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The Impact of Secondary School Educators' Implementation Of Response To Intervention (RTI) On African American Female Students

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Concordia University (Portland)
College of Education
Doctorate of Education Program

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THE IMPACT OF SECONDARY SCHOOL EDUCATORS' IMPLEMENTATION OF
RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION (RTI) ON AFRICAN AMERICAN FEMALE STUDENTS

Janelle Muhammad

Concordia University – Portland

College of Education

Research proposal submitted to the Faculty of the College of Education

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in

Transformational Leadership

Donna Graham, Ph.D., Faculty Chair Dissertation Committee

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Abstract

Understanding the implementation of the educational policy of the Response to Intervention (RTI) and the extent to which it provides support to students with learning gaps is imperative for student's success. However, teachers with the broad adoption of the RTI system nationwide may need the additional insight of the intervention delivery challenges, and analysis of direction and intensity. Guided by Dewey's theory of experiential learning, which holds that educators could utilize a student's personal experience to engage the learner, this study examined the connection of the student's experiences facilitated by the teachers' adoption and construction of edifying experiences to facilitate the closing of the achievement gap that exists for minority students. The researcher examined teachers' beliefs about the effectiveness of RTI on the academic achievement of students at tier 1 and 2 of RTI. Specifically, the researcher explored teachers' beliefs about the effectiveness of three RTI components, namely the academic abilities and performance of Students with Disabilities (SWD), Data-Based Decision Making (DBDM), and Functions of Core and Supplemental Instruction (FCSI), on the academic achievement of struggling African American Females (AAF) students. The results revealed statistically significant relationships between teachers' belief in RTI Data-Based Decision Making scores and AAF-RTI students' math achievement scores and between teachers' belief in RTI Function of Core and Supplemental Instruction scores and AAF-RTI students' math achievement scores. There was also a relationship between SWD and DBDM. This research also observed a correlation with no significance between the teachers ($n = 46$) belief of academic achievements of SWD and their FCSI. These results are indicative of need to create a climate supportive of experiential based learning for RTI implementation training for secondary teachers.

Keywords: Response to Intervention, secondary, achievement gap

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my husband and son, Salahundin and Jayden for all the love and support you bestowed me through this journey. Salahundin, your continued support, and words of inspiration have allowed me to keep pushing on. Jayden thank you for being the most understanding son a mother could have and for always loving me.

I also dedicate this dissertation to my parents Irwin and Irma. Thank you for believing in me as a child and your continued support over the years. Dad, I know that you are smiling down on me and you are still my biggest cheerleader.

I will also like to dedicate this dissertation to my Aunt Wendy and my mentor Sandra Forsythe. Aunt Wendy, you have been my greatest motivator over the years. Continually checking on me, pushing me and always there to listen and offer the best advice. Sandra, you were the first one to encourage me to pursue my dreams of completing my doctorate, you continue to promote me and inspire me to grow and reach for the stars. Thank you.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction to the Problem

In 2015, the National Center for Education Statics (NCES) reported that 24% of 8th-grade students scored below basic grade level, and 28% of 12th-graders scored below basic grade level on reading for the average National Assessment of Educational Progress (Kena et al., 2016). The successful educational attainment of students despite their race or economic status is paramount to educators. When students struggle to learn, educators are tasked with the responsibility of designing creative and engaging intervention strategies for students to learn. Fisher, Frey, and Hite (2016) suggested that learning takes place through the experience of interactions, and if these interactions are specific and intentional, the acquisition of knowledge will impact student learning. Dewey (1938) believed if educators encouraged learners to utilize their experience they will be able to relate to the learning. The linking of education and personal experiences Dewey (1938) believed, will increase the learners' capacity for knowledge.

When cultural experiences shape a learners thinking, educators should facilitate learning experiences to engage student learning. A one size fit all approach to teaching all students suggest that a students' experience may not be taken into consideration when the learner is in a mainstream classroom. Tomlinson and Imbeau (2010) believed that students should have equitable access to great learning opportunities. Dewey (1916) suggested that by being true to the individual's full potential learners can have an impact on a democratic society. If this is not an ideal, Dewey (1916) predicted that this narrow mentality would destroy our democracy. According to the NCES condition of education 2016 report an academic gap by ethnicity and race exist. At grade 8th-grade level white 8th-grade students scored the highest (274), and black students scored the lowest (248). Between the years of 1992 and 2015, average reading scores

across the nation for white 8th-grade students were higher than those of Hispanics and Blacks. However, the White-Hispanic gap has changed from 26 points in 1992 to 21 points in 2015 and the White-Black gap changed from 30 points in 1992 to 26 points in 2015 (Kena et al., 2016). At the 12th grade level, the White-Black gap of 30 points in 2015 was greater than the White-Black gap for reading of 24 points in 1992. Whereas, the White-Hispanic showed no measurable difference in 1992 than in 2015 (Kena et al., 2016). A continued gap as it relates to academic achievement and ethnicity suggests that there may be a need for a system of interventions that are culturally relevant to the individual needs of the learner. Education (1983) statements are reflective of Dewey (1938) belief of experience and education. The idea that regardless of race, class, or economic status all children are given a fair chance at tools to develop their individual mind and spirit to their maximum potential. Hence, when students are competently guided to attain informed judgments they can contribute to the success and progress of society (Education, 1983). A need for a system of targeted intervention services may help to narrow the achievement gap and increase the academic achievement standards of all struggling students.

Background, Context, History, and Conceptual Framework for the Problem

National and educational policies endeavor to close the academic achievement gap (Kena et al., 2016). The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001(NCLB) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2004) are educational laws that addresses the academic equity and providing research based guidance for improving student achievements across the nation. The NCLB Act placed standards on educators to bring all students to a competent level. No child left behind meant that all students regardless of race, culturally diversity, disability, or socioeconomic status will achieve success. Section.1001.60 of the NCLB states “closing the achievement gap between high- and low-performing children, especially the achievement gaps between minority and

nonminority students, and between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers” and “promoting schoolwide reform and ensuring the access of children to effective, scientifically based instructional strategies and challenging academic content” is important for fair equitable access to high quality to meet minimum proficiency levels (“Title I - Improving The Academic Achievement Of The Disadvantaged,” 2005). Whereas the IDEA Act of 2004 provides for students who needs additional support in the classrooms. The act mandates that struggling learners must receive scientifically based research services through a pyramid of interventions called Response to Interventions (RTI). Both educational policies mandate a system of scientific based research interventions to improve academic achievement in schools. Hence, intervening services should offer multiple methods of remediation for students. Differentiation of curriculum, will provide multiple avenues for instruction and assessment students on all tiers of the RTI pyramid of intervention. Therefore by providing struggling students with the right tools to grow, educators can cultivate democratic citizens who will function as contributing individuals to our society. The goal is to provide a benefit to all students by equipping them with the appropriate tools to thrive academically. Dewey’s concept of learning offers educators an ideal approach of personal experiences to engage the student by creating multiple avenues for student engagement and intervention. Hence, students with different abilities, interest, and learning needs experience equally appropriate ways to learn.

Statement of the Problem

The creation of the RTI system nationwide provided a framework for teachers to implement a pyramid of research based interventions for students. Dewey (1938) believed that our learning experiences are social and as such students will flourish in learner centered environments. However, the majority of intervention research and practices focuses on students

at the elementary level (“IDEA - Building The Legacy of IDEA 2004,” 2016). This creates a problem for educators as a need for clarity and insight of the intervention delivery, challenges, and analysis of direction and intensity exist for secondary students (Buffum, Mattos, & Weber, 2011; Regan, Berkeley, Hughes, & Brady, 2015). Hence, there is a need for teacher clarity to successfully implement the critical components of the RTI framework using the student’s experience as a tool.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to determine whether there is a relationship between teachers’ belief in the various aspects of RTI and the academic achievement of African American female students in tier 1 or 2 of RTI. The aspects of RTI analyzed include the academic abilities and performance of Students with Disabilities (SWD), Data-Based Decision Making (DBDM), and Functions of Core and Supplemental Instruction (FCSI).

Research Questions

The study will examine Dewey’s theory of experiences, as it will analyze the connection of the student’s experiences facilitated by teachers’ adoption and construction of edifying experiences to increment student engagement and achievement level. The research is designed to investigate the degree of consequentiality that a relationship subsists between secondary educators’ belief of RTI implementation and struggling African-American Female RTI students’ academic achievements. Therefore, the researcher will explore the subsequent questions in this study:

1. To what extent if any does a relationship exist between African American Female (AAF) RTI students’ academic achievement scores and teacher’s belief of RTI Implementation (DBDM)?

2. To what extent if any does a relationship exist between teachers' belief of RTI (FCSI) and academic achievements of AAF students on RTI (Tier 1 and 2)?
3. What is the relationship between a teacher's belief of academic achievement of African American Female students with disabilities (SWD) and the teacher's DBDM?
4. What is the relationship between a teacher's belief score of academic achievement of African American Female's students with disabilities (SWD) and the teacher's FCSI?

Rationale, Relevance, and Significance of the Study

A quantitative correlation research design is applicable for this study as it will explore to what degree if any does a relationship exist between a teacher's understanding and implementation of learner-centered RTI, and explore the relationship between teachers belief of African American Females' students with disabilities (SWD) and DBDM and FCSI.

Correlational designs look for evidence of a relationship. Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2011) delineated that correlational relationships have a pivotal role in making predictions.

Consequently, the researcher decided that correlation design was the best method to adopt for this investigation.

Henceforward, it is critical for this study to probe for the statistical paramountcy of the relationship between the degree to which teachers facilitate learner-centered experiences utilizing RTI strategies that are germane for African American females, and the caliber of belief these edifiers have in their competency to amend students' achievement. The present study will examine the students' accomplishment on the State of Texas Assessments and Accountability Readiness (STAAR) data and compare them to a teacher's credence of RTI survey. This hypothesis testing process may yield insightful erudition to discover consistent relationship by examining the evidence to optically discern if predictions about the benefits of student-centered

learning experiences for all students are statistically significant Adams and Lawrence (2014). As a result, the investigation may provide educators with a cognizance of experiential strategies to utilize in the general education classroom, which may fortify the instructional core of the curriculum and increment relevant learning experiences for students of all races, ethnicities, gender, socioeconomic status and religious beliefs.

