

Spring 5-18-2015

# Teacher Preparedness for and Implementation of Response to Intervention to Support the Learning and Behavioral Needs of African-American Students: Implications for Educational Leaders

Lillian M. Harris  
lillian.harris@students.cau.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.auctr.edu/cauetds>

 Part of the [Educational Leadership Commons](#), [Special Education and Teaching Commons](#), and  
the [Teacher Education and Professional Development Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Harris, Lillian M., "Teacher Preparedness for and Implementation of Response to Intervention to Support the Learning and Behavioral Needs of African-American Students: Implications for Educational Leaders" (2015). *Electronic Theses & Dissertations Collection for Atlanta University & Clark Atlanta University*. Paper 14.

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Clark Atlanta University at DigitalCommons@Robert W. Woodruff Library, Atlanta University Center. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses & Dissertations Collection for Atlanta University & Clark Atlanta University by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@Robert W. Woodruff Library, Atlanta University Center. For more information, please contact [emcclenney@auctr.edu](mailto:emcclenney@auctr.edu).

ABSTRACT

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

HARRIS, LILLIAN MARGURITHA ANN     B.A. COLUMBIA COLLEGE  
CHICAGO, 1988  
M.ED. CLARK ATLANTA  
UNIVERSITY, 2001

TEACHER PREPAREDNESS FOR AND IMPLEMENTATION OF RESPONSE TO  
INTERVENTION (RTI) TO SUPPORT THE LEARNING AND BEHAVIORAL  
NEEDS OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDENTS: IMPLICATIONS  
FOR EDUCATIONAL LEADERS

Committee Chair: Barbara Hill, Ed.D.

Dissertation dated May 2015

The purpose of this mixed methodological study was to explore perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs that urban middle school teachers have regarding their preparedness to implement Response to Intervention (RTI) and research-based interventions. The independent variables were Administrative Support, Teacher Professional Development, and RTI Resources; the dependent variable was Teacher Preparedness. Quantitatively, the specific tradition of inquiry was correlational research because it dealt with the extent of the relationship between specific variables. Qualitatively, the specific tradition of inquiry was the phenomenological approach because it dealt with the single concept of teacher perception of their preparedness to implement a required process. Ultimately, this

researcher used a concurrent mixed methods approach to determine the extent in which the quantitative and qualitative data converge and what similarities and differences exist across levels of analysis (Creswell & Clark, 2007). The study took place in two middle schools located in an urban metropolitan Georgia school district. The participants included 30 certified teachers, 2 principals, and 2 student support team (SST) chairpersons.

The quantitative data collected included a survey of 30 teachers. To analyze quantitative data, this researcher tested the variables to see if they had content validity using Pearson  $r$  2-tailed correlation. Pearson Correlations were used to test the significant relationship between variables. The qualitative data collected included interviews of two principals and two SST chairpersons, a document analysis of the Georgia Board of Education Rule Code: IGB 160-4-2-.32 Student Support Team, and a document analysis of the district's SST Monthly Data Report. To analyze qualitative data, this researcher interpreted statements from the interviews, documents, and document analyses into codes and themes, which were then organized in an analysis matrix.

The findings of this study determined that there is a significant relationship between the dependent variable teacher preparedness and the independent variables, administrative support, teacher professional development, and RTI resources. The findings also determined that teachers perceive they are not prepared for RTI implementation. Although supportive of teachers, administrators concur that teachers do not fully understand the RTI process. Administrators recognize that they have more work to do to get teachers prepared to implement RTI effectively.

TEACHER PREPAREDNESS FOR AND IMPLEMENTATION OF RESPONSE TO  
INTERVENTION (RTI) TO SUPPORT THE LEARNING AND BEHAVIORAL  
NEEDS OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDENTS: IMPLICATIONS  
FOR EDUCATIONAL LEADERS

A DISSERTATION  
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

BY

LILLIAN MARGURITHA ANN HARRIS

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

ATLANTA, GEORGIA

MAY 2015

© 2015

LILLIAN MARGURITHA ANN HARRIS

All Rights Reserved

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*“Take the first step in faith. You don’t have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step.” Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*

Every step in this journey was taken with faith in God, love, and passion for children. I thank my husband, Charlton, for his love, motivation, and support. I thank my children Alena, Charlton Jr., Maurice and his wife Dachele, for always making me laugh. I thank my mom, Maudesta, my siblings, Eddie, Lory, and Sean, my cousins Talisha and Lakesha, my mother-in-law Charlene, and my entire family for being my cheerleaders. Thank you to my sorority sisters, Beverly, Towanda, Denise, Valerie, Patrice, Shadonna, my mentor Dr. Battle, and all the ladies of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. I thank all of my friends and Mr. Fernander, a great educational leader. I dedicate this dissertation with love to my grandmother, Deloris Wilson. All of you inspire me to achieve my dreams.

To my professors at Clark Atlanta University, thank you for your intellect, leadership, and support. Dr. Norman, thank you for your wisdom and “Normanisms.” Dr. Hill, thank you for recommending me to become a 2014 White House Initiative HBCU All Star Student. Dr. Gregory, thank you for publishing the book review with me of Todd Whitaker’s *What Great Teachers Do Differently, 17 Things That Matter Most*. Dr. Turner, Dr. Groves, Dr. Shepherd, and Dr. Moffett, thank you for providing quality and engaging instruction. Because of all of you, I am truly prepared with the knowledge, skills, and disposition to be an educational leader and change agent on a national level.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	iii
LIST OF FIGURES .....	vii
LIST OF TABLES .....	viii
CHAPTER	
I.    INTRODUCTION .....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	7
Purpose of the Study .....	10
Research Questions .....	12
Significance of the Study .....	13
Chapter Summary .....	15
II.   REVIEW OF RESEARCH LITERATURE .....	17
Organization of the Review .....	17
Emergent Themes .....	36
Chapter Summary .....	38
III.  THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	40
Theory of Variables .....	42
Definition of Variables and Other Terms .....	45
Relationship among Variables .....	46
Justification of Variables .....	46
Research Questions.....	48
Limitations of the Study.....	49

CHAPTER

	Chapter Summary .....	50
IV.	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....	51
	Research Design.....	51
	Description of the Setting .....	53
	Sampling Procedures .....	55
	Working with Human Subjects.....	56
	Instrumentation .....	57
	Participants/Location of Research .....	58
	Data Collection Procedures.....	60
	Description of Data Analysis Methods .....	61
	Chapter Summary .....	63
V.	ANALYSIS OF THE DATA.....	74
	Analysis of Quantitative Data.....	75
	Analysis of Qualitative Data.....	89
	Analysis of the Interviews .....	99
	Document Analyses .....	115
	Chapter Summary .....	117
VI.	FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	120
	Findings.....	120
	Conclusions and Implications.....	127
	Limitations .....	129



Recommendations .....130  
Further Research .....131  
Chapter Summary .....132

APPENDIX

A. Survey Instrument .....135  
B. Interview Questions .....138  
C. Survey Consent Form .....140  
D. Interview Consent Forms .....141  
E. The Georgia Rule on Student Support Team .....145  
F. Georgia Rule on the Student Support Team Document Analysis.....147  
G. SST Monthly Data Report .....149  
H. SST Monthly Data Report Document Analysis.....150  
I. Terms and Definitions.....152

REFERENCES .....154

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.	Diagrammed Outline of Variables .....	46
Figure 2.	Survey Responses: Teacher Preparedness .....	79
Figure 3.	Survey Responses: Administrative Support.....	81

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.	Data Collection Alignment for Research Questions .....	64
Table 2.	Demographic Data of Participants .....	76
Table 3.	Survey Responses: Teacher Preparedness .....	78
Table 4.	Survey Responses: Administrative Support.....	80
Table 5.	Survey Responses: Professional Development .....	82
Table 6.	Survey Responses: Resources .....	83
Table 7.	Survey Responses: Teacher Perception Regarding an RTI Undergraduate Course .....	84
Table 8.	Content Validity Test: Teacher Preparedness.....	85
Table 9.	Content Validity Test: Administrative Support .....	85
Table 10.	Correlations: Teacher Preparedness and Administrative Support .....	86
Table 11.	Correlations: Teacher Preparedness and Professional Development.....	87
Table 12.	Correlations: Teacher Preparedness and Resources .....	88
Table 13.	Correlations: Teacher Preparedness and Gender, Experience, and Degree .....	88
Table 14.	Outline and Definition of Themes .....	92
Table 15.	Analysis Matrix.....	94

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

In a book review of Todd Whitaker's *What Great Teachers Do Differently, 17 Things That Matter Most*, conducted by Harris and Gregory (2014), two important questions were posed: "Have you ever heard the phrase, 'move from good to great?' It sounds motivating; however, one has to then wonder, what is the difference between good and great?" (p. 1).

As educators, we all know when students are not engaged in the learning process they have a small chance of grasping concepts taught. Student engagement by definition occurs when a student has active participation in academics and has a commitment to their educational goals and learning (Appleton, Christenson, & Furlong, 2013a). Lack of participation, commitment, and investment could lead to academic failure and ultimately reduce the number of students graduating from high school. A good teacher will go through the typical functions of taking attendance, grade reporting, and holding tutorial, but a great teacher will go the extra mile to determine specific needs for each student and to implement a plan to support their academic success (Whitaker, 2011). There are many ways in which teachers can facilitate standards-based quality instruction. One method that captures an overall view of implementing support is the Response to Intervention (RTI) framework.

The concept of the RTI framework was developed in response to the United States Department of Education's goal to improve special education services by focusing on student outcomes (Prasse, 1999). Soon after, RTI emerged as a general education initiative to identify students who are performing below grade level, implement interventions targeted to their deficit areas, and to support their learning until they are capable of performing on grade level (Prasse, 1999). By design, the intention of the RTI framework shifted to decrease the number of students being misidentified as having a learning disability, and thus identified as Special Education. This is especially important as research, such as *The Urgency of Now* by the Schott Foundation for Public Education (2012), still shows a higher number of African-American students performing lower than other ethnic groups which puts them at greater risk of being misidentified as having a learning disability. The report also shows that Georgia ranks 38 out of 50 states in regards to the graduation rate for African-American males. Specifically, of the 315,408 black males enrolled, Georgia is only graduating 49% of them compared to 65% of white male students (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2012). This information speaks to the importance of district and administrative support for teacher implementation of the RTI process to support the learning and behavior needs of students and to reduce the number of students, especially African-American students, being identified as special education. In this study, the RTI framework was examined as perceived by select middle school teachers, located in an urban school setting, regarding their knowledge and preparedness to implement processes within the framework.

School districts in Georgia are required by the *Marshall Law*, a 1984 case that determined minority students were disproportionately placed in special education (Barge, 2011b), to implement the Student Support Team process, which is part of the Response to Intervention (RTI) framework. When reviewing student assessment data of an urban school district in the metro Georgia area, the researcher found a significant number of African-American students are not graduating from high school. In fact, as educators commonly use the phrase, “all children can learn,” Georgia is currently graduating 64% of its African-American students; thus, a significant number of students are not learning (Georgia Public Broadcasting [GPB] News, 2013). In addition, the graduation rate for black males is 49%, which ranks Georgia in the bottom 10 of all states (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2012).

This is an important implication for educational leaders as they must ensure teachers are knowledgeable and prepared to implement best practices to get students to learn and ultimately graduate from high school. Generally, teachers express passion for students and their educational well being and for the most part, they want to do a good job, they want to be great professionals. However, there is a missing link between the belief that all children can learn and the outcome. The Response to Intervention framework outlines ways, in the format of Tiers, to support the learning and behavioral needs of students so that they are successful in performing on grade level. The role of district and school administrators is critical to teacher implementation of Response to Intervention. The researcher explored the knowledge and preparedness of teachers to

implement the Tiers outlined in the Georgia Response to Intervention manual (Barge, 2011a):

**Tier 1: STANDARDS-BASED CLASSROOM LEARNING:**

- **All** students participate in general education learning that includes:
  - Universal screenings to target groups in need of specific instructional support;
  - Implementation of the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPS) through a standards based classroom structure;
  - Differentiation of instruction including fluid, flexible grouping, multiple means of learning, and demonstration of learning;
  - Progress monitoring of learning through multiple formative assessments.

**Tier 2: NEEDS-BASED LEARNING:**

- **In addition to Tier 1**, targeted students participate in learning that is different by including:
  - Standard intervention protocol process for identifying and providing research based interventions based on need and resources;
  - On-going progress monitoring to measure student response to intervention and guide decision-making;

**Tier 3: SST-DRIVEN LEARNING:**

- **In addition to Tier 1 and Tier 2**, targeted students participate in learning that is different by including:

- Intensive, formalized problem solving to identify individual student needs in reading, mathematics and/or behavior;
- Targeted research based interventions tailored to individual needs;
- Frequent progress monitoring and analysis of student response to intervention(s);

**Tier 4: SPECIALLY-DESIGNED LEARNING:**

- **In addition to Tiers 1 through 3**, targeted students participate in:
  - Specialized programs, methodologies, or instructional deliveries;
  - Greater frequency of progress monitoring of student response to intervention(s). (pp. 39-50)

As outlined in the RTI Tiers, implementation of research based interventions is an important aspect of supporting the learning and behavioral needs of struggling students. It is also important that implementation is done with fidelity to ensure effectiveness (Barge, 2011a). School and district leaders must consistently monitor and support the work of RTI at all Tiers to ensure fidelity of implementation (Barge, 2011a). The Georgia Response to Intervention manual (Barge, 2011a) outlines system leadership, building leadership, and teacher roles and responsibilities as follows:

**System Leadership**

- Create a district-wide plan for RTI implementation including the plan for monitoring implementation of the interventions and addressing issues of fidelity;
- Determine reading, mathematics, and behavior expectations;



- Establish and support a common set of characteristics of Tier 1 and Tier 2 instruction in all classrooms;
- Support the implementation of the non-negotiables at each Tier of the RTI Pyramid.

### **Building Leadership**

- Implement the RTI plan including monitoring interventions and addressing issues of fidelity;
- Create a school-wide focus on having assessment drive instruction;
- Develop staff understanding of the RTI process;
- Establish schedules to provide various times for interventions;
- Ensure that Tier 1 standards-based instruction occurs in all classrooms;
- Establish standard protocols of support for students needing Tier 2 support.

### **Classroom Teachers**

- Implement the CCGPS;
- Implement the Tier interventions (as planned, as appropriate);
- Consistently use formative and summative assessments to guide classroom instruction;
- Differentiate instruction – it is the heart of teaching and learning;
- Consistently communicate with the intervention and instructional specialists.

(p. 75)

### **Statement of the Problem**

Implementation of Response to Intervention (RTI) is an educational issue of national, state, and district level importance. Effective teaching is critical to the overall progress of student academia at each school. As discussed in Ladson-Billings' (2009) book, *The Dream Keepers*, some teachers, classified as tutors, are so effective in their instructional delivery models that they rarely refer students to be considered for services out of the classroom because they believe it is their responsibility to get them to learn. Effective teaching also indicates that services through RTI are appropriately aligned to the students' academic and behavioral deficit areas to prevent students from being misidentified or under-identified. It is the responsibility of educational leaders to make provisions for professional development opportunities that prepare teachers for implementation of Response to Intervention. Further, the support of district and school leaders is necessary for effective teacher implementation of RTI or any best practice in teaching and learning.

This study focused on the perceptions of teachers in two middle schools located in an urban metropolitan Georgia school district. Since the Student Support Team, which is a component of Response to Intervention, is a Georgia mandate to support the learning and behavioral needs of students, teachers rely on professional development and support from administrators to effectively implement the process. Equally important is the fact that if teachers are not adequately trained to support the learning and behavioral needs of students, they will continuously refer the students for special education consideration (Lee-Tarver, 2006).

Currently, the College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI) is what the Georgia Department of Education uses as a criterion to measure student outcomes (Barge, 2012b). The indicators within CCRPI include several categories that measure content mastery, middle school, high school, and post high school readiness, and graduation rates. According to Rehora (2011), there is a disproportionate representation of African-American students in special education. In addition, the data show significant disproportionate percentages in two areas: African-American students make up 17% of the U.S. school enrollment and more than 20% of them are identified with a learning disability (Rehora, 2011).

Prior to determining the special education eligibility of a student, the Student Support Team, Tier 3 of RTI, must implement research and evidence based interventions to ensure best practices during general education instruction (Barge, 2011b). School administrators must ensure teacher implementation of the Student Support Team by providing the professional development, time, and resources necessary for effectiveness of implementation. If teachers are not successful in implementing research and evidence based interventions to address learning and behavioral needs, African-American students in this district will continue to be identified for special education services at disproportionate rates. Research has indicated that students, if not successful in middle school, will potentially become disengaged in the learning process and eventually drop out of high school (Bridgeland, Dilulio, & Morison, 2006). This will increase the deficit in the United States of minorities eligible for careers especially in the critical fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics. In addition, according to the United

States Census Bureau (2008), more than half of the children in the United States will be from a minority population by 2023, which means that by 2050, the minority population will be 54%, thus making the minority race the majority race. Clearly, if educational leaders do not address learning needs of African-American students today, the county will suffer significantly later.

The following two examples show the national and local impact if students are not academically successful. First, the potential national impact comes from the ninth grade End-of-Course Test data as reported by the Georgia Department of Education (2014b) which shows that 77% did not pass Mathematics II, and 25% did not pass Biology. These results are a direct reflection of the middle school scores in this urban metropolitan Georgia school district whereby the 2014 Georgia Criterion Referenced Competency Test (GCRCT) shows that 30% of eighth grade students did not meet expectations in mathematics and 35% of eighth students did not meet expectations in science (Georgia Department of Education, 2014a). Middle schools in this district rank the lowest performing in the state of Georgia (*Atlanta Journal Constitution [AJC] News*, 2013). This is a great concern because if Georgia, and the United States for that matter, expects to compete globally, education in science technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) must improve. This is an expectation supported by many organizations including the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, General Electric, National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), and the United States Department of Education. Further, if the United States plans to effectively compete

globally, consideration must be given to Daniel Pink's (2011) 3-A Theory: Asia, Automation, and Abundance. In his theory, Pink describes the 3-As as follows:

- Asia, as they have a high number of educated and qualified individuals to do the job for half the price of American labor (i.e., American labor costs more and is less skilled and less efficient when compared to Asia). (para. 1)
- Automation, described as technology replacing tasks and jobs, i.e. automation in some areas has replaced the need for humans. (para. 2)
- Abundance, having a need for new technology, i.e. we need our children to create new technology and not to simply sustain the current technology. (para. 3)

The second example shows the local impact if students are academically successful. According to the Alliance for Excellent Education (2010), if only half of the 61,500 dropouts from 2010 in Georgia actually received a diploma, the state would yield a \$242 million increase in earnings; \$191 million increase in spending; \$475 million increase in home sales; \$28 million increase in auto sales; 2,650 new jobs; \$350 million increase in gross state product; and a \$18 million increase in tax revenue. In essence, an increase in the graduation rate could cause an increase in the economy and simultaneously yield a decrease in the unemployment rate and crime rate.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Teachers struggle to implement Response to Intervention for many reasons. To explore those reasons, the researcher conducted a mixed methods research. According to Creswell and Clark (2007), mixed methods research is defined as a research design, as a

methodology, and as a method. The research design included both philosophical assumptions and methods of inquiry. The methodology component used philosophical assumptions to frame the collection and analysis of data while combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. As a method, this researcher collected, analyzed, and mixed quantitative and qualitative data into a single study (Creswell & Clark, 2007). The purpose of this mixed methodological study was to explore the perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs that urban middle school teachers have regarding their preparedness to implement Response to Intervention with the inclusion of research-based instructional interventions. These interventions are required to meet the needs of students prior to and during the Student Support Team process. In addition, the Student Support Team process is Tier 3 of the Response to Intervention framework and is mandated by the state of Georgia. Educational leaders have the responsibility to ensure teachers are adequately prepared to implement these components as they are critical to student learning and behavior outcomes.

The study was designed to discover variations that might significantly influence teachers' preparedness as related to readiness to implement Response to Intervention to meet the learning and behavioral needs of African-American students in urban public middle schools in metropolitan Georgia. The variations in teacher preparedness were influenced by: lack of professional development on Response to Intervention, knowledge of the Student Support Team process, administrative support, and other factors, such as available instructional resources.

The following research questions were derived from independent and dependent variables. The three independent variables included Administrative Support, Teacher Professional Development, and RTI Resources; the dependent variable was Teacher Preparedness.

### **Research Questions**

This study explored the following research questions which are both qualitative and quantitative:

- RQ1: What are teachers' perceptions of their preparedness to implement the Response to Intervention process?
- RQ2: What are teachers' perceptions of the Student Support Team process?
- RQ3: What factors impact teacher preparedness for and implementation of Response to Intervention (administrative support, district support, teacher professional development, RTI resources, other)?

This study explored the following qualitative research question:

- RQ4: What aspects of administrative support influence teacher preparedness for and implementation of Response to Intervention?

This study explored the following quantitative research questions:

- RQ5: What is the frustration level of being a teacher who cannot get students to master concepts taught?
- RQ6: What is the frustration level of being a teacher who cannot get students to behave appropriately?

- RQ7: What are teachers' perceptions on the need for a postsecondary undergraduate course on Response to Intervention for students seeking degrees in education?
- RQ8: Is there a significant relationship between administrative support and teacher preparedness for implementation of Response to Intervention?
- RQ9: Is there a significant relationship between teacher professional development and teacher preparedness for implementation of Response to Intervention?
- RQ10: Is there a significant relationship between RTI resources and teacher preparedness for implementation of Response to Intervention?

### **Significance of the Study**

The *Marshall v. Georgia* case in 1984, dealt with the disproportionate placement of minority students in special education (Barge, 2011b). As a result, the State of Georgia mandates that all local education agencies develop a Student Support Team (Barge, 2011b). The Response to Intervention process is the overall framework in which the Georgia Student Support Team process exists (Barge, 2011b). The purpose of the Student Support Team process is to develop and implement an instructional plan tailored to individual student needs, while they are served in the general education classroom. The Student Support Team must ensure instructional and/or behavioral interventions are implemented with fidelity prior to considering referral for special education evaluation. Interventions should also be implemented prior to referral to the Student Support Team (Barge, 2011b).



According to the United States Commission on Civil Rights (2009), out of 3,500 schools surveyed, 22% to 32% of African-American students are in some area of Special Education; however, African-American students make up only 16% of the population. This means that African-American students are 2.3 - 2.8 times more likely to be placed in Special Education, than other groups. If general education teachers do not effectively implement Response to Intervention, the percentage of African-American students referred for special education services could continuously increase. In addition, there could be a potential increase in the percentage of minority students misidentified and under-identified for special education services, which is a direct conflict with the intention of the Student Support Team process, as defined in the Response to Intervention framework.

The issue of teachers being prepared to implement Response to Intervention to meet the learning and behavioral needs of African-American students is of national, state, and district level importance. Effective teaching is critical to the overall progress of student academia at each school. Teachers who are effective in their instructional delivery model and implementation of interventions rarely refer students to be considered for services out of the classroom. It is equally critical that interventions to support students are appropriately aligned to the students' deficit areas to prevent students from being misidentified or underidentified. Educational leaders, both at the district and school level, must support teachers through professional development and other resources specific to the implementation of Response to Intervention. Overall, this study

determined the teacher perceptions of their preparedness to implement Response to Intervention.

