

Perceptions of and Readiness for RTI Implementation in a P-12 School District

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Abstract: *With any new initiative, stakeholder insights provide critical information that can aid in the execution of the project. Gathering stakeholder perceptions of a new initiative is particularly critical in schools where teachers' varied beliefs may influence outcomes. Recognizing and acknowledging beliefs may make the difference in adoption of new initiatives, such as Response to Intervention (RTI). Using case study design, this qualitative study collected teacher perceptions and understandings regarding the implementation of a district wide RTI model. The Stages of Concern (SoC) diagnostic dimension from the Concern-Based Adoption Model guided data analysis. Through deductive coding, several themes surfaced on the SoC continuum including concern for professional development, doubt of effectiveness, and leadership execution. The study provides insight for teachers, researchers, and school leaders on SoC during change and RTI implementation.*

School personnel are accountable for meeting the needs of all students. This at times can seem an overwhelming task, as students enter school with a range of abilities and needs. To address these needs, school leaders thoughtfully consider and purposefully implement programs that can contribute to improved academic performance. One such model used to guide academic improvement is Response to Intervention (RTI), a systematic method of identifying and providing academic support services through data-driven decision-making (Vaughn et al., 2010).

In the past, federal legislation has been enacted to ensure the needs of all learners are addressed. One such federal law, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA, 2004) was created to establish a route for success for all learners (Renner, 2018). A major component of IDEIA includes the allowance of funds for academic support for general education students through the RTI process (IDEIA, 2004). RTI provides a framework of instruction to support the needs of all learners, including extended support and intensive academic and/or behavioral interventions for students who need additional support, but are not yet identified as qualifying to receive special education services (Fisher & Frey, 2013). The goal of RTI is to intervene with appropriate early interventions, determined by individual student needs to ensure success for all students. This early intervention model counters the narrative of the special education discrepancy model in which students need to *fail* to be able to receive additional support through special education services (Restori et al., 2009). A common misconception of RTI is that it is a special education approach; however, it is “a multitiered approach to help struggling learners” and is “part of the disability identification procedures” (Hughes & Dexter, 2022, p. 4). There is

inconsistency about the relationship between learning disabilities (LD) and RTI, as some states require school educators and leaders to utilize RTI prior to LD identification, while others feel that such an approach could delay a student's identification and minimize parent request for evaluation (Berkeley et al., 2020).

RTI has been utilized for over a decade, however, the district in this study has just begun to adopt the model. Now, almost 20 years later, according to Novak (2019), some early adopters of RTI have transitioned to a similar but more encompassing term of Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS). This phrase change to MTSS was adopted to encompass a broader inclusion of behavioral and social-emotional learning, but also to distance from a common misbelief that RTI was perceived to be a special education initiative (Bailey, 2019). The school district personnel in this study utilized the term RTI, so for the purpose of this study the term RTI will be used throughout to match this language.

RTI IN THE SCHOOL SETTING

RTI is a tiered system of instruction based on a student's response to research-based interventions (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). The keys to successful implementation of RTI is the identification of students at risk of not meeting grade-level outcomes, the delivery and receipt of targeted and/or intensive interventions, and the ongoing collection of student performance gathered through assessment on the learning to gauge the effectiveness of the intervention (McInerney & Elledge, 2013). Assessment is emphasized in RTI. Diagnostic assessment information allows educators to make instructional decisions targeting the unique struggles of each individual student and progress monitoring are used to monitor progress (Batsche et al., 2006; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). This tiered approach includes: (a) Tier 1, service to all students in the general education classroom with standard differentiation techniques; (b) Tier 2, small group targeted instruction with progress monitoring (i.e. regular assessment) to evaluate intervention effectiveness; and (c) Tier 3, individual or small group instruction with higher intensity, frequency, and/or time of intervention (Rutgers, 2021). Through assessment and data collection, tiered interventions are chosen and implemented to promote academic success and reduce the chance of inappropriate referral to special education (Batsche et al., 2006; Werts et al., 2014).