Definition of Terms

Academic Achievement. This term is defined as the degree to which a learner, instructor, or school has achieved their collegiate goals. Examinations or constant prevalent assessment, but there are no universal standards on how it is best tested or which aspects are most consequential procedural learning such as skills or declarative learning such as fact (Tomar, 2016).

Achievement Gap. This term is defined as any significant or persistent variation in academic achievement or edifying achievement between diverse bodies of pupils, such as Caucasian and minority students, or students from different economic status (Concepts, 2013).

Culture. This term is defined as behaviors and information that either consciously or subconsciously transcends generations and helps individuals to make sense of their existence (Linton, 1945).

Culturally Relevant RTI models. This term is defined as integration of cultural values and interests of students to motivate and encourage students throughout the intervention tiers (Williams, 2015).

Learner Centered Teaching. This term is defined as the proposal of the learner at the core of the instruction. The pupil surmises the charge for acquiring the essential knowledge and skills whereas the teacher assumes the responsibility for facilitating the learning experience. Therefore, the control in the classroom is transferred to the student (“Learner Centered Teaching,” n.d.)

Learning Gaps. This term is defined as an application to the relative attainment of specific students to include the variation between what learners have mastered and what they are required to learn at an appropriate age or standard (Concepts, 2013).

Experiential or Authentic learning. This term is defined as an extensive assortment of enlightening and instructional procedures directed on cumulating what students are taught in an academic institution to relevant and a suitable world matters, dilemmas, and purposes. Hence, students, are driven to acquire incipient theories, opinions, beliefs, and judgments (Concepts, 2013).

Response to Intervention. This term is defined to as an intensive multitier framework that is a mandated pre-referral stage to special education. However, it offers research-based quality interventions and supportive instructions for struggling learners by closing learning gaps (Buffum, Mattos, & Weber, 2009; Howard, 2009; Johnson, Smith, & Harris, 2009).

Socioeconomic Status. This term is defined is generally referred to as the social position or status of a person or body. It is conventionally quantified as an aggregate of educational procurement, salary, and employment (American Psychological Association, 2015).

Assumptions, Delimitations, and Limitations

The quantitative correlational study may determine that a correlation subsists between African American Female students' academic achievement and teachers' credence level of RTI implementation. The participant representation in this investigation is confined to one secondary school located in Central Texas. The participants are edifiers working in a medium sized secondary school with predominantly minority students of low socioeconomic status. Consequently, the relationship between the instructor's implementation of learner-centered practices in the classroom and students achievement scores restrict the generalizability of the

findings. The researcher did not focus literature review on all subgroup whose minority status withal impact the edifier's implementation of learner-centered or culturally pertinent RTI practices for students.

Summary

Cultural backgrounds of both educators and students serve a significant role in students' academic accomplishments. Moreover, the ideals and expectations of students' upbringing influence their attitude about educational achievement (EdSource, 2008; Williams, 2015). It is vital for teachers and educational leaders to be aware of environmental factors in and out of the classroom that may transform the learning of African American students. Hence, it is critical that educators are informed and educated about the African American culture and can relate to the students as the individual.

Teachers and administrators can use this knowledge to continually challenge students of all races to ensure they are engaged in learning at all time. The information will be helpful because it may offer an explanation as to why students are not academically engaged, and help close the achievement gap among racial subgroups. The model selected to conduct the study is quantitative correlation research. This research was used to determine the degree of the relationships that exists between the academic achievements of female students with African American heritage and the teachers' belief of RTI implementation. The research will help identify related variables that may be useful for future experimental studies, and may provide beneficial information on the achievement gap that exists in the secondary school.

To ensure that this study meets the criteria for approval, the researcher will examine literature texts to include a historical overview and an examination of Response to Interventions (RTI) as a device for closing the achievement gaps. The researcher will analyze the Individuals

with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Legislature that outlines the framework of tiered interventions for students with learning deficits. An examination of the theoretical assumptions, of a student's personal experience and their attainment of knowledge, as it fosters student engagement and learning was studied. The exploration of Dewey's theory of experiential learning will confer a foundation to mastermind innovative and appropriate interventions for improved academic accomplishments. The literature will additionally concentrate on a culturally asserted intervention system of RTI implementation at the secondary level to avail educational practitioners to provide to the requirements of diverse students. Determinately, an investigation of the impact of the familial and societal influence of the African American girl's academic prospects and gender will support schools grappling with implementation of RTI a framework for researched-based intervention strategies for student success.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction to the Chapter and Background to the Problem

Students with learning gaps and different learning styles suffer silently on a daily basis. As a result, students attend school less frequently. Roderick, Kelley-Kemple, Johnson, and Beechum (2014) found minimal students' attendance and academic performances were predictive of future high school dropout. Hence, a students' attendance plays a critical role in academic achievements, which results in better ties to the school and infrequent deviant behaviors.

Neuman and Celano (2006) argued that the assumption that knowledge produces additional knowledge leads researchers, teachers, and policymakers to believe that those who have equal access to information use this knowledge for fulfilling educational purposes and needs. Therefore, the ideology of leveling the playing field or equalizing educational resources for minority students of low socioeconomic status is an appealing alternative for closing the academic gap in schools. For decades, researchers and policymakers (Neuman & Celano, 2006; Welch, 2001) maintained the idea that there are advantages of equalizing educational opportunities for minority children, but despite their efforts, the achievement gap still exists. The Individuals with Disabilities Educational Act (IDEA, 2004) necessitated that a required step for special education referral is the Response to Intervention (RTI) process. A primary intention of intervention programs they claimed is to provide support to intervene on behalf of students struggling with comprehension and application of the core competencies attained in the core subject areas ("IDEA - Building The Legacy of IDEA 2004," 2007). In 2006, Fuchs and Fuchs, (2006), in an introduction of RTI noted that this was an alternative method for Intelligence Quotient (IQ) – achievement discrepancy to identify students with learning disabilities. Also,

Fuchs and Fuchs, (2006) argued that RTI aids in the provision of early intervention for students at risk for low academic performances Johnson et al., (2009) conception of RTI suggested that it is a multitier approach to offer preventive instructional interventions and strategies that are research-based, and targeted to support and improve student academic achievements. Howard, (2009) defined RTI as a multitier approach that provides intervention for struggling readers. The overarching conception behind RTI she claimed is to intervene and support struggling learners read at their appropriate grade level. She noted that it is a pre-referral framework that avails students to eschew referrals to special education. Similarly, Buffum et al., (2009) defined RTI as a pre-referral system that provides targeted distribution of research-based interventions over time, with increases in intensity, before consideration to the special education program.

Regardless of definitions, they all agree that RTI is an intensive framework that is rooted in preventative science and offers quality instructions for struggling learners. Understanding the implementation of the educational policy of the RTI and the extent to which it provides support to students with learning gaps is imperative for higher academic success. Teachers with the broad adoption of the RTI system nationwide need the insight of the intervention delivery, challenges, and analysis of direction and intensity. With the initiation of RTI in school districts, a considerable amount of responsibility is placed on teachers to ensure that once students are identified as needing Tier 2 interventions documentation follows. RTI however, remains ambiguous for most educators. Fuchs and Fuchs (2006) noted that a comprehensive overview of RTI is necessary for the promotion and implementation of an effective early intervention system and Learning Disability (LD) identification.

The data identified by the body of evidence are symptomatic of a need for teacher clarification of RTI in secondary schools for an effective implementation of the intervention

program. Students at the secondary level struggle to meet standards for the state's assessment of academic readiness for reading and math at grade levels. Ehren (2009) contended that educators would identify students who may have academic difficulties at the secondary school. These students may not necessarily qualify for special education services through discrepancy criteria for learning disability identification, but require services nevertheless. Therefore, the discrepancy model that focused on a disparity between aptitude and achievement for a particular grade level, without considering the environmental factors of a student, was insufficient for closing academic gaps of a student who did not qualify for special education services, or was misdiagnosed (Buffum et al., 2009). Hence, the inability to accurately identify or misdiagnose such learners may lead to increased academic deficits at the secondary school levels.

The purpose of this literature review is to evaluate research studies on the RTI system as it relates to closing achievement gaps for female minority students. In addition to informing educators, policy makers and parents of a possible need for a culturally relevant intervention system in secondary schools, the author hopes to identify gaps in the literature and offer a framework for the explorations of a learner-centered educational experience for all students. Thus, low achieving students at the secondary level may be characteristic of a critical need for proactive measures by school districts to ensure that students at risk can benefit from an effective intervention system.

Review of the Literature

The focus of chapter two is about the literature studies that include a historical overview and an examination of Response to Interventions (RTI) as an expedient of closing the achievement gaps. The study will review the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Legislature that outlines the framework of tiered interventions for students with learning deficits.

An exploration of the theoretical implications, of a student's personal experience and their acquisition of knowledge, as it promotes student engagement and magnification was studied. The exploration of Dewey's theory of experiential learning will provide a substratum to engineer innovative and felicitous interventions for amended academic performances. The literature will additionally fixate on a culturally predicated intervention system of RTI implementation at the secondary level to avail edifying practitioners to cater to the desiderata of diverse students. Determinately, an examination of the impact of the familial and societal influence of the African American girl's scholastic prospects and gender will avail schools struggling with RTI implementations to adopt alternative ways to surmount obstacles that can obstruct student achievement.

Conceptual Framework

In 1938, John Dewey argued that traditional edifying experiences were not engaging and as a result were not conducive to learning. Education, he maintained is comprised of acquired essential knowledge and skills that have been worked out over time; the task given to educators is to communicate this message to an incipient generation. Dewey (1938) theory of experience dictates that a student's experience should dictate the pedagogical curriculum. The educator should seek to incorporate quality-learning experiences of the student. Therefore, the child's schooling experiences should be active and consist of continuity of experiences and interactions that will foster life connections. This learning should take place in a setting that is conducive to life experiences using an educator that will facilitate this knowledge and promote student growth. The framework for the theory expresses each experience as unique, independent of aspiration or objective; individual experience transcends future experiences (Dewey, 1938). Hence, ("IDEA -

Building The Legacy of IDEA 2004,” 2007) believed the basis of educational experiences should be selective and lay the foundation for subsequent creative experiences.