Principals and educational leaders can benefit from this study as they strive to reduce the disproportionate number of African-American students identified as special education, to implement the Common Core Standards, and to meet the College and Career Readiness Performance Indicators (CCRPI). This study will also direct educational leaders' decisions to recruit teachers experienced in implementing interventions and to provide professional development opportunities for currently staffed teachers who need training in this area.

### **Chapter Summary**

Within this urban metropolitan Georgia public school district exists a problem that some students are not provided the support needed to reach their full potential to learn. According to the Response to Intervention framework and the Student Support Team process mandated by the state of Georgia, this support must be provided through research-based interventions. Educational leaders have significant responsibilities to ensure implementation of RTI by providing professional development and resources for teachers so that they are adequately prepared. The researcher explored middle school teachers' perception of the RTI framework and their preparedness to implement processes therein. Eighth grade teachers in particular have the critical task of successfully bridging the gap between middle school and high school. A student's foundational success in middle school could determine their success in high school. This is of significant importance to principals and district educational leaders because the College

and Career Readiness Performance Indicators expect growth in student academic performance as well as in the graduation rate.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RESEARCH LITERATURE

The primary focus of this chapter was to review literature that is relevant to Response to Intervention, literature that is related to perceptions of preparedness and implementation, and literature that is related the impact on students. In addition, literature was reviewed that relates to teacher quality as well as the impact on the preparedness of the United States to compete globally.

#### **Organization of the Review**

##### **Development of Response to Intervention**

The concept of the Response to Intervention (RTI) model was created as a response to a particular concern in special education—learning disabilities (LD). Controversy over LD determination, as indicated by Bradley, Danielson, and Doolittle (2005), include (a) perhaps the eligibility criteria were not well developed, causing states to use their own method of determining the discrepancy between ability and achievement; (b) the number of students being identified as having a learning disability increased over 200% since the inception of LD in 1977; and (c) many students may have been misidentified or underidentified over the years. Twenty years later, in 1997, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was reauthorized. Then in 2004, IDEA was reauthorized again and renamed Individuals with Disabilities

Education Improvement Act (Wedl, 2005). According to Wedl, IDEA-97 eliminated the use of I.Q. testing as a required component of the identification of children with disabilities. In addition, Wedl adds that the reauthorization in 2004, IDEA, removed the requirement of the “significant discrepancy” formula for learning disabilities classification based on intelligence quotient (IQ) tests and required that states adopt alternative models including Response to Intervention. It is important to note that the Response to Intervention process is a framework absent of federal funds with the exception that IDEA 2004 determined that Early Intervening Programs under RTI, could be funded with up to 15% of special education funds (Klotz & Canter, 2006). States across America, including Georgia, have adopted the RTI model.

### **Response to Intervention in Georgia**

Response to Intervention (RTI), the Georgia Student Achievement Pyramid of Interventions, is the process of aligning appropriate assessments with purposeful instruction for all students (Barge, 2011a). It is a four-tier framework identifying progressive and more intensive interventions in each tier. In the Georgia RTI manual, Barge explains that RTI is the practice of providing quality instruction and interventions matched to student needs and if RTI best practices are implemented effectively at Tiers 1 and 2, at least 80% to 90% of the students should respond positively with 10% to 20% or less being referred to SST (i.e., Tier 3). In essence, implementation of the RTI model should prevent students from being referred out of the classroom (i.e., to special education—Tier 4), without sound evidence that research-based instructional interventions have been initiated and data verifying the impact of these interventions are

used in the RTI evaluation and decision-making model (Wedl, 2005). The major issue is that although states adopted the RTI model, they have not implemented the RTI model in the way that it was intended (Wedl, 2005), meaning districts have placed focus on Tier 3, the Student Support Team (SST) process, without the intentional focus needed in Tiers 1 and 2 where quality instruction and progress monitoring should take place to prevent unwarranted referrals out of the classroom. The lack of intentional instructional focus in Tiers 1 and 2 poses the risk for more students to be referred to Tier 3, SST and eventually Tier 4, special education. If the implementation of RTI, including SST, is not required and monitored, then it is uncertain whether students are receiving the interventions designed to meet their needs (Barge, 2011a). For this reason, the Georgia RTI framework also requires district and building leaders to be involved and to monitor the implementation of Response to Intervention (Barge, 2011a).

### **The National Center on Response to Intervention**

The National Center on Response to Intervention (NCRTI) outlined the essential components to include Screening, Progress Monitoring, Multi-level Prevention System, and Data-Based Decision Making. Throughout these components is culturally relevant and evidence-based instruction all of which is connected to improving student outcomes. The Screening process typically involves the use of an initial assessment on particular concept in which the results are used to identify students demonstrating poor learning outcomes (NCRTI). Early detection and interventions rather than the “wait to fail” notion is an important aspect of the Response to Intervention model (Klotz & Canter, 2006). Interventions also help to determine students who actually have a learning

disability versus students who suffer from the lack of being taught previously (Klotz & Canter, 2006). When students demonstrate poor learning outcomes, Progress Monitoring is implemented with the use of research-based interventions to assess and measure the rate of progress in the deficit area and to determine how the student is *responding* to the intervention (NCRTI).

Response to Intervention is framed within a Multi-level Prevention System whereby students are serviced in whole group, small group or an individual approach to implementing interventions at different levels of intensity or prevention (NCRTI). Data-Based Decision Making is a component used at all levels of instruction, hence it is the bases by which decision are made regarding types of interventions, the instructional model and effectiveness of the interventions (NCRTI). The Student Support Team is the most intensive level of support for general education students within the Response to Intervention framework. Federal laws such as No Child Left Behind and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004, direct schools to help students to learn by implementing appropriate strategies and interventions as early as possible to prevent referrals to special education (Klotz & Canter, 2006). Because these laws require general education interventions prior to special education referrals, many states have mandated the implementation of Student Support Teams. Although required by many states, the Student Support Team process is an unfunded mandate.

### **Student Support Team Mandate in Georgia**

In 1984, the *Marshall v. Georgia* case determined that minority students were disproportionately placed in special education (Barge, 2011b). As a result, Georgia

mandates that all local education agencies develop and implement the Student Support Team process (Barge, 2011b). As indicated by the *Marshall Law*, the Student Support Team (SST) is a collaborative effort between general education and special education to identify and implement instructional strategies for students prior to or instead of referring them to be evaluated for special education services (Barge, 2011b). The Georgia Board of Education Rule on Student Support Team requires each school to establish a team that consists of the referring teacher and at least two other staff members such as the principal, special education teacher, and any other appropriate personnel (Barge, 2011b). The Georgia SST Rule also states that parents must be invited to attend the SST meetings but their presence is not required for school staff to conduct the meeting. The major components of the SST meeting include identifying learning and/or behavior problems of students, discussing progress from implemented interventions, and developing or modifying an education plan tailored to the student's specific deficit area(s) (Barge, 2011b). Although SST is mandated, it is critical that teachers understand the entire Response to Intervention model which includes the SST process. Understanding the progressive process of Response to Intervention could help teachers with the implementation of the SST process as it includes methods used in Tiers 1 and 2.

### **Teacher Preparedness and RTI Implementation**

Audette, Polly, and White (2012) conducted a study of an elementary school's implementation of Response to Intervention (RTI). As noted in the study, this school was selected by the district as a pilot school for RTI implementation. Audette et al. began by discussing the various definitions, purposes, and perspectives that states have regarding



Response to Intervention. One study surveyed districts nationwide to determine the percentage of states implementing RTI, to determine each state's formal purpose of RTI, and to determine the status of professional development and statewide training on Response to Intervention. Forty-four of the states responded with some form of RTI implementation but there were varying levels of implementation noted.

The results of the elementary school's implementation of RTI revealed that previously teachers were frustrated with the system of implementation; hence, interventions were not helping students to do better in school (Audette et al., 2012). After implementation of RTI, teachers in this elementary school noted some improvements in student progress (Audette et al., 2012). The researchers outlined the critical things from this study that made RTI implementation successful as Principal Leadership, Professional Development, Improved Outcomes, and Implementation Obstacles. Principal Leadership is critical because the knowledge, disposition and visibility of the school leader in any process set the tone for effective implementation. Professional Development is important so that teachers understand the purpose and function of RTI and SST as well as how to implement strategies in their classroom. Improved Outcomes is the reasoning behind RTI implementation. The goal is to get students to improve upon their learning potential. It is also important to recognize Implementation Obstacles so that schools and districts as organizations know how to improve instructional practices.

The process of Response to Intervention includes innovative instructional practices geared toward improving student outcomes (NCRTI). Changes such as

programs, staff, and mobility of students can present challenges in implementing continuous and effective RTI practices (NCRTI). Administrators must recognize the importance of the training, funding and guidance needed in order to ensure RTI implementation can continue during periods of change (NCRTI). Training is important so that teachers know and understand the purpose and function of RTI and SST. Through training, teachers can learn effective strategies to implement interventions for targeted students while still meeting the needs of other students in the classroom. Funding is needed so that teachers have the tools and resources needed to implement the interventions. Ongoing guidance is needed from administrators so that teachers have constant support in the implementation of RTI and SST best practices. Without appropriate training, funding, and guidance, it will be difficult for teachers to meet the needs of students at risk of academic failure. If instructional needs are not met, the result will most likely have a negative impact on present and future student outcomes, including the ability to graduate from high school.

### **Support and Implementation of Interventions**

According to Lipson and Wixson (2012), the basis of Response to Intervention is the implementation of interventions. Lipson and Wixson point out that in a 1987 article, Mary Clay was the first person to indicate that students should not be considered learning disabled until high quality instruction had been provided and proven to not benefit the students' academic achievement. In this article, "To What Interventions are Students Responding?" Lipson and Wixson outline four attributes of successful implementation of interventions as follows:

- System of Support – provide a system of support for implementation at the district, school and classroom level.
- Coordinated with Core Curriculum – the interventions must be aligned to the curriculum and classroom instruction.
- More Instructional Opportunity – instructional time in the areas of weakness for the students should be increased and that time should be tailored to meet their needs.
- Responsive Instruction – educators must use good assessment strategies and the outcome of the assessments must be used to tailor further instruction.

(p. 112)

Lipson and Wixson also discussed the differences in interventions related to grade levels. The researchers indicate that there is less known about interventions beyond the third grade. In essence, the approaches used for grades 4-12 are not as effective as approaches used for younger students. In order to successfully implement interventions for older students, educators must use interventions that address multiple components and provide sufficient opportunities for students to practice and receive corrective feedback (Lipson & Wixson, 2012). Aside from the interventions themselves, educators must have practical considerations to address which students will be selected for interventions, who will implement the interventions, what type of professional development will be needed, and what is already in place to support implementation (Lipson & Wixson, 2012). In addition, consideration must be given to the daily schedule for pull out and pull aside models for implementing interventions (Lipson & Wixson, 2012).

### **College and Career Performance Ready Performance Index**

The Georgia Department of Education has now implemented the College and Career Performance Ready Performance Index (CCRPI) as the instructional criteria used in the state (Barge, 2012). Although similar to the former criteria used as outlined in No Child Left Behind (NCLB), CCRPI includes other factors important to student outcomes. Academic performance-based outcomes are based on the Georgia Criterion Referenced Competency Test, a standardized assessment given to all 3rd to 8th grade public school students in the state of Georgia and the End-of-Course Tests, content-based standardized assessments give to 9th to 12th grade students. Both CCRPI and NCLB included expectations on performance, attendance, and graduation; but CCRPI added expectations such as implementation of Response to Intervention, Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), and a Career Interest Inventory (Barge, 2012). In addition, CCRPI includes goals and expectations on courses, postsecondary requirements (ACT/SAT/COMPASS), and implementation of a Safe and Drug Free Survey (Barge, 2012).

There are 19 indicators for high schools that are divided among the three categories of Content Mastery, Post High School Readiness, and Graduation Rates (Barge, 2012). Middle schools have 14 indicators divided among the three categories of Content Mastery, Post Middle School Readiness, and Predictors for High School Graduation (Barge, 2012). Elementary schools have 12 indicators divided among three categories similar to middle school, Content Mastery, Post Elementary School Readiness, and Predictors for High School Graduation (Barge, 2012). Overall, the major component of CCRPI, as outlined by the state of Georgia, is Response to Intervention.

### **Perception of General Education Teachers on SST**

In 2006, Lee-Tarver (2006) conducted a survey of 123 general education teachers on their perceptions of the function and purpose of Student Support Teams, a process within the Response to Intervention framework. Overall, the teachers responded that they received training on the Student Support Team process but only after they were already members of a Student Support Team (Lee-Tarver, 2006). Students referred to the Student Support Team process were at risk of academic failure because they were having problems in a content area or they presented behavior challenges that impacted their academics. The main function of the Student Support Team is to provide additional academic support through peer tutoring, one-to-one instruction and other individualized approaches to help students improve (Lee-Tarver, 2006). According to Lee-Tarver, many of these teams, as noted in other studies, provide less support for students and function as more of a gateway into special education. Lee-Tarver also added that there is very little research on teachers' perception of the function and purpose of Student Support Teams.

### **Teacher Pedagogy and Preparedness**

In a book review of Todd Whitaker's *What Great Teachers Do Differently, 17 Things That Matter Most*, Harris and Gregory (2014) explored exactly what separates a good, and sometimes a not so good teacher, from a great teacher. Each chapter identified and described the things that matter most in being a great teacher. Following are some highlights from the book review conducted by Harris and Gregory (2014). In essence, these are the very things that promote and sustain student engagement.

1. "It's People, Not Programs." Whitaker (2011) explains that parents are not necessarily attracted to the programs used in instruction, but rather the people behind the programs. To validate this thought, Whitaker points out that when a parent is satisfied with a teacher, he/she is satisfied with the school (p. 2).
2. "The Power of Expectations." Effective teachers focus on expectations but ineffective teachers focus on rules and consequences (Whitaker, 2011). The gap between what really works with students is the relationship teachers build with them and the consistency of expectations set. When teachers focus on expectations, students try to live up to them (p. 3).
3. "Prevention versus Revenge," hence, effective teachers try to prevent misbehavior, whereas ineffective teachers seek revenge (p. 4).
4. "High Expectations – For Whom?" Most would think obviously high expectations are only for the students. Whitaker explains, while great teachers do have high expectations for students, they have even higher expectations for themselves (p. 5).
5. "Ten Days Out of Ten." Taking a positive approach means to treat everyone with respect every day (p. 6).
6. "The Ability to Ignore." Depending on the situation, great teachers know when to respond immediately and when to ignore the situation until later. In essence, these teachers give attention when it is needed (p. 9).
7. "Put Yourself in Their Position." Whitaker approaches the strategy of connecting with students. All teachers deal with students from various

backgrounds. The difference in how effectively teachers manage the needs of the students depends greatly on their ability to put themselves in the students' shoes, i.e. to see the world from their perspective (p.12).

Everything a teacher does, good or bad, has an impact on students. When teachers become more sensitive to students and to their needs, the opportunity for students to learn concepts taught increases (Whitaker, 2011). In reading this book, great teachers can reinforce their skills while others can learn new skills discussed. Whitaker reminds the readers that the success of a school is determined by the quality of the teachers, success comes from people not the programs, and most importantly, success is determined by how much focus is placed on students first.

### **Impact on High School Dropout Rate**

Researchers, Bridgeland, Dilulio, and Morison (2006) conducted a survey study, funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, with young people age 16-25 who identified themselves as high school dropouts. Studies were conducted in 25 different locations throughout the United States. As a result, it was found that the number one reason students drop out of school is because the classes were not interesting. In fact, the study showed that 47% of students dropped out because they were disengaged. In a local study conducted by the Alliance for Excellent Education (2009), it was found that 56% of Georgia's students are graduates and 44% are nongraduates. Of the 44% nongraduates, 65% of the students are minorities.

According to Bridgeland et al. (2006), 45% of the people surveyed responded that they entered high school unprepared because of inadequate schooling in their early

grades. Thirty-five percent said that they were retained at least once prior to entering high school. Further research could determine that these students were not served effectively in the general education process as it relates to Response to Intervention and the Student Support Team. To add, 68% of the respondents indicated that they had very little parental involvement in their education until their parents became aware that they were dropping out (Bridgeland et al., 2006). Another factor that contributed to students' decision to drop out as indicated by 32% of the respondents is that they had to quit school to get a job because they needed the money (Bridgeland et al., 2006).

### **Student Engagement: The Culture of Learning**

Measuring a student's level of engagement provides districts and schools with valuable information that will inform decisions for improvement if necessary. The Student Engagement Instrument, developed by researchers Appleton, Christenson, and Furlong (2013), was designed to capture reasons students are disengaged from school. The instrument measures several dimensions of engagement that go beyond academics. According to Appleton et al. (2013b), there are four types of engagement: academic, behavioral, cognitive, and affective. Since academic and behavior data are typically available at the district and school level, the Student Engagement Instrument focuses primarily on cognitive and affective engagement (Appleton et al., 2013b). While cognitive engagement deals with students' interest in learning, affective engagement directly relates to the importance of social opportunities for students.

In regards to increasing social opportunities, Gloria Ladson-Billings (2009) discusses in her book, *The Dream Keeper*, regardless of the content taught, teachers must



find a way to connect with students. Two themes that come from this book to increase social opportunities include cooperative learning and culturally relevant instruction.

Through the implementation of cooperative learning activities, students learn positive and constructive ways to socialize and work together. This is especially important during science lab experiments and other group work. Teachers who utilize this method of instruction find themselves as facilitators of instruction. When facilitated efficiently, cooperative learning activities make management of students easier than whole group instruction, thus the students get along better and the teacher is not only more connected to the students, they are also more aware of those who are disengaged.

Culturally relevant instruction also has a social component whereas teachers foster the kind of social interactions in the classroom that support individual groups in context. In other words, through cooperative learning students learn how to work together and through culturally relevant instruction they learn about differences in each other and how to appreciate and respect those differences (Ladson-Billings, 2009).

In a study of 428 Missouri districts with high schools conducted by Alspaugh (1998), it was found that educators could offset disengagement by increasing social opportunities and expanding course offerings. Alspaugh found that districts with schools organized by grades 7-12 experienced lower dropout rates than districts organized with grades 10-12 in high schools. Furthermore, students who attended the 7-12 grade schools had a longer opportunity to build social relationships, and thus tended to stay in school (Alspaugh, 1998). In order to keep students in school, educators must hold their interest

with great teachers. According to Alspaugh, one-fourth of ninth graders dropped out of high school which had a direct impact on the well being of the community.

### **Impact on the Nation**

As discussed in chapter eight of Joel Spring's 2011 book, *The Politics of American Education*, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) was founded in the 1960s to sustain economic growth and employment, to raise the standard of living in member countries, and to contribute to the development of the world economy. This created a "brain drain," "brain gain" reaction whereby foreigners leave their country to work in the United States, for example, thus creating a brain drain for that country and a brain gain for the United States. A good example of this is discussed in chapter five of Obama's (2006) book, *The Audacity of Hope*. Upon a visit to Google headquarters, Obama met with their general counsel, David Drummond, an African-American. Obama noticed that among the many employees, not one was black or Latino. David explained that it was difficult to find an American-born engineer regardless of the race. Therefore, they rely heavily on selecting foreign students as employees, hence, "brain drain/brain gain." In addition, countries benefit from brain gain, hiring from other countries, because it increases their productivity, competitiveness, and economy. Countries that lose skilled personnel to other countries, brain drain, also have the risk of decreased productivity, competitiveness, and economy.

As discussed in chapter five, by the 1970s productivity in the United States was down and the economy was suffering from postwar drainage. This caused an increase in globalization, which Yale Global Online (2015) refers to as the exchange of good ideas.

The largest group of global producers is the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). With OPEC leading the way in the global market, U.S. companies were met with competition from countries that produced other goods such as electronics, cars, and clothing. By the 1980s, production from countries had practically taken over the U.S. market, such as Asia for example, with their “Made in China” labels on millions of items we purchase. This influx of globalization put American companies at a disadvantage.

Historically, education has been a part of the political agenda, from *Plessy versus Ferguson* in 1896 which allowed state-sponsored segregation (Georgia Public Broadcasting [GPB], 2002), *Brown versus the Board of Education* in 1954 which declared public school segregation unconstitutional (Georgia Public Broadcasting [GPB], 2007), to the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* which seeks to improve individual outcomes in education (Editorial Projects in Education Research Center, 2011). Even President Clinton, during his first two years, as noted in chapter one of President Obama’s (2006) book, *The Audacity of Hope*, had a goal to implement universal healthcare and increase investment in education and training but he was forced to remove those items from his platform. These elements that Clinton put to the side mirror the items on Obama’s agenda.

In *The Audacity of Hope*, Obama focused chapter seven on race. Obama notes that on almost every single social economic indicator, black and Latino Americans continue to lag far behind their white counterparts. However, it will take more than the government stepping in to close the gap because social and cultural factors also have a

negative effect. Factors like impoverished communities, single-parent homes and lack of emphasis on educational achievement impede progress and feed intergenerational poverty. In other words, parents did not excel in education or in a career, and then neither do their children or their children's children, and so on.

In the *Audacity of Hope*, Obama does not mention Race to the Top because it did not exist before his presidency. However, everything that he discussed in the book seemed to lay the foundation for Race to the Top. Race to the Top promotes improvements in schools in an effort to close the achievement gap. One big component of Race to the Top is providing training for teacher effectiveness. The components of what makes teachers effective are aligned in the Response to Intervention framework. Another component of Race to the Top is the implementation of a common set of curriculum and standards along with education and training to compete in the global market. An improved standard of education is exactly what's needed to offset the deficits of organizations like OPEC and the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA). In chapter five, Obama (2006) mentions that globalization greatly increased instability for millions of ordinary Americans. This may be the very thing that is spearheading globalization in education. In fact, also in chapter five, Obama suggests that we should start with investments that can make America more competitive in the global economy: investments in education, science and technology, and energy independence.

### **Race to the Top**

According to the United States Department of Education (2014), Race to the Top, the centerpiece of the Obama administration's education reform is a nationwide

competitive grant to support education reform and innovation in the classrooms. States leading the way on school reform were eligible to compete for a portion of the \$4.35 billion in funding. Reform strategies for recipients of Race to the Top funds focus on four significant areas:

- Adopting internationally benchmarked standards and assessments that prepare students for success in college and the workplace;
- Recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals;
- Building data systems that measure student success and inform teachers and principals how they can improve their practices; and
- Turning around our lowest-performing schools. (p. 7)

Many states competed for the Race to the Top grant funds. Georgia was one of the competing states to be named as a Race to the Top winner.

Georgia's Race to the Top application was prepared through a collaborative effort between the Governor's office, the Office of Student Achievement, the Georgia Department of Education, and education stakeholders (Georgia DOE, 2014). The recommendations in the Georgia application include strengthening traditional and alternative preparation programs for teachers and leaders, supporting teachers more effectively in the classroom, evaluating teachers and leaders with consistent and objective criteria that inform instruction, and rewarding great teachers and leaders with performance-based salary increases (Georgia DOE, 2014). In addition, Georgia will adopt and implement the Common Core Curriculum along with international benchmark

exams which would allow the opportunity for competition globally. Ultimately, Georgia's vision is to equip students with the skills to empower them to graduate from high school, to be successful in college and/or professional careers, and to be competitive with their peers throughout the United States and the world (Georgia DOE, 2014). Governor Nathan Deal's office and State Superintendent John Barge's office will monitor, evaluate, and work closely with the 26 districts in receipt of the Race to the Top funds to implement the ideas outlined in the application.