This qualitative research was conducted at the request of school and district leaders to provide administrators a lens into the uncertainties and needs of those responsible for implementation of RTI. By collecting this information, building and district leaders were provided an opportunity to start the conversation around meeting the needs of educators in the implementation of this RTI program. For any innovation to be successful, those responsible for the innovation must have a commitment to implementation. For example, one study found that in mature school or district initiatives, teacher buy-in had a significant positive relationship with students' academic growth (Lee & Min, 2017). This demonstrates the value in understanding educator perspectives when implementing any innovation such as RTI. The purpose of this case study was to shed light on the knowledge, benefits, and concerns of educators tasked with the implementation of a district wide RTI program and support the effective implementation of RTI in a suburban school district. The research questions guiding this study included (a) What are the perceptions of K-12 teachers toward RTI? And (b) How well do K-12 educators understand RTI?

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Response to Intervention is a major component of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 and is intended to be a preventative effort to provide general

education students the highest quality instruction possible, as well as provide data to appropriately determine student eligibility for special education services (Elliott, 2008; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006; Keller-Margulis, 2012; Preston et al., 2016; Werts et al., 2014). The emphasis on the one-size-fits-all approach is fading away in lieu of differentiation of instruction based on student needs; however, implementation of such models is difficult in the present structure of public schools (Elliott, 2008). According to Elliott (2008), school leaders generally do not have the resources to provide intensive instruction to more than 20 percent of students, which means that core instruction must be responsive to 80 percent of the students. This establishes the case for the benefit of RTI; however, details regarding the implementation of the RTI model into schools and districts is less known.

Implementing change in the P-12 learning environment is often plagued with challenges. District-level initiatives may overlook the experiences or feelings of those directly responsible for implementing the change (Berkeley et al., 2020; Regan et al., 2015). Hall and Hord (2011) argued that the status quo for change in schools has remained for decades and that change in schools and school districts is difficult. Equally, there is substantial research demonstrating a lack of readiness to implement RTI, despite the level of conceptual understanding (Arden et al., 2017; Barrio & Combes, 2015; Berkeley et al., 2020) and RTI is most effective when implemented with a high level of fidelity (Bianco, 2010; Gersten et al., 2017; March et al., 2016).

The reason for adoption concerns may be due to a shift in the role of the educator compromising the acceptance of the policy, teacher buy-in, and fidelity in implementation (Werts et al., 2014). To most effectively establish an RTI model, these teacher concerns must be addressed to avoid resistance to the initiative (Werts et al., 2014). As a solution to address these concerns, one study conducted by Freeman and colleagues (2015) suggested providing multi-faceted training focused on the adopted curriculum for each tier of instruction and behavioral expertise. In this study it was noted that a coach worked directly with educators to support all tier levels, but also included training on the technology resources for assessment and data collection. There is evidence that effective implementation has the potential to shift the mindsets of educators from considering the implementation as an “administrative directive” to accepting the model’s sustainability (Rinaldi et al., 2011, p. 43). The key is to identify the needs of educators to best address concerns and meet the needs for effective implementation supported through invested leadership.

Effective leadership is the one indisputable attribute of effective implementation (Duffy & Scala, 2012; Elliott, 2008; Rinaldi et al., 2011; Utley & Obiakor, 2015). School leaders are responsible for enforcing and deepening RTI implementation, student- and school-level data analysis, and providing support for educators (Duffy & Scala, 2012). This study collected data regarding the mindset of educators which would be used by district implementation leaders, as well as provided awareness of the effectiveness of a potential tool to help determine the needs and concerns of educators new to RTI for successful implementation accomplished through the Stages of Concern Model (Newlove & Hall, 1976).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The success of new programs in education depends on how well they are implemented, which lies in the hands of the personnel leading the change (Acton, 2021). Change inevitably brings about uncertainty and doubt. Addressing stakeholder concerns allows leaders of such initiatives to better assist those implementing the change (Newlove & Hall, 1976). In this study, district leaders desired to know the concerns and educator knowledge at the onset of implementation so that they could frontload and ensure implementation success. This study provided an avenue to address educator concerns to prevent the possibility of resistance to the implementation of the RTI model.