The IDEA, 2004 maintained that RTI is significant for education today as it holds that all children will gain provision to quality instructions at high cognitive (“IDEA - Building The Legacy of IDEA 2004,” 2007). The design of RTI framework is intended to help struggling students succeed and ensure that students can be easily identified and supported using research-based strategies of tiered interventions (core and supplemental). RTI challenges educators to implement proactive interventions using a needs-based framework that provides accommodations predicated on a student's needs. Teachers should reinforce the functions of core and supplemental instructions (FCSI) which comprises of Tier 1 core curriculum using differentiated instructions and research-based strategies Tier 2 supplemental instructions to engender multiple pathways for students to be successful (“IDEA - Building The Legacy of IDEA 2004,” 2007). Buffum et al., (2009) highlighted the discrepancy model as a system that waited for educational failure before the diagnoses of a learning disability. The discrepancy model was able to identify students’ difficulties along an academic continuum but neglected to contribute environmental factors such as the learners’ native language, culture, socioeconomic status and educational history to failure (Buffum et al., 2009). Hence, the students’ personal experience as it related to academic success was never a consideration for special education diagnoses until the use of data-based decision making (DBDM) practices was utilized for implementation of the RTI framework. Utilizing John Dewey’s theory of experience, the importance of the learner’s experience is seen as fundamental to the success of a culturally responsive RTI curriculum to improve student achievement. It follows that; Dewey’s philosophy of learner-centered instruction of quality experiences is appropriate for the intervention of

struggling students. Bates (2015) maintained that the provision of quality experiences for students allow for engagement and an opportunity for learners to cement those experiences. According to Buffum et al., (2009) a learning-centered school has a responsibility to systematically distinguish students who require extra time and support to master core instructions, by administering targeted supplemental interventions utilizing data-based decision-making practices. Therefore, the educator must provide a coherent and viable curriculum to continually monitor and target interventions focused on closing the achievement gap, while ensuring that students can evaluate and internalize their learning experiences.

The reflective practices of individuals create an opportunity to internalize experiences Mezirow (1991). Critical reflection of experiences according to Mezirow (1991) is fundamental to the problem-solving process. Dewey (1938) believed the inhibition of a student's thoughts and actions would stunt their intellectual growth. He believed thinking generates experiences. Therefore, by depriving students of the freedom to think, educators may prevent the learner from engaging in reflective practices which may impede the student's ability to problem solve. Piaget (1975) believed that construction of knowledge predicates one's experience. Hence, an understanding of the metacognitive processes and how it develops the capacity for thinking and learning is critical. According to Forbes, Swenson, and Person (2008) the RTI model has the capability to create a complex metacognitive processing system in all learners. This sanctions the individual student to develop thinking at an earlier age deepens the thinking over time and makes allowances for intricate structures of cerebrating over time.

Experience Theory as it Relates to RTI

According to Dewey (1938), the theory of education and learning are social experiences, and as such knowledge acquisition can flourish in a learner-centered classroom. Dewey (1938)

contended that educators have a responsibility to be aware of the environmental influences and experiences that shape their students' existence. Additionally, they must make a distinction as to what experiences promote student's growth. The theory of experience is adequate as it relates to the conceptual framework of RTI that supports learning connections and development of the struggling student and helps to increase teacher's awareness of the RTI process as it relates to content, context, and process. A better understanding of the RTI process and its implication for better student achievement may help to close the achievement gap for students of all ethnic groups. Educators who understand how students learn can make a significant difference in the lives of struggling students. Provisions of quality instructions and experiences can enhance students who encounter challenges with learning connections. The RTI process aligns with Dewey's concept of learning as social experiences; it proposes that teachers should create multiple avenues so that students with different abilities, interest, and learning needs experience equally appropriate ways to learn.

Despite our reasoning's learning falls into two categories, instrumental learning, and communicative learning. The facility to deduce logic rationally through a scientific process or the instrumentation of our insight to reflect critically on our personal experiences significantly impacts our scope of understanding. According to Mezirow (1991) problem-solving or learning in the instrumental domain is done through hypothetical deductive logic. Our replication to situations are resolute by the formulation of hypothetical scenarios, consequences are anticipated, and the most plausible hypothesis are culled and acted upon, and testing its validity by the results of our action. Mezirow (2000) views learning as the significance of what is communicated between individuals, as it often embodies emotions, goals, principles, and ethical issues (Mezirow, 2000). Communicative learning demands that the learner evaluates and probe

the designations of feelings, values, moral issues, and different ideals in a faculty to enhance the cognition of the individual. However, the ultimate goal of our cognition experiences is the transformation of our cerebrating so that we can make consequential experiences of our cognition.

According to Bates (2015), an essential principle of Dewey's theory suggests teachers in their attempt to communicate the required knowledge and skills to learners must strategically incorporate the learner's experience into their curriculum. A student's cultural experiences, when used in the classroom, will increase the student's interest and enhance learning. Teachers must consciously take the time and effort to infuse different cultural elements in the classroom. A student's life experiences can be used to increase the student's knowledge. Siwatu and Polydore, (2010) concluded that culturally responsive teachers (CRT) understand that students come to school with behaviors that are influenced by cultural norms and practices. As a result, CRT's cultivate a rich knowledge of their student's background and home life to enhance the learning experience of their students. The idea of integrating a student's culture into the curriculum, to facilitate learning in a non-traditional way to close the achievement gap, and to prevent the eventual dropout of students is not a novel concept. Thus, before a teacher embarks on a mission to learn a student's culture, Vygotsky (1978) suggested there must be an awareness of social interaction, as it plays a fundamental role in the development of a student's cognition. He believed that social interaction creates knowledge and thinking processes and is known as the zone of proximal development.

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of human learning supports this concept of using social experiences to enhance learning. Vygotsky (1978) maintained that sociocultural theory of human learning portrays learning as a community progression and the origination of human wisdom and

insightfulness in the cultivation of civilization. Hence, identification of social and cultural elements of specific minority students who struggle to achieve educational success is an integral part of responding to student's needs. There is a possibility that creating learning experiences that are culturally relevant can help to decrease the achievement gap with RTI.

As Bates (2015) noted, the continuity and interaction of culturally responsive interventions are fundamental to the filtering of experiences that are valuable and those that can be excluded. Commenting on the continuity of experience Dewey (1938) explicated, that life edification modifies past and present circumstances and will ultimately affect the quality of future experiences. This idea aligns with the essential components of RTI that suggest that a strong core curriculum with high quality and researched-based classroom instruction must be ongoing along with the provision of differentiated instruction, continued assessments, and progress monitoring. Therefore, continuity of this learning experience will allow for modifications that will enhance the learning experience.

Although students' experiences should be learner-centered, Bates (2015) noted, it is an expectation of teachers to select experiences that can potentially enhance the learning and development of a student's academic ability, through the provision of guidance and use of data-based decision making practices, observation, and judgment. The cognitive atmosphere produces a potency that emanates from the superiority of the instruction of core and supplemental curriculum. Hence, the instructional quality that provides for learning experiences must empower the learner to become a critical consumer of the information acquired. Similarly, the plan of intervention by the teacher should provide quality-learning experiences that determine the level of frequency, intensity and progress monitoring. Additionally, teachers will use data-based decision making practices to determine if progress monitoring is relevant to move students

between tiers. To implement the RTI process teachers must not only understand the importance of high-quality deliverance of core and supplemental instruction but how to use data to incorporate experience-based education for students (Bates, 2015).

Therefore, it is important to challenge experienced-based educators to provide quality experiences of learning that will inspire creativity and stimulate intellectual growth for struggling students. Especially since opponents of this theory believe that learner-centered classroom detracts from the role of the teacher. Teachers need to provide quality experiences for students that will enhance learning for struggling students. In doing so, the teacher must respond to the cultural needs of the student and incorporate research-based strategies that focus on the individual requirements of the student. Thus, the learners' experience can be socially and culturally constructed and integrated into the curriculum. However, Dewey's ideas of experiential learning to incorporate curriculum design is applicable for the RTI process as a student will be able to connect their cultural experiences to educational experiences. Dewey (1938) contended, that traditional curriculum was designed with rigidity, and did not make allowances engage students through the interests and nature of the learner. The inflexibility of the curriculum may exist in some classrooms today, thus it is important that teachers understand the flexibility that the RTI allows. The creation of a curriculum where students can help to design their learning experiences based on home, neighborhood, school, church and media may foster problem-solving and critical thinking skills. The possibility exists that by understanding the importance of RTI and providing relevant information to students, a teacher may promote growth and improve academic success.

Historical Overview of RTI

The development of the RTI model can be dated to Stanley Deno's cascade model, which was developed in 1970. The cascade model was originally created for students with disability services and identified five environments for the education of special needs students. One of the five models outlined included the general education classroom with full inclusion (Buffum et al., 2009). The inclusion model forced teachers to shift their perception of students with disabilities and forced them to increase their knowledge base of special education students (Brownell, Sindelar, Kiely and Danielson, 2010). From the inclusion model the concept of curriculum-based measures (CBM)'s were developed. Buffum et al., 2009) defined CBM's as short valid and reliable assessments that measures students' academic growth in reading, writing and math. CBM's are currently used in RTI. He notes that although the cascade and inclusion model were meant originally for special education students the absence of empirical evidence of academic success the focus shifted to education for all (Buffum et al., 2009).

Former President Gerald Ford signed the 94-142 Act, the Education for All Handicapped Children (EHA) Act in 1975. The Act ensured that all students with a disability could attend the public school system (Ahram, Stenbridge, Fergus, & Noguera, 2011; Buffum, Mattos, & Weber, 2011; Prasse, 2009). Along with the entry into public schools, schools were required to develop Individualized Education Plan's (IEP) for student and adhere to all system and procedural safeguards to protect the student's rights. However, there was no emphasis placed on student achievements, and as such when students were unsuccessful in the general education settings they were immediately referred to special education for testing. To address the issue of academic progress the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1997 was enacted. In this educational act, special education students would receive research based intervention

strategies, which may or may not be based on a specific need (Brozo, 2009; Buffum et al., 2009; Prasse, 2009).