Recommendations on how funds should be used to support the needs of urban schools and students require consideration on what the students really lack. In speaking with a representative at the Georgia Department of Education, it was suggested that at least a portion of the funds be used to support Response to Intervention implementation in schools. This makes sense because spending in this area is in alignment with the Effective Teacher in Every Classroom objective. In fact, the Georgia Department of Education approves of using Race to the Top funds to support professional learning in the areas such as Response to Intervention. In addition, funds could be used to provide incentives for parental involvement. According to a survey conducted by the Michigan Department of Education, 86% of the general public believes that support from parents is the most important way to improve schools. In essence, parent participation is leading the way as the most important input variable to academic achievement for students. Therefore, funding in this area is needed in order to encourage consistent parent participation throughout the school year.

### **Emergent Themes**

There were seven major themes that emerged throughout the review of literature which include resources, interventions, administrative support, implementation, teacher preparedness, student engagement, and the impact on the nation. Each theme is interlocked and interdependent on the other. For example, interventions cannot occur without implementation, implementation cannot occur without teacher preparedness, teacher preparedness has a great impact on students, the impact on students, positive or negative, has a great impact on the nation. In addition, teacher preparedness and student engagement is dependent upon administrative support and administrative support is dependent upon resources.

Resources emerged from the literature three times. Research regarding the development of RTI indicates IDEA 2004 determined that Early Intervening Programs under RTI, could be funded with up to 15% of special education funds (Klotz & Canter, 2006). States across America, including Georgia, have adopted the RTI model. Although required by many states, the Student Support Team process is an unfunded mandate (NCRTI). According to the Georgia Department of Education (2010), it was suggested that at least a portion of the Race to the Top funds be used to support Response to Intervention implementation in schools.

The history and reasoning behind the interventions as discussed by Bradley, Danielson, and Doolittle (2005) and Wedl (2005), is the most important component necessary to prevent students from being misidentified as having a learning disability. Barge (2011a) outlines specifics of the Response to Intervention framework on a local

level and Klotz and Canter (2006) outline specifics on a national level. Both frame the importance of interventions as they relate to student need and teacher implementation to meet those needs. In addition, the state of Georgia has outlined criteria to measure effectiveness of instructional practices within the College and Career Performance Ready Performance Index. The major component of the College and Career Performance Ready Performance Index is the implementation of Response to Intervention.

Administrative support emerged from three sources of literature. The Georgia RTI framework requires district and building leaders to be involved and to monitor the implementation of Response to Intervention (Barge, 2011a). Audette et al. (2012) indicated one of the critical things from their study that made RTI implementation successful was Principal Leadership because the knowledge, disposition and visibility of the school leader in any process set the tone for effective implementation. In addition, Lipson and Wixson (2012) indicated one of the four attributes of successful implementation of interventions is providing a System of Support for implementation at the district, school and classroom level.

Audette et al. (2012) discussed the varying levels of RTI implementation within districts as well as across the nation. The variations generated a significant level of teacher frustration regarding the standard and meaning of effective implementation. In their research, Lipson and Wixson (2012) outline attributes of successful RTI implementation. Research regarding implementation of RTI reflects the awareness of RTI but also the differing views therein.



Teacher preparedness is another major theme that emerged whereby Lee-Tarver (2006) presented study that indicated teachers were not fully prepared to implement the processes within RTI prior to being expected to do the work. Whitaker (2011) pointed out that prepared teachers are reflective of great teachers and their internal knowledge of effective instructional practices.

The theme related to student engagement emerged from four areas. Bridgeland et al. (2006) discussed the impact on the graduation rate and indicated that one major reason students drop out of school is because they are disengaged in the learning process. Appleton et al. (2013) as well as Ladson-Billings (2009), discuss the culture of learning and important ways to get students engaged in the learning process. In addition, Alspaugh (1998) pointed out that student engagement can improve if educators increase social opportunities for students and provide them with great teachers.

Obama (2006) and Spring (2011) highlighted compelling research on the impact on the nation if the citizens of the United States are not prepared to compete globally in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Strikingly, their research also depicts the lack of U.S. born citizens prepared to work in these areas locally. There is a political focus to improve education in the United States with support as outlined in Race to the Top. Georgia is one of many states to receive Race to the Top funds to help improve teacher effectiveness and ultimately student outcomes.

### **Chapter Summary**

The Response to Intervention framework was developed in the late 1970s because of the high number of children identified as having a learning disability. The intention of

Response to Intervention is to provide a framework for educators to follow in regards to implementing effective instructional practices prior to consideration for special education. Implementation of research based and scientifically proven interventions is critical to the success of meeting the needs of students in order for them to improve. Equally critical is the preparedness of teachers to be knowledgeable about the Response to Intervention components as well as the implementation of the interventions. The provision of support, professional development and resources from educational leaders is significant to teacher preparedness to implement Response to Intervention. The state of Georgia measures the effectiveness of Response to Intervention through the College and Career Performance Ready Performance Index.

According to the research, if the learning needs of students are not met, they will become disengaged in the learning process and potentially drop out of high school. There are recommended strategies to get students engaged in learning such as providing them with great teachers and increasing their opportunities for social interactions. This is important because teachers, with the guidance and support of educational leaders, must get students, especially minority students, to learn so that our nation will be prepared to function locally and compete globally.

## CHAPTER III

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Theories that undergird this study center on best practices to get students to learn better, the importance of professional development and the importance of leadership support. Marzano's (2000) Theory of Learning is aligned with the Response to Intervention model as it relates to implementing standards-based instruction. Tomlinson's (2001) Theory of Differentiated Instruction is also aligned with the Response to Intervention and Student Support Team process as it relates to meeting the needs of individual students. Guskey's (2002) Theory of Professional Development and Teacher Change are aligned with the Response to Intervention and Student Support Team process as it relates to teachers' ability to implement the process. Finally, Glickman's Five Tasks and Instructional Leadership strategies by Blasé and Blasé (2004) are aligned with the Response to Intervention process as it relates to the requirement for district and school administrators to be involved in and to monitor fidelity of implementation.

As explained by Barge (2011a) in the *Georgia RTI* manual, the Georgia RTI model includes 4 tiers. All students are serviced in Tier 1 and should receive quality standards-based instruction on a daily basis. Marzano's (2000) Theory of Learning provided a higher-level approach to stimulating learning by revising Bloom's Taxonomy to what is known as a New Taxonomy. Within this New Taxonomy are three systems and knowledge important for thinking and learning (Marzano, 2000). The Self-System

deals with the students' attitudes and beliefs about learning (Marzano, 2000). It is important that teachers positively encourage students' Self-Systems to offset the feeling of disengagement, a significant indicator of high school dropouts as indicated by Bridgeland et al. (2006). The Metacognitive System deals with addressing specific learning goals and monitoring the progress of those goals (Marzano, 2000). This is a key component of the Response to Intervention (RTI) and Student Support Team (SST) process whereby identified learning deficits require specific learning goals and continuous progress monitoring of those goals. The Cognitive System deals with knowledge retrieval (Marzano, 2000), which also aligns with the review of student progress data in the RTI and SST process. Marzano's Knowledge Domain deals with the content itself which is simply the curriculum used and facilitated through standards-based instruction as described in the first tier of the RTI framework.

The Response to Intervention framework indicated standards-based instruction as a key component to effective implementation of the process (Barge, 2011a). According to Marzano (2003), standards-based instruction should include specific instructional strategies used to respond to students' needs on a consistent basis. These strategies include setting objectives that are aligned to curriculum and standards; providing feedback to students about their progress; implementing effective summarizing and note taking; implementing cooperative learning activities which include student roles of responsibilities (group manager, recorder, reporter, timekeeper); identifying similarities and differences in learning styles of students; utilizing higher order questions, cues and advance organizers; and providing daily homework and practice.

Targeted groups of students who need academic support receive additional interventions at Tier 2 of the Response to Intervention model. Tier 3 is where students are referred for a Student Support Team approach to receive individualized support in addition to Tiers 1 and 2. The components outlined in each Tier, 1 through 3, align with Carol Tomlinson's Theory of Differentiated Instruction. Through Tomlinson's (2001) theory for differentiating instruction, emphasis must be placed on planning activities that facilitate the mastery of objectives while at the same time reflecting the variability in the needs of the students. Tomlinson points out that students vary as learners so it is important that teachers try to address their particular needs. This is critical to ensuring students have adequate schooling in the early grades to prevent them from dropping out of high school as noted by Bridgeland et al. (2006). According to Tomlinson (2001), students should engage in hands-on activities and lessons that are life applicable as much as possible. Whole group instruction should be held to a minimum because small groups, cooperative-learning groups, flexible learning style groups, paired groups, and computer assisted activities that focus on student diagnosed needs increase learning potential (Tomlinson, 2001).

Clearly stated in the Georgia Response to Intervention manual, building leaders must develop staff understanding of the RTI process (Barge, 2011a). According to Guskey's (2002) Theory of Professional Development and Teacher Change, high-level professional development is a critical component to the success of improving education. Guskey indicates that there are two reasons implementation of programs fail: teacher motivation to participate in professional development and the time it takes for teachers to

process change. Teachers are motivated by professional development if they believe in the initiative/program and if they believe it will contribute to their knowledge and professional growth (Guskey, 2002). It is important for school administrators to understand that after teachers participate in professional development, it takes time to change their attitudes, beliefs and perceptions during the implementation phase of a new initiative (Guskey, 2002). Guskey suggests consideration of the Model of Teacher Change: Professional Development → Change in Teachers' Classroom Practices → Change in Student Learning Outcomes → Change in Teachers' Attitudes and Beliefs. In essence, teachers' attitudes and beliefs change after they see results in student learning outcomes. The changes in student learning outcomes are dependent upon the change in teachers' classroom practices and this change is dependent upon professional development.

The Response to Intervention framework also requires building leaders to be involved and to monitor the implementation of the RTI process (Barge, 2011a). Supporting and monitoring this process is important because it includes the Student Support Team process which is mandated by the state of Georgia. According to Glickman, Gordon, and Ross-Gordon (2009), education leaders should follow five steps or tasks to meeting the objectives of student achievement. These tasks, professional development, direct assistance to teachers, curriculum development, group development, and action research have a direct impact on instructional improvement (Glickman et al., 2009). Glickman et al. indicate that supervision is more of an action not just a title and leadership should be viewed as a function and process rather than a role or position.

One of the requirements for building leaders in the Response to Intervention process is to create a system for feedback and decision-making (Barge, 2011a). Similarly aligned to this requirement for building leaders is research conducted by Blasé and Blasé (2004). In their book, *Handbook of Instructional Leadership*, Blasé and Blasé discuss the importance of leaders to build a culture of collaboration and learning. In addition, the researchers discuss “wondering around” as an effective strategy to demonstrate administrative support. If principals are visible/wondering around throughout the school (i.e. through informal walkthroughs and classroom visits), it shows their interest in instruction and it enhances teachers' motivation, self-esteem, sense of security and morale (Blasé & Blasé, 2004). These strategies help to build a culture of collaboration and learning.

### **Theory of Variables**

#### **Independent Variables**

**Administrative Support** as an independent variable was determined by the support provided to teachers by school administrators and the support provided to schools by district administrators. Support was determined as professional development on Response to Intervention, constructive feedback from observations, and resources to provide quality instruction.

**Teacher Professional Development** as an independent variable was determined by the opportunities provided to teachers for professional development on Response to Intervention.

**RTI Resources** as an independent variable was determined by materials and funding provided to implement effective interventions and progress monitoring.

### **Dependent Variable**

**Teacher Preparedness** as a dependent variable was measured by the percentage of teachers prepared to implement RTI best practices.

## **Definition of Variables and Other Terms**

### **Independent Variables**

**Administrative support** is defined as the process in which educational leaders influence instructional practices. The influence includes provision of resources, professional development and ongoing support to teachers. In addition, administrators are governed to observe classroom instruction, to provide coaching support and to provide useful and constructive feedback to, i.e. district administrators to principals and principals to teachers.

**Teacher Professional Development** is defined as the training provided to teachers in the area of Response to Intervention.

**RTI Resources** is defined as the books about Response to Intervention, website links and tools to access interventions, and the provision of a progress monitoring tool.

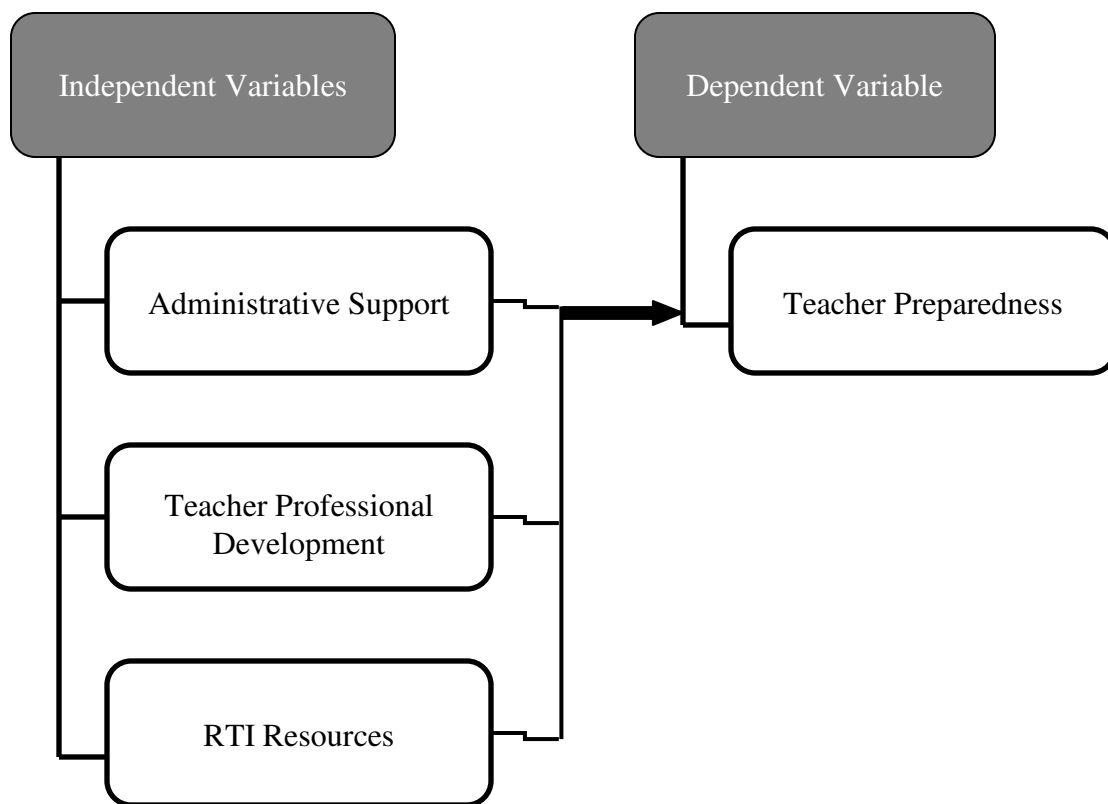
### **Dependent Variable**

**Teacher Preparedness** is defined as teachers who are knowledgeable and prepared to implement RTI best practices.



### Relationship among Variables

Figure 1 shows the relationship between the dependent and independent variables.



*Figure 1.* Diagrammed Outline of Variables

### Justification of Variables

The theory that supports the dependent variables was based upon the requirements for Response to Intervention implementation as outlined by the Georgia Department of Education. The presumption was that teachers were knowledgeable in and prepared to implement Response to Intervention including research-based interventions and to monitor the progress of student deficiencies in reading, mathematics and/or behavior. It

was further presumed that implementation of the interventions would help students improve academically and behaviorally and prevent students from being misidentified for special education services.

Appropriately identifying a student with a disability has sparked a lot of controversy over the years, not because of special education services, but because of the disproportionate number of African-American students who land there. Classroom grades, attendance to school and even sometimes behavior are used by teachers throughout the nation as a way of measuring whether a student should be evaluated for special education services. The Response to Intervention framework sets a criterion of expectations that must be followed, with documented data, prior to referring a student to be evaluated for special education services.

According to Victorian (2012), African-American children make up 16% of the population yet they account for 31% of special education children with an intellectual disability. Further, 28% of African-American students are identified as emotionally disturbed, which adds to the disproportionate number of African-American students in special education (Victorian, 2012). Methods, such as the Response to Intervention framework, were implemented with the intentions to offset the high number of students being identified as learning disabled. Despite the efforts introduced in the late 1970s, the problem with African-American students disproportionately identified as special education still continues.

Additional research-based variables that relate to Response to Intervention according to literature are used because of the following:

- Response to Intervention is proposed to be related to the College and Career Ready Performance Index because research indicates implementation improves with accountability measures.
- Response to Intervention is proposed to be related to graduation rates because research indicates that lack of quality instruction targeted to student academic needs causes an increase in the high school dropout rate.

### **Research Questions**

This study explored the following research questions which are both qualitative and quantitative:

- RQ1: What are teachers' perceptions of their preparedness to implement the Response to Intervention process?
- RQ2: What are teachers' perceptions of the Student Support Team process?
- RQ3: What factors impact teacher preparedness for and implementation of Response to Intervention (administrative support, district support, teacher professional development, RTI resources, other)?

This study explored the following qualitative research question:

- RQ4: What aspects of administrative support influence teacher preparedness for and implementation of Response to Intervention?

This study explored the following quantitative research questions:

- RQ5: What is the frustration level of being a teacher who cannot get students to master concepts taught?

- RQ6: What is the frustration level of being a teacher who cannot get students to behave appropriately?
- RQ7: What are teachers' perceptions on the need for a postsecondary undergraduate course on Response to Intervention for students seeking degrees in education?
- RQ8: Is there a significant relationship between administrative support and teacher preparedness for implementation of Response to Intervention?
- RQ9: Is there a significant relationship between teacher professional development and teacher preparedness for implementation of Response to Intervention?
- RQ10: Is there a significant relationship between RTI resources and teacher preparedness for implementation of Response to Intervention?

### **Limitations of the Study**

There were some expected limitations to the study. The teacher participants in the study may not have fully disclosed their perception of Response to Intervention implementation. The targeted principals may not have fully disclosed the level of support provided to teachers to implement Response to Intervention. The participating Student Support Team chairpersons may not have fully disclosed the overall status of implementation in their school. It was anticipated that participants may not have wanted to fully disclose information if it was directly related to their job performance. In the researchers' experience, human behavior is unpredictable even when monitored and managed closely; therefore, the researcher considered this as a possible threat to the

validity of the study. The research began in September and ended in December of the same school year.

### **Chapter Summary**

There are many theories that support the importance of Response to Intervention implementation. Many of the theories such as Marzano's (2000) Theory of Learning and Tomlinson's (2001) Theory of Differentiated Instruction clearly describe standards-based instruction which is the first tier of Response to Intervention. Guskey's (2002) Theory Professional Development and Teacher Change is aligned to teacher's ability to implement Response to Intervention. In addition, Glickman et al. (2009) and Blasé and Blasé (2004) both align to administrative support for teachers. The theories align to the implications for educational leaders to support teachers through professional development and resources so that teachers are prepared for RTI implementation. All of the theories related to the dependent and independent variables described in the chapter. The variables were justified by the Response to Intervention implementation requirements as outlined by the Georgia Department of Education.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the framework for conducting the research inquiry. Throughout the chapter a description of the research design, the setting and the procedures for selecting the participants was described. In addition, an explanation of the instruments and methods of gathering data and relevant information was provided.

#### **Research Design**

This mixed-methods study combined quantitative and qualitative data to investigate teacher preparedness for and implementation of Response to Intervention to support the learning and behavioral needs of African-American students. The study also addressed the implications this research has for educational leaders. A triangulation mixed-methods design was used whereby the researcher used multiple methods to collect data. The study used a survey instrument to test the theory of teacher preparedness for and implementation of Response to Intervention (RTI), which predicted that administrative support, teacher professional development, and RTI resources have the potential to influence teacher preparedness and implementation of RTI for participants at an urban school district in the metro Georgia area. Concurrent with the quantitative data, qualitative data included two document analyses, and interviews to explore the central phenomenon of teacher preparedness at an urban school district in the metro Georgia area. Data were collected in the natural setting where the participants experienced the issue. A quantitative approach was appropriate because participants responded to survey questions based on a Likert Scale. A qualitative approach was appropriate because

teachers' perception of their preparedness for and implementation of Response to Intervention to support the learning and behavioral needs of African-American students is an issue that needed to be explored. Utilizing the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative forms of research helped to validate results of teacher preparedness for and implementation of Response to Intervention.

While participating in a professional development workshop, the researcher was in conversation with a couple of attendees. One attendee expressed concerns that she and her colleagues were frustrated and overwhelmed with trying to get struggling students to function on grade level. She explained that the frustration increases the closer they get to the administration of the State standardized assessment. In addition, the teachers wished they could get more support from the school administrators. The researcher considered this phenomenon as one that needed to be studied.

From a quantitative perspective, the specific tradition of inquiry was correlational research because it dealt with the extent of the relationship between specific variables. Correlational research is defined as collecting data to determine whether, and to what degree, a relationship exists between two or more quantifiable variables (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2006). The key characteristics in the study included conducting a survey and using the results to determine the degree of the relationship between the variables.

From a qualitative perspective, the specific tradition of inquiry was the phenomenological approach because it dealt with the single concept of teacher perception of their preparedness to implement a required process. A phenomenological study, as defined by Creswell (2013), describes lived experiences of a particular concept that

several individuals have in common. The key characteristics of this study included conducting the research in the participants' natural setting, utilizing multiple methods to collect data and focusing on the participants' meanings about the issue. The phenomenological approach was appropriate for this study because the participants experienced frustration with implementing interventions as determined in the Response to Intervention framework and as required by the Student Support Team process. They all had something in common, getting middle school children prepared for high school and the frustration experienced to prepare students functioning below grade level.

Considering both the quantitative and qualitative data, ultimately this researcher used a concurrent mixed methods approach in this study. A concurrent form of research takes place when quantitative and qualitative data are collected concurrently and the researcher determines to what extent the quantitative and qualitative data converge, and what similarities and differences exist across levels of analysis (Creswell & Clark, 2007).

### **Description of the Setting**

The research was conducted at two middle schools within an urban school district in the metro Georgia area. The teacher to student ratio at each school is approximately 1 teacher to 25 students. The overall racial/ethnic population is 77% black, 14% white, and less than 10% attributed to other race/ethnic groups. Of the 92% Title I schools in the district, 75% of the students are eligible for free or reduced lunch.

The schools in this district are nestled in areas comprised of socioeconomic differences that range from lower to upper income status. There is a mix of one and two-parent homes but in both cases, the parents have to spend more time working than



volunteering at schools. Typically, parents visit the schools when they have a concern or to attend a mandatory teacher conference. Residents in these communities are mostly African-American with a small percentage of Hispanics.

Middle schools within the district are structured into three grade levels including sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students. Each grade level is departmentalized into at least one team of four teachers consisting of a science, mathematics, language arts, and social studies teacher. The team of four teachers is based on student enrollment, whereas lower student numbers will result in three or even two member teacher teams. In this case, teachers are required to instruct in two areas. Each teacher, regardless of the area, is responsible for delivering standards-based instruction in his or her content area.