Arden et al. (2017) stated that RTI effectiveness is in direct relation to the fidelity of implementation. Barrio and Combs (2015) stated that teachers are discouraged by the components and challenges of the implementation of RTI, as well as the increased workloads resulting from additional assessment, data analysis, and instruction. In similar studies of RTI implementation, both Burns (2007) and Holloway (2003) noted that beliefs, behaviors, and attitudes of those who implement the innovation must be noted to make the change effective.

To measure educator perceptions of the implementation of RTI in this study, the Concern-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) was used (Hall & Hord, 2011). Hall and Hord's (2011) CBAM model assumes: (a) change is a process that takes time; (b) change will not occur within an organization until the individuals implement the new initiative; and (c) change involves growth in personal confidence and competence. To address these assumptions, the CBAM includes three dimensions which include Stages of Concern (SoC), Levels of Use (LoU), and Innovation Configurations (IC) (Hall & Hord, 2011). This study captures the thoughts, feelings, and perceptions of implementing RTI; therefore, SoC was the guiding dimension from CBAM. Characteristics of SoC are the perceptions and feelings of the people involved in the change, whereas the other dimensions (LoU and IC) do not become relevant until after change has been initiated so will not be addressed in this study (Hall & Hord, 2011).

There are two approaches to assessing SoC (George et al., 2013). One of the approaches is the Stages of Concern Questionnaire (SoCQ) developed by Hall et al. (1977). These researchers used Likert-type questions that analyzed data quantitatively to determine the level of concern about an innovation. The second approach analyzed qualitative open-ended questions regarding the innovation using methods found in *The Manual for Assessing Open-Ended Statements of Concern About an Innovation* (Newlove & Hall, 1976). Newlove and Hall designed a model that included seven stages of concern that identified perceptions ranging from *unconcerned* to *impactful*. Early concerns develop around the self and are related to how the innovation will impact oneself personally. Once self-concerns are resolved, a shift occurs from *self* to the *task*. In the final stages of this model, concerns once again shift from the *task* to the *impact* of the change (Newlove & Hall, 1976). CBAM has been used to help explain concerns in the adoption of an innovation in schools for many years (Chen, 2022; Kayaduman & Demirel, 2019). Recent studies include research that analyzed pre-service teachers' level of concern around RTI (Barrio & Combes, 2015), another explored gifted education teachers' concerns about competency-based instruction (Chen, 2022), one examined librarian concerns regarding e-sources acquisition (A'dillah & Noorhidawati, 2022), and another reviewed educator concerns regarding STEM education implementation (Lau & Jong, 2022). In all mentioned studies, the researchers utilized the Stages of Concern questionnaire (SoCQ) for data collection and analysis. However, in one study, the open-ended Stages of Concern model (Newlove & Hall, 1976) was used to evaluate educator concerns regarding the application of the multiple intelligence theory (Engstrom & Danielson, 2010), as well as one that used the open-ended Stages of Concern in conjunction with the SoCQ (Kayaduman & Demirel, 2019).

For this research, an expanded model of stages of concern was developed using the work of George et al. (2013) and Newlove and Hall (1976) designs (see Figure 1). This new merged representation provided a more thorough explanation of each stage (Newlove & Hall, 1976), as well as an expanded description of the stages (George et al., 2013). The researchers created this design to better understand responses and thus decrease uncertainty on coding of data.

Table 1
Expanded Stages of Concern

Stages of Concern		Expressions of Concern
“Impact”	6 Refocusing	The focus is on exploration of more universal benefits from the innovation. Ex: I have some ideas about something that would work even better.
	5 Collaboration	The focus is on coordination and cooperation with others regarding the use of the innovation. Ex: I would like to coordinate my effort with others, to maximize the innovation’s effect.
	4 Consequence	The focus is on the impact of innovation on students. Ex: How is my use affecting my students?
“Task”	3 Management	Focus is on the processes, tasks, and use of resources. Ex: I see to be spending all my time getting materials ready.
“Self”	2 Personal	The focus is on the demands of the innovation and one’s ability to meet them. Ex: How will using it affect me?
	1 Informational	Focus is on a general awareness of the innovation and desire to learn more. Ex: I would like to know more about it.
“Unconcerned”	0 Awareness	Little concern about or involvement with the innovation is indicated. Ex: I am not concerned about it.