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) of 2004 was signed by former President George Bush and enacted into law. The IDEA 2004 addressed not only the academic outcomes of special education students, but interventions for students before they failed. The system for addressing this issue was called RTI (Prasse, 2009). Understanding the implementation of the educational policy of the RTI system and the extent to which they offer support to students with learning gaps is imperative for higher academic success. Hence, RTI can be considered a valid substitute for IQ - achievement discrepancy, and is it a valid means of LD identification (“IDEA - Building The Legacy of IDEA 2004,” 2007)

Individuals with Disability Education Act (IDEA)

The enactment of the EHA in 1975 by Congress allowed students with disabilities to receive education similar to students without disabilities (“IDEA—the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act | Center for Parent Information and Resources,” n.d.). Amendments to the law stipulated that educators must use specific documentation for eligibility determinations of school-aged students receiving special education services. On August 14th, 2006 the final regulation for IDEA was published. According to § 300.302, Screening for instructional purposes is not an evaluation; the determination of instructional strategies for curriculum and instruction purposes are appropriate for use by teacher or the specialist to determine eligibility of special education or related services. Section 300.305 of the IDEIA 2004 Act offers specific requirements for evaluations and reevaluations. The first step to reevaluation is to review existing evaluation data. The educator must utilize current formative and summative assessment

data, historical assessment data, universal screeners, teacher observations, health history forms, and parent data (“IDEA - Building The Legacy of IDEA 2004,” 2007).

Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Education Act (IDEA, 2004) requires educational practitioners to identify At Risk students from which likely candidates are expected to surface instead of using Intelligence Quotient (IQ) test to determine learning disability Fuchs and Fuchs, (2006). Historically students were steered into Special Education services based on IQ testing. However, RTI allows for the provision of targeted and systematic interventions for struggling learners as soon as the need occurs (Buffum et al., 2011). This identification of students before labeling allows students an opportunity to receive interventions to improve academic performances before testing occurs.

Fuchs and Fuchs (2006) noted that because IQ-achievement discrepancy has been theorized as atheoretical. The lack of theory gave states the ability to interpret and student success initiatives differently. Thus, this approach does not qualitatively differentiate sub groups of low achievers Federal law stipulates that in addition to variety processes and assessments, educational agencies must utilize assessments that are custom made for students learning experiences free of racial or cultural biases as opposed to specific educational content. Assessments can include, but not limited to verbal expression, auricular discernment and reading comprehension, written expression, rudimentary reading and fluency skills and mathematical problem solving and calculation adeptness and calculation skills (Brozo, 2009; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006b; Restori, Katz, & Lee, 2009).

According to Fuchs and Fuchs, (2006) the misidentification of LD students through the use of IQ- achievement discrepancy receives the blame for increased expenses for special education services. Are governments interested in finding ways to identify students who may be

labeled as LD and providing early interventions, or are they interested in saving costs?

Regardless, the question remains is the IQ-achievement discrepancy to blame for misidentification of LD students?

Overview of RTI

Request for clarification of screening led the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) in the U.S. Department of Education to provide more details for the identification process. Response to intervention they noted provides the necessary tools and strategies that can focus instructional interventions for specific need, before an issue arises. Ideally students at all grade levels can receive supplemental academic and behavioral reinforcement in the mainstream classroom (“IDEA - Building The Legacy of IDEA 2004,” 2007).

Federal law requires that states must adopt criteria in the determination of students with Specific Learning Disability (SLD). The criteria should not include a severe discrepancy between intellectual ability and learning disability. The inclusion of a child’s response to early interventions using scientific, research based interventions (RTI). Similarly, RTI should not be the only criteria for determining special education eligibility (“IDEA - Building The Legacy of IDEA 2004,” 2007). The early intervention program (RTI) subscribed by the government contains characteristics that must be adhered by all states. The IDEA (2004) requires that the subscription of a specific RTI model is not mandatory. However, all RTI models must display core characteristics. All students must be provided with research-based instruction in their general education setting. There must be a data-based decision making framework for screening students, ongoing progress monitoring of student performance, and the determination for tiered level support. Furthermore, tiered levels of differentiated instructional support with increasing

level of intensity should be provided based on the students' receptivity of the response ("IDEA - Building The Legacy of IDEA 2004," 2007).

Data-based Decision Making (DBDM)

According to Buffum et.al (2009) data data-based decision making (DBDM) is an ongoing process of amassing, analyzing, and summarizing data to guide advancement, implementation, and evaluation of an operation. ("RTI Training Webcast - Data-Based Decision Making | RTI Action Network," n.d.) stated that data-based decision making (DBDM) is devising instructional decisions predicated on assessment data. The data-based decision-making process occurs at all levels of RTI implementation and all levels of instruction. Hence it is consequential to utilize data for screening, progress monitoring, and tiered level interventions. Hence, data-based decision making is central component of all phases of RTI. Consequently, data-based decision making is the fundamental component of all stages of RTI.

Data within the RTI model is utilized for three purposes to include *screening* which is used to identify students in jeopardy for academic challenge. *Progress monitoring* used to determine whether the learner is responsive to given education. Data is also used to *individualize instruction* as part of the multi- tiered prevention system which assesses data to develop more rigorous programs for those who don't respond to the core or supplemental instructions. ("RTI Training Webcast - Data-Based Decision Making | RTI Action Network," n.d.).

Tiered Instructions

Screening and progress monitoring lays the foundation for RTI implementation, and as such students placed on Tiers have an identification of academic deficiencies.

Tier 1-Core Instructions: According to ("IDEA - Building The Legacy of IDEA 2004," 2007) quality scientific research-based strategies in the general education classroom are provided

for all students and labeled as primary or Tier 1 interventions (Core Instructions). Buffum et al., (2012) labeled Tier 1 interventions as Effective Core Instructions for all students. The core instruction is also known as the primary, base or universal program. Students at this level do not require additional academic and behavioral support to be successful in a general education classroom. Buffum et al., (2009) suggested that the core instructional program of any school sets the foundation for a pyramid of response to intervention. These educational practitioners indicated that Tier 1 interventions are instructional programs that are provided by the general education teachers and meant for all students, the program is scientifically based and emphasizes the critical elements of the curriculum are provided with opportune abilities to practice throughout the day.

Tier 2-Supplemental Instructions: Tier 2 interventions (Supplemental Instructions) exist for students who are at risk for academic and behavioral problems. Buffum et al., (2012) labeled Tier 2 as Supplemental Interventions for some identified students. Therefore, small group instructions are appropriate for such students. Buffum et al., (2009) defined Tier 2 interventions as instructional interventions offered to supplement, augment and sustain Tier 1 instructions. The program is scientifically based and emphasizes the critical elements of the curriculum. Educators provide students with additional responsiveness, attention, and encouragement, and give them the opportunity for reviewing and pre-teaching and practicing of skills and concepts throughout the day.

Tier 3- Intensive Instructions: Finally, instructions that are unique to the individual academic or behavioral support of students with intensive needs are known as tier three or tertiary interventions (“IDEA - Building The Legacy of IDEA 2004,” 2007). Buffum et al., (2012) labeled Tier 3 as Intensive interventions for individual students. Buffum et al., (2009)

defined Tier 3 interventions as individualized instructional interventions offered to supplement, augment and sustain Tier 1 and 2 instructions. The program is scientifically based and emphasizes the critical elements of the curriculum. Educators equip learners with additional responsiveness, attention, and encouragement; and give them the opportunity for reviewing and pre-teaching and practicing of skills and concepts beyond the day. For this reason, students on Tier 3 interventions (Intensive Instructions) receive intense one on one help in the hopes that they show progress. If a student on the Tier 3 level does not demonstrate significant improvement or no improvement at all, a recommendation for special education services follows, and a referral to the special education department for testing.

The inclusion of RTI in schools allows teachers to differentiate between a knowledge gap not due to curriculum and instructional deficits and a learning disability. Hence, Local Education Agencies (LEA) must include a comprehensive list of data as part of the referral process. A common belief held by many educators is that the frequent misdiagnoses of the special education population led to the response to intervention process that called for the required steps before diagnoses. However, RTI is much more than a process for identifying students for special education services. The major intention of the intervention program is to provide support to intervene on behalf of students struggling with comprehension and application of the basic skills attained in the core subject areas. With the 2004 reauthorization of IDEA 2004 Act and the use of RTI as a measure of evaluating student eligibility for special education services, some states have mandated this approach before students can be identified as LD (Detgen & Alfeld, 2011) .

Scientific based research supports early intervention programs like RTI. This program provides a precise distinction of students with learning gaps as opposed to those with categorical learning disabilities. Consequently, these learning gaps could be narrowed with concrete,

research-based interventions (“IDEA - Building The Legacy of IDEA 2004,” 2007). The idea to create opportunities for alternate learning experiences by identifying struggling learners and intervening on their behalf to close those learning gaps is an integral component of the RTI framework. According to the description provided by Buffum et al., (2009), RTI is a program that qualifies students for intervention only after successive non-replication of felicitous, systematic, and intensive research-based interventions. This identification of students before labeling may allow students an opportunity to receive interventions to close academic achievement gaps before testing occurs. John Dewey's theory of education and experiences offers a means of providing support to struggling students and contains qualities that provide an explanation of RTI. Dewey (1938) did not define experience as a concrete concept, but as a philosophy of education. He noted that the quality of an experience has two features. Experiences are either pleasant or unpleasant and are not isolated events, but builds upon later experiences. Educators, Dewey (1938) argued should design engaging continuous activities based on these experiences to support desirable future learning opportunities. Hence, the idea of designing instructional opportunities to accommodate cognitive level, learning styles, cultural values, strengths and needs of our students is to facilitate greater learning opportunities through differentiated instructions.