Students have the opportunity to participate in non-core/elective classes such as music, art, foreign language, and physical education. Middle school students attend two elective classes per semester, one class every other day. Students who require additional support in mathematics or reading might be scheduled to attend a Remedial Education Program (REP) class in lieu of one of the elective classes. Teachers for elective and Remedial Education Program classes are also responsible for delivering standards-based instruction as well as making connections to science, mathematics, language arts, and social studies content area.

Generally, the goals of this district are: to expect the highest levels of academic performance, interest and participation that each student is capable of achieving, especially in the areas of science, mathematics, critical thinking and technology; to provide all students with the “opportunity-to-learn;” resources in order for them to fulfill

all expectations; and to provide students with a secure environment in which they can receive quality instruction and meaningful experiences. As teachers strive to maintain these goals, approximately 9.5% of the students in this district are in the Student Support Team process and at risk of being referred for evaluation for Special Education services.

### **Sampling Procedures**

In regards to the sampling method in this study, the researcher was purposeful in the selection of participants, the type of sampling used and the consideration for the sample size. As a criterion of importance in phenomenological studies, the research was conducted in the natural setting of the participants. The participants work at an urban public middle school in Georgia. The participants were middle grade teachers, principals, and SST chairpersons preparing students to meet requirements within the College and Career Ready Performance Index. All of the participants experienced frustration with meeting the needs of struggling students and improving student academic and behavioral outcomes. Teaching middle school concepts throughout the year is critical to students' ability to meet expectations on the standardized assessments as well as determining preparedness for high school. In Georgia, eighth grade students who do not meet expectations on standardized state assessments in reading and/or mathematics are automatically retained (Georgia DOE, 2001).

The type of sampling was combination for the purpose of triangulation of the research with multiple data sources (i.e., a survey, interviews, and document analyses). Through data collection, the researcher wanted to find out teachers' perception of their preparedness for and implementation of Response to Intervention to support the learning

and behavioral needs of African-American students. In addition, the researcher wanted to know if the school administrators provided teachers with resources and support for implementing RTI and whether or not teachers are comfortable with implementing the interventions. The sample size included 34 participants consisting of 2 principals, 2 Student Support Team chairpersons, and 30 middle school teachers.

### **Working with Human Subjects**

In order to prevent ethical issues in this study, the researcher made ethical considerations during data collection by explaining to the teachers that they were participating in a study related to education. Then the purpose of the study was explained as the researcher's interest in obtaining information about teachers' perception of their preparedness for and implementation of Response to Intervention to support the learning and behavioral needs of African-American students. It was further explained that the researcher was interested in knowing this information because implementation of these interventions through the Student Support Team process is a requirement under Georgia's *Marshall Law* (Barge, 2011b). Finally, the researcher protected the anonymity of the survey and interview participants by assigning pseudo names to each individual.

### **Instrumentation**

Given the fact that the Student Support Team is mandated in the state of Georgia, the researcher selected a survey of teachers as the first data source to get capture perceptions on their preparedness to implement requirements under this mandate. The criterion for selecting the teacher participants was based on the following: the teachers taught the middle grades level in the same school and district, the school had concerns with supporting the learning and behavioral needs of African-American students, and the teachers had the same phenomenon in their effort to get struggling students to improve academically.

The researcher interviewed principals and SST chairpersons at each middle school used in the study as the second data source. The purpose of interviewing the principals and SST chairpersons was to capture perspectives about teachers' perception of their preparedness to implement Response to Intervention. The interviews were used to collect information on the principals and SST chairpersons' background knowledge about Response to Intervention as well as the support they provide for teachers to implement RTI best practices as outlined on page 75 in the Georgia Response to Intervention manual. In addition, it was important to determine if the principals were receiving district level support for implementation considering the requirements outlined on page 75 in the Georgia Response to Intervention manual.

The researcher chose two document analyses as the third data source. The criterion for document selection was based on the content as it related to mandate for educators in Georgia to implement the Student Support Team process as outlined in the

Response to Intervention framework. The first selected document, Georgia Board of Education Rule Code: IGB 160-4-2-.32 Student Support Team was analyzed by this researcher for the content as it related to the mandate for Student Support Team implementation in all schools in the state of Georgia. The second selected document, SST Monthly Data Report used in schools by the selected district, was analyzed by this researcher for the content as it related to evidence of district and school requirements to implement and monitor the RTI and SST process.

### **Participants/Location of Research**

The researcher surveyed teachers and interviewed principals and SST chairpersons at middle schools in an urban school district in the metro Georgia area. In addition, the researcher conducted an analysis of two documents. The structure and delivery of the survey instrument was hard-copy, hand delivered to teachers at their school and collected in an envelope by a designated member of the staff who did not participate in the survey. Section one of the survey consisted of demographic information about the survey participants. Section two consisted of a Likert Scale where participants used a scale of 5-1 to rate the accuracy of each of the items listed as its truthfulness by placing a check mark in the appropriate box. It was identified that 5 = Always True, 4 = Sometimes True, 3 = Neutral, 2 = Rarely True, and 1 = Never True. Prior to the survey, the researcher provided participants with an explanation of the research being conducted and obtained consent to participating in a survey. Participants were given the option to discontinue the survey at any time.

The structure of each interview was one-to-one while the researcher/interviewer actively listened and recorded the interview. Questions asked were open-ended and related to the teacher perceptions of their preparedness to implement Response to Intervention. Prior to the interview, the researcher provided interviewees with an explanation of the research being conducted, a copy of the interview questions and obtained consent to interview. Interview participants were given the option to discontinue the interview at any time. The interviews took place in the principal's office and designated office space for the SST chairpersons at each school in the research study. After each interview, the researcher and interviewee reviewed the transcript from the recording and the interviewee gave permission for the researcher to use the interview contents for research purposes.

The first document, Georgia Board of Education Rule Code: IGB 160-4-2-.32 Student Support Team was selected to be analyzed by this researcher because of the specific requirements outlined for all school districts in Georgia to follow. The second document, the SST Monthly Data Report used by schools within this Georgia district, was selected to be analyzed by this researcher because it is required that schools implement and monitor the RTI and SST process. Middle school principals and teachers were selected because middle school is the time in which the instructional content becomes more difficult as students are being prepared for high school. The researcher interviewed principals and SST Chairpersons to explore insight on teachers' perception of their preparedness to implement Response to Intervention. In addition, the researcher gained information regarding principals and SST Chairpersons' background knowledge

as well as the support they provide to teachers and support received from the district to implement Response to Intervention. Both the interviews and surveys were conducted in the natural work setting of the participants.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

During this study it was important to collect data on teachers' perception of their preparedness to implement Response to Intervention, administrator support of the implementation of Response to Intervention, the Georgia Rule on Student Support Team, and the monitoring process used at the school level. Prior to conducting research via the interviews and survey, the researcher obtained Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from Clark Atlanta University, permission from the urban school district in the metro Georgia area, and permission from each school therein to conduct the study. The researcher provided the district, principals and SST chairpersons participating in the interviews, and teachers participating in the survey with an explanation of the research being conducted. Participants were allowed to complete the survey at their convenience within a five day window of time. Data were collected over a period of 2 weeks from December 8, 2014 through December 19, 2014.

Protocols in this research included a survey, interviews and two document analyses. The survey instrument, which was used to collect data on teachers' perceptions of their preparedness to implement Response to Intervention, can be found in Appendix A. The interview questions, which were used to collect data on the teacher perceptions of their preparedness to implement Response to Intervention, can be found in Appendix B. The survey consent form, which was used to obtain informed consent to participate in a

research survey, can be found in Appendix C. The interview consent form, which was used to obtain permission to interview and permission to use the interview contents in research, can be found in Appendix D. The Georgia Rule on Student Support Team, document 1 that this researcher analyzed, can be found in Appendix E. The Georgia Rule on the Student Support Team document analysis can be found in Appendix F. The SST Monthly Data Report used in this Georgia district, document 2 that this researcher analyzed, can be found in Appendix G. The SST Monthly Data Report document analysis can be found in Appendix H.

## **Description of Data Analysis Methods**

### **Concurrent Mixed Methods**

The key characteristics of quantitative data are the collection of numeric data through surveys in order to explain, predict, and/or control phenomena of interest (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2006). In other words, quantitative research focuses on numerical data to determine outcomes and analysis of research. Quantitative data can be analyzed through methods such as rating scales, questionnaires, and personality inventories.

The key characteristic of qualitative data is the collection of nonnumeric data through interviews, field notes, images and documents (Gibbs, 2012). In other words, in qualitative research there is more of a focus on text rather than on numbers as in quantitative research. The methodology, or way of conducting the research, can be completed in various ways (i.e., narrative approach, case study approach or phenomenological approach). The analysis of qualitative data is representative of five characteristics: organizing the data, reading and writing memos, interpreting the data into



codes and themes, interpreting the data, and representing and visualizing the data (Creswell, 2013).

The researcher selected the concurrent mixed methods approach to conduct this study. Specific procedures carried out in this study began with considering the researchers personal experiences with the study and putting those experiences aside so that the study would reflect the experiences of the participants. The researcher facilitated a survey, conducted four interviews, and completed two document analyses to collect data. The data were organized in electronic files and via hard copy files. The researcher read the data to get an understanding of the contents.

To analyze the quantitative data, this researcher used the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. This researcher tested the variables to see if they had content validity using Pearson  $r$  2-tailed correlation. The researcher used an alpha value of .05 with a confidence interval of 95% to accept or reject the hypothesis (i.e., teachers' perception of their preparedness to implement RTI is significantly dependent on administrative support, professional development, and RTI resources).

To analyze the qualitative data, this researcher interpreted statements from the interviews into codes and themes. From the data, the researcher developed a textural description based on what the participants experienced. The researcher developed a structural description of how the experience occurred. Using this information, the researcher was able to frame the "what" and "how" descriptions into a complete description of the phenomenon. In addition, the researcher developed a document analysis of both the Georgia Board of Education Rule Code: IGB 160-4-2-.32 Student

Support Team and the SST Monthly Data Report. The document and the document analyses were interpreted into codes and themes.

The researcher used triangulation as a verification procedure whereby multiple sources, methods, and theories were utilized. The multiple sources included thirty survey participants and four interview participants. The multiple methods will included a survey protocol, an interview protocol, and two document analyses. Finally, the multiple theories the researcher used to provide corroborating evidence included, Marzano's (2000) Theory of Learning, Tomlinson's (2001) Theory of Differentiated Instruction, Guskey's (2002) Theory of Professional Development and Teacher Change, Glickman's Five Tasks, and Instructional Leadership strategies by Blasé and Blasé (2004). Table 1 shows the alignment of the research questions to the data sources.

### **Chapter Summary**

This qualitative research explored the nature of teachers' perception of their preparedness to implement Response to Intervention at their middle schools in an urban school district in the metro Georgia area. It was previously observed that teachers within the district were frustrated about the implementation of Response to Intervention. The researcher selected a concurrent mixed methods approach, combining quantitative (correlational) and qualitative (phenomenological) to determine to what extent the quantitative and qualitative data converge, and what similarities and differences exist across levels of analysis.

Table 1

*Data Collection Alignment for Research Questions*

Research Questions And Variables	Will be answered via:		Document Analysis
	Survey Items	Interview Questions	
<b>Qualitative and Quantitative Questions</b>			
<b>1</b> What are teachers' perceptions of their preparedness to implement the Response to Intervention process?	Item 1 - One was knowledgeable and prepared to implement Response to Intervention including research-based interventions prior to my first day of teaching.	Q1 – In your experience, What is the teacher's perception of implementing the Response to Intervention framework?	
IV – Teacher Professional Development	Item 2 – Differentiated instruction is a priority in my daily instructional practice.		
DV – Teacher Preparedness	Item 3 – Formative and summative assessments guide my classroom Instruction.		
	Item 4 – I understand what it means to implement research-based interventions.		

(continued)

Table 1 (continued)

Research Questions And Variables	Will be answered via:		
	Survey Items	Interview Questions	Document Analysis
<b>Qualitative and Quantitative Questions</b>			
	Item 5 – I understand what it means to implement a system of progress monitoring.		
2 What are teachers' perceptions of the Student Support Team process?	Item 6 – The Student Support Team is designed to develop Instructional strategies for struggling learners.	Q2 – In your experience, what is the teachers' perception of implementing the Student Support Team process?	SST Monthly Data Report
IV – Administrative Support			
DV – Teacher Preparedness	Item 7 – The Student Support Team is designed to Move students from general Education to special education	Q3 – In your opinion, how does teacher perception and preparedness to implement RTI impact student referrals to SST?	
3 What factors impact teacher preparedness for and implementation of response to Intervention (administrative support, district support, teacher	Item 8 – The school administrators provide support to ensure I am prepared to implement Response to Intervention.	Q4 – The state of Georgia Mandates all public Schools to implement the Student Support Team Process. In this district, what is the historical	Georgia Board of Education Rule 160-4-2-.32 Student Support Team

(continued)

Table 1 (continued)

Research Questions And Variables	Will be answered via:		Document Analysis
	Survey Items	Interview Questions	
<b>Qualitative and Quantitative Questions</b>			
professional development, RTI resources, other)?	Item 9 – the district provided Professional development Which prepared me to Implement Response to Intervention.	aspect of funding for resources to support RTI and SST implementation? Q5 – What type of resources are available to teachers at this school to implement Response to Intervention?	
IV – Administrative Support; Teacher Professional Development; RTI Resources	Item 10 – The professional development that I participated in help prepare me to implement Response to Intervention.	Q9 – What are some of The key supports the district has in place to ensure teacher preparedness to implement Response to Intervention?	
DV – Teacher Preparedness	Item 11 – The available resources (website links and tools to access interventions; provision of a progress monitoring tool) helps to prepare me for implementation of Response to Intervention.	Q10 – How does the district monitor school leaders to ensure teachers Are implementing RTI?	

(continued)

Table 1 (continued)

Research Questions And Variables	Will be answered via:		
	Survey Items	Interview Questions	Document Analysis
<b>Qualitative Questions</b>			
4 What aspects of administrative support influence teacher preparedness for and implementation of Response to Intervention?		Q6 – What are some of the key supports administrators put in place to ensure teacher preparedness to implement Response to intervention?	Georgia Board of Education Rule 160-4-2-.32 Student Support Team SST Monthly Data Report
IV – Administrative Support		Q7 – What type of administrative support is in place so that teachers have time to implement Interventions?	
DV – Teacher Preparedness		Q8 – What type of administrative support is in place so that Student Support Team meetings are held regularly?	
		Q9 – What are some of the key supports the district has in place to ensure teacher preparedness to implement Response to intervention?	

(continued)

Table 1 (continued)

Research Questions And Variables	Will be answered via:		
	Survey Items	Interview Questions	Document Analysis
<b>Qualitative Questions</b>			
		Q10 – How does the district monitor school leaders to ensure teachers are implementing RTI?	
<b>Quantitative Questions</b>			
<b>5</b>	What is the frustration level of being a teacher who cannot get students to master concepts taught?	Item 12 – When students do not learn concepts taught, I feel frustrated and inadequate as a teacher	
	IV – Teacher Professional Development	Item 13 – From the beginning of my teaching experience, I was prepared to implement	
	DV – Teacher Preparedness	Interventions to support the Learning needs of African American students?	
<b>6</b>	What is the frustration level of being a teacher who cannot get students to behave appropriately?	Item 14 – When students do not behave appropriately, I feel frustrated as a teacher	
	IV – Teacher Professional Development	Item 15 – From the beginning of my teaching experience, I was prepared to implement interventions to support the	

(continued)

Table 1 (continued)

Research Questions And Variables	Will be answered via:		Document
	Survey Items	Interview Questions	Analysis
<b>Quantitative Questions</b>			
DV – Teacher Preparedness	behavior needs of African American students?		
7 What are teachers' perceptions on the need for a postsecondary undergraduate course on Response to Intervention for students seeking degrees in education?	Item 16 – An undergraduate course in Response to intervention would prepare education majors for implementation of the work		
IV – Teacher Professional Development			
DV – Teacher Preparedness			
8 Is there a significant relationship between administrative support and teacher preparedness for implementation of Response to Intervention?	<b>IV – Administrative Support</b>		
	Item 17 – Administrators in my building monitor classes to ensure teacher implementation of RTI		
IV – Administrative Support	Item 18 – The school schedule provides various times to implement		
DV – Teacher Preparedness	interventions		

(continued)



Table 1 (continued)

Research Questions And Variables	Will be answered via:		
	Survey Items	Interview Questions	Document Analysis
<b>Quantitative Questions</b>			
	Item 19 – The school district monitors RTI Implementation at all schools		
	Item 20 – Administrators in my building provide support to ensure I am prepared to Implement RTI		
	<b>DV – Teacher Preparedness</b>		
	Item 23 – I can easily apply concepts taught in RTI professional development workshops to my classroom Instruction		
	Item 21 – I am prepared to implement Response to intervention and the Student Support Team process because of training provided by my school district		

(continued)

Table 1 (continued)

Research Questions And Variables	Will be answered via:		
	Survey Items	Interview Questions	Document Analysis
<b>Quantitative Questions</b>			
<b>9</b>	Is there a significant relationship between teacher professional development and teacher preparedness for implementation of Response to Intervention?	<b>IV – Teacher Professional Development</b>  Item 22 – Professional development workshops are informative enough to prepare me for Implementation of RTI	
	IV – Teacher Professional Development	<b>DV – Teacher Preparedness</b>	
	DV – Teacher Preparedness	Item 23 – I can easily apply concepts taught in RTI professional development workshops to my classroom Instruction	
<b>10</b>	Is there a significant relationship between RTI resources and teacher preparedness for implementation of Response to Intervention?	<b>IV – RTI Resources</b>  Item 11 – The available resources (website links and tools to access interventions; provision of a progress monitoring tool)	

(continued)

Table 1 (continued)

Research Questions And Variables	Will be answered via:		
	Survey Items	Interview Questions	Document Analysis
<b>Quantitative Questions</b>			
IV – RTI Resources	helps to prepare me for Implementation of Response		
DV – Teacher Preparedness	to Intervention		
	Item 24 – Funding for RTI resources (staff, data tools and materials) help to prepare me for Implementation of RTI		
	Item 25 – RTI Resources are sufficient enough for me to implement RTI		
	<b>DV – Teacher Preparedness</b>		
	Item 23 – I can easily apply concepts taught in RTI professional development workshops to my classroom instruction		

Quantitative research instrumentation included a survey of middle school teachers; the qualitative research instrumentation included a document analysis of the Georgia Board of Education Rule Code: IGB 160-4-2-.32 Student Support Team, a

document analysis of the Student Support Team Monthly Data Report used at schools within this district, and interviews of middle school principals and SST chairpersons.

## CHAPTER V

### ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

The purpose of this concurrent mixed-methods study was to determine factors that impact teachers' perception of their preparedness for and implementation of Response to Intervention to support the learning and behavioral needs of African-American students. The researcher used three data sources to conduct the study. One data source included a survey of 30 middle school teachers, 15 participants at Middle School 1 and 15 participants at Middle School 2. Another data source included an interview of four participants, Principal 1 and SST Chairperson 1 at Middle School 1 and Principal 2 and SST Chairperson 2 at Middle School 2. The last data source included document analyses of the Georgia Board of Education Rule Code: IGB 160-4-2-.32 Student Support Team and the SST Monthly Data Report used by this school district. Data were collected over a period of two weeks from December 8, 2014 through December 19, 2014.

In order to prevent ethical issues in this study, the researcher made ethical considerations during data collection by explaining to the teachers and administrators that they were participating in a study related to education. Then the purpose of the study was explained as the researcher's interest in obtaining information about teachers' perception of their preparedness to implement Response to Intervention. It was further explained that the researcher was interested in knowing this information because implementation of these interventions through the Student Support Team process is a requirement under

Georgia Law. Prior to the survey and interview sessions, participants were given the option to discontinue participation at any time. Finally, the researcher protected the anonymity of the survey and interview participants ensuring their names did not appear on the data sources and by assigning pseudo names to each individual. A description of terms and their relationship to the research can be found in Appendix I.

### **Analysis of Quantitative Data**

#### **Analysis of Descriptive Data**

Given the fact that the Student Support Team is mandated in the state of Georgia, the researcher selected a survey of teachers as a data source to capture perceptions on their preparedness to implement requirements under this mandate. A total of 30 teachers participated in the survey—15 at Middle School 1 and 15 at Middle School 2. Seven of the teachers were male, 16 were female, and 7 participants did not respond to the gender category. In regards to years of teaching experience, 16 teachers had more than 10 years, 7 had 6-10 years, and 2 had 4-5 years. None of the participants identified themselves as having 1-3 years of experience and 5 participants did not respond to this category. Among the participants, 7 had a bachelor's (B.A.) degree, 11 had a master's (M.A.) degree, 5 had an educational specialist (Ed.S.) degree, and one had a doctor of education (Ed.D.) degree or a doctor of philosophy (Ph.D.) degree. Five participants did not respond to the Highest Degree Earned category. Section 1 of the survey captured demographic data (shown in Table 2) about the participants in terms of gender, years of teaching experience, and highest degree earned.

Table 2

*Demographic Data of Participants*

					No
Gender	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>			<b>Response</b>
	7	16			7
Years of Teaching	<b>1-3 years</b>	<b>4-5 years</b>	<b>6-10 years</b>	<b>More than 10 years</b>	
Experience	0	2	7	16	5
Highest Degree Earned	<b>B.A.</b>	<b>M.A.</b>	<b>Ed.S.</b>	<b>Ed.D. / Ph.D.</b>	
	7	11	5	1	5

Section two of the survey instrument asked the participants to use a scale of 5-1 to rate the accuracy of each of the items listed as its truthfulness by placing a check mark in the appropriate box. It was identified that 5 = Always True, 4 = Sometimes True, 3 = Neutral, 2 = Rarely True, and 1 = Never True. The following tables and figures show the number, percentages, and type of responses for each item based on the variables. The majority responses are highlighted in each table.

According to the survey items regarding teacher preparedness, 37% of the teachers responded that it is “Never True” that they were knowledgeable and prepared to implement RTI prior to their first day of teaching. There was another 37% collectively who responded either “Rarely True” or “Neutral” that they were knowledgeable and prepared to implement RTI prior to their first day of teaching. The majority of the teachers, responded “Always True” and “Sometimes True” regarding prioritizing differentiated instruction, using assessments, understanding research-based interventions,

and understanding progress monitoring. Thirty-three percent of the teachers were “Neutral” about feeling frustrated and inadequate when students do not learn concepts taught while another 30% responded that it is “Sometimes True.” Twenty-seven percent responded that it is “Sometimes True” and another 27% responded that it is “Never True” that at the beginning of their teaching experience they were prepared to support the learning needs of African-American students. Thirty percent of the teachers were “Neutral” with regards to feeling frustrated when students do not behave appropriately while another 30% responded that it is “Sometimes True.” In regards to being prepared from the beginning of their teaching experience to support the behavioral needs of African-American students, 27% responded “Never True” and another 27% responded “Rarely True.” Thirty-three percent of the teachers responded that it is “Sometimes True,” followed by 27% who responded “Neutral” that they can easily apply concepts taught in RTI professional development workshops to their classroom instruction (see Table 3 and Figure 2).