Note. This model was adapted for this research from *Measuring implementation in schools: The stages of concern questionnaire* (Hall et al., 1977) and *A Manual for assessing open-ended statements of concern about an innovation* (Newlove & Hall, 1976).

METHODOLOGY

This study was an in-depth case-study analysis of the early stages of implementing RTI in a suburban school district. Case study research extends the opportunity to investigate a phenomenon in a particular context (Miles et al., 2018) and this study investigated educator concerns, perceptions, and readiness to implement RTI (the phenomenon) in a suburban school district (the context). Because MTSS is a school-wide system involving teachers, paraeducators, school psychologists, and related support staff, it was important to the leadership that all voices involved in the educating of students be included in the research. Therefore, educators were defined for the purpose of this study as anyone who had instructional responsibilities in the teaching of students. Data for this study was collected utilizing an open-ended survey.

Because RTI was not new to the field of education, this district personnel's new adoption of a well-established model afforded an opportunity to investigate the implementation of RTI in a context long after the model had been utilized and validated across the field of education. This unique context extended our understanding of implementation of a system that had previously been implemented in similar settings.

PARTICIPANTS AND SETTINGS

The RTI model was first introduced in the state in which this school district resides nearly two decades before the district considered implementation (oregonrti.org, 2019). The district is known for having high-performing students, ranking in the 95th percentile nationally (citation being withheld to protect anonymity of school). The participants represented both elementary and high school educators. Of the 45 educators who participated, 18 were from high school, 19 from elementary, five from middle school, and three were K-12 specialists. The average years of experience was 16. The school is predominantly white with less than 25% being students of color. Thirty-eight percent of students received free or reduced lunch, and 13% of students were identified as receiving special education services (citation being withheld to protect anonymity of school).

District leaders wanted to gather information regarding the adoption of the RTI within the classrooms across the district, which was conducted through a series of open-ended questions used to determine beliefs about the knowledge, benefits, and concerns regarding implementation of RTI. Of note, the educators in the district were familiar with the concept of RTI from prior conversations and introductory professional development seminars; however, most had received little or no formal RTI training at the time when the data was collected prior to official implementation. This timing was purposeful to inform implementation the following year.

SURVEY DEVELOPMENT

From the initial administrator interview, the researchers, in collaboration with the district leadership, created a survey of seven demographic-related items, such as grade level, position, and years of teaching experience in addition to 12 open-ended items seeking data about three main constructs (knowledge, benefits, and concerns of RTI) to answer the two research questions. The survey was created in collaboration with school and district leadership and the researchers. School and district administration reviewed and approved the survey questions to ensure it aligned with the purpose of the research and provided the information they sought in this study, while the researchers validated that the open-ended question regarding concerns aligned with the SoC framework.

The survey instrument development included questions of interest identified through informal conversations with the school district leadership. Newlove and Hall's (1976) single open-ended question, "When you think about _____, what are concerned about?" (p. 19), aligned with the intent of district leadership to identify specific RTI implementation concerns. Although multiple questions were created for the survey, each question in the survey had foundation in the quest to discover concerns in multiple areas of implementation.

Table 2

Table of Survey Questions

Knowledge of RTI
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the training/instruction have you had with RTI. • Describe your understanding of RTI. • If you utilize Tier 1 interventions in your classroom, which interventions do you find most valuable? • If you utilize Tier 2 interventions, what interventions do you find most valuable? • How do you identify the need for interventions? • How do you track the effectiveness of interventions implemented? • How do you track the effectiveness of interventions implemented? • When do you seek outside support for students that need intervention? • Do you bring up concerns about students before or after you have implemented interventions?
Benefits of RTI
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you see RTI benefiting student achievement?
Concerns of RTI
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What concerns do you have about implementing RTI? • What supports do you need to successfully implement RTI?