Differentiation of instruction in the classroom is an intervention that allows students with different learning needs to assess the content, process, product, and affect of a curriculum using the students’ readiness level, interest, and learning profile equally (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2010). Differentiation of instruction in the classroom is an important consideration for RTI. (Bender, 2011) noted that differentiated instruction is fundamental if schools want to build effective RTI practices. He asserted that the notion of differentiated instruction predates RTI and that

differentiated instructions are in effect Tier 1 interventions. Tomlinson & Imbeau (2010) surmised that it is important for educators to understand that students in diverse classrooms differ by background experience, culture, socioeconomic status, language, gender, readiness level, interest inventory, learning profiles, learning support system, modes of learning to gather data to drive instruction. Teachers they believe have a requirement to understand the nature of their students and the content they are charged with teaching.

Dewey (1938) surmised that students respond to effective teaching, and when they do not, teachers adjust the curriculum to ensure students are making academic progress. Effective rigorous intervention strategies and a variety of delivery methods should be offered to assist students, parents, teachers, and administrators. Daly, Martens, Barnett, Witt, and Olson, (2007) believed that problems educators and parents contend with can be traced to deficiencies in fundamental knowledge and skills. When deficiencies in basic literacy and numeracy skills exist, educational gaps increase and misdiagnoses of learning abilities can lead to special education diagnosis.

Dewey (1938) suggested that schools have the right intentions of preparing our youths for future responsibilities and success in life. However, the methodology by which students receive this message is open to scrutiny. Progressive classrooms should provide students with experiences that were attained by both the student and the teacher. Fifty years ago Dewey questioned the motivation to engage in learning by students over time. He suggested that many students may have lost their drive to learn, because of the delivery of the instruction (Dewey, 1938).

RTI in Secondary Schools

The implementation of RTI in schools is challenging. RTI at the secondary level takes on a new set of challenges for teachers. Implementation of RTI at the secondary level takes a lot of time and effort, as there are limited researches available on this topic (Bender, 2011; Fitzell, 2011; Johnson et al., 2009). However, the fact remains that some students fall through the cracks. According to the NCES the national graduation rate has increased from 80 percent in 2011- 2012 to 81.4 percent for 2012-2013 and the most recent data of 2013 -2014 of 82.3 percent which means high school dropout is on the decline, this does not negate the fact that 18.7 percent of students in the United States dropped out of schools in the last year (DePaoli et al., 2015). Hence, student identification at the secondary level may prevent high school dropout. The data identified by the body of evidence are symptomatic of a need for teacher clarification of RTI in secondary schools for an effective implementation of the intervention program. Students at the secondary level struggle to meet standards for the state's assessment of academic readiness for reading and math at grade levels. (Brozo, 2009) reported that an approximation of 66 percent of secondary students read at levels that are considered academically unacceptable on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, and an estimated 1.2 million students leave school prematurely every year with literacy levels below third world countries.

Academic deficits at the middle and high school are established before students attend secondary grade levels. Hence, it makes sense to use existing data and teacher recommendations for interventions. In 2015, the NCES reported that high school dropout rate for 2013-2014 was 18.7 percent a total of 153, a total of 679 students who did not graduate high school that year (DePaoli et al., 2015). These sobering data should be perceived as betokening a public crisis; it should engender a sense of exigency to enhance resources at secondary schools for intensive RTI

intervention accommodations (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Compton, 2012). However, it is important to note that if kindergarten teachers are trained to identify at risk students and can provide adequate interventions, the problem of struggling readers at the secondary level can be prevented.

Teacher clarification of RTI at all grade levels will assist in a more effective secondary implementation. Hence, appropriate grade level training is necessary. Barrio and Combes (2015) research of pre-service teacher analyzed teachers concerns about feelings of unpreparedness of implementing RTI for students in the general education settings. They found that a marked disparity in the literature subsists concerning pre-service teachers' pedagogy's caliber of apprehension relating to the implementation of RTI. Educators are in need of more training and professional development on RTI implementation. Respondents from a survey conducted suggested that the teachers possessed inadequate erudition and training to put into action the application of the district's RTI model and insufficient time to complete these actions (Regan et al., 2015). Lack of understanding can lead to failure of a program that has great potential for closing the achievement gap. Professional development if provided should include elements that can focus on what is RTI, why we need it, how to implement these research based interventions in the classroom. Secondary schools RTI implementations may be challenging for teachers if the information is not presented with transparency for proper implementation (Bender, 2011, Fitzell, 2011; Johnson et al., 2009).

Minority Students and RTI

Equalizing educational opportunities for African American students and closing the achievement gap is a high priority of researchers and policy makers. However, this was not the case two centuries ago. Few public schools racially integrated in the 1900's, a sense of obliviousness persevered, because of a fear that African Americans did not have the mental

faculty to be taught (Hine, Harold, & Hine, 2013). White Americans feared the integration of the African American community would result in decreasing the educational level of American students (Hine et al., 2013). Segregated schools with African Americans did not receive their fair share of tax dollars (Frederick & View, 2009; Hine et al., 2013). Insufficient funding and limited curriculum culminated in a decline of attendance and low expectations for the success of African American students (Frederick & View, 2009; Hine et al., 2013). Therefore, the poor attendance rates offered a possible explanation for the low academic performance and the eventual educational disengagement of African American students.

The theory of using RTI to differentiate and build students' ability to learn at high levels is a teaching strategy that should be considered. Educational research is required to further examine the RTI process to see if a relationship exists between the interventions offered and the African American achievement gap. The continued segregation of race as it relates to academic success is a definite quandary. Leveling the playing field to ensure that students achieve an equal level of academic success is not a novel idea. Students should not struggle to accomplish similar academic success because of their race. Daly et al., (2007) offered a framework to improve the intervention process. With the use of measurements to improve educational interventions, reorganizing past experiences and consequences to further support incentive control and generalization, ameliorate the quality of instructional resources to facilitate the progression of practice and growth over time by offering ingenious training opportunities. Daly et al., (2007) noted the disproportionate use of the RTI system for majority of minorities' states, he noted that almost 40 percent of fourth graders in the nation read below the basic level, and this rate is greater for African Americans and Hispanics. However, they offered insufficient information or

explanation how to resolve this issue so that the system is used proportionally for students who needs academic intervention.

Understanding the implementation of the developmental policy of the RTI and the extent to which they offer support to students with learning gaps is imperative for higher academic success. Detgen and Alfeld (2011) offered educators and parent's insight of the intervention delivery, challenges and analysis of direction and intensity that is afforded to them with the broad adoption of the RTI system nationwide. Kern and Wehby (2014) presented a practical approach and personal insight of the intervention system by using the observations and existing data of a fictional minority student's behavior to describe the detail behavioral intervention. Interestingly, the teachers were able to provide detailed documentation of their response to Isaacs's behavior throughout the entire process. According to Kern and Wehby (2014), the illustration of Isaac showed a progressively increase in intensity and need as dictated on his response to research-based strategy utilized by the educational practitioner. The educator calls to question the practical implementation of the data and documentation fidelity for every student. However, Kern and Wehby (2014), suggested that if educators implement the program with fidelity predicated on students' individualized needs, it will avail students to be more prosperous both in and out of the classroom. Hence, it is paramount for educators who work with minority and low socio- economic students to individualize their intervention programs utilizing culturally responsive pedagogy. Gay et al., (2011) defines culturally responsive teaching as "using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively" (p. 106). The preparation of teachers for culturally responsive teaching is fundamental for ethnically diverse students' success.

RTI Implementation for Culturally Diverse Secondary Students

There is a need to understand and determine the effectiveness of the RTI framework for minority students. An effective intervention program will ensure that teachers are able to teach to ethnically diverse students. Culturally responsive teachers who teach minority students must understand the role of culture as a teaching tool to enhance the student's experience. Teachers who do not understand the cultural context of African-American students are at a disadvantage when attempting to provide quality-learning experiences for their students. According to Siwatu and Polydore (2010), the absence of a rich knowledge base of African American students', cultural background, norms, preferences and practices is unfortunate as it prevents these cultural values from being reinforced or asserted at school. However, minority students deserve interventions that are culturally appropriate.

It is necessary here to clarify what is meant by culture. Culture is not a concrete concept. It is an acquisition of norms and expectations derived at birth and continue throughout our existence. Culture can be found in the family, school, religious organizations, communities, ethnicity, class and media. Linton (1945) defined culture as behaviors and information that either consciously or subconsciously transcends generations and helps individuals to make sense of their existence. West (2000) surmises that culture is homogeneous to economic or political structures; it is cemented in institutions such as families, schools, religious organizations, and business industries. Culture dictates our livelihood and saturates the perspectives of a juvenile's life, including resting, performing, thinking, and interacting. The development of culture is inherent in the composition of relationships, participation in daily routines, and involvement in learning activities. Tomlinson and Imbeau (2010) related culture as an element of exploring and expressing pedagogy using an approach to learning that is influenced strongly by the contexts an

individual lives and makes sense of their existence. However, Thomas, Davidson, and McAdoo (2008) cautions that diversity exists within cultures.

Culturally relevant response to intervention (CR-RTI) models according to Williams (2015) integrates cultural values and interest of students to motivate and encourage students throughout the tiers. CR-RTI pays attention to both the cognitive aspects of engagement and affective levels (Williams, 2015). Affects according to Tomlinson and Imbeau (2010) are the way emotions and feeling impact student learning. Hence, creating CR-RTI models entails the requirement of teachers having a relationship with students. Williams (2015) suggested that there is no significant difference between CR-RTI and traditional RTI frameworks. At the core of the RTI framework is the provision of appropriate and high quality instruction for students. The RTI framework places students in the center of learning by differentiating instructional needs based on learning styles, values, and knowledge. However, the interpretation of appropriateness for educators may differ and a tendency to focus on skill based intervention of problem solving and calculations in content areas. CR-RTI for African American students should incorporate movements, bonding, interdependence and communalism to engage and motivate the learner (Williams, 2015). Thus, Williams (2015) offers the following formula for creating CR-RTI models, 'valued cultural characteristics among students + RTI framework = culturally relevant RTI (CR-RTI) models.