According to the survey items regarding administrative support, 47% of the teachers responded that it is “Sometimes True” that the Student Support Team is designed to develop instructional strategies for struggling learners. Responses were almost evenly divided on the item that the Student Support Team is designed to move students from general education to special education whereby 23% responded “Sometimes True” and “Never True,” 20% responded “Neutral,” and 17% responded “Always True” and “Rarely True.”



Table 3

*Survey Responses: Teacher Preparedness*

Item	5	4	3	2	1
	Always	Sometimes	Neutral	Rarely	Never
	True	True		True	True
1 I was knowledgeable and prepared to implement Response to Intervention including research-based interventions prior to my first day of teaching.	4 13%	4 13%	6 20%	5 17%	11 37%
2 Differentiated instruction is a priority in my daily instructional practice.	8 27%	13 43%	7 23%	2 7%	0
3 Formative and summative assessments guide my classroom instruction.	14 47%	15 50%	1 3%	0	0
4 I understand what it means to implement research-based interventions.	11 37%	14 47%	3 10%	1 3%	0
5 I understand what it means to implement a system of progress monitoring.	11 37%	12 40%	5 17%	1 3%	0
12 When students do not learn concepts taught, I feel frustrated and inadequate as a teacher.	2 7%	9 30%	10 33%	5 17%	4 13%
13 From the beginning of my teaching experience, I was prepared to implement interventions to support the learning needs of African-American students.	2 7%	8 27%	5 17%	7 23%	8 27%
14 When students do not behave appropriately, I feel frustrated as a teacher.	3 10%	9 30%	9 30%	6 20%	3 10%

(continued)

Table 3 (continued)

Item	5	4	3	2	1
	Always True	Sometimes True	Neutral	Rarely True	Never True
15 From the beginning of my teaching experience, I was prepared to implement interventions to support the behavior needs of African-American students.	1 3%	6 20%	7 23%	8 27%	8 27%
21 I am prepared to implement Response to Intervention and the Student Support Team process because of training provided by my school district.	3 10%	10 33%	4 13%	8 27%	4 13%
23 I can easily apply concepts taught in RTI professional development workshops to my classroom instruction.	2 7%	10 33%	8 27%	7 23%	3 10%

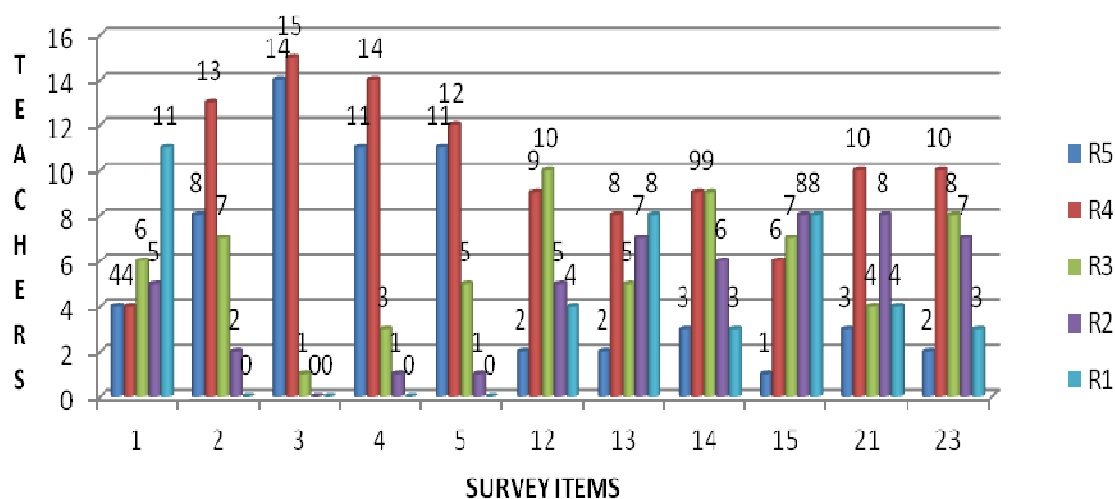


Figure 2. Survey Responses: Teacher Preparedness

Thirty-three percent responded that administrators provide support and 47% responded that administrators monitor implementation of Response to Intervention. Thirty-three percent responded “Never True” and 27% responded “Rarely True” that the school schedule provides various times to implement interventions. Thirty-seven percent responded “Sometimes True” that the school district monitors RTI and 37% responded “Sometimes True” that building administrators provide support to ensure teachers are prepared to implement Response to Intervention (see Table 4 and Figure 3).

Table 4

*Survey Responses: Administrative Support*

Item	5	4	3	2	1
	Always True	Sometimes True	Neutral	Rarely True	Never True
6 The Student Support Team is designed to develop instructional strategies for struggling learners	9 30%	11 47%	5 17%	3 10%	1 3%
7 The Student Support Team is designed to move students from general education to special education	5 17%	7 23%	6 20%	5 17%	7 23%
8 The school administrators provide support to ensure I am prepared to implement Response to Intervention.	7 23%	8 27%	10 33%	3 10%	2 7%

(continued)

Table 4 (continued)

Item	5	4	3	2	1
	Always True	Sometimes True	Neutral	Rarely True	Never True
17 Administrators in my building monitor classes to ensure teacher implementation of RTI	1 3%	9 30%	14 47%	2 7%	4 13%
18 The school schedule provides various times to implement interventions	2 7%	6 20%	4 13%	8 27%	10 33%
19 The school district monitors RTI implementation at all schools	4 13%	11 37%	9 30%	2 7%	4 13%
20 Administrators in my building provide support to ensure I am prepared to implement RTI	3 10%	11 37%	9 30%	3 10%	4 13%

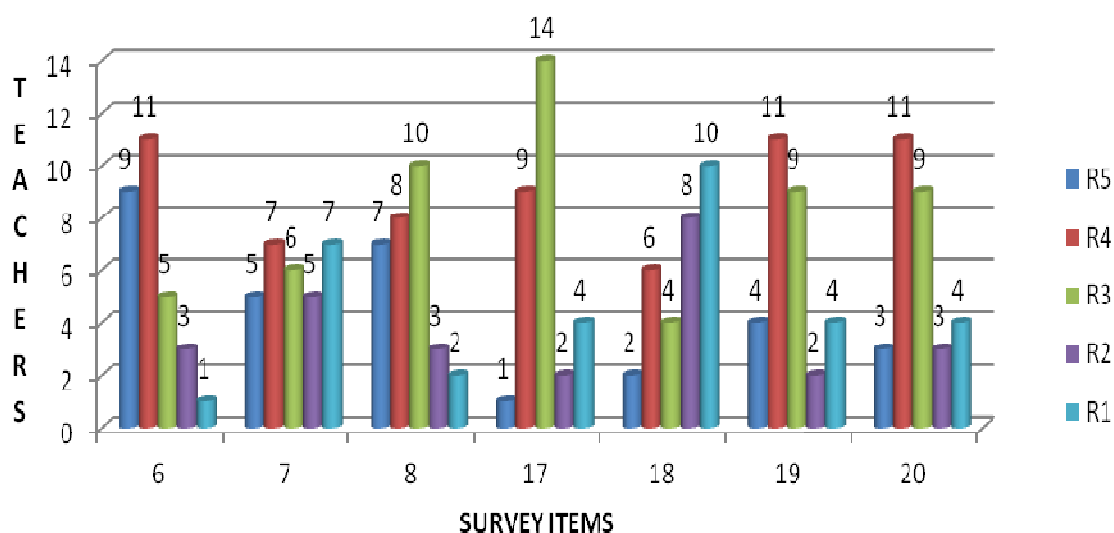


Figure 3. Survey Responses: Administrative Support

According to the data shown in Table 5 regarding professional development, 33% were “Neutral” while another 30% responded “Sometimes True” that the district provided professional development, which prepared them to implement Response to Intervention. Similar were the responses that the professional development they participated in helped prepare them to implement Response to Intervention whereby 37% responded “Neutral” and 30% responded “Sometimes True.” Regarding whether professional development workshops are informative enough to prepare them for RTI implementation, 33% responded “Rarely True,” 27% responded “Sometimes True,” and 23% were “Neutral.”

Table 5

*Survey Responses: Professional Development*

Item	5	4	3	2	1
	Always True	Sometimes True	Neutral	Rarely True	Never True
9 The district provided professional development which prepared me to implement Response to Intervention	3 10%	9 30%	10 33%	4 13%	4 13%
10 The professional development that I participated in help prepare me to implement Response to Intervention	3 10%	9 30%	11 37%	5 17%	2 7%
22 Professional development workshops are informative enough to prepare me for implementation of RTI	3 10%	8 27%	7 23%	10 33%	1 3%

Table 6 shows data regarding responses to resources. According to the data, 43% of the teachers responded that it is “Sometimes True” that the available resources are helpful in implementing Response to Intervention. Thirty percent were “Neutral” and another 37% responded “Rarely True” that the funding for resources as well as the sufficiency of resources were enough for RTI implementation.

Table 6

*Survey Responses: Resources*

Item	5	4	3	2	1
	Always True	Sometimes True	Neutral	Rarely True	Never True
11 The available resources (website links and tools to access interventions; provision of a progress monitoring tool) helps to prepare me for implementation of Response to Intervention	2 7%	13 43%	9 30%	5 17%	1 3%
24 Funding for RTI resources (staff, data tools and materials) help to prepare me for implementation of RTI	3 10%	5 17%	9 30%	11 37%	3 10%
25 The RTI resources are sufficient enough for me to implement RTI	3 10%	4 13%	9 30%	11 37%	3 10%

Table 7 shows that the majority of the teachers, 40% “Sometimes True” and 37% “Always True,” (a total of 77%) responded that an undergraduate course in Response to Intervention would prepare education majors for implementation of the work.

Table 7

*Survey Responses: Teacher Perception Regarding an RTI Undergraduate Course*

Item	5	4	3	2	1
	Always True	Sometimes True	Neutral	Rarely True	Never True
16 An undergraduate course in Response to Intervention would prepare education majors for implementation of the work	11 37%	12 40%	2 7%	4 13%	1 3%

To analyze the quantitative data further, this researcher used the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. The variables, teacher preparedness and administrative support, were tested by the researcher to see if they had content validity using Pearson  $r$  2 tailed correlation. Correlation analyses were used to test the significance of the relationship between the dependent variable, teacher preparedness, and the independent variables administrative support, teacher professional development, and RTI resources. The researcher used an alpha value of .05 with a confidence interval of 95% to accept or reject the hypothesis (i.e., teacher perceptions of their preparedness to implement RTI is significantly dependent on administrative support, professional development, and RTI resources).

According to the data analysis, it was determined that Teacher Preparedness has a strong content validity because in an item to scale analysis all items correlate strongly (see Table 8). The data reflect that all items are below the .05 confidence level which indicates a strong correlation.

Table 8

*Content Validity Test: Teacher Preparedness*

		TeachPrep	VAR00001	VAR00002	VAR00003	VAR00004	VAR00005
TeachPrep	Pearson Correlation	1	.755**	.534**	.382*	.517**	.442*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.003	.045	.005	.019
	N	28	28	28	28	28	28
		VAR00012	VAR00013	VAR00014	VAR00015	VAR00021	VAR00023
TeachPrep	Pearson Correlation	.524**	.729**	.453*	.833**	.738**	.721**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	.000	.015	.000	.000	.000
	N	28	28	28	28	28	28

According to the data analysis, it was determined that Administrative Support has a strong content validity because in an item to scale analysis all items correlate strongly (see Table 9). The data reflect that all items have a .000 level of significance, which is below the .05 confidence level and indicates a strong correlation.

Table 9

*Content Validity Test: Administrative Support*

		AdminSup	VAR00006	VAR00007	VAR00008
AdminSup	Pearson Correlation	1	.674**	.622**	.775**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	29	29	29	29
		VAR00017	VAR00018	VAR00019	VAR00020
AdminSup	Pearson Correlation	.814**	.854**	.686**	.857**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	29	29	29	29



According to the data analysis, Teacher Preparedness strongly correlates with Administrative Support (see Table 10). The data reflect that all items have a .000 level of significance which is below the .05 confidence level and indicates a strong correlation.

This correlation aligns with the following research question:

RQ8: Is there a significant relationship between administrative support and teacher preparedness for implementation of Response to Intervention?

Table 10

*Correlations: Teacher Preparedness and Administrative Support*

		TeachPrep	AdminSup	ProfDev	Resources
TeachPrep	Pearson Correlation	1	.810**	.719**	.738**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	28	27	27	28
AdminSup	Pearson Correlation	.810**	1	.801**	.721**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	27	29	29	29

According to the data analysis, Teacher Preparedness strongly correlates with Professional Development (see Table 11). The data reflect that all items have a .000 level of significance which is below the .05 confidence level and indicates a strong correlation. This correlation aligns with the following research question:

RQ9: Is there a significant relationship between teacher professional development and teacher preparedness for implementation of Response to Intervention?

Table 11

*Correlations: Teacher Preparedness and Professional Development*

		TeachPrep	AdminSup	ProfDev	Resources
TeachPrep	Pearson Correlation	1	.810**	.719**	.738**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	28	27	27	28
ProfDev	Pearson Correlation	.719**	.801**	1	.817**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	27	29	29	29

According to the data analysis, Teacher Preparedness strongly correlates with Resources (see Table 12). The data reflect that all items have a .000 level of significance, which is below the .05 confidence level and indicates a strong correlation. This correlation aligns with the following research question:

RQ10: Is there a significant relationship between RTI resources and teacher preparedness for implementation of Response to Intervention?

According to the data analysis, Gender, Experience, and Degree does not make a significant difference regarding Teacher Preparedness as all items are above the .05 level of significance (see Table 13).

Table 12

*Correlations: Teacher Preparedness and Resources*

		TeachPrep	AdminSup	ProfDev	Resources
TeachPrep	Pearson Correlation	1	.810**	.719**	.738**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	28	27	27	28
Resources	Pearson Correlation	.738**	.721**	.817**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	28	29	29	30

Table 13

*Correlations: Teacher Preparedness and Gender, Experience, and Degree*

		Correlations						
		TeachPrep	AdminSup	ProfDev	Resources	GENDER	EXPER	DEGREE
TeachPrep	Pearson Correlation	1	.810**	.719**	.738**	-.073	-.325	.173
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.740	.113	.409
	N	28	27	27	28	23	25	25
AdminSup	Pearson Correlation	.810**	1	.801**	.721**	.042	-.104	.308
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.845	.613	.126
	N	27	29	29	29	24	26	26
ProfDev	Pearson Correlation	.719**	.801**	1	.817**	-.138	-.066	.270
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.520	.747	.181
	N	27	29	29	29	24	26	26
Resources	Pearson Correlation	.738**	.721**	.817**	1	-.259	-.217	.277
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.221	.288	.171
	N	28	29	29	30	24	26	26

(continued)

Table 13 (continued)

		<b>Correlations</b>						
		TeachPrep	AdminSup	ProfDev	Resources	GENDER	EXPER	DEGREE
GENDER	Pearson Correlation	-.073	.042	-.138	-.259	1	.274	.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.740	.845	.520	.221		.195	1.000
	N	23	24	24	24	24	24	24
EXPER	Pearson Correlation	-.325	-.104	-.066	-.217	.274	1	.110
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.113	.613	.747	.288	.195		.594
	N	25	26	26	26	24	26	26
DEGREE	Pearson Correlation	.173	.308	.270	.277	.000	.110	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.409	.126	.181	.171	1.000	.594	
	N	25	26	26	26	24	26	26

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

### **Analysis of Qualitative Data**

Qualitative data were collected from four interviews and two document analyses. The interview participants included the principal and SST chairperson at Middle School #1 and the principal and SST chairperson at Middle School #2 in an urban school district in the metro Georgia area. The interviews were conducted so that the researcher could determine, from the administrators' perspective, if school administrators provided teachers with resources and support for implementing RTI and whether or not teachers were comfortable with implementing the interventions. The first document, Georgia Board of Education Rule Code: IGB 160-4-2-.32 Student Support Team was analyzed by this researcher because of the specific requirements outlined for all school districts in Georgia to follow. The second document, the SST Monthly Data Report used by schools within this Georgia district, was analyzed by this researcher because it is required that

schools implement and monitor the RTI and SST process. There were 10 interview questions (IQ) used during this research:

- IQ1: In your experience, what is the teachers' perception of implementing the Response to Intervention framework?
- IQ2: In your experience, what is the teachers' perception of implementing the Student Support Team process?
- IQ3: In your opinion, how does teacher perception and preparedness to implement RTI impact student referrals to SST?
- IQ4: The state of Georgia mandates all public schools to implement the Student Support Team process. In this district, what is the historical aspect of funding for resources to support RTI and SST implementation?
- IQ5: What type of resources are available to teachers at this school to implement Response to Intervention?
- IQ6: What are some of the key supports administrators put in place to ensure teacher preparedness to implement Response to Intervention?
- IQ7: What type of administrative support is in place so that teachers have time to implement interventions?
- IQ8: What type of administrative support is in place so that Student Support Team meetings are held regularly?
- IQ9: What are some of the key supports the district has in place to ensure teacher preparedness to implement Response to Intervention?

IQ10: How does the district monitor school leaders to ensure teachers are implementing RTI?

Once all of the data sources were collected, the researcher organized the data into themes in an effort to validate the information presented in the study. The researcher identified fifteen themes and grouped them into four categories. The first category, Students/Family, included the following four themes: Student Progress and Achievement, Struggling Students, Special Education, and Parents/Guardians. The second category, Teachers, included three themes, Too Much Work, Teacher Preparedness and Frustrated/Dislike. The third category, RTI/SST Requirements, included the following four themes: Interventions, SST, Progress Monitoring, and Implementation. The fourth category, RTI/SST Support, addressed four themes that identify support for the RTI/SST Requirements as Professional Development, Administrative Support, District Support, and Resources. Each data source presented some similarities and differences with regards to the related themes. Table 14 outlines the themes identified by the researcher along with the meaning of each theme.

To analyze the qualitative data, this researcher interpreted statements from the interviews into codes and themes. In addition, the researcher developed a document analysis of both the Georgia Board of Education Rule Code: IGB 160-4-2-.32 Student Support Team and the SST Monthly Data Report. The document and the document analyses were interpreted into codes and themes. Using the qualitative data collected, the researcher created an Analysis Matrix organized with the four categories, fifteen themes,

fifteen data codes, and the eight data sources. The themes were tabulated from each of the eight data sources, four interviews, two documents, and two document analyses.

Table 14

*Outline and Definition of Themes*

<b>Data</b>			
<b>Codes</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Theme</b>	<b>Definition</b>
DC1	STUDENTS/FAMILY	Student Progress & Achievement	Improvements in student's ability to learn concepts
DC2		Struggling Students	Students who have difficulty in retaining concepts taught
DC3		Special Education	Students in need of specialized instruction different from general education
DC4		Parents/Guardians	Involvement of parents/guardians
DC5		Too Much Work	Teachers' perceptions of SST implementation
DC6	TEACHERS	Teacher Preparedness	Teacher readiness for RTI and SST implementation
DC7		Frustrated/Dislike	Teachers' challenges with implementation of SST
DC8		Interventions	Research-based methods of re-teaching a specific concept
DC9	RTI/SST REQUIREMENTS	Student Support Team (SST)	Tier 3 level of instructional support and intensity based on student outcomes and how they respond to interventions
DC10		Progress Monitoring	Ongoing monitoring of student progress on a specific concept
DC11		Implementation	The act of fulfilling a specific task as related to RTI and SST
DC12		Professional Development	Facilitation of workshops to provide teachers with best practices on RTI and

(continued)

Table 14 (continued)

<b>Data</b>			
<b>Codes</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Theme</b>	<b>Definition</b>
DC13	RTI/SST SUPPORT	Administrative Support	Building level support for teachers related to RTI and SST implementation
DC14		District Support	Central office level support for principals and schools related to RTI and SST implementation
DC15		Resources	Money, materials and human resources provided to support FTI and SST Implementation

Data based on the number of times themes emerged were disaggregated by theme, data source, total number of times each theme emerged from the interview data, total number of times each theme emerged from the document/document analyses data, total number of times each theme emerged from data sources collectively, total number of times the themes emerged from each category, and the total number of times the themes emerged overall. The categories, themes, data codes, and data were organized in Table 15.





According to the analysis matrix, 13 of the 15 themes identified emerged from the interview protocol. Six of the themes, Interventions, SST, Implementation, Administrative Support, District Support, and Resources were the most frequent themes



from this data source whereby they emerged 20 to 51 times. The second highest frequency of themes emerged 11 to 18 times.

Table 15

*Analysis Matrix*

Categories 		Students/Family				Teachers		
Themes 		Student Progress & Achievement	Struggling Students	Special Education	Parents/ Guardians	Too Much Work	Teacher Preparedness	Frustrated/ Dislike
Data Codes 		DC1	DC2	DC3	DC4	DC5	DC6	DC7
<b>Data Sources</b> 								
Number of times	Prin-1	2	4	1	0	2	2	0
each theme	Prin-2	0	1	1	0	3	6	6
emerged from the	SST-1	5	0	0	0	4	2	5
<b>Interviews</b>	SST-2	0	0	0	0	2	1	3
<b>Total from Interviews</b>		<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>14</b>
Number of times	GA SST	4	3	12	4	0	0	0
each theme	Rule							
emerged from the	GA SST	1	3	10	1	0	0	0
<b>Documents and</b>	Rule							
<b>Document</b>	Analysis							
<b>Analyses</b>	SST							
	Monthly	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
	Report							
	SST							
	Monthly	1	7	4	1	0	0	0
	Report							
	Analysis							
<b>Total from Documents</b>		<b>7</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
Totals per data sources		14	19	29	6	11	11	14
<b>Totals per category</b>		<b>Students/Family = 68</b>				<b>Teachers = 36</b>		

(continued)

Table 15 (continued)

Categories		RTI/SST Requirements				RTI/SST Support			
Themes		Interventions	SST	Progress Monitoring	Implementation	Professional Development Support	Administrative Support	District Support	Resources
Data Codes		DC8	DC9	DC10	DC11	DC12	DC13	DC14	DC15
<b>Data Sources</b>									
Number of times each theme emerged from the Interviews	Prin-1	4	10	2	1	2	14	11	4
	Prin-2	6	15	0	8	3	4	3	9
	SST-1	5	19	1	10	8	9	3	5
	SST-2	8	7	4	6	5	4	3	2
<b>Total from Interviews</b>		<b>23</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>20</b>
Number of times each theme emerged from the Documents and Document Analyses	GA SST Rule	3	19	4	3	0	2	1	0
	GA SST Rule Analysis	2	13	0	2	1	2	1	1
Documents and Document Analyses	Monthly Report	0	3	0	0	0	1	0	0
	SST Monthly Report Analysis	0	24	0	10	0	1	7	0
<b>Total from Documents</b>		<b>5</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1</b>
Totals per data sources		28	110	12	40	19	37	29	21
<b>Totals per category</b>		<b>RTI/SST Requirements = 190</b>				<b>RTI/SST Support = 106</b>			

The four themes that ranked second highest included Too Much Work, Teacher Preparedness, Frustrated/Dislike, and Professional Development. Four themes—Student Progress and Achievement, Struggling Students, Special Education, and Progress Monitoring—were the least frequent themes as they emerged only 2 to 7 times throughout the interview protocol. There was one theme, Parents/Guardians, which did not emerge from this data source.

