumstances that allowed for implementation, such as collaboration. There were also similar coded responses for disadvantages and circumstances that hindered implementation such as time.

Of the 97 participants, there were a total of 1,184 responses. For this study, a response was considered a codable idea. Table 4 shows the total number of responses given for each question. The mean number of responses ranges from 1.34 to 2.92 per participant, which indicates that the participants were not limited in their responses to the questions (Sutton et al., 2004).

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics for Responses (Beliefs) Elicited by the Open-Ended Questions

Question	Total Responses	Mean Response per Participant
Advantages	160	1.65
Disadvantages	156	1.66
Other Associated with your own views	124	1.65
Approve	242	2.92
Disapprove	94	1.34
Associated with others' views	83	1.54
Allow	115	1.72
Difficult	121	1.81
Other issues that come to mind	85	1.47

Theory of Planned Behavior Questionnaire

The Theory of Planned Behavior is designed around three constructs: a person's attitude toward a behavior, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991) and suggests a person's beliefs or attitudes about behavior will influence their willingness to participate in that behavior. This study used the Theory of Planned Behavior to explore teachers' attitudes, beliefs,

and perceptions related to the implementation of RtI. The Theory of Planned Behavior was used to help fill a research gap that exists related to teacher beliefs about RtI and as an exploratory step for future research. The participants' responses to the nine open-ended questions developed for this study were analyzed and grouped into themes. This information is presented in Tables 5, 6, and 7.

The coded items for the participants' responses are organized into three tables. The data for responses related to attitudes are listed in Table 5. The data for responses related to subjective norms are listed in Table 6, and the data for responses related to perceived behavioral control are listed in Table 7. Following each table, I will further discuss any coded items with ten responses or more. I will briefly summarize and discuss coded items with less than ten responses.

Attitudes

The first three questions in the questionnaire were developed to elicit responses regarding the participants' attitudes toward Response to Instruction/Intervention (RtI). Based on The Theory of Planned Behavior, a person's attitude is derived from their behavioral beliefs (Downs & Hausenblas, 2005). A person's attitude toward a behavior refers to how favorable or unfavorable their evaluation of the behavior is (Ajzen, 1991). Furthermore, a person's attitude toward a subject is determined by their salient beliefs about that subject (Conner & Armitage, 1998). The responses for the first three questions provided information related to the participants' attitudes toward RtI and its implementation.

In Table 5, the data from the first three questions were represented. The information presented in the table represented responses related to advantages, disadvantages, and other attitudes toward the implementation of RtI. Ninety-seven participants answered the question related to advantages, 94 participants answered the question related to disadvantages, and 75

participants answered the question related to other things associated with their views. Of those participants, 160 responses were elicited for the question related to advantages, 156 responses related to disadvantages, and 124 responses related to other views.

Table 5 shows the coding frame for the questions related to participant attitudes of advantages, disadvantages, and other views of RtI. The response count column depicts the number of participant responses related to each coded item. The percentage of participants who reported on each coded item is also shown in Table 5. The percentage was obtained by dividing the response count for each coded item by the number of participants for the given question.

Following Table 5, the findings will be discussed in a more in-depth manner for coded responses of 10 or more. A number instead of percentage was chosen because the number of participants for each question varies throughout the study. Also, there will be some discussion for coded categories where the response count may not have reached 10 for one question but reached ten across multiple questions and represented the same ideas.

Table 5

Coding Frame for the Advantages, Disadvantages, and Other Questions with Numbers and Percentages of Participants for Each Category

Item Codes	Attitudes					
	Advantages		Disadvantages		Other	
	Response Count	Participant Percent	Response Count	Participant Percent	Response Count	Participant Percent
Time			42	44.68	3	4.00
Student receives help	29	29.90			4	5.33
Large amount of documentation	10	10.31	19	20.21	3	4.00
Collaboration	15	15.46			1	1.33
Meet student needs	15	15.46			3	4.0
Student progress	14	14.43				
Individualized instruction	12	12.37			3	4.0
Ineffective			12	12.77	2	2.67
None	10	10.31	4	4.26	13	17.33
Student weakness identified	9	9.28			4	5.33
Close gaps	8	8.23			4	5.33
Additional instruction/intervention	8	8.23			1	1.33
Small group instruction	8	8.23			1	1.33
Large class sizes			7	7.45	4	5.33
No code assigned					7	9.33
Give grades (pad or inflate)			6	6.38		
Intervention teachers/class needed			5	5.32	5	5.33
Lack of resources			5	5.32		
Other student engagement			5	5.32	1	1.33
Reduces special education referrals	4	4.12				
Lack of consistency			4	4.26		
Lack of RtI knowledge/training			4	4.26	8	10.67
Lack of student accountability			4	4.26	4	5.33
Lack of student motivation			4	4.26	6	8.00
Overwhelming for teachers			4	4.26	4	5.33
Proper implementation			4	4.26	2	2.67
Data driven	3	3.09			2	2.67
Framework	3	3.09			1	1.33
Behavior concerns			3	3.19		
Students not tracked/fall through cracks			3	3.19		
Students stay in RtI			3	3.19	2	2.67
Consistent/daily					3	4.00
Lack of parent support					3	4.00
Changes needed					3	4.00
complicated			1	1.06	3	4.00

Accommodations used	2	2.06		
Beneficial/effective	2	2.06	4	5.33
Proactive	2	2.06		
Interventions not defined			2	2.13
Lack of support for teachers			2	2.13
Not flexible			2	2.13
Only focus on lower students			2	2.13
Scheduling problems			1	1.33
Tier I suffers			1	1.33
Waste of time			2	2.67
Explicit/purposeful instruction			2	2.67
Do not like it/it is a problem			2	2.67
Need sooner than high school			2	2.67
Necessary			2	2.67
All students have an opportunity	1	1.03	1	1.33
Can be done digitally	1	1.03	1	1.33
Each school is different	1	1.03		
Leads to IEP of 504	1	1.03	1	1.33
Reflective practice	1	1.03		
Systematic	1	1.03	1	1.33
Funding/costs			1	1.06
Lack of attendance			1	1.06
Unrealistic expectations			1	1.06

Advantages. Participant responses, as represented in Table 5, show a total of 29 (29.90%) participants indicted “students receive help” more frequently than other advantages of the RtI process. One participant stated, “Kids have a chance to get some assistance.” Another participant stated, “Students are able to get help more quickly within a general education setting.”

Participants also indicated “collaboration” and “meet student needs” both had 15 (15.46%) of the participants list these as advantages to RtI. Related to collaboration, one participant stated, “Getting input from all of a student’s general ed teacher to help them be successful in class” was an advantage to RtI. Another participant stated, “Teachers can discuss students in need of interventions and make a group plan. Teachers can also determine if the student is an issue in just their class or if the behavior in all classes is leading to academic

problems”. As related to “meet student needs,” one participant stated, “RtI is an effective way to determine what students need and how the teacher can meet those needs.”

The fourth most frequently coded response to advantages related to RtI was “student progress” with 14 (14.43%) responses. Participants felt that students making academic progress were an advantage to the implementation of RtI. Some of the participant responses included:

- “You can see the student progress.”
- “We have seen progress in those who participate.”
- “The students can grow to be an independent, successful students in the classroom.”

Participant responses, as represented in Table 5, indicated “individualized instruction” was a coded response from 12 (12.37%) participants as another advantage to the RtI process. Participant responses varied from simple to more detailed. A sample of these responses are as follows:

- “Individualized instruction. One-on-one instruction.”
- “Students receive instruction based on their needs in a setting that best suits their needs (smaller group, individualized instruction)”
- “It provides students with extra opportunities to succeed – opportunities that are specific to their learning styles and skills.”

The amount of documentation gathered through the process was also frequently coded as an advantage. Participants' responses, as indicated in Table 5, show “large amount of documentation” was an advantage reported by 10 (10.31%) participants. One participant stated, “it identifies needs and provides a documented way of tracking progress.” Another participant said, “[it] helps keep track of documentation,” while yet another said, “it’s excellent for documentation.”

Further analysis of the data showed “none” had 10 (10.31%) of the participants indicated there were no advantages to the RtI process. Participant responses included:

- “I do not see any apparent advantages from my own application of the RtI process.”
- “None that I can see because no one has told us what to do with the students.”
- “None. Most teachers do not have the time to conduct the RtI process well.”

These responses indicate negative attitudes toward the RtI process.

There were numerous responses coded with response counts of less than 10. These items were coded and reported because they represented teachers’ attitudes about the advantages of RtI. Some of those coded items include “student weakness identified” as represented by 9 (9.28%) participants, “small group instruction” as represented by 8 (8.23%) participants, and “data-driven” represented by 3 (3.09%) participants. There were some other coded items where there was one response (1.03%). These coded items include “each school is different,” “can be done digitally,” “reflective practice,” and “leads to IEP or 504”.