Characteristics often associated with the African American culture include communalism, movement expression, orality, and verve (Belgrave & Allison, 2013; Boykin, Jagers, Ellison, & Albury, 1997; Williams, 2015). Hence, it is important to consider communalism as social orientation where the interactions with peers involve creating social bonds. Group duty will allow the individuals to work in cooperative learning groups and

collaboration. The construct of identity is not viewed as individualistic but identifying within the context of a group. Sharing allows the individuals to spread their wealth for the benefit and success of others (Williams, 2015). Movement Expressiveness incorporates rhythmic orientations that features stylistic patterns of percussion music and movements (Williams, 2015). According to Belgrave and Allison (2013), orality is a characteristic associated with African American folk stories. Therefore, presentations and speeches are often lively and entertaining (Williams, 2015). Verve incorporated the variability of bonding, movement, expression, and music and the ability to choose. A sense of animation and preference for activities and rhythm and expression (Belgrave & Allison, 2013; Williams, 2015).

Creating a culturally responsive pedagogy necessitate that educators make authentic attempts to understand the child as a whole, part of a cultural group and as an individual. Therefore, the educator must encourage and provide opportunities for students to foster a culture that invites creativity, inquiry, and innovation. Dewey (1938) recommended that a fundamental expectation of teachers include an awareness of how the nurturing climate molds a child. Additionally, educators must acknowledge how the nature of a youth's surroundings contributes to growth experiences of the learner. The integrity and survival of learning in a global economy dictate that the learning experiences in the classroom are relevant to real world experiences.

The continued segregation of economic status as it relates to academic success creates challenges. Ensuring that students achieve a high level of academic success regardless of their heritage should be a top priority for educators. It is consequential to make developmentally congruous curriculum decisions to learn about the lives, credence's, and fascinates of the children and their families ("Multicultural Principles for Head Start Programs Serving Children Ages Birth to Five," 2011). A student's cultural experiences should be used to influence growth,

innovation, and creativity. According to “Multicultural Principles for Head Start Programs Serving Children Ages Birth to Five,” (2011) subsequent to an endeavor to implement RTI, urban school systems with challenging circumstances, must have the competency to purposively and thoughtfully examine the context of the pedagogy for improved student achievement. For student performances to improve a teacher must embrace the embedded culture of the student and maintain high levels of belief when circumstances become challenging.

The understanding of culture is crucial to the success of a multicultural classroom in the twenty-first century. Schein (1992) argued that it is important that we see the world through a cultural lens using a cultural perspective hence, becoming adept at analyzing culture forces in organizations. He believes that after learning to optically discern the world through cultural lenses, all kinds of things commence to make sense that initially was inscrutable, frustrating, or ostensibly incoherent. Therefore, to understand a culture, a *Weltanschauung* of culture is imperative.

Creating culturally responsive classrooms for minority and low socioeconomic students are possible. Therefore, the implementation of a culturally responsive intervention program will require planning and support of all stakeholders. According to Ahram et al., (2011) urban school districts often have higher rates of poverty, ethnic and linguistic diversity, immigrant population, and a preponderant mobility of students as opposed to suburban and rural districts. Ahram et al., (2011), does not refute the fact that poverty-stricken schools do not face challenges implementing the RTI program. They suggest however that some challenges are specifically unique to culturally diverse schools. They noted three cultural challenges that can engender barriers to the prosperous implementation of RTI to include cultural dissonance of views of ethnicity and stature as constraining prognosticators of academic accomplishment; discernments

of diverse learning characteristics versus astute insufficiencies; and an absence of cultural responsiveness in prevailing operational procedures and systems (Ahram et al., 2011).

The successful implementation of RTI is promising for the school who address cultural differences in schools with low- incomes or racial/ethnic minority students. Ahram et al., (2011) posited that the institution must cultivate a culture of innovation, creativity, and competence in their students. A student's racial or income status should not matter with regards to creative abilities as everyone can bring something refreshingly different to the table. Ensuring that student reach their potential, and become active participants in the creation of ideas and solutions is an effective way of showing students you value their involvement.

Furthermore, Ahram et al., (2011) claimed that by demystifying the schools' accomplishments, educators can explicitly edify the systems of potency that highlight the institution's cultural system without denigrating or devaluing of the students' fundamental cultural standards and values. Moreover, it is important to embrace cultural differences so that students gain a sense of trust and connectivity. An embracement of cultural differences will decrease the student's fear and apprehension at school. According to Hallowell (2011) "there is no greater cause of underachievement than fear" (p. 89). The negative influence of fear in the in a school setting can cause unnecessary suffering. Fear can cause a paralysis of the brain, which ultimately leads to poor performance. Hallowell (2011) believed, when the brain applies its full attention to an imminent threat of trepidation, that higher cortical cerebrating, grasping irony, laughing at a jest, concocting an initial conception, optically discerning shades of gray, ceases to subsist. If students are apprehensive and stressed out, performances may become limited.

Ahram et al., (2011) encouraged relationship building between students and teachers to improve the classroom climate and help to improve behavior and achievement through the use of

integrity, respect and trust. An effective educator will build resourceful relationships with students and stimulate growth and change through support, respect, innovation, a caring attitude and authentic appreciation of educational and personal growth for all students. Ahram et al., (2011) addressed the importance of building the relationship with parents and stakeholders. Trust, rapport, relations, and connections between students and educators are withal aided by the formal coordination of services with community allies to meet real needs such as food, health care, and guidance services. Therefore, it is important that schools understand the importance of collaboration with parents to gain support. Collaboration to get improvement is beginning to the end product that can benefit all.

Student Engagement as it Relates to Student Achievement

Fitzgibbon (2008) suggested that although it makes sense that students who attend school regularly gain more information and do better on tests, this philosophy is accurate if the students are engaged in meaningful learning experiences, and as a result attendance is not a guarantee of success. Therefore, positive experiences of student engagement may result in better academic performance. Greene, Marti, and McClenney, (2008) suggested that engaged students are academically involved when the institution has conditions set in place to allow significant participation by the student body. Greene et al., (2008) concluded that there is a lot of literature that indicates institutional barriers as they contribute to the racial disparity in academic achievement. These barriers he stated included culturally monolithic classrooms, African Americans experience with racism, faculty who may lack cross cultural skills, curricular choices and method of delivery can have adverse effects on learning, one-dimensional instructional style of teaching may be unsuitable for the diverse nature of ethnic minority students (Greene et al., 2008).

According to Gregory, McCarty, and Soderman (2005), many of the overwhelming hardships faced by African American youths affect their school achievement. Some elements of African American students' adversity are; learning styles are different from white Americans. For these reasons students leave school early instead of fighting for an education Hale (2001), and there is an alarming number of students' discipline referrals (Gregory & Weinstein, 2008). In academic climates, there is a negative impact for student referrals, and as a result students miss instructional time and develop an indifferent academic identity that can lead to disengagement.

African Americans and Testing

The endorsement of the Child Labor Law in 1836 was the first recorded attempt to keep indentured servants and children who were slaves, in school. This law mandated that it was against the law to let children partake in activities that would cause them harm or prevent them from attending school. Children who were working in factories had to attend school, at least, three months out of the year, and the workday was limited to ten hours per day (Schargel & Smink, 2014).

The Freeman's Bureau afforded African Americans educational opportunities as men. These educational opportunities happened between 1865 and 1870 and resulted in the education of 247,333 African Americans in the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics ('High School Dropouts Cost Country Billions', 2006). This pivotal decision became a catalyst for the inspiration of reducing the amount of African Americans who attended formal schools. A new legislative enacted the intent on leveling the funding field for Texas (Romo & Falbo, 2010). The Texas school system became a blue print for the No Child Left Behind Act in 2000 and signed in to law in 2005 (Texas Education Agency, 2016). The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act

demanding that every state institute academic measures and a state examination system that suffices federal specifications. States, districts, and private institutions are obligated to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). State mandates require that a particular portion of the learner population must perform at standard grade or above in reading and math (No Child Left Behind, 2001). An important objective of the NCLB is closing the achievement gap between white Americans and minority students (Schargel & Smink, 2014; Williams, 2015). In 1997, Congress authorized funding to help low-performing schools seek new programs to raise student achievement (Schargel & Smink, 2014; Williams, 2015).

African American Females and Academic Achievement

A considerable amount of literature has been published on the African American male and academic achievement (Davis, 2003; Noguera, 2009; Stahl, Keane, & Simic, 2013); Supporting the School, 2015). However, there is limited research on the African American female. The traditional dominance of male roles has influenced research. Hence, a gap in the literature exists for the academic achievement of the African American girl.

Meaning perspectives screen our use of symbols as a way of allowing for interpretation of our worldview. Horizons of expectations, frames of reference, and point of view or meaning perspectives provide a reference point from which we draw our reality (Mezirow, 1991). Perceptual filters can be unconscious and can shape our lives positively or negatively. Hence, it is important to understand a student's self-identity in relation to academic achievement. As Belgrave (2009) pointed out our identity originates from prior experiences, prophesies our destiny and defines our essence of self. A pivotal character of our individuality emotions, is the inspiration of faith one's self possess. Therefore, an African American's female identity of self will affect her socialization and experiences in school.

An adolescent self-identity is important as they usually make decision that can impact their lives positively or negatively. Belgrave (2009) noted the identity of an African American girls' self-conceptualization is intricate and consist of many dimensions. Self-concept and identity are consequential to examine as principles influence uniqueness and individual growth. Belgrave (2009) suggested that the African American teen female possess high self-confidence and self-esteem, African American girls self-concepts tend to be commonly positive. Nonetheless, the aforementioned is not implicative of an absence of negative self-concepts. Additionally, the author claims that the self-identity of African American teen also includes roles such as the daughter, friend, member of an extra-curricular group and student.

Socialization in familial and cultural circle of trust provides a child with an initial template that serves as the master plan and patterns the way they experience life. Belgrave (2009) maintained that the structure of the African American family is atypical. Therefore, the existences of extended households are as common as single parent households. Single-female-headed households predominantly house African American girls. Mothers heavily influence their daughters and as such the relationship with their fathers' decline with age. Mezirow (1992) argued that all too often figurative representations are thrust unto one's sense imagination and give meaning to symbolic representations, hence one form behaviors and customs of expectations which structures and establish these signs into actions or gestures that coveys a set of established principles.