The survey was then offered via email to all educators in a medium (approximately 4300 students) suburban school district in the Northwest, resulting in a return of 45 responses with a 25% participation rate of eligible educators. Despite the possibility of response bias or nonresponse error in this sample due to the small sample size, the survey provided an opportunity to implement the SoC protocol and learn about some preliminary concerns regarding RTI implementation.

DATA ANALYSIS

Frequency of all responses were identified in each category of knowledge, benefits, and concerns. There were seven questions in the survey addressing participant knowledge, one question regarding benefits, and two addressing concerns. With no previous codes created in these categories, responses were analyzed using inductive open coding. Each researcher first independently read the results to become familiar with the data. The researchers then met to determine initial codes for each of these constructs of knowledge and benefits, then each researcher coded all data to ensure inter-rater reliability. Codes were then collapsed into themes.

In regard to analyzing responses related to concerns, deductive coding was used as the codes were created by this study’s researchers in the newly developed Expanded Stages of Concerns Procedures (Table 1). To become familiar with the data, each researcher first read the responses independently. Data were then read together with coding and initial categorization using the pre-established codes that aligned with each stage of the SoC. Data were re-read, and codes were reviewed once again with both researchers to verify category placement and improve inter-rater reliability. Responses in this stage could be given two potential codes within the Expanded Stages of Concerns table (see Table 1). As per the instructions outlined in the *Manual for Assessing Open-ended Statements of Concern about an Innovation* (Newlove & Hall, 1976) each double coded response required further analysis and only one final code identified. Newlove and Hall noted the decision on final placement of the response was dependent on where the statement primarily aligned on the SoC continuum.

The categories for the Stages of Concern were reviewed for frequency of occurrences within the Expanded Stages of Concern table. Another layer of analysis was conducted following the recommendations for assessing open-ended statements of concern, with the goal to develop a global picture of the overall person’s concerns (Newlove & Hall, 1976). The responses were read again with a focus on the substance of each response sentence, looking specifically at the concerns being addressed within each response and assigning a final Stage of Concern decision.

RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

SURVEY RESPONSES

The 12-question survey included seven questions asking about knowledge of RTI, one question targeting perceptions of benefits, and two questions regarding concerns of RTI implementation. Two questions were deemed unusable for analysis as responses did not align with any of the constructs of knowledge, benefits, or concerns. They were included in the survey per administration's request.

The series of knowledge questions were included to provide administrators an overview of the current level of understanding of RTI (see Table 3). One observation from these responses was that although many participants (73%) were able to speak to the definition of RTI as a tiered system of interventions and ongoing data collection and 82% were unable to accurately identify a single Tier 1 or Tier 2 intervention. The data demonstrated that 27% then were not able to define RTI or provide an example of an intervention or stated that they were unable to answer the question because they did not know. Only eight percent of the respondents were able to give an accurate example of a Tier 1 or Tier 2 intervention, demonstrating a functional understanding of RTI for less than 10% of the educator participants.

Table 3
Knowledge of RTI

# / % n=45	Define RTI	# / %	Intervention Knowledge
33/73%	Could define RTI and/or include a detail regarding RTI such as use of assessment or example of an intervention	37/82%	Could not accurately identify an example of a Tier 1 or Tier 2 intervention
12/27%	Indicated they knew nothing of RTI or did not respond	8/18%	Could offer an accurate example of an intervention

From the survey, one question was used to determine educator perceptions of benefits of RTI. A sizable percentage of participants (80%) were able to identify at least one possible benefit of RTI and some respondents indicated more than one type of benefit of RTI. Notable comments about the benefits included, “It is a fluid way of providing intervention that meets the needs of the individual” (R29) and “Being more purposeful in the way I provide instruction” (R45). There were 31 references to improved student outcomes, which was by far, the most dominant benefit indicated in the data. Respondent quotes that stood out regarding student outcomes include “Identifying holes

in Phonemic Awareness, Phonics & Reading and then following up on if interventions work with those identified students” (R6) and “RTI sees to it that students do not get too far behind” (R1).