Disadvantages. There were a total of 42 participants (44.68%) who reported there was not enough time to complete the RtI process fully. This category was the largest coded category for disadvantages related to RtI implementation. One participant stated, “The time constraints make it difficult to meet the needs of everyone every day of the week.” Another participant stated, “The time required to reteach the information. The length of time required to identify students that need additional support”.

Another disadvantage identified by participants was the amount of documentation required for the process. A total of 19 (20.21%) participants, as represented in Table 5, indicated “a lot of documentation” as a disadvantage to the process. Participants provided the following responses in relation to documentation being a disadvantage: “It can be demanding on an already

demanding job (the documentation)” and “Teachers do not put children on RtI due to the extra paperwork.”

Furthermore, participants stated that the RtI process is ineffective. The coded item “ineffective” is represented by responses from 12 (12.77%) participants, as shown in Table 4.

Some of these responses include:

- “It's too much work and ineffective.”
- “Many times, it ends up being just more paperwork and doesn't solve the problem.”
- “A lot of the interventions do not seem to work.”

Multiple coded items had less than ten participants list a response related to that category.

There were 7 (7.45%) participants indicate “large class sizes” as a disadvantage to the RtI process while 6 (6.38%) participants indicted a disadvantage was that teachers “give grades (pad or inflate).” Some of the coded items in which 5 (5.32%) participants responded included “intervention teachers/class needed,” “lack of resources,” and “other student engagement.” There were some of the coded items where 4 (4.26%) participants responded, These included “lack of consistency,” “lack of RtI knowledge/training,” “lack of student motivation,” and “proper implementation” Finally, there was a small number of coded items in which 1 (1.06%) participant responded which included “complicated,” “funding/costs,” “lack of attendance,” and “unrealistic expectations.

Other Views Related to Attitudes. A total of 13 (17.33%) participants, as represented in Table 5, indicated they did not have any other views associated with their attitude toward the RtI process. There were seven “no code assigned” in this category because the responses could not be grouped into categories. Some of the responses include “Don’t use it.,” “I loathe RtI and the process,” “Only in place to document against lawsuits,” and “exhaustion.” These responses

did not fit into any of the coded categories. Analysis of the participant responses in Table 5 indicated there were coded items that reached a response count of 10 across multiple questions related to attitudes. Percentages are not used when reporting these numbers because the participant count number was different for each question. The coded responses indicated as advantages across multiple questions were “student weakness identified” with a response count of 13 and “close gaps” with a response count of 12 were reported as advantages to the RtI process. The coded responses “lack of RtI knowledge/training” with a response count of 12 and “lack of student motivation” with a response count of 10 were reported as disadvantages to the RtI process. One participant stated, “I asked what we were supposed to do to help the students, and the person in charge could not give an answer, rather did not know.” Another participant stated, “There is just not enough training.

Subjective Norms

The second construct of the Theory of Planned Behavior is subjective norms. According to Ajzen (1991), subjective norms is the social factor in the Theory of Planned Behavior. Subjective norms refer to the level in which a person is influenced by another person’s approval or disapproval of a task or activity (Ajzen, 1991). A person’s normative beliefs and perceived social pressure drive their subjective norms (Connor & Armitage, 1998). Social pressure is a person’s perceived pressure from others to perform or not perform a task (Ajzen, 1985). In Table 6, the data from the three questions related to subjective norms were represented.

The information presented in the table represents responses related to the participants' “perceived approval and disapproval” of their implementation of the RtI process. The responses for “anything else that you would associate with what others consider being acceptable or not when providing instructional interventions through the RtI process” are discussed in a section

following the table. Eighty-three participants answered the question related to approval, 70 participants answered the question related to disapproval, and 54 participants answered the question related to other people's views. Of those participants, 242 responses were elicited for the question related to approval, 94 responses related to disapproval, and 83 responses related to others' views.

Table 6 shows the coding frame for the questions related to participant beliefs of people that would approve and disapprove of their implementation of the RtI process. The response count column depicts the number of participant responses related to each coded item. The percentage of participants who reported on each coded item is also shown in Table 6. The percentages were calculated by dividing the response count for each coded item by the number of participants for the given question. Participant numbers varied by question. Information related to the question eliciting responses about "there anything else that you would associate with" was discussed in a section following the table because the participants' responses did not address the question.

Coded responses related to administrative roles in the school were listed separately in the table because participants listed various administrative roles individually while others simply listed administration. Administrative teams and RtI monitoring responsibilities vary by school; therefore, there was no way to know what roles participants were responding to when they simply listed administration. When the coded items "administration," "principal," and "assistant principal" were combined, there was a total of 81 (97.59%) participant responses who stated some form of administration would approve of their implementation of RtI. In combining the same coded items, 17 (24.29%) participants indicated some form of administration would disapprove of their implementation.

Table 6

Coding Frame for the “Approval and Disapproval” Questions with Numbers and Percentages of Participants for Each Category

Item Codes	Subjective Norms			
	Approval		Disapproval	
	Response Count	Participant Count	Response Count	Participant Count
Principal	35	42.17	4	5.71
Administration	28	33.73	9	12.86
Teachers	26	31.33	13	18.57
Assistant Principal	18	21.69	4	5.71
Parents	18	21.69	6	8.57
Counselor	14	16.87	2	2.86
No one	1	1.20	14	20.00
Academic Coach	13	15.66	4	5.71
RtI team members	10	12.05	2	2.86
Central office staff	8	9.64	1	1.43
Reading coach	8	9.64	2	2.86
Colleagues	7	8.43	4	5.71
n/a			6	8.57
RtI coordinator	6	7.23	2	2.86
Curriculum specialist	5	6.02	1	1.43
Interventionist	5	6.02	1	1.43
Special education teacher	5	6.02		
Superintendent	5		1	1.43
No code assigned	5	6.02	5	7.14
Special education department	4	4.82		
Not sure			4	4.71
Board members	3	3.61	1	1.43
Students	3	3.61	3	4.29
Department of education	2	2.41		
Don't do RtI	2	2.41	2	2.86
Anyone	1	1.20		
Behavior interventionist	1	1.20		
Chief academic officer	1	1.20	1	1.43
Data lovers	1	1.20		
Director of elementary education	1	1.2		
Federal programs	1	1.2		
Librarian	1	1.2		
Math coach			1	1.43
Other school leaders	1	1.2		
Outside sources			1	1.43
Political figures	1	1.2		
Stakeholders	1	1.2		
Yahweh	1	1.2		

Approval. Analysis of participant responses in Table 6 indicated there were multiple people participants reported as approving of their approach and implementation to RtI. Participants responded to this question in list form, and many listed more than one person who would approve of their implementation strategies. A total of 35 (42.17%) of participants listed “principal” and 18 (21.69) participants listed “assistant principal” as people who would approve. There were 28 (33.73%) participants who listed “administration” as a group of people who would approve of their implementation of RtI. There were other coded items where there were more than ten responses. Those included teachers 26 (31.33%), parents 18 (21.69%), counselor 14 (16.87%), academic coach 13 (15.66%), and RtI team members 10 (12.05%).

Participant responses, as represented in Table 6, also indicated there were other people or groups of people in which participants stated would approve of their implementation of RtI. A total of 6 (7.23%) of participants indicated the “RtI coordinator” would approve of their implementation. There were four categories where 5 (6.02%) participants responded. These were “curriculum specialist,” “interventionist,” “special education teacher,” and “superintendent.” Several coded items had 1 (1.20%) participant response. Some of these were “behavior interventionist,” “director of elementary education, and “political figures.”

Furthermore, there were five responses coded as “no code assigned” because the participants’ responses did not answer the question. One participant stated, “I end up conducting classes as if all students were on RtI, rather than differentiate.” Another participant stated, “I provide RtI interventions to all my students.”

Disapproval. Analysis of participant responses in Table 6 indicated there were multiple responses from participants when asked about people or groups who would disapprove of their implementation of RtI. The coding frame “no one” was assigned to the responses from 14

(20.00%) participants indicating they did not believe there was anyone who would disapprove of their implementation. There were a total of 13 (18.57%) participants who indicated that “teachers” would disapprove of their implementation of RtI. Several participants indicated “teachers” in list format while other participants provided some explanation. These responses include:

- “Some teachers who don’t like RtI.”
- “teachers because of time commitments.”
- “peers do not approve because the time involved takes commitment.”
- “Some teachers who feel that this approach is an effort to "show off" rather than help students grow.”

There were other coding frames assigned to smaller numbers of participants’ responses. There were 9 (12.86) participants who listed “administration” as a group of people who would disapprove of their implementation of RtI. Six (8.57%) participants stated “parents” would not approve of their practices. There were 4 (5.71%) participants who indicated the “principal,” “academic coach,” and “colleagues” would not approve of their implementation.