Commenting on customs of expectation Belgrave (2009) noted, African American females have a historical background of taking responsibility for the health and care of herself and her family. Hence, African American females are androgynous, and as such tend to assume both gender role identities. In his ethnographic research of black girls at a secondary school

(Morris, 2007) noted the assertive interactions of African American girls. He noted that majority of girls of African descent spoke assertively in the classroom, stood up to the boys both verbally and physically without the help of the teacher. The majority of the girls he noted competed with boys and girls for the positive attention of the teacher. These approaches and styles inside classrooms are expected when examining the past encounters of most women with African heritage, who have labored against race and gender persecution in forms that varied in stark contrast to White women (Morris, 2007; Belgrave 2009; Evans-Winters & Esposito 2011). It is this flexibility that has allowed African American females to become successful in the workforce, despite their identity as a double minority (Belgrave, 2009). This framework of reference scaffolds to contour and shape their worldview and traditional values which are now observed in the African American female teen. Hence, (Morris, 2007) argued, that the historical excision from Caucasian typical standards of effeminateness and the requisite to not rely on men has produced candidness for countless females of African heritage. The assertiveness of African American girls may lead to an independence that can be mistaken for insolence in the school system (Belgrave, 2009; Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010; Morris, 2007). Furthermore, (Morris, 2007) argued, that such notions and views result in a substratum of chastisement intended to reform the femininity of black females as more tolerable. Nonetheless, (Morris, 2007) cautioned that an acceptable practice of femininity is equitable to the conventional view of compliance and passiveness.

Culturally responsive RTI can promote positive self-confidence by teaching students about their cultural heritage. It is important to expose African American adolescents to other successful African American females. (Belgrave, 2009) listed several suggestions to help develop the African American female identity of self and family. These suggestions included

providing opportunities for the expression of androgynous gender role beliefs, the ability to discuss career options, promoting and identifying positive relations for peers, adults and authority figures. Furthermore, allowing African American girls to reflect on the meaning of family, praising and rewarding them when they do something positive, teaching them to analyze media messages and encouraging and providing opportunities for meaningful relationships with males.

Perceptions of an African American Female

Understanding the cultural content of communication is important as symbolic constructs are collectively conveyed as particular meanings. Assumptions are made based on the content of our language. Surpassing the limit of our presuppositions is important as we interact with people of different cultural heritages on a daily basis. Distorted or limited meaning perspective or views prevents us as adult from learning new information.

According to (Mezirow, 1991) the ability to make meaning of our learning experiences over time is based on our need to make meaning of our experiences. “These understandings must be explained in the context of adult development and social goals” (Mezirow, 1991, p. xii). As a child, it is impossible to make sense of every experience and interpret them fully without biases from cultural upbringings. Hence, as time passes, our capability to make sense of meaning without those biases changes even though these changes can question and challenge our basic beliefs and values.

Academic Expectations of African American Girls/Females

The term academic as reported by Armstrong (2007) cognate to an accentuation on academic content, problem-solving, critical cerebrating skills whereas, achievement tells us how educators expect students to master these accomplishments. Students who master the concept of

academic content and skills are heralded as successful academic achievers. (Belgrave, 2009) argued that a school that fosters feelings of low expectations from African American girls condones academic incompetence.

Academic confidence allows students to approach problems with self-assurance in their ability. Also, higher academic persistence is related to self-confidence that is a greater individual honor, self-acceptance, and self- efficacy views (Butler-Barnes, Chavous, Hurd, & Varner, 2013). However, a contradiction exists, as the academic achievement belief for African American females may be low when compared to the level of confidence the student displays. This inconsistency may be due to the alienation of the African American youth, hence the likelihood to maintain enthusiasm and motivation academically is minimal because of perceptions of discrimination (Belgrave, 2009).

African American females possess great self-confidence. Sue and Sue (2002) in their book *Counseling the Culturally Diverse*, posit that a great deal of African American adolescent display an energetic, persuasive and challenging communication style. On the other hand, schools have norms of traditional values of docility; teacher centered activities and individualized activities.

Understanding the cultural content of communication is important as symbolic constructs are conveyed as particular meanings. Assumptions are made based on the content of language. Surpassing the limit of one's presuppositions is important as they interact with people of different cultural heritages on a daily basis. Teachers who interpret African American girls' assertiveness as a negative form of communication may look at this behavior as aggressiveness or possibly misbehavior. This misbehavior may ultimately lead to discipline measure by teachers and administrators. Morris (2007) claimed that African American girls received the majority of

their disciplinary actions from the related behavior. Their outspokenness was an observation that he made. Black girls did not adhere to the white middle-class perspective of docility and passiveness, the prospects of safeguard, when compared to their white peers, were missing. Teachers expectations for African American girls Morris (2007) observed were that of the norms associated with American Caucasian girls.

As a child, it is impossible to make sense of every experience and interpret them fully without biases from cultural upbringings. Butler-Barnes et al., (2013) argued that the experience of school based racism for adolescents leads African Americans to believe that despite their academic abilities and tireless efforts, they receive rewards that are sub- par to those of their peers. Hence, as time passes, the capability of the African American female youth to make sense of perceived discrimination without losing confidence in her ability may affect the quality of her learning experiences.

According to Mezirow (1991), we learn many ways of understanding the world insensately through socialization. These culturally determined frames of reference conventionally remain insensate, but they are very consequential in the tenaciousness of our interpretation of experience. Thus, the constructs of racial pride, self- worth and acceptance are crucial when examining how African American youth deal with cultural discrimination at schools Butler-Barnes et al., (2013). Consequently, as an African American girl develops, socialization in her familial and cultural circle of trust provides her with an initial template that serves as the master plan and patterns the way she experiences life. All too often figurative representations are trusted unto one's sense of imagination and give meaning to symbolic representations. Hence African American girls form behaviors and customs of expectations which structures and establishes these signs into actions or gestures that coveys a set of

established principles (Mezirow, 1991). Therefore, the Weltanschauung of an African American female is altered by her familial and cultural upbringing.

Educational Gender Gap and Educational Expectations

In a study conducted by Wood, Kaplan, and McLoyd (2007), the researchers studied how gender was connected to the academic expectations of inner-city, low-income African American students and their parents, and teachers. The researchers sought to determine if gender differences were grounded motivational theory. Data from the study was obtained from Child and Family Study of the New Hope Project. The participants of the study consisted of African American families with youngsters' ages 6 to 16. The sample comprised of 301 African American caregivers, 466 children, and 281 teacher samples. The researchers analyzed perceptions of school conditions, academic achievement and indicators of socioeconomic status of youth, parents and teachers academic expectations. The researcher performed a regression analysis to determine if the youth's gender was related to their parents and teachers educational experiences. A comparison of the boys and girls were made to determine if a difference of the expectations existed for the boys when compared to girls. The data was also analyzed to determine if the relationship expectations were based on gender. Finally, an analysis of parents' low expectations of the youth affected the child who had a positive school environment and high teacher expectation.

An educational gender-gap subsists for African American students. In their research, Wood et al., (2007) found parents and edifiers held minimal prospects for the eventual procurement of African American males than females. Likewise, African-American males were uncertain that they would attend or graduate college as were females. The female youth in the study reported higher prospects for themselves. Education gender inequalities subsist for all

income level of African Americans, although they are extreme for families' low socioeconomic means (Wood et al., 2007; Wood, Kurtz-Costes, Rowley, & Okeke-Adeyanju, 2010).

Therefore, African American girls received more support from parents and teachers concerning academic expectations. When perceptions of the school environment and teacher expectations were high, the students' expectations were high regardless of the low parental expectations. Therefore, when school practitioners have a positive view of students' performance a buffer is engendered to abate the impact of low parental prospects (Wood et al., 2007).

The study conducted by Wood et al., (2007)) and Wood et al., (2010) contribute to the literature with regards to gender disparity and educational experiences. However, a more comprehensive methodology would have compared different socioeconomic statuses of African American youths. As reported by (Belgrave, 2009) African American female students are generally more optimistic than boys regarding their education and careers. Hence, their educational expectations differ from for African American girls and boys.

Parent Expectations

As noted in the previous section, parental expectations for boys and girls vary in the African American community. A mothers' influence on her daughter may also affect the academic achievement African American girls. In a study on differential parenting as an explanation for gender inequalities in achievement, Varner and Mandara (2014) data for this study were collected from 796 African Americans from a total of 924 families from the Maryland Adolescent Development in Context Study (MADICS). The study by Varner and Mandara (2014) used a diverse sample of the socioeconomic status of African American to include socioeconomically and environmentally diverse families with minimal income living in inner-city, suburban and rural settings.

Analysis of the data collected by Varner and Mandara (2014) showed that there were a higher GPA and test scores related to greater parental monitoring, age, revenue, and education. Moreover, girls reported less autonomy in their households and were subject to more parental rule enforcement, and higher expectations. The researchers reported that parent of girls were very involved in the whereabouts of their daughters and as such tended to be more involved in their lives. Mothers also reported having less conflict with females than males. Varner and Mandara (2014) reported that mothers had more conflict with firstborn boys than firstborn. Consequently, Varner and Mandara (2014) concluded that African American females outscored the African American males consistently in academic achievements. This was similar to other ethnic groups. Nonetheless, for African American girls, the score for mathematics was more advanced than African American boys whom the researcher reported was an anomaly for other ethnic and racial subgroups. A mother's level of academic prospect for females was noted as the most astronomically immense parenting distinction between males and females. Mothers of daughters were markedly more probable than mothers of sons to have confidence that their youngster would thrive in an academic establishment. youngster would thrive in school (Varner & Mandara, 2014). In the discussion of their finding the researchers Varner and Mandara (2014) reported that more preponderant societal trends of higher educational procurement amongst African American women and elevated rates of imprisonment among African American men may lead mothers to have lower prospects and more evasive expectations for their sons. This trend may be related to the positive expectations parents have for their daughters and the negative outlook on life for their sons.