Three more notable codes surfaced from the data, including that RTI would help create common practice throughout the district (9% of respondents), such as standardized interventions and common language regarding student achievement; one respondent stated, “I am hopeful that it will better standardize interventions across the district” (R37). Four respondents indicated that RTI would provide a system of accountability (9%) and two referenced improved professional development based on data from core instruction.

Table 4
Benefits of RTI

# / % n=45	Categories of Benefits	Example Statements
31 / 69%	Improved Student Success	<p>“RTI sees to it that students do not get too far behind” (R1)</p> <p>“Fills in learning gaps” (R43)</p> <p>“Identifying holes in Phonemic Awareness, Phonics & Reading and then following up on if interventions work with those identified students” (R6)</p> <p>“Early intervention they [students] may be able to overcome their issues” (R25)</p> <p>“It is a fluid way of providing intervention that meets the need of the individual” (R29)</p>
9 / 20%	Unsure of Benefits	<p>“I am not sure yet” (R34)</p>
4 / 9%	Create a Common Practice	<p>“I am hopeful that it will better standardize interventions across the district” (R37)</p> <p>“Common language and practices” (R30)</p>
4 / 9%	Improved Accountability	<p>“It prevents administrators from running with half-baked ideas that go nowhere” (R41)</p> <p>teacher to be accountable for using effective strategies in order to support each student (R31)</p> <p>“To me, it’s about follow-through” (R40)</p>
2 / 4%	Identify Professional Development Needs	<p>“If the core isn't working, then we need more training to fix it” (R7)</p>

Although there were only two specific questions seeking input regarding concerns about implementation, if a respondent indicated a concern in any other response, it was also considered

when determining where a respondent fell on the SoC scale. For example, when asked a knowledge focused question such as providing an example of Tier 1 intervention, many respondents indicated they needed more training to be able to answer the question. This was a key indicator that the concern level was in the management stage (Stage 3) of the Stages of Concern and in all cases, echoed the concerns stated in the concerns-focused question. Other major concerns included limited resources and training and the feasibility for instructors to implement with the demands of their workloads. Training and resources were the most frequent responses to the question regarding needed supports, but interestingly 10 of the 45 respondents indicated they needed to feel support and encouragement from administration.

DISCUSSION & IMPLICATIONS

This discussion section is divided into themes derived from the constructs of knowledge and benefits. The question asking about concerns was analyzed using the Stages of Concern model (Newlove & Hall, 1976).

LIMITATIONS

One important limitation to note is the limited sample size of only 25% of the possible sample, which raises the issue of generalizability to the entire population (Rahman, 2020). A further limitation included potential selection bias. The researchers relied on educators to respond to the recruiting messages and did not conduct direct recruitment; consequently, the responses are subject to participation bias. Because the participants volunteered to complete the survey, they may not have represented the beliefs of the whole population. The survey instrument also posed some limitations, as although the questions were open-ended related to the Stages of Concern framework, the instrument itself had not been tested in prior studies. However, the survey questions were reviewed and designed in conjunction with school and district-level leaders with the intent of discovering teacher readiness for RTI implementation at the school and district level.

KNOWLEDGE OF RTI

The most apparent theme from the knowledge-focused questions on the survey was the discrepancy between teacher theoretical understanding of RTI and the application of the RTI approach in the classroom, which aligns with prior studies that the research to practice gap remains prevalent, even after decades of RTI implementation (Berkeley et al., 2020). It was evident that three quarters of the respondents were able to give some semblance of an accurate definition, but more than three out of four were unable to give an example of even the lowest level of classroom application. This is not surprising since there had only been an informational training; however, the administration was surprised that educators were not more professionally prepared. This brings the question about the assumptions of educator readiness and the role of quality professional development.