The code “no code assigned” was given to 5 (7.14%) participants’ responses because their responses did not answer the question about the disapproval of their practices. Some of these responses include, “RtI requires some productive struggle.” and “Effective Classroom Management and Classroom Procedures have to be in place to teach effectively.”

Other Approval and Disapproval. For the third question related to the subjective norm construct, the participants were asked, “Is there anything else that you would associate with what others consider being acceptable or not when providing instructional interventions through the

RtI process?” The participants did not provide information answering this question but did respond related to their thoughts and feelings about the RtI process overall.

For the coding frame, “no” 19 (35.19%) participants indicated there was nothing else they would associate with what others considered to be acceptable or not for implementing the RtI process. Also, two participants stated they did not understand the question.

The participants' responses to this question were related to the implementation problems and lack of training or knowledge related to RtI. One participant stated, “Teachers feel that they are ill-equipped or should not have to provide intensive support to students with significant gaps or poor foundational instruction. This question applies to all content areas, not just literacy.” Another participant stated, “I believe some people see this as a way of focusing all attention on Tier 2/3 students for the sake of test scores. Therefore, not enough time is spent on Tier 1 students. As a result, Tier 1 students never reach their full potential because all the attention is mostly on Tier 3 students. The lack of attention can reduce rigor and cause parents not to send their children to public schools.” A different participant stated, “My District wants to mandate lesson plan formats and clearly has a defined way they want things done, but they fail to provide adequate training and resources for educators that want to do as asked/required.” While these responses provide information about the current state of RtI implementation in some schools, they do not answer the question asked.

Perceived Behavioral Control

The third construct of Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior is perceived behavioral control. The Theory of Planned behavior came from the addition of this construct to the Theory of Reasoned Action to increase predictive validity (Ajzen, 1985, 1991). A person's perceived behavioral control refers to how difficult or easy they believe participating in an

activity would be (Ajzen, 1991). A person's perceived behavioral control can be unrealistic when they have little information about the task or behavior, requirements are unknown or have changed, available resources have changed, or unfamiliar elements have become part of the situation (Ajzen, 1991).

In Table 7, the data from the three questions related to perceived behavioral control were represented. The information presented in the table represented responses related to the factors or circumstances participants believe "allow, make it difficult, and other issues that come to mind" concerning implementing the RtI process. Sixty-seven participants answered the question related to circumstances that allow the implementation, 67 participants answered the question related to circumstances that make it difficult to implement RtI, and 58 participants answered the question related to other issues that come to mind concerning the implementation of the RtI process. Of those participants, 115 responses were elicited for the question related to allowing for implementation, 121 responses related to circumstances that make it difficult to implement RtI, and 85 responses related to anything else that comes to mind related to the implementation of RtI.

Table 7 shows the coding frame for the questions related to circumstances attributed to allowing the implantation of RtI, making the implementation difficult and other issues with the implementation that come to mind for the participants. The response count column depicts the number of responses for each coded item. The percentage of participants who reported on each coded item is also shown in Table 7. The percentage was calculated by dividing the number of responses by the number of participants for each question. Participant and response count varied by question.

Table 7

Coding Frame for the circumstances that “allow, make difficult, and other” Questions with Numbers and Percentages of Participants in Each Category

Item Codes	Perceived Behavioral Control					
	Allow		Make Difficult		Other	
	Response Count	Participant Percent	Response Count	Participant Percent	Response Count	Participant Percent
Time/scheduling	20	29.85	37	55.22	11	13.79
Student/teacher ratio	4	5.97	16	23.88	5	8.62
Student data	12	17.91	2	2.99		
Collaboration	11	16.42	1	1.49	2	3.45
None	1	1.49			9	15.52
Teachers/interventionist	8	11.94	5	7.46	1	1.72
Administration support of RtI	7	10.45	6	8.96	2	3.45
RtI knowledge/training	3	4.48	4	5.97	7	12.07
Attendance	2	2.99	6	8.96	1	1.72
No code assigned	2	2.99	4	4.48	6	10.34
Instruction/intervention	5	7.46			4	6.90
Material resources	2	2.99	5	7.46	3	5.17
Student needs/weaknesses	5	7.46	5	7.46	2	3.45
Planning/organization	4	5.97	3	4.48	1	1.72
Communication	3	4.47	1	1.49		
Extra work on teacher			1	1.49	3	5.17
Flexibility	3	4.47			1	1.72
Give grades			1	1.49	3	5.17
Lack of proper implementation			3	4.47	3	5.17
n/a	1	1.49	1	1.49	3	5.17
Ability/small group	2	2.99			1	1.72
Amount of documentation			2	2.99	2	3.45
Behavior	1	1.49	2	2.99	1	1.72
Colleagues	2	2.99				
Focus on reading	2	2.99	2	2.99		
Lack of parent support			1	1.49	2	3.45
Mandated	2	2.99				
Other student engagement	2	2.99	2	2.99		
Student buy-in	1	1.49	2	2.99	1	1.72
Student motivation/accountability	2	2.99	2	2.99	2	3.45
Systematic	2	2.99			1	1.72
Tier I	2	2.99				
Waste of time/not needed	1	1.49	1	1.49	2	3.45
Consistent	1	1.49			1	1.72
Classroom management					1	1.72
Exhaustion			1	1.49		
Limited access to student records			1	1.49		
Parents			1	1.49	1	1.72
Politics					1	1.72
RtI team members	1	1.49				
School culture	1	1.49	1	1.49		
Socioeconomic status			1	1.49		

Factors which Allow for RtI Implementation. Analysis of participant responses is represented in Table 7 indicated “time/scheduling” is the category with the largest response count. There were 20 (29.85%) participants who provided responses related to this item code. For scheduling, a participant stated, “Making sure that RtI time is implemented into my schedule.” Participants provided responses stating that time in their schedule allows them to implement the RtI process.

The item code with the second-highest response count was “student data.” A total of 12 (17.91%) participants gave a response related to student data allowing them to implement the RtI process. Participants stated, “Student test data and grades,” “low test score,” and “Standardized Testing Scores.”

Further analysis of participant responses in Table 7 specified “collaboration” was referenced by 11 (16.42%) participants as a circumstance that allows for the implementation of the RtI process. One participant stated, “collaboration with colleagues.” Another participant provided a more in-depth response stating, “Having a great support system at my school allows me to implement the RtI process and interventions. We have plenty of teachers on this team that we can talk to for advice. They also send out advice and new ways to implement RtI in the classroom without being asked for the information.”

Numerous item codes had response counts of less than ten. For item code “teachers/interventionist,” there were 8 (11.94%) participants who indicated having additional teachers, or an interventionist allowed them to implement the RtI process. Also, the item code “administration support of RtI” was referred to by 7 (10.45%) participants. Furthermore, item codes “instruction/intervention” and “student needs/weakness” both had 5 (7.46%) participants state these were circumstances which allowed them to implement RtI. There were two item

codes with 4 (5.97%) participant responses. These were “student/teacher ratio,” which indicated the class or group sizes were small enough that they could implement the process and “planning/organization,” which indicated this as a circumstance that allowed them to implement RtI.

Furthermore, there were several item codes in which there were 2 (2.99%) participants who responded, stating these were circumstances that allowed them to implement the RtI process. Some of these item codes were “attendance,” “focus on reading,” “systematic,” and “other student engagement.” Finally, there were some item codes where there was only 1 (1.49%) participant who responded to the code making their response unique. Some of these were “school culture,” “behavior,” and “none.” There were also 2 (2.99%) participants’ responses, which were given “no code assigned” because the responses could not be categorized for the question. These included “all” and “I don’t do RtI.”

Factors which Make RtI Implementation Difficult. Analysis of Table 7 shows 37 (55.22%) participants indicated “time/scheduling” as the most reported circumstance making it difficult to implement the RtI process. Participants overwhelmingly stated there was not enough time in the day to implement RtI. Participant responses included:

- “Time is the possession of all, but none of us can hold it captive. There are not enough hours in the day, week, the school year to get everything done.”
- “The timing in scheduling all the RtI lessons with the students individually.”
- “More time is needed for intervention” and “not enough time in the day.”
- “Classroom teachers do not have adequate time to work with RtI students on their interventions each day. It would be better if students who are placed on an RtI plan went to an intervention class, so there is truly time carved out for them to fill in their

learning gaps.”

As represented in Table 7, participants indicated “student/teacher ratio” was a circumstance that made it difficult to implement RtI. This response was a coded response from 16 (23.88%) participants indicating the class or group sizes were too large to implement the RtI process. The participant responses related to this item code included:

- “Overcrowding as far as class size.”
- “Classes that are too big.”
- “The other issue that I’m seeing is sometimes (especially in math) the amount of Tier 2-3 students in a class outweigh Tier 1 greatly, so you almost need a whole group time to implement this instruction. As a result, it’s almost impossible to implement with one teacher in the classroom when there are large class sizes.”