An analysis of the individual interview participants indicated that 13 of the 15 themes identified emerged out of responses from Principal 1. Three themes with a frequency of 10 to 14 emerged as the highest from Principal 1, which included Student Support Team (SST), Administrative Support, and District Support. The two themes that did not emerge from this interview included Parents/Guardians and Frustrated/Dislike. Twelve of the 15 themes emerged out of responses from Principal 2. The highest theme, Student Support Team, emerged with a frequency of 15 times from Principal 2. The three themes that did not emerge from the interview with Principal 2 included Student Progress and Achievement, Parents/Guardians, and Progress Monitoring. Twelve of the fifteen themes emerged from the interview with SST Chairperson 1. The highest two themes from SST Chairperson 1 were Student Support Team which emerged 19 times and Implementation which emerged 10 times. Three themes did not emerge from the interview with SST Chairperson 1—Struggling Students, Special Education, and Parents/Guardians. Eleven of the 15 themes emerged from the interview with SST Chairperson 2. All of the themes from SST Chairperson 2 emerged less than 10 times. The highest themes, which emerged 5 to 8 times, included Interventions, SST,

Implementation, and Professional Development. The four themes that did not emerge from the interview with SST Chairperson 2 included Student Progress and Achievement, Struggling Students, Special Education, and Parents/Guardians.

The second data source was two document analyses in which the documents and the analyses of the documents were coded separately. Ten of the 15 themes emerged from the first document, Georgia Board of Education Rule Code: IGB Student Support Team. Student Support Team (SST) emerged 19 times and was the highest theme in the document. Special Education was the second highest theme with 12 occurrences. In this document, Student Progress and Achievement, Parents/Guardians, and Progress Monitoring emerged four times. Struggling Students, Interventions, and Implementation emerged three times. Administrative Support emerged two times and District Support emerged one time. Five themes did not emerge from this data source, which included, Too Much Work, Teacher Preparedness, Frustrated/Dislike, Professional Development, and Resources.

The highest themes that emerged from the document analysis of the Georgia Board of Education Rule Code: IGB Student Support Team were Student Support Team which emerged 13 times and Special Education which emerged 10 times. Of the other seven themes that emerged, Struggling Students emerged three times, Interventions, Implementation and Administrative Support emerged two times, and five themes emerged one time each: Student Progress and Achievement, Parents/Guardians, Professional Development, District Support, and Resources. The document analysis of the Georgia Board of Education Rule Code: IGB Student Support Team had four themes

that did not emerge from the data source, three of which also did not emerge from the document (i.e., Too Much Work, Teacher Preparedness, and Frustrated/Dislike).

Progress Monitoring was the fourth theme that did not emerge from the document analysis.

Five of the 15 themes emerged from the second document, SST Monthly Data Report. Student Support Team (SST) emerged three times and the other four themes, Student Progress and Achievement, Struggling Students, Special Education, and Administrative Support emerged one time each. Ten of the themes did not emerge from the SST Monthly Data Report which included Parents/Guardians, Too Much Work, Teacher Preparedness, Frustrated/Dislike, Interventions, Progress Monitoring, Implementation, Professional Development, District Support, and Resources.

The highest theme that emerged from the document analysis of the SST Monthly Data Report was Student Support Team (SST), which emerged 24 times. Implementation emerged 10 times, District Support and Struggling Students emerged 7 times, Special Education emerged 4 times, and Student Progress and Achievement, Parents/Guardians, and Administrative Support emerged 1 time each. Similar to the document, the document analysis of the SST Monthly Data Report had seven themes, which did not emerge from the data source which included Too Much Work, Teacher Preparedness, Frustrated/Dislike, Interventions, Progress Monitoring, Professional Development, and Resources.

The 15 themes emerged at total of 400 times from the eight data sources. The highest category was RTI/SST Requirements where 190 themes emerged, 106 themes

emerged from RTI/SST Support category, 68 themes emerged from Students/Family category, and 36 themes emerged from Teachers category. Overall, the highest emerging theme was Student Support Team (SST), which emerged 110 times, followed by Implementation which emerged 40 times, and Administrative Support which emerged 37 times. The variations in which the themes emerged depended upon the context of the data source. This analysis matrix indicates there is a strong connection between RTI/SST Requirements and RTI/SST Support. In addition, the analysis indicates Teachers, Implementation, Administrative Support, District Support, Interventions, Special Education, and Struggling Students are key components of the Response to Intervention/Student Support Team process. Although Progress Monitoring and Parents/Guardians are important components of the RTI/SST process, the analysis indicates that these themes were rarely addressed as they emerged as the lowest ranking themes within the matrix.

### **Analysis of the Interviews**

Responses to the interview questions provided answers to four research questions. The interview participants included Principal 1 and SST Chairperson 1 at Middle School 1 and Principal 2 and SST Chairperson 2 at Middle School 2. The interview responses are stated after each corresponding research question is listed.

RQ1: What are teachers' perceptions of their preparedness to implement the Response to Intervention process?

According to the responses from the four interviews, statements indicate that teachers do not fully understand the process to implement Response to Intervention.

There is not a lot of buy-in from teachers and they believe there is too much work in implementing the RTI process. Principal 1 stated the following:

The big picture of why RTI is important, I think, is they get a general understanding that they are asked to support students who are struggling academically, but I don't think they get the piece that RTI is a preview. You know it should not begin only after a child has started failing, it should be implemented from day one you know, as school wide intervention strategies and then of course based on need; but I don't think the teachers have a full understanding of RTI. (Personal communication, December 12, 2014)

Principal 2 stated the following:

Okay in my experience, teachers' perception of implementing the Response to Intervention framework is that RTI is another task for them to do. There's not a lot of buy-in to understanding what the outcome is for them; so they really want to have something, some type of intervention for the students but they want to do it without them having to do a lot of the work. (Personal communication, December 15, 2014)

SST Chairperson 1 noted the following:

Okay, the teachers are responsible for implementing the SST program. It's more of an inconvenience for them although I try to dispel some of those with that type of thought by trying to make sure I go and work one-on-one with them. But they have a lot of work on the table to do themselves so they feel like this is just another piece that is added to the process, even though it is there to support the



students. In my opinion, you work for the students so they can do well academically the classroom, so right now it's a feeling that we have done well. The teachers are thinking in that way, that we have done well, but the majority of students are not showing that right now. (Personal communication, December 15, 2014)

SST Chairperson 2 provided the following comments:

Most of the teachers feel that the RTI, Response to Intervention process works well when it's implemented correctly. They appreciate the process; they just think it's too much paperwork. (Personal communication, December 15, 2014)

RQ2: What are teachers' perceptions of the Student Support Team process?

According to the four interview responses, principals and SST chairpersons state that teachers implement the SST process but some perceive it as a burden. Teachers do not implement the process in a timely manner which has an impact on the support students need for improvements in academics and behavior. Overall, teachers feel they need more time to implement the SST process and to have SST meetings. In some cases, teachers begin to see the benefit of SST after implementation. Principal 1 stated the following:

In my experience, teachers' perception of implementing SST is a process by which students get formalized academic support. A written plan in my experience, is a procedure in SST which also involves strategies that are different from what they are doing in general during class to support individual students. Also in my perception, teachers do view SST cases as a burden. They don't look

at it as a beneficial process, rather, something extra to do; but it should be what they are doing in the instructional practice already.

SST for my brand-new student cases go to RTI process late, you know, they (teachers) don't look at it as a process to work with kids who were struggling early on, before teachers go through the referral process. It's almost like SST is an emergency fix; but what it should be is the reverse. It should be something that you as a classroom teacher implement much earlier on in the school year. (Personal communication, December 12, 2014)

Principal 2 stated the following:

At first their perception of implementing the Student Support Team process is not good, but once they get the data and they begin to see the results then there's a positive response. However, there is a sense that they don't like meeting and coming out of their planning time. Having that part is an important proportion of the process; however, it is when the outcome renders the child getting some support services, then that's the benefit; so they're very particular about who they actually refer because if they did not see an outcome of the services they don't want to put in the work—the paperwork which is an effort because it means they are doing it for nothing, not because they are trying to help get interventions for the child.

In terms of teachers' perception of preparedness to implement RTI and the impact on SST referrals, in my experience, it depends on who the person is that is driving the process which is the SST chair or the RTI specialist. It depends on

that person and how willing that person is to assist with getting them trained in the understanding of the process itself, understanding of what's in it for them, and understanding the evaluation process. If it can be explained to them the 'why' of everything then the buy-in is easier; but if they don't feel prepared and they don't know what to do they won't refer. (Personal communication, December 15, 2014)

SST Chairperson 1 shared the following:

The teachers' perceptions of implementing the SST process are similar to the RTI. During their common planning time, they want to use that time to maybe work on some of their lesson plans or discuss best practices in the classroom. But we schedule the SST meetings during planning time and that takes away from what they want to do. They have to attend the meeting and that is a process that we have to go forth with in order to go get the best interventions for the student. So I will say if we had 100% of the teachers, about 90% of them don't want to do it, that's how I believe the teachers perceive this SST process.

The teachers' preparedness to implement the RTI and SST and SST referrals is, I will say, still goes hand-in-hand with question two. They feel that there's a lot of work that has to be done prior to moving to tier 3. To collect that data is something that I'm going to say again, about 90% (of teachers) feel like it's a waste of time. Sometimes they are so concerned because they feel like a referral meeting is really going to happen. So many other times they get upset because I'll come to them and try to stay on them so that we can have a meeting, but it has to be with the help of the data in place. Without that data we don't know which

direction to go during the meeting, so I will say that it basically impacts the referral process because they know there has to be data collected. They feel like it's too much work for them so a lot of students are not referred. (Personal communication, December 15, 2014)

SST Chairperson 2 stated the following:

When the teachers implement the Student Support Team process they feel they need more time as far as training on progress monitoring. Other than that, they like the process. I don't get a lot of negative feedback.

Teachers withdraw when it comes to completing the initial referral they want to see the students in the program go to the process but they don't want to do the work. (Personal communication, December 15, 2014)

RQ3: What factors impact teacher preparedness for and implementation of Response to Intervention (administrative support, district support, teacher professional development, RTI resources, other)?

According to the responses from the four interviews, previously, the district did not have designated personnel to manage the implementation of RTI/SST. Currently, with district support, each school has a full-time SST Chairperson and there is an RTI specialist at the district level who supports the schools. The addition of these personnel has improved RTI/SST implementation as well as teacher preparedness.

In regards to training, the district facilitates in-person professional development sessions and webinars in the district MyPLC (My Professional Learning Community) system. The district also monitors implementation through periodic audits of school SST

files and data comparisons of school discipline reports. The SST chairperson redelivers training sessions and facilitates professional development to the school staff both whole group and with individual teachers. In addition, the SST chairperson assists teachers with interventions and progress monitoring resources so that they can implement RTI effectively. Principal 1 noted the following:

Previously the district had not funded SST or RTI. Support for the past two years with the district has been very aggressive in finding a system of RTI support. Finally, we have a formalized position that is funded at the district level. This is an RTI coordinator for each school, which is a good idea and its working wonders you know, district wide. Being honest, even at that I still think, depending on your school, even more funding support is needed because we are playing catch up.

There are several resources that we have available to teachers at school. First, school-wide at our school, we offer several levels of support for children referred to SST in the classroom. I've done a really big job in putting differentiated instruction as a key level-one RTI intervention so that all students can get support. As they have difficulty in mastering standards in a general classroom setting, our level-two support would offer double-dosing in the form of our REP (Remedial Education Program) classes in math and English Language Arts (ELA). At the connections side, students can take science and social studies. Level-three is formalized support in between prior to level four. We offer Flexible Learning Program (FLP) classes after school up until the state test. We

then refer students to special education if they qualify for services. Additionally, we have Thursday Title I (funded) tutorial as well.

The district has done a really good job of now having a district level RTI coordinator available to come out and train teachers, faculty, and staff on the overall purpose and process. Additionally, the district has set up courses in MyPLC (My Professional Learning Community) where teachers are able to access webinars and other self-directed training to learn how to get a better understanding RTI. Also, the district put in place several off-campus trainings at the Instructional Support Center (ISC). With the full-time SST coordinator we have someone who can come back and redeliver trainings including training principals so they are aware of federal and state SST and RTI guidelines.

The district does audits of SST files and additional periodic spot checks such as the Individualized Education Program (IEP) Online database for accuracy and correctness. This year they are using Teacher Keys for teachers and Leader Keys for principals, which is a portion of our annual evaluation to support the school level. The district is disproportionate so we have to use Positive Behaviors Interventions and Supports (PBIS) to reduce suspensions. We get a monthly report to show our suspension data and to compare with other schools from the Office of Student Placement, so there are definitely checks and balances.

(Personal communication, December 12, 2014)

Principal 2 provided the following comments:

In my previous experience, the history of funding for resources to support RTI and SST implementation typically comes through creativity in actually having a person that is dually serving as a teacher and possibly as an SST chair. Where I was, we didn't have an RTI person in isolation for SST. The person was just implementing that process but it was done where the person was halftime teacher and halftime assistant coordinator.

The resources we have at our school come directly from my RTI intervention specialist. Typically she addresses the issues for those who need help with something; they'll ask directly and she finds whatever resources are available. Right now, she goes between using the virtual academy to whatever literature she may have to help them or she provides a strategy she's got from some book. I know she does a lot from a particular behavior book that was given to her by one of our counselors. But typically, the teachers go to her to get the resources, which makes it easy for them to get what they need. As long as it's easy for them to get it then it's easier for her to go through the process and get to the end to handle the meeting. She's pushing the SST process so they can give students what is needed and the resources of course help.

Some of the key supports the district has a place is having an SST RTI coordinator over the district level who trains the SST specialist that we have within our building. Then they do professional development outside of the building where they attended and learned how to do Functional Behavior

Analyses (FBAs) and Behavior Intervention Plans (BIPs) so they can be an additional support in case a child is referred to an SST and then to special education. I know the district has done some of the things on top of just having that position designated for RTI but that's the only job that person has.

In terms of how the district monitors school leaders to ensure teachers are implementing RTI, there has not been a directive per se in terms of what we do with them like sit down and review records. It is something that needs to occur. I get a weekly log from my specialist to tell me what she's done with SST cases she's opened; but we haven't sat down and gone through SST files. She just keeps me abreast of her weekly log of activities and of cases that have moved back or forward. (Personal communication, December 15, 2014)

SST Chairperson 1 stated the following:

In the past we only were working on SST, doing this process half of a day. Historically we had a teacher that would be teaching maybe REP classes, maybe two or three classes, and then the remainder of the day would be working on SST duties and responsibilities. But you know today, at this time we now have full-time SST RTI representatives. We really work in that we are in the SST area from morning until dismissal and so it allows us to do more to service the students. It allows us to work with the teachers individually and then also attend trainings to help us to better implement SST at the schools.

Teachers have access to the SST RTI intervention specialist on a daily basis. At any given time of support, I consider myself the first resource that they



would try to go to. We also have resources on SharePoint, which has been implemented by people. The previous director of student support team really, really, added a lot to help our job become a little easier. We have a website where teachers and the SST coordinator will go to find as many resources possible; like a 504 plan submitted you have resources to show how they were supposed to implement that. The teachers have access to interventions and progress monitoring tools that are used to make sure that the students maximize learning in the classroom. There are so many resources outside of that and we have websites such as Intervention Central and so forth, but all of that is just a fingers reach away to make sure that we have the implementation.

Currently, the district has hired an RTI intervention specialist at the district level and at this time she is trying to roll out the information that needs to be discussed during the meeting. She trains, and what is rolled out to us, I think they said something like the train the trainer model, meaning I will then come back and present information to the teachers. And also we also have ongoing trainings weekly and every Friday of each month.

During the principals' meetings, principals are receiving ongoing training from the SST director and from the RTI coordinator for the district. They are receiving ongoing training in that fashion. My administrator and I try to meet at least once a week to discuss what's what is going on with SST case, like where they are in the SST process and making sure that everything we discuss is also

being trickled down to the teachers. Audits of the SST folders are supposed to take place next semester. (Personal communication, December 15, 2014)

SST Chairperson 2 expressed the following:

Prior to this year there were little to no funds for the SST person. They actually had other people in other positions fulfilling the obligation of the SST chair which made it difficult for the school to be effective. Our school has purchased different intervention plan books that have a lot of strategies in it as well as interventions to support the teachers. In addition, the district has provided us with the SharePoint portal that provides the academic and behavior interventions and resources to support the teachers when they complete their probes and assessments.

The district has several professional development programs that they have put in place. You can do it online or you can actually go to the classes. The SST RTI specialist can actually do professional development at different schools. They also have an RTI Specialist to support the RTI coordinator and that person also supports the different schools to make sure that everyone has an understanding support in implementing interventions.

The district monitors leaders through the reports from the SST specialist. The specialist is supposed to meet twice a month to talk about the progress and then the principal can report back to the executive director. We do IEP Online of course, and they can monitor that. I think that's it. (Personal communication, December 15, 2014)

RQ4: What aspects of administrative support influence teacher preparedness for and implementation of Response to Intervention?

According to the responses from the four interviews, there are four aspects of administrative support that influence teacher preparedness for implementation of Response to Intervention which include professional development, personnel, scheduling, and accountability. Professional development is provided at both the district and the school level. Personnel is an aspect that includes the hiring of the full-time SST chairperson who attends the district-level professional development sessions and redelivers the training to teachers at the school level. In addition, the SST chairperson also provides ongoing training to the school staff. Scheduling is an aspect that helps teachers with the time necessary to implement RTI/SST. Grade level teachers have common planning time and designated days during planning to attend SST meetings. Accountability is handled through the Teacher Keys Evaluation System whereby implementation of RTI/SST is a part of the teachers' evaluation process. Principal 1 stated the following:

We offer the opportunity for mandatory training twice a year. First we do it in August during preplanning or within the first three weeks of school. It is actually the district that formalizes our training the first time and then the second round of training occurs at the grade level by the school RTI coordinator where they actually go through the process, rules, documents, and expectations. The third level of support is through duties and responsibilities by way of Teacher Keys strategies, which are not optional. The expected mindset is that it is not okay in

2014 for students to fail in your classroom. Teachers have the responsibility and role to support all students they teach.

Teachers are given daily planning, seventy minutes every day during the week, Monday through Friday. Additionally, I do have two co-SST chairs which are two Remedial Education Program (REP) teachers with a second planning period daily to support with paper work, progress monitoring, and support with resources in the classroom with struggling students.

Now that we are fortunate to have a full-time SST coordinator, all meetings are held preferably during planning time so that we don't require support as far as covering classes; but I do have to put in extra supports as far as two teachers who are given extra planning time in the event that there are SST meetings are outside of planning time. That way, I do have coverage available to support those teachers but we try to stick to the planning times. Additionally, we try to give at least three to four weeks advance notice so teachers can plan to attend with the understanding that the SST meeting time is sacred. Administrators monitor meetings to make sure they take place in a timely manner and that all proper procedures are followed. (Personal communication, December 12, 2014)

Principal 2 stated the following:

Some of the key supports that administrators put in the place to ensure teacher preparedness is the actual hiring of the RTI and SST intervention specialist so that they have a person whose sole responsibility is to prepare teachers thereby ensuring the fidelity of the process. The type of administrative support that is in

place so the teachers have time to implement interventions is that they do it during class. Most of the interventions are during the class time and their planning is the time that they have the meetings to discuss interventions with SST specialist or with other teachers. They collaborate with other teachers but there's no designated time for the interventions, teachers do it within their class. In addition, administrative support for the SST process is that we have meetings to be held on Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays because Wednesday's are designated days for us to do meetings in the building so those are held sacred pretty much. (Personal communication, December 15, 2014)

SST Chairperson 1 shared the following:

The administrators put in place meetings with the teachers to inform them of how the SST RTI process is directly related to their Teacher Keys. They go over each one of those standards to make sure the teachers understand that this has to be done. It is not oh well I would like to do it, may do it; this is a mandate that they must do it within the school. Also looking myself, I am the first contact that they would need to speak with. You have questions in the building so we also have our assistant principals who help in monitoring to make sure that the teachers are implementing the SST and RTI process.

Teachers have time to implement the RTI process and interventions during our afterschool tutorial. Afterschool tutorial is not individual but we have our students, who are in SST to meet with the teachers ongoing during the afterschool

tutorial, and then the interventions are implemented at that time and the recording is also taking place.

Okay, we meet on a regular basis daily with the parents and students who are scheduled for the SST meetings. The administration helps so that daily we have common planning times. During each grade level common planning time we will definitely have meetings, for example sixth grade planning is from 3 o'clock to 4 o'clock so I use that time schedule all the sixth grade students. We were insisting their meetings have specific time in a day so we are able to have meetings regularly and it is working pretty well for us. (Personal communication, December 15, 2014)

SST Chairperson 2 stated the following:

Administrators support the Student Support Team as well as the RTI process by reiterating on the importance of progress monitoring and the process of the data implemented interventions in the classroom and they do classroom observations to see if they are implementing. Administrators have put in place an assessment block of time, scheduled in increments of time where teachers not only work the old cases, they also have time to do the implementation of interventions such as the quick pick and exit ticket; so there are several ways. They can get another open ended response with the exit ticket and so on from there.

There's a time slot allotted for teachers to do grade level meetings to talk about interventions, to share ideals, to transition from one tier to another per se as far as individual needs go. Then they take what they know and what was shared

and go back to their classroom to implement it. (Personal communication, December 15, 2014)

### **Document Analyses**

The two document analyses provided information for three of the research questions. Document Analysis 1 is the Georgia Board of Education Rule Code: IGB Student Support Team and Document Analysis 2 is the schools' SST Monthly Data Report. The information aligned from the document analyses are stated after each corresponding research question is listed.

RQ2: What are teachers' perceptions of the Student Support Team process?

#### **Related information from Document Analysis 2**

This document serves as verification and documentation that the school district is implementing the Student Support Team process. The last meeting date indicates the most recent time the student's progress was discussed by the Student Support Team (including teachers). This document was written to maintain data on the students within a given school who receive support at the SST (Tier 3) level.

RQ3: What factors impact teacher preparedness for and implementation of Response to Intervention (administrative support, district support, teacher professional development, RTI resources, other)?

#### **Related information from Document Analysis 1**

The document is associated with the *Marshall v. Georgia*, 1984 lawsuit. The results of the lawsuit required a process to support the educational needs of general education students prior to referral for special education services. The document outlines

a standardized way to address the needs of individual students with learning and/or behavior challenges in the general education setting. It seeks to prevent the misidentification of students for special education services. Because of the lawsuit, districts are required to support and ensure establishment of the Student Support Team.

Related information from Document Analysis 2:

The results of the *Marshall v. Georgia*, 1984 lawsuit requires school districts in the state of Georgia to implement a process to support the educational needs general education students prior to referral for special education services. This process is identified as the Student Support Team. School districts must support and have evidence of SST implementation. The SST Monthly Data Report serves as verification and documentation that the school district is implementing the Student Support Team process.

RQ4: What aspects of administrative support influence teacher preparedness for and implementation of Response to Intervention?

### **Related information from Document Analysis 1**

This document is a Georgia Board of Education Rule presented in outline format. The Rule number and code for Student Support Team (SST) is found at the top of the document. There are three major components of the document which include; the definition of Student Support Team, Requirements, and Exceptions to the Use of the SST Process. In addition, an excerpt from the *Marshall Law* is included which gives background information as to why the SST Rule was developed. The document lists appropriate school staff who should participate on the Student Support Team. The school principal is first person on the list.