Gersten and colleagues (2017) discovered that RTI is effective when implemented with a high level of fidelity. In this study, participants indicated a strong desire for training and the responses regarding understanding of RTI indicated the need for the same. Although the administration already believed teachers would have some foundation based on the introduction they had provided and the longevity of the model in the field of education, educators clearly indicated they felt unprepared and untrained. This disconnect demonstrated the need for leadership to establish trust, practice fidelity, and follow-through on the implementation of the program. This

information provided a starting point for the administration regarding the depth of faculty familiarity with the decades-old innovation they were intending to implement.

BENEFITS OF RTI

Although the concerns about RTI implementation were strong, most respondents were able to speak to some of the benefits that RTI has to offer. This shed a light of hope onto the implementation. It is worth noting that 20% of responses revealed educators (not necessarily 20% of all respondents, as some respondents identified multiple benefits) were unsure of the benefits of RTI, which is similar to the percentage of respondents who indicated they did not know anything about RTI (27%). For those who did identify benefits, it was clear that they knew RTI was intended to support all students in reaching high academic outcomes. There were many references to closing learning gaps, meeting the needs of individual learners, and identifying holes in individual student skillsets. Additional reported benefits highlighted how a district wide RTI model would establish common language use regarding student needs and achievement, as well as common practices in meeting those needs. Accountability was also mentioned. This includes improved accountability for administration and for teachers, as RTI establishes a system for follow-through. Lastly, a couple of respondents emphasized how determining low student progress on the learning goals is an opportunity to receive adequate training on how to teach to student needs. It appears that the majority of educators see RTI as a system that would benefit not only themselves, but primarily, their students.

STAGES OF CONCERN

The evident themes of concern were fit to the Expanded States of Concern Framework (authors) to identify which stages of concern were most prominent among respondents. The most outstanding Stage of Concern was Stage 3: Management, which included the dominant codes of time, resources, training, and support and encouragement that surfaced during open coding. There were fewer respondents who were in the fourth level of the SoC (9%), as well as a few who were in the personal stage (13%). Although there were four participants who indicated they were not concerned at all (9%), eight respondents indicated they needed more information (Stage 1) and three did not answer the question. No responses fell within Stages 5 or 6 of the Stages of Concern model which indicated participants were not ready to collaborate and refocus on RTI implementation.

When looking at the responses regarding concerns, researchers utilized the suggestions of Newlove and Hall (1976) and focused on the global picture to provide the implementation leaders with a synopsis of educator concerns. The themes that emerged from data analysis included doubt about the effectiveness of the RTI model and time to implement, as well as concern about a lack of training and preparation for educators. Logistical concerns and concerns regarding access to resources and additional time for implementation dominated this stage, however, training also surfaced as a theme of concern. The biggest revelation as a result of this study was noting that nearly half of the educators who participated were in Stage 3 (management) of the SoC model, which indicates their greatest concern was with the task of implementation.

Although some respondents indicated no concern, or Stage 0, the SoC research indicates that this does not necessarily mean the respondents are implementing the innovation or that they have no concerns, but rather, requires additional investigation. For the purposes of this survey, responses were anonymous; however, if the administration chose to further the use of the SoC tool throughout the entire RTI implementation, they could benefit from collecting more personalized data.

Table 5
Expand Stages of Concern Survey Results

Stages of Concern		# / % n=45	Examples
Impact	6: Refocusing	0	No responses in this category
	5: Collaboration	0	No responses in this category
	4: Consequence	4 / 9%	<p>“That the interventions are not meaningful, they're rote, and rooted in skill and drill” (R39)</p> <p>“That we are focusing so much on reading, it has taken away from science experiments and hands-on social studies instruction” (27)</p>
Task	3: Management	20 / 44%	<p>“Executing RTI requires manpower” (R1)</p> <p>“Our district does not value teacher input” (R2)</p> <p>“Training for all staff” (R8)</p> <p>“Time and large ratios of students to teachers” (R44)</p> <p>“Staffing and scheduling” (R38)</p> <p>“Materials being provided by district to run intervention groups in the classroom” (R6)</p>
Self	2: Personal	6 / 13%	<p>“It doesn't allow for any teacher input or creativity” (R4)</p> <p>“How is it going to work? What new responsibilities will I have on top of what I am already doing? What kind of caseload numbers are going to increase?” (R41)</p>
	1: Informational	8 / 17%	<p>“Not enough knowledge to be successful” (R5)</p> <p>“I do not know what RTI is about” (R9)</p>
Unconcerned	0: Unconcerned	4 / 9%	“None” (R28)
No response	No Response	3 / 7%	No Responses in this category