There were two coded items in which 6 (8.96%) participant responses were categorized. These were “administration support of RtI” and “attendance.” Both of these were indicated as circumstances that make it difficult to implement the RtI process. Also, several coded items had 5 (7.46%) participant responses. These included “teachers/interventionists,” “material resources,” and “student needs/weakness.” The responses from the participants indicated that there was a lack of teachers/interventionists to implement the RtI process. One participant stated, “Lack of intervention teachers.” Participants indicated that the lack of material resources was another circumstance that made it difficult to implement the RtI process. A participant stated, “lack of resources,” and another participant stated, “limited supplies.”

Further analysis of participant responses, as represented in Table 7, indicates there were several coded items with response counts of three or less. The coded items for which 3 (4.48%) participants responded were “planning/organization,” lack of proper implementation,” and “no

code assigned.” The “no code assigned” was used to represent responses that could not be categorized. These included “all,” “I don’t participate in RtI.,” and “fear of being sued.” Table 7 also indicates item codes with response counts of 2 (2.99%). Some of these include “amount of documentation,” “behavior,” “focus on reading,” “other student engagement,” and student motivation/accountability.” Coded items with 1 participant response included “limited access to student records,” unrealistic expectations,” “socioeconomic status,” and “exhaustion.”

Other Implementation Factors Related to RtI. The item code with the largest response count for the question “any other issues” was “time/scheduling. Analysis of participant responses, as indicated in Table 7, showed 11 (13.79%) participants indicated time or scheduling problems as another issue they associated with, making it difficult to implement the RtI process.

Participant responses included:

- “Scheduling students.”
- “time”
- “More time is needed.”

Other item codes had response counts of less than ten. The majority of items coded in this column were not unique to this question. They were responses other participants had given for the first two columns. Some of the unique item codes were “classroom management,” “politics,” “teacher buy-in,” and “isolated setting.” Each of these item codes had 1 (1.72%) participant response.

Analysis of participant responses in Table 7 does show for this question there were 6 (10.34%) participant responses given the item code of “no code assigned.” The responses were given this code because they could not be categorized. One participant stated, “It is all a "legal

hurdle." Another participant stated, "RtI is a prescriptive system for what good teachers have done without documentation previously."

There was a coded item that did not reach a response count of ten or more in a single column but did reach that response count across multiple columns in which the responses represented circumstances that made it difficult to implement the RtI process. Participant responses, as represented in Table 7, indicated "RtI knowledge/training" to be a circumstance that made it difficult to implement the RtI process. This response was indicated by a total of 11 participants in two columns.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted as the second phase of this study. The purpose of the interviews was to triangulate the data. Triangulation of data in qualitative studies can create validity for the study (Creswell, 2013; Schwandt, 2007). Triangulation occurs when information is collected from various sources or using various methods (Creswell, 2013). Participation in the interview was voluntary. I developed an interview protocol before the study to submit for IRB approval. The questions were based on the three constructs of the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) and my knowledge of RtI. I used the interview protocol used during the interviews as a guide, but additional questions were asked based on participant answers and data gathered from the online questionnaire. Some questions addressed the teacher's self-efficacy related to the implementation of RtI and the scope and frequency related to their implementation of the process. It has been argued that self-efficacy and perceived behavioral control are synonymous (Ajzen, 1991). However, some authors argue that the two terms are different (Armitage & Conner, 2001). According to Armitage and Conner (2001), self-efficacy is defined as "confidence in one's own ability to carry out a particular behavior" (p. 479). Ajzen (1991)

defines perceived behavioral control as “people’s perception of the ease or difficulty of performing the behavior of interest” (p. 183). For self-efficacy in this study, it will be defined as a person’s confidence in their ability to perform a task.

Participants were selected from the contact information they provided at the end of the online questionnaire. There was a total of six interviews conducted: three elementary school teachers and three middle school teachers. The interviews were conducted face-to-face and via Zoom and lasted from almost nine minutes to almost twenty-seven minutes. Audio recordings of the interviews were made with participant consent, and the data was transcribed by an online transcription service. The information from the interviews was hand-coded and organized into themes by reading the question with the response and identifying the theme of the answer. The themes that emerged from the individual interviews were compared, and common themes across multiple interviews were identified. These themes are further discussed in Table 8.

Participants for the interview were given pseudonyms in order to keep their identity confidential. The information in Table 8 is representative of the interview participants’ grade levels and subject areas for which they provided intervention. Also found in Table 8 are the participant’s pseudonyms and the frequency in which they reported providing Tier II and Tier III intervention. Table 8 is a more in-depth description of the scope and frequency related to the participant’s RtI implementation.

Table 8

Interview participant pseudonyms, grade-level, subject, and intervention frequency

Participant Pseudonyms	Grade Level	Subject	Tier II	Tier III
Erin	2 nd	Reading	4-5 times a week for 25 minutes	Another teacher
Joanne	5 th	Reading	3 times a week	Another teacher
Karen	8 th	Math	Daily (small group) Twice weekly (individual)	Another teacher
Katherine	2 nd	Both	Twice weekly	Daily
Maria	6 th	Reading	4 times a week for 30-45 minutes	Responsible, but has none
Sarah	6 th	Reading	3-4 days a week	Responsible, but has none

Scope and Frequency. Analysis of the interviews led to data regarding the scope and frequency in which participants provided intervention for Tier II and Tier III students. The six teachers reported providing intervention for different subjects and grade levels. Analysis of participant responses as represented in Table 8 indicates, Karen was the only participant who provided intervention for only math, while Katherine was the only participant responsible for providing intervention for reading and math. While Maria provided intervention for reading, she was a science teacher. Further analysis of participant responses in Table 8 indicates that Joanne, Erin, and Sarah provided only reading intervention. Erin and Katherine both provided RtI intervention for students in primary elementary grades, while Joanne provided intervention for students in intermediate elementary grades. Karen, Maria, and Sarah all provided intervention for students at the middle school level. Maria and Sarah were considered middle school, even though they taught sixth grade because they were located in middle schools.

Katherine reported providing Tier II intervention twice a week and Tier III daily. There was no time duration for the interventions reported. She also indicated that more focus was placed on reading intervention versus math intervention. Erin stated she provided Tier II

intervention four to five times a week for 25 minutes a session. She was not responsible for Tier III instruction because students were pulled out of class three days a week for Tier III intervention. Joanne reported providing Tier II intervention three days a week for no specified duration. She does not provide Tier III intervention but did report the students are pulled out of class for Tier III intervention. Sarah stated that she only provided Tier II intervention instruction because she did not have any students receiving Tier III instruction. She provides that intervention three to four days a week, depending on time. According to Karen, she provides Tier II intervention during the 80-minute block in the form of small group rotations. She also pulls students an additional two to three times a week individually for additional intervention but not Tier III specifically.

Karen stated, “I had those kids for 80 minutes, so within that 80 minutes, I was able to work with those groups.” Finally, Maria provides Tier II instruction for students at least four times a week for 30-45-minute sessions. She reported not have any students receiving Tier III intervention.

Beneficial. Analysis of the interview data indicated participants felt the implementation of the RtI process could be beneficial; however, three of the six did use a phrase similar to “when/if it’s done correctly.” Karen stated, “I think when it’s done well, it can be a fantastic thing. I’ve seen it really help a lot of students.” Joanne, “It’s beneficial if it’s implemented correctly if the teacher implements it and uses strategies and reteaches.” Erin, “I feel like it can be useful if done correctly, and it can help all the teachers responsible for the instruction that they are supposed to be giving.” Katherine indicated she believes RtI can be effective when the student to teacher ratio is smaller, and if Tier III was provided outside the classroom. She stated, “It would be more beneficial if they were in another classroom.”

Barriers. Analysis of the interview data indicated “time” and “documentation” as being barriers to the implementation of the RtI process. All six interview participants stated that time and documentation were factors that made it difficult when implementing the RtI process. Erin stated, “We are already having a lot on our plates. Having one more thing added, one more thing to keep up with the paperwork, documentation. Sometimes it’s a lot to just do one more thing on what we already have.” Sarah stated, “A lot of times it’s time.” She went on to say “double documentation” was also a barrier indicating she documented the process online and on paper forms. Joanne stated, “So, I think sometimes teachers have a hard time with finding the time to sit down and put it [documentation] in on top of their other responsibilities.” Maria stated, “Honestly, I don’t like it. I feel like it’s very time-consuming.”