The document was written to provide guidance to school administrators regarding the requirements and support needed for implementation of the Student Support Team process. Derived from the *Marshall v. Georgia*, 1984 law, the document was formatted in an easy to understand outline with the definition, requirements and exceptions regarding the Student Support Team.

### **Related information from Document Analysis 2**

This document is a Student Support Team (SST) monthly report presented in a table format. The report date, SST chairperson's name, and school name are found at the top of the document. There are six major components captured in the table on the document which include the student's name, gender, grade level, abbreviations that indicate the reason they are at the SST level (tier 3), last meeting date, and whether they are being referred for an evaluation to determine special education eligibility. In addition, the chairperson and principal's signature and date signed are required at the bottom of the form.

### **Chapter Summary**

The quantitative data collected in this research study was analyzed by this researcher using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. The variables, teacher preparedness, and administrative support were tested by the researcher to see if they had content validity using Pearson  $r$  2-tailed correlation. Correlation analyses were used to test the significance of the relationship between the dependent variable, teacher preparedness, and the independent variables administrative support, teacher professional development, and RTI resources. An alpha value of .05 with a

confidence interval of 95% was used to accept or reject the hypothesis (i.e., teacher perceptions of their preparedness to implement RTI is significantly dependent on administrative support, professional development, and RTI resources). Section 1 of the survey instrument captured demographic data about the participants in terms of gender, years of teaching experience, and highest degree earned. Section 2 of the survey instrument collected responses based on the independent variables Administrative Support, Teacher Professional Development, and RTI Resources, and the dependent variable, Teacher Preparedness. This researcher used Pearson's Correlations to analyze quantitative research questions 1, 5, 6, 8, 9, and 10 related to Teacher Preparedness, research questions 2, 3, and 8 related to Administrative Support, research questions 3 and 9 related to Teacher Professional Development, and research questions 3 and 10 related to RTI Resources. This researcher analyzed research questions 1-3 both quantitatively and qualitatively and analyzed research questions 5-10 quantitatively.

The qualitative data collected in this research study was analyzed by this researcher using data coding and an analysis matrix. To collect the qualitative data, the researcher used Dragon software to record four interviews of two principals and two SST chairpersons. To analyze the qualitative data, this researcher coded the transcripts and identified common themes. This researcher collected additional qualitative data by completing document analyses of two documents, the Georgia Board of Education Rule Code: IGB Student Support Team and the SST Monthly Data Report used by the school district in this study. To analyze this set of qualitative data, this researcher coded the documents and document analyses and identified common themes. Fifteen themes

emerged from the analysis and were categorized into four areas, Students/Family, Teachers, RTI/SST Requirements, and RTI/SST Support. Interview responses were used to answer research question 4. The document analyses were used to answer research questions 2, 3, and 4. This researcher analyzed research questions 1-3 both quantitatively and qualitatively and analyzed research question 4 qualitatively.

## CHAPTER VI

### FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the fact that the Response to Intervention Student Support Team is mandated by law in Georgia, the purpose of this research was to determine teachers' perceptions of their preparedness for and implementation of Response to Intervention to support the learning and behavioral needs of African-American students. This was a mixed-methods study which combined quantitative and qualitative data. From a quantitative perspective, the specific tradition of inquiry was correlational research and a survey was used to determine the degree of the relationship between the variables. From a qualitative perspective, the specific tradition of inquiry was the phenomenological approach. Interviews and document analyses were used to determine the participants' perceptions and meanings about the issue. Considering both the quantitative and qualitative data, ultimately this researcher used a concurrent mixed methods approach in this study.

### **Findings**

#### **Quantitative Findings**

The demographic analysis conducted in this research determined the following:

- Most of the thirty teachers surveyed were identified as female (n = 16), most had more than 10 years of teaching experience (n = 16), and a master's degree

could be identified as the highest degree earned within the group of 30 (n = 11).

The analysis of teacher perception of teacher preparedness conducted in this research determined the following:

- In analyzing the responses for “Rarely True” to “Never True,” it could be determined that most of the teachers (n = 16) were not knowledgeable and prepared to implement RTI prior to the first day of school.

The analysis of teacher perception of administrative support conducted in this research determined the following:

- It could be determined that at least half of the survey participants (n = 15) feel they do have administrative support in the implementation of Response to Intervention.
- With responses from “Sometimes True” to “Always True,” it could be determined that the majority of the teachers believe the Student Support Team (SST) was designed to help struggling learners (n = 20); however, it could also be determined that over one-third (n = 12) of the teachers, with responses from “Sometimes True” to “Always True,” believe SST was designed to move students to Special Education, which is contradictory to the intention of Response to Intervention and the Student Support Team process.

The analysis of teacher perception of professional development conducted in this research determined the following:

- With responses from “Neutral” to “Rarely True,” it could be determined that one-third (n = 10) of the teachers surveyed did not find professional development to be helpful.

The analysis of teacher perception of RTI resources conducted in this study determined the following:

- Over one-third (n = 11) of the teachers surveyed could be identified as needing more resources to implement Response to Intervention.

The analysis of teacher perception regarding an RTI undergraduate course conducted in this study determined the following:

- With responses from “Sometimes True” to “Always True,” it could be determined that most (n=23) of the teachers surveyed believe an undergraduate course on Response to Intervention would help prepare education majors for implementation of the work.

Analysis of the Content Validity Test determined the following:

- It could be determined that Teacher Preparedness has a strong content validity with all items reflecting below the .05 confidence level.
- It could be determined that Administrative Support has a strong content validity with all items reflecting .000 level of significance, which is below the .05 confidence level.

Review of the significant findings from the correlation analysis determined the following:

- It could be determined that Teacher Preparedness strongly correlates with Administrative Support because all items have a .000 level of significance which is below the .05 confidence level.

- It could be determined that Teacher Preparedness strongly correlates with Professional Development because all items have a .000 level of significance which is below the .05 confidence level.
- It could be determined that Teacher Preparedness strongly correlates with Resources because all items have a .000 level of significance which is below the .05 confidence level.
- It could be determined that Teacher Preparedness does not strongly correlate with Gender, Experience, or Degree because all items are above the .05 level of significance.

### **Qualitative Findings**

- Findings from coding of the qualitative data, i.e. interviews, documents, and document analyses, showed that 15 themes divided among four categories emerged from the data sources.
- It was determined that the first category was Students/Family and included four themes: Student Progress and Achievement, Struggling Students, Special Education, and Parents/Guardians.
- It was determined that the second category was Teachers and included three themes: Too Much Work, Teacher Preparedness and Frustrated/Dislike.
- It was determined that the third category was RTI/SST Requirements and included four themes: Interventions, SST, Progress Monitoring, and Implementation.



- It was determined that the fourth category was RTI/SST Support and included four themes that identified support for the RTI/SST Requirements as Professional Development, Administrative Support, District Support and Resources.
- It was determined that the 15 themes emerged at total of 400 times from the eight data sources.
- It was determined that the highest category was RTI/SST Requirements where 190 themes emerged from the data sources.
- It was determined that the second highest category was RTI/SST Support where 106 themes emerged from the data sources.
- It was determined that the third highest category was Students/Family where 68 themes emerged from the data sources.
- It was determined that the lowest category was Teachers where 36 themes emerged from the data sources.
- It was determined that the highest emerging theme overall was Student Support Team (SST) which emerged 110 times, followed by Implementation which emerged 40 times, and Administrative Support which emerged 37 times.
- It was determined that the variations in which the themes emerged depended upon the context of the data source. The analysis matrix indicated a strong connection between RTI/SST Requirements and RTI/SST Support.

- Through the analysis matrix it was determined that Teachers, Implementation, Administrative Support, District Support, Interventions, Special Education, and Struggling Students are key components of the Response to Intervention/Student Support Team process.
- Through the analysis matrix it was determined that although Progress Monitoring and Parents/Guardians are important components of the RTI/SST process, the themes were rarely addressed as they emerged as the lowest ranking themes within the matrix.
- The findings from the qualitative data analysis of the interviews showed evidence that supports the quantitative findings that teachers do not fully understand how to implement Response to Intervention.
- The qualitative findings from the interviews support quantitative findings that administrators are supportive in the implementation of Response to Intervention.
- The qualitative findings from the interviews also support quantitative findings that although professional development is provided, more opportunities for professional development are needed.
- The qualitative findings from the interviews support quantitative findings that resources is a factor that impacts teacher preparedness and implementation of RTI and more resources are needed.
- The document analysis of the Georgia Board of Education Rule Code: IGB Student Support Team revealed that the Student Support Team is required to

prevent students from being misidentified or under-identified for special education services which is a contradiction to the quantitative findings that some teachers believe the Student Support Team is designed to move students from general education to special education.

- The document analysis of the Georgia Board of Education Rule Code: IGB Student Support Team revealed that administrators must be a part of the process which supports the quantitative findings that administrators support the Response to Intervention and Student Support Team process.
- The document analysis of the Georgia Board of Education Rule Code: IGB Student Support Team did not reveal any indication of resources being provided which supports the quantitative findings that more resources are needed to implement Response to Intervention.
- The document analysis of the Georgia Board of Education Rule Code: IGB Student Support Team revealed requirements to implement the Student Support Team process but did not reveal how teachers would obtain knowledge on “*how*” to implement the process which supports the quantitative findings that more professional development is needed.
- The document analysis of the SST Monthly Report revealed that administrators are part of the process which supports the quantitative findings that administrators support implementation of Response to Intervention and the Student Support Team.

## Conclusions and Implications

Connecting to the theories that undergird this study, it was determined that there is a significant alignment with the findings:

- Marzano's Theory of Learning
  - The Metacognitive System deals with addressing specific learning goals and monitoring the progress of those goals (Marzano, 2003), which aligns with quantitative findings that most of the teachers (n = 25) understand what it means to implement research-based interventions and most of the teachers (n = 23) understand what it means to implement a system of progress monitoring. From the qualitative findings teachers do understand what it means to implement research-based interventions and progress monitoring but they need improvement on the actual implementation.
- Carol Tomlinson's Theory of Differentiated Instruction
  - Differentiated Instruction deals with knowing that students vary as learners and planning instruction to address their particular needs (Tomlinson, 2001) which aligns with the quantitative findings that most of the teachers (n = 21) responded that differentiated instruction is a priority in their daily instructional practices. It also aligns with the qualitative findings that differentiated instruction is considered a level-one (Tier 1) intervention so that all students can get support they need.
- Guskey's Theory of Professional Development and Teacher Change

- It is important for school administrators to understand that after teachers participate in professional development, it takes time to change their attitudes, beliefs and perceptions during the implementation phase of a new initiative (Guskey, 2002). This aligns with the quantitative findings and the qualitative findings that some of the teachers are frustrated and perceive the process as too much work. It also suggests that teacher frustration about Response to Intervention and the perception that the process is too much work will reduce as they gain knowledge and apply incremental steps toward implementation.
- Glickman's Five Tasks
  - Education leaders should follow these Tasks to meet the objectives of student achievement: Professional development, direct assistance to teachers, curriculum development, group development, and action research because they have a direct impact on instructional improvement (Glickman, 2009). This aligns with the quantitative findings and qualitative findings that more professional development and assistance to teachers is needed to effectively prepare teachers for RTI implementation.
- Instructional Leadership strategies by Blasé and Blasé
  - It is important that leaders to build a culture of collaboration and learning. Blasé and Blasé (2004) aligns with the quantitative and qualitative findings that administrators provide support for implementation of Response to Intervention.

Overall, it was determined through this research that teachers perceive they are not fully prepared for RTI implementation. Although supportive of teachers, administrators concur that teachers do not fully understand the RTI process. Administrators recognize they have more work to do to get teachers fully prepared to implement RTI effectively. Additional professional development and resources could offset the lack of preparedness and implementation for all teachers. Based on data presented and findings, it was determined that the hypothesis could be accepted that teacher perceptions of their preparedness to implement RTI is significantly dependent on administrative support, professional development, and RTI resources.

### **Limitations**

The results of this study may not have addressed all of the teacher perceptions of their preparedness for and implementation of Response to Intervention. Although the researcher protected the anonymity of the survey and interview participants, participants may not have fully disclosed information that was directly related to their job performance. For example, teachers may have felt compelled to respond favorably to survey items that would reflect their understanding of Response to Interventions components as well as administrative support received because many of the factors were those that could be found on their Teacher Keys Evaluation Instrument. During the interviews, participants responded confidently and often about the support they provide to teachers for RTI implementation because factors were directly related to their effectiveness as a principal and/or SST chairperson.

## **Recommendations**

Regarding implementation of Response to Intervention, this study suggests there is room for improvement in areas of teacher preparedness, professional development, and resources provided. Given the fact that the Response to Intervention Student Support Team is a mandate in the state of Georgia, there are several recommendations to consider.

### **Recommendations for the Federal Level (Resources)**

- The Response to Intervention process is a framework absent of federal funds with the exception that IDEA 2004 determined that Early Intervening Programs under RTI could be funded with up to 15% of special education funds (Klotz & Canter, 2006). Since districts and local schools still lack adequate funding for RTI implementation, the federal level should consider allocating a line item of funds aimed at remediating this concern.

### **Recommendations for the State Level (Resources and Coursework)**

- The Response to Intervention Student Support Team process is a mandate in Georgia. The state should reconsider the level of support provided for this mandate by providing funds or matching funds for districts to hire school-level staff to manage the work.
- Undergraduate students are required to take *The Exceptional Child* course as part of their teacher education program. All states should consider working with the Professional Standards Commission/local teacher certification agency to include a course on Response to Intervention as a requirement for certification and undergraduate completion of teacher education programs.

**Recommendations for the Local District (Professional Development and Personnel)**

- Local districts should consider including a workshop on Response to Intervention during their new teacher orientation process. Professional development should be ongoing and monitored throughout the school year for all teachers.
- Local districts without funds to hire full-time or part-time staff should consider flexible scheduling for personnel who are responsible for managing the Student Support Team process.

**Recommendations for Educational Leaders (Professional Development - Interventions)**

- Educational leaders should consider facilitating professional development specifically focused on implementing academic and behavior interventions with emphasis on differentiated instruction and student engagement.

**Further Research**

The following topics are suggested to researchers who may have interest in contributing to the literature aligned to this study.

- Analyze the effect of teacher implementation of research-based interventions and achievement outcomes for students receiving the interventions.
- Analyze the length of time students are at the Student Support Team (Tier 3) level prior to referral for special education consideration.



- Examine the number, gender, and ethnicity of students who are at each Tier (1, 2, 3, and 4) at selected schools in compare with students in different socio-economic areas.
- Analyze the number, gender, and ethnicity of students who are retained in the same grade level without benefiting from the implementation of research-based interventions and without verifying special education eligibility.
- Examine the effectiveness of Response to Intervention implementation for schools that use Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) versus schools that do not.
- Examine teachers' perception of the function and purpose of Student Support Teams.
- Analyze the relationship between high school dropouts and effective implementation of the general education process as it relates to Response to Intervention.

### **Chapter Summary**

What emerged from this study is that most of the teachers involved in this study believe they were not knowledgeable or prepared to implement RTI prior to their first day of teaching and they still do not feel completely prepared to meet the learning and behavioral needs of African-American students. Administrators in this study also agree that teachers do not fully understand how to implement the RTI process. This is also evident as many of the teachers believe that the Student Support Team was designed to move students to Special Education, which is a direct contradiction to the reason for the

Student Support Team. In addition, teachers do feel supported by administrators but some of the teachers feel frustrated when students do not learn concepts taught and when they do not behave appropriately. Administrators recognize this frustration as they indicated teachers view RTI as too much work, a burden, and something they do not have enough time to implement. Teachers, principals, and SST chairpersons in this study all agree that more resources and professional development would be beneficial to teacher preparedness and implementation of Response to Intervention. According to the principals and SST chairpersons, there is still more work to be done to prepare teachers for RTI implementation but the support has improved since August 2014, when the SST chairperson became a full-time position. In this study, the researcher predicted accurately that administrative support, teacher professional development, and RTI resources have the potential to influence teacher preparedness and implementation of RTI for participants at an urban school district in the metro Georgia area.

The findings in this study are critical because Response to Intervention was designed as a framework for teachers to support the learning and behavioral needs of students so they have a better chance of achieving academically based on their goals and objectives. The Response to Intervention framework was also designed to decrease the number of students being misidentified as having a learning disability, and thus identified as Special Education. If teachers do not feel prepared to implement RTI, as found in this study, how will the academic and behavior needs of the students be effectively met? In addition, if the RTI process is not implemented appropriately, there is a potential factor that students, especially African-American students, in this district will be

disproportionately referred for a special education evaluation. The provision of support, professional development and resources from educational leaders is significant to teacher preparedness to implement Response to Intervention. This was found to be challenging for the district in this study, because the Student Support Team process, a component of RTI, is a mandate in Georgia; however, it is an unfunded mandate. Recommendations for the federal, state, local district and school leaders should be taken into consideration so that RTI is implemented in the way in which it was intended. Teachers, with the guidance and support of educational leaders, must be prepared to implement the Response to Intervention process to support the learning and behavioral needs of students, especially African-American students, so that our nation will be prepared the function locally and compete globally.



Item		5	4	3	2	1
6	The Student Support Team is designed to develop instructional strategies for struggling learners					
7	The Student Support Team is designed to move students from general education to special education					
8	The school administrators provide support to ensure I am prepared to implement Response to Intervention.					
9	The district provided professional development which prepared me to implement Response to Intervention					
10	The professional development that I participated in help prepare me to implement Response to Intervention					
11	The available resources (website links and tools to access interventions; provision of a progress monitoring tool) helps to prepare me for implementation of Response to Intervention					
12	When students do not learn concepts taught, I feel frustrated and inadequate as a teacher					
13	From the beginning of my teaching experience, I was prepared to implement interventions to support the learning needs of African-American students?					
14	When students do not behave appropriately, I feel frustrated as a teacher					
15	From the beginning of my teaching experience, I was prepared to implement interventions to support the behavior needs of African-American students?					
16	An undergraduate course in Response to Intervention would prepare education majors for implementation of the work					
17	Administrators in my building monitor classes to ensure teacher implementation of RTI					

Item		5	4	3	2	1
18	The school schedule provides various times to implement interventions					
19	The school district monitors RTI implementation at all schools					
20	Administrators in my building provide support to ensure I am prepared to implement RTI					
21	I am prepared to implement Response to Intervention and the Student Support Team process because of training provided by my school district					
22	Professional development workshops are informative enough to prepare me for implementation of RTI					
23	I can easily apply concepts taught in RTI professional development workshops to my classroom instruction					
24	Funding for RTI resources (staff, data tools and materials) help to prepare me for implementation of RTI					
25	The RTI resources are sufficient enough for me to implement RTI					

## APPENDIX B

### Interview Questions

#### **Implementation of Response to Intervention**

**Interviewer: Lillian M. Harris**  
**Ed.D. Candidate, Clark Atlanta University**

**Question 1**

In your experience, what is the teachers' perception of implementing the Response to Intervention framework?

**Question 2**

In your experience, what is the teachers' perception of implementing the Student Support Team process?

**Question 3**

In your opinion, how does teacher perception and preparedness to implement RTI impact student referrals to SST?

**Question 4**

The state of Georgia mandates all public schools to implement the Student Support Team process. In this district, what is the historical aspect of funding for resources to support RTI and SST implementation?

**Question 5**

What type of resources are available to teachers at this school to implement Response to Intervention?

**Question 6**

What are some of the key supports administrators put in place to ensure teacher preparedness to implement Response to Intervention?

**Question 7**

What type of administrative support is in place so that teachers have time to implement interventions?

**Question 8**

What type of administrative support is in place so that Student Support Team meetings are held regularly?

**Question 9**

What are some of the key supports the district has in place to ensure teacher preparedness to implement Response to Intervention?

**Question 10**

How does the district monitor school leaders to ensure teachers are implementing RTI?



## APPENDIX C

### Survey Consent Form

#### **Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Survey**

**Purpose of the research survey:** Overall, the project involves research on teacher perception of their preparedness to implement Response to Intervention. The focus of the research is teacher's understanding and perception of implementing the Response to Intervention framework to support the learning and behavioral needs of African-American students.

**This is a survey of:** Middle school teachers in the Georgia metropolitan area.

**This survey is being conducted by:** Lillian M. Harris, a doctoral candidate in the Department of Educational Leadership at Clark Atlanta University

**Expected benefits of the research include:** It is hoped that the results of this study will benefit educators through providing greater insight into teacher preparedness for and implementation of Response to Intervention.

**Results will be made available:** Once the dissertation is complete, it will be available electronically through the Clark Atlanta University research database.

**Approximate time to complete the survey:** This survey will take 20-25 minutes to complete.

**Risks:** There are no known risks associated with participation in the study.

**Participation in this survey is entirely voluntary. Voluntary participation also means:**

- \* You need not answer any questions you consider inappropriate
- \* You may stop filling out the survey at any point.
- \* If you decline to participate, you may return the blank survey or destroy it

This survey is completely anonymous and confidential. To ensure anonymity, please do not put your name on the survey.

If you have any questions about this survey and your rights, please contact:  
Lillian M. Harris  
[lilpub@aol.com](mailto:lilpub@aol.com)

Return procedures: On your school campus, written surveys will be collected in a plain envelope at the end of the scheduled faculty meeting.

Signature of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Consent form adopted from: <https://www.umpi.edu/files/faculty-staff/irb/consurvey-o18.pdf>

## APPENDIX D

### Interview Consent Forms

#### ORAL DATA COLLECTION PROTOCOL

##### Instructions

##### **(1) Informing your Participant:**

When an individual is approached to be interviewed, either with or without electronic recording, it is important that you explain to them very clearly who you are, what the project is about, why you are doing it, what risks it poses to them, who will benefit, and what will become of the materials. This makes for “informed consent,” meaning they truly understand what they are getting involved in. You can read the materials to them, and you may also give them the option of reading the description themselves.

##### **(2) The Agreement to Interview Form**

The Agreement to Interview form is a very good and appropriate way to insure that your participants know what they are getting into. After you have read the project description to them, and explained clearly what the project is about, why you are doing it, and what will become of the interviews and other materials.

You may then, if you feel it’s appropriate, ask them to sign the Agreement to Interview form, and give them a copy. Keep the other copy in a safe place.

Alternatively, you can obtain their consent “on tape,” in the actual interview.

##### **(3) Final Consent Form**

(a) Draft Review: Before obtaining final consent, it is absolutely essential that the participants be given the opportunity to look over any final product(s) that you produce from the interviews, and they should have the opportunity to request changes (which you should then make). Remember, this is their words you are using, and those words are their intellectual property. It is important that you respect their requests to have their words read as they want them to.

The final consent form is designed so that you can get their signature in advance, providing that you will make the changes that they request. They may also want a family member or other third party to edit their materials, and the form also allows for this.

(b) Final Consent: This form allows you to go ahead and publish their words in whatever form is appropriate to your project. Note that there are also places where they can choose to be identified. If they do not sign these, but request to remain anonymous, you must respect that and protect their identities from being released.

## **INFORMED CONSENT**

Interview Exercise

Protocol: Implementation of Response to Intervention

**Lillian M. Harris**

**404-245-4666**

### **Project Description:**

Overall, the project involves research on teacher perception of their preparedness to implement Response to Intervention. The focus of the research is teacher's understanding and perception of implementing the Response to Intervention framework to support the learning and behavioral needs of African-American children. The interviewee has background knowledge on the subject through application and research. The interview protocol considers the background knowledge of the interviewee and it is tailored to support new research to be conducted by the interviewer.