For the eight percent who fell within Stage 1 (informational stage), more information is needed for them to progress along the stages of concern. Information needed includes explanations of what the innovation is, what it will do, and what is involved. This is essential information for

change leadership, as to move educators forward, they will need to start with the foundational information before they are able to begin considering the impact the innovation will have on themselves (Stage 2) and eventually on their students (Stage 4) and organization. Stage 2 focuses on the ego-related questions and uncertainties. When respondents fall into this stage, they may be unable to consider more substantive concerns regarding the change (George et al., 2013). Specific concerns stated at this stage included the impact RTI would have on educators' ability to manage workloads and the kind of work they would do.

A small percentage of respondents fell within Stage 4 of the SoC (consequence). The respondents who fell within Stage 4 demonstrated concerns about how the RTI model would impact students, which indicated that they are mentally applying the model to their practice and considering the outcomes of the innovation. These few educators are the highest on the continuum in this study.

IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

As leaders of change, this data and framework provides an opportunity to plan for management concerns as the leadership supports educators in moving along the SoC continuum during implementation. The informational concerns are also important for leaders to recognize as they prepare training to facilitate the implementation and the management concerns are essential to guiding early implementation. George and colleagues (2013) argued that the resolutions of concerns at each stage of the SoC model typically must be first resolved before later concerns can emerge. The resolution of concerns is not through more knowledge, more time, or more experience alone. For instance, the innovation could be poor and ineffective, the skills or knowledge are beyond a person's abilities, or the demands prohibit the innovation having a high priority (Newlove & Hall, 1976). Leaders can use this information to support those responsible for innovation change as they move along the stages of concern, as studies utilizing the SoC have demonstrated the effectiveness of identifying the presence of concern and extending support in resolving them (George et al., 2013).

As policies are established and programs adopted, educators often find themselves amid an ever-changing profession. The results of this study provided a look into the experiences of those subject to the ever-changing policies and allowed researchers and school and district leaders the opportunity to implement RTI with a sensitive and strategic eye. This data is valuable to researchers and education leaders in their quest for effective program implementation of RTI. The educators' hesitation to implement combined with their limited experience suggest that school and school district leadership should focus on ongoing professional development that supports teachers with all aspects of RTI as recommended by prior researchers (Werts et al., 2014). It is suggested that implementing such a model could take between three and five years (Keller-Margulis, 2012); therefore, appropriate follow-up studies would include an analysis of the ongoing training and professional development, as well as perceptions of educators over time using the SoC framework as the RTI model unfolds in classrooms throughout the district.

Equally, the use of the SoC framework proved to be an effective tool to get an overall assessment of the status of those responsible for implementation. This study revealed that most were beyond the egocentric stage of the implementation framework, which allowed administration to approach further conversations and trainings with a focus on the overall concern level. The management level of the stages primarily dealt with the logistical aspects of implementation. By thoughtfully planning for the concerns such as time, resources, scheduling, and management, the likelihood of maintaining educator positive dispositions and successful implementation increases.

Future studies that would benefit the field could include a comparative analysis between elementary and secondary educators, as well as a deeper study to analyze the training and implementation of the RTI process. Training could be interpreted and applied differently to grade levels dependent on a variety of experiences including prior experiences in the field relevant to their grade level and content area. Equally, an analysis of the training and implementation process could shed more light into the inconsistencies between administrator beliefs about training and educator experiences. Additionally, future research could include longitudinal studies to see the impact of applying SoC throughout the stages of the intervention as suggested by Newlove and Hall (1976).

In this study, the SoC analysis procedures established a framework by which to evaluate the progress of RTI implementation in this suburban district. Because of this framework, the leaders of this change can plan for and approach the innovation with the insight necessary to facilitate successful implementation.

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