The “lack of training” was discussed by five of the six participants as a barrier to RtI implementation. The participants indicated they had received little to no formal training regarding the implementation of the RtI process. Maria stated, “Training. I mean, I’ve been teaching, this will be my ninth year in education. I don’t think that I’ve ever had any training in RtI.” Katherine stated, “I mainly relied on my assistant principal and my grade chairperson, and people like that to try to guide me...I never had official training.” Sarah stated, “I feel like training would be my number one thing that we need for RtI.” Joanne stated, “We’ve never had an in-depth training where we’ve all been sat down and truly done through it and dug deep into the RtI process. I feel there is a deeper part to this than a student has an F, so let’s track him.”

Self-efficacy. Another theme that emerged from the interview participants’ responses was their self- efficacy as it related to their implementation of the RtI process. All six participants stated they felt they were effective in different degrees of implementing the RtI process. Some addressed areas they could improve to make their implementation more

successful. Katherine indicated she felt more successful by the end of the year after receiving training in a reading intervention program but felt her implementation for math was not successful at all. Joanne indicated she did not feel she was successful 100% of the time and stated, "I probably don't pull them enough." Erin indicated she was successful in implementing RtI and stated, "I make it a point to do what I'm supposed to do and it's what the kids need." Maria indicated she felt she was successful in her attempt with what she knew but was unsure if she was being effective and stated, "I don't know what an effective RtI looks like." Sarah indicated her effectiveness varied from day to day. She stated, "Some days I do feel like I do good, some days I don't feel like I meet what they need." Karen indicated overall she felt she was successful in implementing the RtI process. However, she stated, "I want to do a better job myself of looking at not just a student's grade level but look at what are their weaknesses. I'm hoping I can identify those and help target those areas before they get to the struggling point."

Elementary versus Middle School. It is also notable that the three middle school participants have also taught elementary school and started implementing the RtI process was different at the elementary level than the middle school level. Karen, "In a middle school setting, it's sometimes hard to have the protected time to regularly do all the interventions, working within the students' schedule and the teacher's schedule...So if it's protected and certain times set aside to do the program regularly, then that's what I meant by doing it well." Sarah indicated there were too many gaps by the time a student gets to the middle school level that RtI is not effective. She stated, "There are so many gaps that need to be fulfilled...so I don't think I'm helping." Maria, "When you have a child who doesn't have that foundation, like the younger children, it's a lot harder to get them where they need to be."

Conclusion

The purpose of this elicitation study was to explore general education teachers' attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control as it related to the implementation of RtI at an exploratory level. The findings for the open-ended questionnaire were organized by construct and reported in Chapter Four in Tables 5, 6, and 7. The themes from the follow-up interviews were also presented within the chapter.

Chapter V: Conclusion

This study was designed using the theoretical framework The Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991). This elicitation study set out to gather information related to teachers' perceptions and beliefs as they relate to the implementation of RtI. I developed an instrument to measure teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of RtI that addressed the three constructs of The Theory of Planned Behavior. These constructs are attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991). Ninety- seven teachers from across the state of Alabama responded to the open-ended questionnaire online. Six of those teachers also participated in a follow-up interview. The questionnaire elicited a response that was then used when follow-up interviews were conducted. This elicitation study is the first in educational leadership to use The Theory of Planned Behavior to explore teachers' attitudes and beliefs about their implementation of the RtI process.

This chapter will review the problem addressed in this study, the purpose of this study, the research questions, and the methodology. This chapter will then provide in-depth discussion related to the major finding of this study as they relate to the three constructs of The Theory of Planned Behavior and the four research questions. Implications for current practice are then addressed, followed by implications for future research, and finally, a summary is given.

Problem

The RtI process has been implemented and studied nationwide for over a decade (Bineham et al., 2014; Fuchs et al., 2010; Mellard et al., 2010). The majority of the research has focused on early reading intervention and using the process as an alternative method for special education identification (Bineham et al., 2014; Burns et al., 2007; Fuchs et al., 2003; Graves & McConnell, 2014; Greenwood et al., 2012). Some studies explored the concepts of the method, the needed components for implementation, and the implementation itself (Denton, 2012; Stahl

et al., 2012; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006; Mellard et al., 2010). Little research has focused on teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions related to the implementation of the RtI process (Bineham et al., 2014; Castillo et al., 2015; Hollenbeck & Patrikakou, 2014; Rinaldi et al., 2011). The research that has been conducted exploring teacher beliefs has included educators in all positions within the schools and has focused primarily on the elementary level. There has been no known study conducted to explore only general education teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions about RtI, nor has the research focused on teachers at all levels from elementary to high school. However, teachers at all levels are the ones tasked with implementing this intervention or instruction process daily. There is a lack of research to explore general education teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions at the elementary, middle, and high school levels related to RtI implementation.

Purpose Statement

Elicitations studies are used to determine a person's behavioral, normative, and control beliefs regarding an activity or task (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Furthermore, elicitation studies can provide insight into someone's thoughts or feelings about a specific behavior (Downs & Hausenblas, 2005). In conjunction with the Theory of Planned Behavior, elicitation studies are often used as an exploratory research step (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Ajzen 1991). The purpose of this elicitation study was to explore general education teachers' attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral controls of RtI implementation in a pilot study to further the research in this area. This study is the first known elicitation study, using The Theory of Planned Behavior, on teacher's salient beliefs about their attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control as it related to the RtI process. This study is also the first known study that focused on only general education teachers and included teachers from elementary, middle, and high school.

Research Questions

Four research questions guided this study:

1. What attitudes do teachers report as important to their implementation of RtI?
2. What subjective norms do teachers report as important to their implementation of RtI?
3. What perceived behavioral control do teachers report as important to their implementation of RtI?
4. What scope and frequency do teachers report relative to providing RtI interventions for their students?

Methodology

This elicitation study was a qualitative study using Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior as a conceptual framework. The Theory of Planned Behavior is used for elicitation studies because it allows the researcher to seek responses related to participants' attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control toward a subject or task. In this study, it allowed for responses to be gathered through nine open-ended questions related to the three constructs of The Theory of Planned Behavior. The study used purposeful sampling for recruiting participants. An open-ended questionnaire was developed using the guidelines from the *Theory of Planned Behaviour Questionnaires: Manual for Researchers* (Francis et al., 2004). This link for the questionnaire in Qualtrics was sent via email to principals within the state of Alabama, and they were asked to forward it to the teachers in their building.

Once the questionnaire was completed, the data was coded by the researcher. That data was analyzed and categorized for further understanding. There were then six follow-up interviews conducted. The interviews were recorded with the permission of the participants. The

interviews were transcribed by an online transcription service. The interview data was then coded, categorized, and organized into themes. The combination of using questionnaire data with interview data allowed for triangulation in the data. Triangulation is the gathering of data from multiple sources and using multiple methods (Creswell, 2013).

Major Findings

Participants. The participants for this study were classroom teachers from regions across the state of Alabama. There was a total of ninety-seven participants who answered the online questionnaire. Six of these participants also completed the interview portion of the study. The participants were representative of all grade ranges kindergarten through twelfth grade. There were more elementary school teachers to complete the online questionnaire than other grade level ranges. A total of 47 (48.46%) elementary school teachers ranging from kindergarten through fifth grade completed the online questionnaire. There were 32 (32.99%) middle school teachers to complete the questionnaire. The smallest group represented was the high school, with 18 (18.56%) participants. For the interview portion of the study, there were three elementary range teachers and three middle school range teachers. There were no high school range teachers who agreed to participate in the study after being contacted.

Attitudes. The first construct of the Theory of Planned Behavior is attitude. This construct refers to a person's attitude being a reflection of their salient beliefs toward a task and how advantageous or not they perceive the task to be (Ajzen, 1991). Table 4 represented the participants' attitudes toward the implementation of RtI. The analysis of Table 4 indicated that participants reported multiple advantages to the implementation of the RtI process. Some of these advantages were: student receives help, collaboration, and meet student needs. RtI continues to be implemented in the schools as a problem-solving framework. In the state of

Alabama, RtI is designed to connect all learning systems while providing high-quality instruction and meeting students' needs (Alabama Department of Education, 2009).

As represented in Table 4, there were 29 (29.90%) of the participants who identified one of the advantages to RtI is students receiving help, and an additional 15 (15.46%) participants identified meeting student needs as an advantage to the RtI process. Likewise, all six interview participants indicated that RtI could be beneficial in helping students. RtI is a tiered instructional framework where students receive instruction at increasingly intensive levels as they move from Tier I to Tier II and then to Tier III if needed (Mellard et al., 2010; Stuart et al., 2011). Within this tiered instructional model, students are receiving additional instruction and help in areas of weakness, often through small group instruction. Small group instruction allows students to receive additional help in areas where they need it (Gersten & Dimino, 2006). An expected outcome for RtI is to close academic gaps by addressing academic concerns early (Turse & Albrecht, 2015). Closing academic gaps happen when the needs of individual students are met through instruction and other avenues. Interventions should be designed to meet the needs of individual students (Alabama Department of Education, 2009).