### **Procedure and Risks:**

We would like to take notes on the interview, if you are willing, and use the notes to write our materials. We will take notes on the interview only with your consent, and will ask that no personal identifiers be used during the interview, to ensure your anonymity. Please feel free to say as much or as little as you want. You can decide not to answer any question, or to stop the interview any time you want. The notes and completed interview will become the property of project.

If you so choose, a copy of notes taken will be kept anonymous, without any reference to your identity, and your identity will be concealed in any reports written from the interviews.

There are no known risks associated with participation in the study.

### **Benefits:**

It is hoped that the results of this study will benefit the community through providing greater insight into the culture and history of our area.

### **Cost Compensation:**

Participation in this study will involve no costs or payments to you.

### **Confidentiality:**

All information collected during the study period will be kept strictly confidential until such time as you sign a release waiver. No publications or reports from this project will include identifying information on any participant without your signed permission, and after your review of the materials. If you agree to join this study, please sign your name on the following page.

**INFORMED CONSENT FOR INTERVIEWS**

Interview Exercise

Protocol: Implementation of Response to Intervention

I, \_\_\_\_\_, (state title only) agree to be interviewed for the project entitled Implementation of Response to Intervention which is being produced by Lillian M. Harris, Doctoral Candidate at Clark Atlanta University.

I certify that I have been told of the confidentiality of information collected for this project and the anonymity of my participation; that I have been given satisfactory answers to my inquiries concerning project procedures and other matters; and that I have been advised that I am free to withdraw my consent and to discontinue participation in the project or activity at any time without prejudice.

I agree to participate in one or more manuscript recorded interviews for this project. I understand that such interviews and related materials will be kept completely anonymous, and that the results of this study may be published in an academic journal or book.

I agree that any information obtained from this research may be used in any way thought best for this study.

If you cannot obtain satisfactory answers to your questions or have comments or complaints about your treatment in this study, contact:

Clark Atlanta University  
Department of Education Leadership  
223 James P. Brawley  
Atlanta, GA 30314  
Attn: Dr. Barbara Hill

**FINAL CONSENT FORM**Interview Exercise  
Protocol: Implementation of Response to Intervention

*Dear Participant:*

*This form gives us final authorization to use material from your interview in [name of your project]. A draft of these materials should have been presented to you for your review, correction, or modification. You may grant use rights for this draft "as is," or with the modifications you specify, if any. See "Conditions" at the bottom of the form*

I, \_\_\_\_\_, (state title only) hereby grant the right to use information from recordings and or notes taken in interviews of me, to Lillian M. Harris, Doctoral Candidate at Clark Atlanta University, and as presented to me as a draft copy. I understand that the interview records will be kept by the interviewer and the project, and that the information contained in the interviews may be used in materials to be made available to the general public.

The following conditions limit the release of information, as agreed between the interviewer and the interviewee:

\_\_\_\_\_ None needed

\_\_\_\_\_ Material may be released once corrections I specified have been made

\_\_\_\_\_ Material may be released once it has been edited by a third part (please specify)

## APPENDIX E

### The Georgia Rule on Student Support Team

**Georgia Board of Education Rule      Code: IGB 160-4-2-.32 STUDENT SUPPORT TEAM**

#### (1) **DEFINITIONS**

- (a) **Student Support Team (SST)** - is an interdisciplinary group that uses a systematic process to address learning and/or behavior problems of students, K-12, in a school.

#### (2) **REQUIREMENTS**

- (a) Each school shall have a minimum of one SST and shall establish support team procedures
- (b) Before a referral is made for other supplemental or support services, an evaluation and/or assessment shall be conducted
  - 1. Prior evaluation(s) and/or assessment(s) of a student for a state or federal program shall be considered as having met this requirement.
- (c) The SST shall include at a minimum the referring teacher and at least two of the following participants, as appropriate to the needs of the student:
  - 1. Principal
  - 2. General education teacher
  - 3. Counselor
  - 4. Lead teacher
  - 5. School psychologist
  - 6. Subject area specialist
  - 7. ESOL teacher
  - 8. Special education teacher
  - 9. School social worker
  - 10. Central office personnel
  - 11. Section 504 coordinator
  - 12. Other appropriate personnel

- (d) Parents/guardians shall be invited to participate in all meetings of their child's SST and in the development of interventions for their child.
- (e) Each school shall include the following steps in the SST process:
  - 1. Identification of learning and/or behavior problems
  - 2. Assessment, if necessary
  - 3. Educational Plan
  - 4. Implementation
  - 5. Follow-up and support
  - 6. Continuous monitoring and evaluation
- (f) Documentation of SST activities shall include the following:
  - 1. Student's name
  - 2. Names of team members
  - 3. Meeting dates
  - 4. Identification of student learning or behavior problems
  - 5. Any records of assessment
  - 6. Educational plan and implementation results
  - 7. Follow-up and, as appropriate, continuous evaluation.

(3) **EXCEPTIONS TO THE USE OF THE SST PROCESS**

- (a) School personnel and parents/guardians may determine that there is a reasonable cause to bypass the SST process for an individual student. Documentation in the student's record shall clearly justify such action, including whether the parent or guardian agreed with such a decision. In cases where immediate referral is sought, the SST shall still determine what interim strategies, interventions, and modifications shall be attempted for the student.
- (b) It is not necessary for students who transfer into the local school system/state operated program with a current Individualized Education Program or Section 504 plan to go through the SST process.

APPENDIX F

Georgia Rule on the Student Support Team Document Analysis

Georgia Board of Education Rule 160-4-2-32 Student Support Team

Analysis Component	Response
Document Title	Georgia Board of Education Rule 160-4-2-32 Student Support Team
Date Reviewed	December 30, 2014
Document Description and Contents	<p>This document is a Georgia Board of Education Rule presented in outline format. The Rule number and code for Student Support Team (SST) is found at the top of the document. There are three major components of the document which include; the definition of Student Support Team, Requirements, and Exceptions to the Use of the SST Process. In addition, an excerpt from the <i>Marshall Law</i> is included which give background information as to why the SST Rule was developed. The document lists appropriate school staff who should participate on the Student Support Team. The school principal is first person on the list.</p>
Significance of the Document	<p>The document is associated with the <i>Marshall v. Georgia</i>, 1984 lawsuit. The results of the lawsuit required a process to support the educational needs of general education students prior to referral for special education services. The document outlines a standardized way to address the needs of individual students with learning and/or behavior challenges in the general education setting. It seeks to prevent the misidentification of students for special education services. Because of the lawsuit, districts are required to support and ensure establishment of the Student Support Team.</p>
Important Quotes from the Document	<p>As stated in the excerpt from the <i>Marshall Law</i>, “The Student Support Team is a joint effort of regular education and special education to identify and plan alternative instructional strategies for children prior to or in lieu of a special education referral.” In addition, “Prior to consideration for special education referral non-special education options should be considered, interventions used, documented, described, and discussed at the special education placement meeting.”</p>



Analysis Component	Response
Is this document critical to a particular idea/notion? If so, how?	This document is critical to the misidentification of students, especially minority students, who were once placed in special education without interventions from general education services (Bradley, Danielson and Doolittle, 2005).
Is this document filed with another project? If so, where?	Yes, this document can be found with other State Board of Education Rules which are located on the Georgia Department of Education website. The document is also part of the State of Georgia Response to Intervention Manual, also found on the Georgia Department of Education website. In addition, since the Student Support Team is a requirement for all schools in Georgia, the document can be found in school district policy manuals throughout the state.
How does this document support or refute the earlier understanding of the content?	Prior to the <i>Marshall Law</i> , there was no criterion in Georgia for supporting individual general education students who struggle academically or present behavior challenges prior to special education referral. The earlier understanding was to refer students to special education at the onset of academic and/or behavior concerns. This practice caused an overabundance of students, especially minority students, to be misidentified or under-identified for special education services (Bradley, Danielson and Doolittle, 2005).
Who are the important people this document supports?	This document supports K-12 students, especially minority students, and parents/guardians of K-12 school-aged children.
Why do you think the document was written?	The document was written to provide guidance to school administrators regarding the requirements and support needed for implementation of the Student Support Team process. Derived from the <i>Marshall v. Georgia</i> , 1984 law, the document was formatted in an easy to understand outline with the definition, requirements and exceptions regarding the Student Support Team.
Write a question to the author that is left unanswered by the document.	How will the requirement of the Student Support Team process be supported through professional development and funding to ensure fidelity of implementation?

APPENDIX G

SST Monthly Data Report

Month: \_\_\_\_\_

SST Chairperson: \_\_\_\_\_ School Name: \_\_\_\_\_

EX	Student Name	Gender	Grade	Write (1) for all that apply					Last SST Meeting Date	Referred for Evaluation? Yes (1) No (0)	
				A	B	A/B	SLP	504			HHB
	<i>John Doe</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>6</i>		<i>1</i>		<i>1</i>			<i>12/28/12</i>	<i>0</i>
1											
2											
3											
4											
5											
6											
7											
8											
9											
10											
11											
12											
13											
14											
15											
16											
17											
18											
19											
20											
21											
22											
23											
24											
25											

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Principal's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

A – Academic  
 B – Behavior  
 A/B – Academic & Behavior  
 SLP – Speech/Language  
 HHB – Hospital/Homebound

APPENDIX H

SST Monthly Data Report Document Analysis

Analysis Component	Response
Document Title	SST Monthly Data Report
Date Reviewed	December 30, 2014
Document Description and Contents	<p>This document is a Student Support Team (SST) monthly report presented in a table format. The report date, SST Chairperson’s name, and school name are found at the top of the document. There are six major components captured in the table on the document which include; the student name, gender, grade level, abbreviations that indicate the reason they are at the SST level (tier 3), last meeting date, and whether they are being referred for an evaluation to determine special education eligibility. The document is number to show the number of students in the process. In addition, the chairperson and principal’s signature and date signed is required at the bottom of the form. A key identifying the abbreviations for the reasons students are at the SST level is also found at the bottom of the document.</p>
Significance of the Document	<p>The results of the <i>Marshall v. Georgia</i>, 1984 lawsuit requires school districts in the state of Georgia to implement a process to support the educational needs general education students prior to referral for special education services. This process is identified as the Student Support Team. School districts must support and have evidence of SST implementation. This document serves as verification and documentation that the school district is implementing the Student Support Team process. The Last Meeting Date indicates the most recent time the student’s progress was discussed by the Student Support Team.</p>
Important Quotes from the Document	<p>As stated on the document, this is an “SST Monthly Data Report.” Students at the SST level receive support in “A-Academic, B-Behavior, A/B – Academic &amp; Behavior, SLP – Speech/Language, HHB – Hospital/Homebound.” In addition, data is maintained on the “Last Meeting Date,” and whether the student was “Referred for Evaluation.”</p>

Analysis Component	Response
Is this document critical to a particular idea/notion? If so, how?	This document is critical to the evidence of implementation of the SST process as required by the Georgia Board of Education Rule 160-4-2-32 Student Support Team.
Is this document filed with another project? If so, where?	Yes, this document can be found at each individual school as well as at the district office that supports Student Support Team implementation.
How does this document support or refute the earlier understanding of the content?	Prior to the <i>Marshall Law</i> (1984), there was no criterion in Georgia for supporting individual general education students who struggle academically or present behavior challenges prior to special education referral. Districts are now required to show evidence of SST implementation. This document serves as one form of evidence of the district's SST implementation.
Who are the important people this document supports?	This document supports K-12 students, especially minority students, and parents/guardians of K-12 school-aged children. This document also supports the school district and schools therein as they are required to maintain documentation of SST implementation.
Why do you think the document was written?	This document was written to maintain data on the students within a given school who receive support at the SST (Tier 3) level. The document was formatted in an easy to understand table format along with a key to identify abbreviations. The document was also written so that the district has documentation of SST at each school.
Write a question to the author that is left unanswered by the document.	How is the SST Monthly Data Report used to analyzed continuity of services from the previous SST Monthly Data Reports?

## APPENDIX I

### Terms and Definitions

Term	Definition
College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI)	(CCRPI) is what the Georgia Department of Education uses as criteria to measure student outcomes (Barge, 2012).
Concurrent mixed methods	A concurrent form of research takes place when quantitative and qualitative data are collected concurrently and the researcher determines to what extent the quantitative and qualitative data converge, and what similarities and differences exist across levels of analysis (Creswell and Clark, 2007).
Correlational research	Correlational research is defined as collecting data to determine whether, and to what degree, a relationship exists between two or more quantifiable variables (Gay, Mills, and Airasian, 2006).
Document analysis	A type of qualitative research whereby a document is analyzed for the content. The researcher gives specific codes to connect similar themes identified throughout the document <a href="http://studentresearch.ucsd.edu/_files/assessment/Assessment-Methods.pdf">http://studentresearch.ucsd.edu/_files/assessment/Assessment-Methods.pdf</a>
End of Course Test (EOCT)	According to the Georgia Department of Education, the EOCT serves as a student's final exam in the associated course.
Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test (GCRCT)	According to the Georgia Department of Education, the GCRCT are a set of tests given to 1 <sup>st</sup> through 8 <sup>th</sup> grade students in the state of Georgia to test the knowledge of students in English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Reading. Third through eighth grade students are also assessed in Science, and Social Studies
Likert Scale	A scale named after Rensis Likert used to collect scaled responses in surveys and responses are scored along a range (Edmondson, 2005).
Phenomenological study	Phenomenological study, as defined by Creswell (2013), describes lived experiences of a particular concept that several individuals have in common.
Response to Intervention (RTI)	A general education initiative to identify students who are performing below grade level, implement interventions targeted to their deficit areas, and to support their learning until they are capable of performing on grade level (Prasse, 1999).

Term	Definition
Student Support Team (SST)	SST is an interdisciplinary group that uses a systematic process to address learning and/or behavior problems of students, K-12, in a school. (Georgia Department of Education)
Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM)	STEM are determined as critical areas of focus for American education, careers, and global competitiveness.
Blasé and Blasé – Instructional Leadership Strategies	An outline of the importance of leaders to build a culture of collaboration and learning.
Glickman’s Five Tasks	<p>Glickman’s Five Tasks are identified as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Professional development</li> <li>2. Direct assistance to teachers</li> <li>3. Curriculum development</li> <li>4. Group development</li> <li>5. Action research</li> </ol>
Guskey’s Theory of Professional Development and Teacher Change	Suggests consideration of the Model of Teacher Change: Professional Development → Change in Teachers’ Classroom Practices → Change in Student Learning Outcomes → Change in Teachers’ Attitudes and Beliefs.
Marzano’s Theory of Learning	Theory of Learning describes three systems and knowledge important for thinking and learning. The Self-System deals with the students’ attitudes and beliefs about learning. The Metacognitive System deals with addressing specific learning goals and monitoring the progress of those goals. The Cognitive System deals with knowledge retrieval (Marzano, 2000),
Tomlinson’s Theory of Differentiated Instruction	Through Tomlinson’s theory for differentiating instruction, emphasis must be placed on planning activities that facilitate the mastery of objectives while at the same time reflecting the variability in the needs of the students.

## REFERENCES

- Alliance for Excellent Education. (2009-2010). *Understanding high school graduation rates in Georgia*. Retrieved from [www.all4ed.org](http://www.all4ed.org)
- Alsbaugh, J. (1998). The relationship of school and community characteristics to high school dropout rates. *Clearing House*, 71(3), 184-88.
- Appleton, J., Christenson, S., & Furlong, M. (2013a). *Emphasis on student engagement*. Regents of the University of Minnesota. Retrieved from <http://checkandconnect.umn.edu/model/engagement.html>
- Appleton, J., Christenson, S., & Furlong, M. (2013b). *The student engagement instrument (SEI)*. Regents of the University of Minnesota. Retrieved from <http://checkandconnect.umn.edu/model/engagement.htm>
- Atlanta Journal Constitution (AJC) News*. (2013). *Best, worst metro CCRPI school scores, 2012*. Retrieved from <http://www.myajc.com/news/news/best-worst-metro-ccrpi-scores-2012/nXjHT/>
- Audette, R. H., Polly, D., & White, R. B. (2012). A case analysis of an elementary school's implementation of response to intervention. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, 26(1), 73.
- Barge, J. (2011a). *Response to intervention*. Atlanta, GA: Georgia Department of Education.

- Barge, J. (2011b). *Student support teams: Structure and process*. Atlanta, GA: Georgia Department of Education.
- Barge, J. (2012). *Georgia's college and career performance ready performance index*. Retrieved from <http://www.gadoe.org/curriculum-instruction-and-assessment/ctae/documents/ccrpi-counselors-060512.pdf>
- Blasé, J., & Blasé, J. (2004). *Handbook of instructional leadership* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Bradley, R., Danielson, L., & Doolittle, J. (2005). Response to intervention. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 38(6), 485-486.
- Bridgeland, J., Dilulio, J., & Morison, K. B. (2006). *The silent epidemic, perspectives of high school dropouts*. Washington, DC: Civic Enterprises, LLC.
- Creswell, J. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J., & Clark, V. (2007). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Editorial Projects in Education Research Center. (2011, September 19). Issues A-Z: No child left behind. *Education Week*. Retrieved from <http://www.edweek.org/ew/issues/no-child-left-behind/>
- Edmondson, D. (2005). *Likert scales: A history*. Retrieved from <http://faculty.quinnipiac.edu/charm/CHARM%20proceedings/CHARM%20article%20archive%20pdf%20format/Volume%2012%202005/127%20edmondson.pdf>



- Gay, L., Mills, G., & Airasian, P. (2006). *Educational research: Competencies for analysis and applications* (8th ed.) Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.
- Gibbs, G. (2012). *What is qualitative data analysis (QDA)?* Retrieved from [http://onlineqda.hud.ac.uk/Intro\\_QDA/what\\_is\\_qda.php](http://onlineqda.hud.ac.uk/Intro_QDA/what_is_qda.php)
- Georgia Department of Education. (2001). *Promotion, placement, and retention*. Retrieved from <http://www.gadoe.org/External-Affairs-and-Policy/State-Board-of-Education/SBOE%20Rules/160-4-2-.11.pdf>
- Georgia Department of Education. (2010). *Georgia Wins Race to the Top*. Retrieved from [www.doe.k12.ga.us](http://www.doe.k12.ga.us)
- Georgia Department of Education. (2014a). *CRCT statewide scores*. Retrieved from <http://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Assessment/Pages/CRCT-Statewide-Scores.aspx>
- Georgia Department of Education. (2014b). *EOCT statewide scores*. Retrieved from <http://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Assessment/Pages/EOCT-Statewide-Scores.aspx>
- Georgia Public Broadcasting (GPB). (2002). *Jim Crow stories: Plessy v. Ferguson (1896)*. Educational Broadcasting Corporation. Retrieved from [http://www.pbs.org/wnet/jimcrow/stories\\_events\\_plessy.html](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/jimcrow/stories_events_plessy.html)
- Georgia Public Broadcasting (GPB). (2007). *Landmark cases: Brown v. Board of Education (1954)*. Educational Broadcasting Corporation. Retrieved from [http://www.pbs.org/wnet/supremecourt/rights/landmark\\_brown.html](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/supremecourt/rights/landmark_brown.html)

- Georgia Public Broadcasting (GPB) News. (2013). *Georgia's high school graduation rate is finally above 71 percent*. Retrieved from <http://www.gpb.org/news/2013/12/11/georgias-high-school-graduation-rate-is-finally-above-71-percent>
- Glickman, C. D., Gordon, S. P., & Ross-Gordon, J. (2009). *Supervision and instructional leadership: A developmental approach* (6th ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Governor's Office of Student Achievement. (2011). *2010-2011 report card*. Retrieved from <http://reportcard2011uat.gaosa.org>
- Guskey, T. (2002). Professional development and teacher change. *Teachers and Teaching*, 8(3), 381-391.
- Harris, L., & Gregory, S. (2014). Review of the book *What great teachers do differently, 17 things that matter most* by Todd Whitaker, *Education Review*. Retrieved from <http://www.edrev.info>
- Klotz, M., & Canter, A. (2006). *Response to intervention (RTI): A primer for parents*. Retrieved from <http://www.nasponline.org/resources/factsheets/rtiprimer.aspx>
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2009). *The dream-keepers*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Lee-Tarver, A. (2006). A survey of teachers' perceptions of the function and purpose of student support teams. *Education*, 126(3), 525-533.
- Lipson, M., & Wixson, K. (2012). To what interventions are students responding? *Reading Teacher*, 66(2), 111-115.
- Marshall v. Georgia, CV 482-233, Southern District of Georgia (GA, 1984).

- Marzano, R. (2000). *Designing a new taxonomy of educational objectives*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press. Retrieved from <http://download.intel.com/education/Common/in/Resources/DEP/skills/Marzano.pdf>
- Marzano, R. (2003). *What works in schools: Transforming research into action*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
- Michigan Department of Education. (2002). *What research says about parent involvement in children's education*. Retrieved from [http://www.michigan.gov/documents/Final\\_Parent\\_Involvement\\_Fact\\_Sheet\\_14732\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/Final_Parent_Involvement_Fact_Sheet_14732_7.pdf)
- National Center on Response to Intervention. (n.d.). *The essential components of RTI*. Retrieved from <http://www.rti4success.org/>
- Obama, B. H. (2006). *The audacity of hope*. New York: Random House.
- Pink, D. (2011). *Summary of Daniel Pink's three A's*. Retrieved from <https://awnm4.wordpress.com/2011/10/27/summary-of-daniel-pinks-three-as/>
- Prasse, D. (1999). *Why adopt an RTI model? RTI action network*. Retrieved from <http://www.rtinetwork.org/learn/what/whyrti>
- Rebora, A. (2011). Keeping special ed in proportion. *Education Week Teacher PD Source Book*, 5(1), 36.
- Schott Foundation for Public Education. (2012). *The urgency of now: The Schott 50 state report on public education and black males 2012*. Retrieved from <http://www.schottfoundation.org/urgency-of-now.pdf>
- Spring, J. (2011). *The politics of American education*. New York: Taylor & Francis.

Tomlinson, C. (2001). *How to differentiate instruction in mixed-ability classrooms*.

Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

United States Census Bureau. (2008). *An older and more diverse nation by midcentury*.

Retrieved from <http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/population/cb08-123.html>

United States Commission on Civil Rights. (2009). *Minorities in special education:*

*Briefing report*. Retrieved from <http://www.usccr.gov/pubs/MinoritiesinSpecialEducation.pdf>

United States Department of Education. (2010). *President Obama, U.S. secretary of education Duncan announce national competition to advance school reform*.

Retrieved from <http://ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2009/07/07242009.html>

United States Department of Education. (2014). *Race to the top fund*. Retrieved from

<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/index.html>

Victorian, B. (2012). *Initiative to tackle high number of black kids in special education*.

Retrieved from <http://madamenoire.com/129309/initiative-to-tackle-high-number-of-Black-kids-in-special-education/>

Wedl, R. (2005). *Response to intervention: An alternative to traditional eligibility*

*criteria for students with disabilities*. St. Paul, MN: EducationEvolving. A joint Venture of the Center for the Policy Studies and Hamline University.

Whitaker, T. (2011). *What great teachers do differently: 17 things that matter most*.

Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education, Inc.

Yale Global Online. (2015). *What is globalization?* Retrieved from <http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/about-globalization>