Of the participants, 15 (15.46%) indicated that collaboration was also an advantage to the RtI process. Collaboration is a necessity when implementing the RtI process as it requires the RtI team members to work together to identify student weaknesses and interventions. A variety of collaborations involving all stakeholders can result in a systemwide, high-quality RtI implementation (Ehren, 2013). Teachers who willingly collaborate toward a common goal, such as improving student success, are more likely to find the benefit in that collaboration (Brownell, Adams, Sindelar, Waldron, & Vanhover, 2006).

Table 4 reveals that teachers indicated multiple disadvantages to RtI. A total of 42

(44.68%) participants reported “time” as a disadvantage to the implementation process. Some participants reported they did not have enough time to implement the process, and others reported the process was time-consuming. All six of the interview participants stated that the amount of time required was a disadvantage in the implementation of the RtI process. The process can be time-consuming to implement. There is a lot of time required for planning, teaching, and analyzing the student data related to the implementation of the interventions. However, collaborative planning and innovative scheduling can help teachers in the implementation of RtI (Stuart et al., 2011).

In addition, 19 (20.21%) of participants stated that the amount of documentation required was a disadvantage to RtI. Furthermore, all six of the interview participants stated that the large amount of documentation required was a disadvantage. The documentation is time-consuming and makes it difficult for teachers to implement RtI (Martinez & Young, 2011). While RtI is a state-mandated process, there is not a mandated set documentation forms specifically for RtI (Alabama Department of Education, 2009). Therefore, the documentation varies from system to system and even school to school just as the implementation does.

A total of 12 participants reported the lack of training, and RtI knowledge was a disadvantage to the implementation of the process. Many indicated they felt ill-equipped to provide the intensive instruction RtI implementation requires. The RtI process is complex and requires teachers to make decisions to support students and implement intervention strategies on various levels. Initial professional development and ongoing support are needed in intervention strategies and classroom management for the effective implementation of RtI (Denton, 2012). Investment in ongoing professional development is necessary to provide teachers with the skills required to effectively implement the strategies for RtI implementation and combat ongoing

teacher turnover (Fuchs & Deshler, 2007).

Subjective Norms. According to Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior, subjective norms reference the social pressures a person feels about participating in an activity or completing a task. The data reported in Table 6 represented the subjective norms teachers indicated relative to their implementation of the RtI process. Participants indicated principals (42.17%), administration (33.73%), and teachers (33.13%) would approve of their RtI process implementation. They also believe assistant principals (21.69%) and parents (21.69%) would approve of their practices. Additionally, all six interview participants indicated they believed their principal and problem-solving teams would "most likely" approve of their implementation. Teachers can experience a large amount of social pressure from this group of stakeholders to implement the RtI process in a particular way.

The role of leadership in the RtI implementation process is a critical one (O'Connor & Freeman, 2012). The leadership at a school or lack of leadership greatly influences the success or failure of implementation efforts (O'Connor & Freeman, 2012). Hollenbeck and Patrikakou (2014), indicate there is a significant impact on teachers' attitudes toward RtI based on the perceptions of the school administration and leadership. Administration approval is more likely prevalent when administrators are knowledgeable about the process and have communicated expectations to teachers than when they have not. School leaders must be knowledgeable in the RtI framework and be able to communicate expectations and support teachers in the implementation for it to be successful (Hollenbeck & Patrikakou, 2014; O'Connor & Freeman 2012). According to O'Connor and Freeman (2012), the schools with the most successful implementation have school leaders who are knowledgeable and supportive but do not try to control the process.

Parents can also play an important role in the success of their child's education. Involving parents in the RtI process can provide an opportunity for a more positive outcome for the student (Byrd, 2011). Parents, like teachers, have communicated frustrations with the RtI process but indicate it can overall be helpful to the students when there is open and ongoing communication about the process and students' needs between the teacher and the parent (Wingate, Postlewaite, Mena, Neely-Barnes, & Elswick, 2018).

In contrast, 20% of teachers believed no one would disapprove of their RtI implementation strategy, while another 18.57% of teachers who responded felt other teachers would disapprove of their practices. These teachers felt other teachers would disapprove of their implementation because the disapproving teachers did not like RtI or lacked an understanding of the process and its benefits to the students.

Perceived Behavioral Control

The final construct of Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior is perceived behavioral control. Perceived behavioral control refers to the perceived difficulty of the task or activity (Ajzen, 1991). The perceived difficulty of the implementation of RtI could impact the degree to which a teacher implements the process. Table 6 reports the perceived behavior control of teachers in Alabama, indicating what would allow them to implement the process and what would make it difficult for them to implement RtI. There were three aspects teachers reported as allowing them to implement RtI. These were time and scheduling (29.85%), student data (17.91%), and collaboration (16.42%).

Contrarily, teachers (55.22%) also reported time and scheduling as a factor that made it difficult to implement the RtI process. Teachers referred to the amount of time it took to implement the process and lacking a scheduled time for an intervention. Teachers also indicated

that time was a disadvantage in the implementation of RtI. In addition to the participants of the questionnaire, the six interview participants also indicated that the amount of time it took to implement RtI was a barrier. They felt there was not enough time in the school day to implement the process well. The other factor that was largely reported as a circumstance that made it difficult to implement the RtI process was the student/teacher ratio, which was reported by 23.88% of the teachers who participated in the study.

Collaboration among all stakeholders allows everyone to work as an integrated system to help the students succeed (Ehren, 2013). Participants perceived collaboration as a circumstance that allowed them to implement the RtI process. Furthermore, they also indicated that collaboration was an advantage to the implementation of the RtI process in this study.

Response to Intervention time should be a scheduled part of the school day. Innovative scheduling practices by the administration can provide that much-needed intervention block (Stuart et al., 2011). There is an increasing number of schools creating an intervention block in order to implement the RtI process by delivering interventions systematically successfully (Higgins-Averill, Baker, & Rinaldi, 2014). When given a protected and scheduled intervention block to implement the RtI process, teachers are given a chance for proper implementation. Without this, the time in their schedule can often be lost due to other activities that create schedule interruptions.

Student data is another factor teachers reported as allowing them to implement RtI. When determining necessary student interventions, decisions should be data driven. There are multiple forms of student data that can be used to determine the need for intervention. These identification options can include end-of-year standardized testing from the year before or a universal screener at the beginning of the school year (Burns et al., 2007; Denton, 2012; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006;

Gersten & Dimino, 2006; Greenwood et al., 2013; Stahl et al., 2013; Stuart et al., 2011).

Furthermore, ongoing recording and analyzing of student data from progress monitoring allows the RtI team to make decisions about student interventions (Greenwood et al., 2013; Mellard et al., 2010; O'Connor & Freeman, 2012; Saeki et al., 2011; Van Der Heyden et al., 2007).

A total of 11 teachers reported the lack of training/knowledge related to RtI was a circumstance that made it difficult for them to implement the RtI process. Lack of training and knowledge of RtI was also reported by 12 participants earlier in the study as a disadvantage to the RtI process. Additionally, five of the six interviewees stated that a lack of training was a barrier to the implementation of RtI. There is a need for initial and ongoing training and support for RtI implementation to be effective (Denton, 2012). Training for teachers should be as individualized as instruction for students. After initial professional development or training, it may be necessary to provide coaching or training in a multi-tiered approach for teachers (Wood, Goodnight, Bethune, Preston, & Cleaver, 2016). This type of training can strengthen professional development and provide teachers with the ongoing support they need to implement the RtI process.

Scope and Frequency. The majority of the interview participants (66.67%) were responsible for providing intervention in reading only. One teacher (16.67%) was responsible for providing intervention for math only, and one teacher (16.67%) was responsible for providing intervention for both reading and math. All six teachers reported providing Tier II intervention for students. There were 83.33% of the teachers that reported providing Tier II intervention at least three times a week, while 16.67% of teachers reported providing Tier II intervention twice a week. There was 50% of teachers who reported they did not provide Tier III intervention because it was provided as a pull-out intervention with a different teacher. Furthermore, three of the

teachers (50%) were responsible for providing Tier III intervention themselves. Two teachers provided time durations for their Tier II intervention ranging from 25 minutes to 45 minutes.

RtI is a tiered intervention/instructional framework where instruction intensifies as the tier increases. Tier II and Tier III interventions should be consistent. Tier II should be provided in a small group setting (Denton, 2012; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2007; Higgins Averill et al., 2014), while Tier III is more effective when provided in a more individualized manner and by someone other than the classroom teacher (Alabama Department of Education, 2009; Denton, 2012; Greenwood et al., 2013). Tier II intervention should be provided to students 3-4 times a week for 20-40 minutes (Denton, 2012). Tier III intervention should occur in increased frequency and decreased group size (Alabama State Department of Education, 2009; Gersten et al., 2008; Mellard et al., 2010).

Unanticipated Outcomes

Response to Intervention/Instruction is an instructional framework that has been implemented nation-wide (Burns, 2010; O'Connor & Freeman, 2012). It was first implemented for 2010-2011 in the state of Alabama. RtI is the topic of many ongoing discussions about closing gaps in academic achievement. The questionnaire was emailed to all principals in the state of Alabama, and they were asked to forward this to their staff. It was completely anonymous with no identifying information being collected. As a result of this, I expected a much higher participation number.

Initially, it was expected that there would be a total of nine interviews for this study – three at each of the elementary, middle, and high school levels to gain perspective from multiple sources. There were not any high school teachers willing to participate in the interview study of the portion, which was an unexpected outcome for the study. Only two high school teachers

provided contact information at the end of their questionnaire, and when contacted to set up an interview via phone and email, they did not respond.

While it is not certain, teachers may not have provided contact information due to the nature of questions being asked on the questionnaire. Teachers were asked about their attitudes and beliefs related to the current educational process. This question could have influenced their willingness to answer the questionnaire or participate in the follow-up interview.

Recommendations for Practice

This study sought to explore teacher attitudes and beliefs related to the implementation of the RtI process as a pilot or exploratory study. It is the first known elicitation study related to the implementation of RtI that used the Theory of Planned Behavior to gain insight related to teachers' perspectives of RtI. Furthermore, this is the first known study to explore only general education teachers' beliefs at all levels of elementary through high school. The literature suggests the Theory of Planned Behavior in conjunction with an elicitation study can be used to gain valuable information regarding a person's attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral controls related to a task or behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Ajzen, 1991).). Exploring teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions about RtI implementation can help school leaders to understand their views better and help inform RtI practices to improve RtI implementation.

This study highlighted common themes surrounding teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward the implementation of RtI. As a result of this, and the analysis of the teachers' responses to the questionnaire and interview, the following recommendations can be made about the implementation of Response to Intervention/Instruction based on the results from this study and the current literature.

Training. Teachers indicated in both the online questionnaire (attitudes and perceived behavioral control sections) and the interviews there is a lack of training and knowledge related to RtI implementation and practices. There is a need for consistent training and support for teachers related to the RtI process. There should be initial systematic training for all teachers, followed by ongoing support with additional training as needed (Denton, 2012). The training should provide teachers the skills they need to be effective in implementing the RtI process (Fuchs & Deshler, 2007). A multi-level training approach where teachers receive professional development and individualized coaching can help provide them with these necessary skills (Wood et al., 2016). Districts should develop these training programs to address the training of teachers at initial hire and continue to provide the hands-on support they need through the implementation of RtI.

Response to Intervention District Coordinator. Teachers who responded to the questionnaire (attitudes) indicated that the amount of documentation was a disadvantage to the RtI process. Interview participants also mentioned that the amount of documentation was overwhelming and inconsistent. They further discussed that there was little to no monitoring of the process by the school or district level. Participants reported a list of various people who would have approved or disapproved of their implementation (subjective norms) with little consistency. There were some other categories indicated as negatively impacting the RtI implementation concerning attitudes and perceived behavioral control. A district coordinator could be beneficial in helping and providing guidance within these areas. These included: lack of resources, lack of proper implementation, lack of administrative support.

Districts need a designated RtI coordinator who can organize training for the district, monitor implementation, and documentation and provide assistance to staff members at schools.

There is a need for consistency, and a district coordinator can help provide that consistency. This consistency would allow for the process and documentation to be streamlined across the district. Response to Intervention is a general education process (Hollenbeck & Patrikakou, 2014; Fuchs et al., 2010); therefore, the RtI coordinator should be separate from the special education coordinator.

Scheduled Intervention Block. The lack of scheduled time for intervention was determined by teachers in both the online questionnaire (attitudes and perceived behavioral control) and in interviews as a factor that made RtI implementation difficult. School leaders should allow time in the school day for scheduled and uninterrupted intervention blocks. This intervention block should be 20-40 minutes long (Denton, 2012). Providing this block of time in the daily schedule would allow the teachers the time they need to implement the process without students having to miss other classes. These intervention blocks can be accomplished through innovative scheduling and allowing for interventions to be implemented in a more systematic manner (Higgins Averill et al., 2014; Stuart et al., 2011).

Recommendations for Further Research

Elicitation studies, in conjunction with the Theory of Planned Behavior, are used to gain information regarding salient beliefs about a subject at the exploratory level (Ajzen, 1991). Furthermore, the Theory of Planned Behavior has been used to successfully predict behavioral intentions (Armitage & Conner, 2001; Downs & Hausenblas, 2002). Based on the results of this elicitation study, there are implications for future research. The Theory of Planned Behavior along with the results of this study could be used to develop a forced response survey about teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and knowledge related to the implementation of the RtI process to then be used in a future research study to explore the possible relationship between teacher

beliefs about the process and their actual implementation. Being able to predict a teacher's willingness to implement the RtI process to fidelity or the level of support they would need during the implementation could be beneficial for school leaders by allowing them to provide teachers with specific resources or support in order to guide them through the process.

Research Development. The top five to ten salient beliefs from the questions from the three constructs of the Theory of Planned Behavior from this elicitation study could be used to create a forced response survey (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). This survey would be given to teachers regarding their attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions related to the implementation of the RtI process to predict their behavior. The group of teachers who participated in the survey could also be observed through a portion of the school year to determine their level of implementation regarding RtI. That observational data could be compared to their survey data to determine the correlation between the two. It would be helpful for this to be done within multiple schools within a district to also help determine district strengths and weaknesses about RtI implementation. The data from the survey could also be compared to student data to determine if teachers' perceptions and implementation factor into student growth.

Possible Research Questions. When determining the possible relationship between teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of RtI concerning their actual implementation of the process, there are some possible research questions to consider.

1. Does a teachers' positive or negative perception of RtI effect their level of implementation?
2. Does a teacher's positive or negative perception of RtI effect student growth for those participating in interventions?
3. Is there a variance in the level of support teachers need based on their perceptions of

RtI?

4. Is the implementation of RtI hindered by factors outside of the teacher's control?

Further Understanding. If teacher behavior related to RtI implementation can be predicted, it could help school leaders organize resources and provide support for teachers. This support, in turn, would help school leaders to be proactive as it relates to the implementation of RtI. Information from the survey may also illustrate the strengths and weaknesses of a school. School leaders could then focus on improving overall weaknesses to make the RtI implementation stronger and, in turn, better help students.

Conclusion

The Theory of Planned behavior can allow for the prediction of a person's actions toward an activity or task based on their attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control related to that activity or task (Ajzen, 1991). As schools continue to implement the RtI process, they must address teachers' beliefs, skills, and abilities about the process because they play an important role in a teachers' ability to implement the RtI process (Castillo et al., 2015). School leaders must address teachers' concerns about the process if they want to continue to see progress.

This study found that many teachers are overall positive about the RtI process, but it did highlight areas that are needed for attention. According to the results of this study, teachers believe the RtI process can be beneficial. They also believe some of the advantages of the process are closing academic gaps and providing the students with the help they need. However, some disadvantages to the process were the amount of time it takes to implement the intervention, the lack of scheduled intervention time, and the amount of documentation required by the schools. The lack of training and knowledge about the RtI process are factors teachers

indicated made it difficult for them to implement the RtI process.

RtI is a general education process designed to close academic gaps and prevent the misidentification of special education students. For this to be successful, it is necessary to provide teachers with the support they need to implement the RtI process. Support can be provided through innovative scheduling, streamlining documentation, and providing more training and support for teachers.

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Appendix A
Information Letter



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS,
LEADERSHIP AND TECHNOLOGY

**INFORMATION LETTER
for a Research Study entitled**

"The Relationship between Teacher Perceptions and Beliefs and their willingness to implement the Response to Intervention/Instruction Process"

You are invited to participate in a research study to investigate the relationship between teachers' beliefs and perceptions about Response to Intervention/Instruction and their willingness to implement the process. This study is being conducted by Kristen Kylie Dawkins, Doctoral Candidate, under the direction of Dr. Lisa Kensler, Coordinator of Administration of Elementary and Secondary in the Auburn University Department of Educational Foundations, Leadership and Technology. You are invited to participate because you are a general education teacher in the state of Alabama, teaching in a K-12 classroom and are age 19 or older.

What will be involved if you participate? If you decide to participate in this research study, you will be asked to answer 9 constructed-response survey questions related to your personal beliefs and perceptions of the Response to Intervention/Instruction process. You will have the opportunity to provide contact information if you would be willing to participate in a follow-up interview. Your total time commitment will be approximately 20-30 minutes depending on the length of your responses.

Are there any risks or discomforts? There are no risks associated with participating in this study.

Are there any benefits to yourself or others? If you participate in this study, you can expect to reflect on your practices and beliefs related to RtI. This may possibly inform your practice in the classroom related to this process. We/I cannot promise you that you will receive any or all of the benefits described.

Will you receive compensation for participating? There will be no compensation for participating in this survey.

Are there any costs? If you decide to participate, you will not incur any cost related to this study.

4036 HALEY CENTER
AUBURN, AL 36849-5221

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334-844-3072

www.auburn.edu

The Auburn University Institutional
Review Board has approved this
Document for use from
11/06/2018 to 11/05/2019
Protocol # 18-399 EP 1811

Page 1 of 2



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS,
LEADERSHIP AND TECHNOLOGY

If you change your mind about participating, you can withdraw at any time by closing your browser window. If you choose to withdraw, your data can be withdrawn as long as it is identifiable. Once you've submitted anonymous data, it cannot be withdrawn since it will be unidentifiable. Your decision about whether or not to participate or to stop participating will not jeopardize your future relations with Auburn University, the Department of Educational Foundations, Leadership, and Technology.

Any data obtained in connection with this study will remain anonymous. We will protect your privacy and the data you provide by storing it on a password protected computer. There will be not identifying data stored with the survey data. Your contact information will be kept separately from your responses. Information collected through your participation may be used in scholarly presentations, and for fulfillment of dissertation requirements. The dissertation may be published.

If you have questions about this study, please ask them now or contact Kristen Kylie Dawkins at kka0005@auburn.edu or Dr. Kensler at lak0008@auburn.edu.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Auburn University Office of Research Compliance or the Institutional Review Board by phone (334)-844-5966 or e-mail at IRBadmin@auburn.edu or IRBChair@auburn.edu.

HAVING READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED, YOU MUST DECIDE IF YOU WANT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT. IF YOU DECIDE TO PARTICIPATE, PLEASE CLICK THE LINK BELOW. PLEASE PRINT A COPY OF THIS LETTER FOR YOUR RECORDS.

4036 HALEY CENTER
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TELEPHONE:
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Investigator's signature Date

Co-Investigator Date

(NOTE: DO NOT AGREE TO PARTICIPATE UNLESS IRB APPROVAL INFORMATION WITH CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN ADDED TO THIS DOCUMENT)

The Auburn University Institutional Review Board has approved this document for use from 11/06/2018 to 11/05/2019. Protocol #18-399 EP 1811, "The relationship between teacher perceptions and beliefs and their willingness to implement the response to intervention, instruction process"

https://auburn.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_da3AdcMZYSeEwbH



Appendix B
Email to Principals

E-MAIL INVITATION FOR ON-LINE SURVEY

Dear Principals and Teachers,

Principals, please forward this to your teachers. Please respond to this email to let me know you forwarded it to your teachers. kka0005@auburn.edu.

I am a graduate student and doctoral candidate in the Department of Educational Foundations, Leadership, and Technology at Auburn University. I would like to invite you to participate in my research study to examine the relationship between teacher perceptions and beliefs and their willingness to implement the Response to Intervention/Instruction process. You may participate if you are a general education teacher, currently teaching in a K-12 classroom in the state of Alabama.

Participants will be asked to answer an online survey consisting of nine constructed-response questions. This survey will take 20-30 minutes depending on how much information you provide. I ask that you answer the questions openly and honestly.

There are no risks associated with participating in this survey. There is no cost to the participant and there is also no compensation. However, this survey will help to inform the Response to Intervention/Instruction practice and add to the literature related to teacher beliefs and perceptions.

If you would like to know more information about this study, an information letter can be obtained by clicking on the following link. https://auburn.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_da3AdcMZYSewbH The consent letter is the first page of the survey. If you decide to participate in the survey click yes and continue. If you do not wish to participate simply close the survey.

If you have any questions, please contact me at kka0005@auburn.edu or my advisor, Dr. Kensler, at lak0008@auburn.edu.

Thank you for your consideration,

Kristen Kylie Dawkins

Appendix C
Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

The interviews will be conducted using the individual in-person approach. A semi-structured format will be used to help ensure consistency within all of the interviews, but allow for questions to be rephrased or additional questions to be asked based on the interviewees responses. Participants were chosen based on their willingness to participate in a follow-up interview from the online survey portion of the study.

Guiding Questions

What do you think about when you hear Response to Instruction/Intervention (RtI)?

How do you feel about RtI? Why do you feel that way?

Do you believe RtI is effective in bridging gaps and identifying students that qualify for Special Education Services? Why or Why not?

Do you currently have any students you are tracking through RtI? If so, how many times a week do you meet with them?

Have you seen any progress? What do you attribute to the growth or lack of growth?

How do you determine what interventions to use for RtI?

If you have chosen not to track students, can you tell me why?

What do you feel are the barriers to RtI?

Have you had any training on RtI?

Do you feel you are successful at implementing the RtI process? Why or why not?

Does anyone monitor your RtI implementation? To what extent?

Is there anything you would like to tell me about RtI that I have not covered?

Appendix D
Interview Consent



**INFORMED CONSENT
for a Research Study entitled**

“The Relationship between Teacher Perceptions and Beliefs and their willingness to implement the Response to Intervention/Instruction Process”

You are invited to participate in a research study to investigate the relationship between teachers’ beliefs and perceptions about Response to Intervention/Instruction and their willingness to implement the process. This study is being conducted by Kristen Kylie Dawkins, Doctoral Candidate, under the direction of Dr. Lisa Kensler, Coordinator of Administration of Elementary and Secondary in the Auburn University Department of Educational Foundations, Leadership and Technology. You are invited to participate because you are a general education teacher in the state of Alabama, teaching in a K-12 classroom and are age 19 or older.

What will be involved if you participate? If you decide to participate in this research study, you will be asked to participate in a face-to-face interview where follow-up questions to the online survey portion of the study will be asked. This will take 30-45 minutes of your time. You will have the option to meet with the researcher in a mutually convenient location or via Zoom at a time agreed upon by both parties. You will be given the opportunity to provide further information about your thoughts and beliefs related to RtI. The interviews will be recorded using an audio-recording device. If a Zoom meeting is chosen, the voice portion only will be recorded, no video recording will be collected.

Are there any risks or discomforts? Due to the interviews being recorded, there is a risk of breach of confidentiality because your voice is identifiable. All reasonable precautions will be taken in order to keep your identity anonymous. Only the researcher will have access to the recordings and the interview will be transcribed using a secure online transcription service. Recordings and signed consent forms will be stored and secured separately.

Are there any benefits to yourself or others? If you participate in this study, you can expect to reflect on your practices and beliefs related to RtI. This may possibly inform your practice in the classroom related to this process. We/I cannot promise you that you will receive any or all of the benefits described.

Will you receive compensation for participating? There will be no compensation for participating in this survey.

Are there any costs? If you decide to participate, you will not incur any cost related to this study.

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Participant’s initials _____

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LEADERSHIP AND TECHNOLOGY

If you change your mind about participating, you can withdraw at any time during the study. Your participation is completely voluntary. If you choose to withdraw, your data can be withdrawn as long as it is identifiable. Your decision about whether or not to participate or to stop participating will not jeopardize your future relations with Auburn University, the Department of Educational Foundations, Leadership, and Technology.

Your privacy will be protected. Any information/data obtained in connection with this study will be kept confidential. The recordings will be stored in a secure location. Information obtained through your participation may be used for completion of dissertation requirements, scholarly presentations, and possible publication.

If you have questions about this study, please ask them now or contact Kristen Kylie Dawkins at kka0005@auburn.edu or Dr. Kensler at lak0008@auburn.edu.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Auburn University Office of Research Compliance or the Institutional Review Board by phone (334)-844-5966 or e-mail at IRBadmin@auburn.edu or IRBChair@auburn.edu.

HAVING READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED, YOU MUST DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT YOU WISH TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY. YOUR SIGNATURE INDICATES YOUR WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE.

(NOTE: DO NOT SIGN THIS DOCUMENT UNLESS AN IRB APPROVAL STAMP WITH CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN APPLIED TO THIS DOCUMENT.)

The Auburn University Institutional Review Board has approved this document for use from 07/20/2019 to 11/05/2019. Protocol #18-399 EP 1811

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_____	_____	_____	_____
Participant's signature	Date	Investigator obtaining consent	Date
_____	_____	_____	_____
Print Name		Printed name	
		_____	_____
		Co-Investigator	Date
		_____	_____
		Printed Name	