Texas Assessments

The State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) is accountability rating

standard set out by the Texas Education Agency (TEA). The STAAR is considered assessment system for Texas students' for grades 3 to 11. STAAR measures knowledge, comprehension, and the application of concepts and skills learned of what the student is expected to be proficient at in the appropriate grade level. Measurement for test assessment is on a scale score, which indicates if a student received commended performance this score is an indicator of mastering the concepts taught. Meeting the standards is indicative of proficient knowledge and comprehension of the subject area and not meeting the standards indicate that the student has limited knowledge in the specific subject area. The ever-increasing accountability standards of Texas schools created a more rigorous curriculum, promotion requisites, and implement different, more involute assessments, including the stipulation that third, fifth and eighth graders must pass the state exam and their coursework to advance to the next grade level. Plans include the requisite that added classes pass the test, along with their coursework for promotion to the next grade (Texas Education Agency, 2016).

Factors That Influence Learning in African American Students

Students' academic achievement and success are based on standardized tests, without taking into consideration the issues that affect results may be biased. Wiggan (2007) believed that some educators view African American students as inferior because of the historical perpetuation of African Americans as intellectually inferior and deem them incapable of becoming high achievers. According to Steele (2004), ability-testing paradigms use “students’ low scores to steer them...into a low expectation education” (p.39). This system of low educational expectation is often related to special education. In the twentieth century, theories evolved using genetics as an explanation for the differences in intellectual ability Belgrave and Allison (2014) their historical review of factors contributing to the genetic inferior theories about

African Americans noted that Darwin's survival of the fittest theory and Galton's doctrine of eugenics both contributed to this misinformation. Francis Galton, an originator of modern psychology suggested that intelligence was inherited by one's ancestors (Belgrave & Allison, 2013; Wiggan, 2007). Darwin and Galton's theory promoted individual differences of African Americans and suggested inferiority of intelligence based on racism and discrimination (Belgrave & Allison, 2013). Additionally, Belgrave and Allison (2013) believed that the work of Herrnstein and Murray's 1994 the bell curve supported racial inferiority theories by suggesting that African Americans fell at the lower end of the Bell curve based on intelligence difference of racial groups. George Stetson made the first attempt to measure the intelligence ability of blacks and white (Wiggan, 2007). Stetson selected students based on their skin tones and features. Although his research revealed that African American students performed better than their white Americans counter-parts, he believed that African Americans were intellectually inferior. The Binet test focused on the use of standardized English, this resulted with white Americans doing better than the African Americans. These findings were highly publicized by the media for the next 60 years. The idea that white Americans were superior to African Americans in terms of intelligence persisted (Belgrave & Allison, 2013; Wiggan, 2007).

The genetic deficiency theory was later challenged when the proposition that an understanding of social and economic theories may affect students' achievement (Belgrave & Allison, 2013; Wiggan, 2007). Their findings reported that when students received the same educational support, high quality instruction, and encouragement, they performed equally (Wiggan, 2007; Belgrave & Allison, 2014). Hence, the concept of using appropriate quality instructional strategies to increase the achievement level of students from diverse culture is beneficial for the RTI process.

State and national tests have shown that over the years, particular subgroups of students achieve lower scores and the achievement gap attributed to issues from the home and school environment (EdSource, 2008). Although poverty is not the foundation for low achievements, students exposed to this hardship suffer from related conditions as inadequate nutrition, healthcare, shelter, substance abuse, and high crime communities. Poverty results in high stress levels in the family, postpartum depression, insufficient interaction with children, and family illiteracy. For this reason, children with one or more risk factors tend to lag behind their counterparts. African Americans represent a high number of students living in impoverishment, and starts school with hindrances (EdSource, 2008).

When students begin school with hindrances, low - teacher expectations can create complications towards a students' performance. Several practices appeared after using regression analysis to determine activities that were similar for high performing school. One noted is a teacher who had higher expectations for their students had higher standardized scores (Williams, Kirst, & Haertel, 2005). The principal of Grass Valley Elementary School Oakland Unified, Alameda County, California whose African American students showed high achievements on standardized test when interviewed about the challenges facing African American student maintained that, African American youths continuously view negative images of themselves in the media and as such emulate their deportment to mirror the popular culture. Students who believe that it is infeasible to achieve at high levels incline to work less and as a result, achieve the bare minimum. However, she believes that children who are incessantly rewarded and built up with a positive image customarily strive to their maximum potential. The quandary lies in the fact that African American students are not customarily viewed in that light (EdSource, 2008).

Muhammad (2009) noted classrooms rarely reflect African American success. Students he claimed if not presented with positive images of themselves can lose interest (Muhammad, 2009). Payne (2008) in her book *Under-Resourced Learners* indicated that educators must first understand the individual before teaching the individuals as a group. Payne (2008) believes that as an educator it is important to relate to the students before teaching can begin. One of her eight strategies to boost student achievement is to build relationships of mutual respect with students. “Students don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care” (Payne, 2008, p. 138). Student’s discernment of teachers concern and care for ones well-being, and academic achievement is the main criteria for academic success (Payne, 2008). When teachers believe that students are incapable of high achievement, they come to work with a lack of zeal. This lack of enthusiasm resulted in teachers being unprepared for classroom instruction (Wiggin, 2007).

Summary

History has shown that the African Americans struggled in order to accomplish the right to an education. Years of stereotyping as inferior, because of the pigmentation of their skin, have created achievement gaps. The relationship between race and achievement is a question still asked today. Nevertheless, researchers admit that a relationship exists between low teacher expectations and high achievement (Wiggin, 2007).

Cultural backgrounds of both educators and students play a significant part in students' academic accomplishments. In addition, the ideals and expectations of students' upbringing influence their attitude about educational achievement (EdSource, 2008). According to Ahram et al., (2011), the problem of students leaving school prematurely does not remain within the student themselves, but there are many other demographic indicators associated with this phenomenon, to include poverty, race or ethnicity, academic failure, parental education and limited proficiency

in English. Academic failure and poverty tend to be a critical variable in determining the graduation rate of African American students. The belief that African Americans cannot relate to an institution that for so long has put up barriers to impede their success is only the tip of the iceberg. The literature review justified the need for the investigation and provided a framework for my research. Despite the legislature passed to improve achievement scores a continued gap persists between African American students and other subgroups.

The assumption that student comprehension of rigorous curriculum and instruction produces greater student achievement leads researchers, teachers, and policymakers to believe that those who have equal access to information use this data for fulfilling educational purposes and needs. Therefore, the ideology of leveling the playing field or equalizing educational resources for minority students of low socioeconomic status using an intervention program is an appealing alternative to closing the educational gap in schools. Equalizing educational opportunities for students with low socioeconomic status and closing the achievement gap is a high priority for researchers and policy makers. The theory of using a response to interventions system to differentiate and build student's ability to learn at high levels is a teaching strategy that needs consideration. Consequently, the use of the RTI model to close achievement gaps in urban schools is an attempt by educators and policy makers to bridge these deficiencies.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

Teachers communicate essential knowledge and skills to students' every day; however, many teachers may not communicate this knowledge using the learner's experience of home, family, community and ethnicity as a strategy to engage the learner. As early as 1938, Dewey argued for an education system that allowed learners to experience an education using a perspective that students could relate to. Dewey (1938) believed that despite all qualms, one perpetual frame of reference existed, an inherent relationship linking education and personal experience. Hence, the government, to increase the overall quality of the learning experiences of students mandated the implementation of the RTI program. A provision of the law allowed for the required interventions of students who were identified as low achievers. Students must receive multiple measures of formative assessments before they are placed on tiered interventions. Hence, intervening services should offer multiple methods of remediation for students. Therefore, by differentiating curriculums based on content, process, product, and affect, teachers can engineer multiple avenues to instruct and assess students on all tiers of the RTI pyramid of intervention. The Texas Education Agency (2016) noted, RTI is one approach schools utilize to avail all learners especially those that struggle to succeed. This method sanctions Texas students an opportunity to be edified at grade level. The goal is to provide a benefit to all students by equipping them with tools to thrive academically. The RTI approach aligns with Dewey's concept of learning as social experiences; it proposes that teachers should engineer numerous avenues for learners with various faculties, pastimes and educational needs receive equal opportunities to learn and grow.

The problem however is that with the adoption of the RTI system nationwide, there is a

need for clarity and insight of the intervention delivery, challenges, and analysis of direction and intensity, especially for secondary students (Regan, Berkeley, Hughes, & Brady, 2015). In their research, Regan et al., (2015) found that there was a need for more support and guidance for educators within the RTI model. They noted that teachers lacked the essential expertise needed to successfully implement the critical components of the RTI framework. In their book *Simplifying Response to Intervention* Buffum et al., (2011) suggested that educators hunger for information, practical strategies and a simplification of RTI to boost the overall performances of all students.

With the initiation of RTI in school districts, a considerable amount of responsibility is placed on teachers to ensure that once students have been identified as struggling learners, documentation follows. RTI however, remains ambiguous for most educators. According to Regan et al., (2015) a lack of clarity exists for teachers at the secondary school; hence the opportunity to provide quality experiences for all students before they leave school prematurely may be of concern to all students. Therefore as noted by Dewey (1938) a requirement for a comprehensive theory of experience is a more appropriate use of curriculum and instructional materials which will, in turn, guide schools to provide greater opportunities for learner-centered experiences.

This study used a quantitative correlational approach. This approach supported Dewey's theory of experiences, as it analyzed the relationship of the student's experiences facilitated by teachers' selection and organization of educational experiences to increase student engagement and achievement level. The research was designed to determine if a relationships existed between secondary school teachers' belief of RTI implementation and African American females academic achievement scores. Chapter 3 culminates an overview of the problem, the purpose of

the study, and introduced the research question and hypothesis. This study also rationalized a research design that was adequate for the exploration of Dewey's theory of experience relative to the teacher's implementation of RTI in a secondary school environment.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to determine whether there is a relationship between teachers' belief in the various aspects of RTI and the academic achievement of African American female students in tier 1 or 2 of RTI. The aspects of RTI analyzed include the academic abilities and performance of Students with Disabilities (SWD), Data-Based Decision Making (DBDM), and Functions of Core and Supplemental Instruction (FCSI).

Research Questions

1. To what extent if any does a relationship exist between African American Female (AAF) RTI students' academic achievement scores and teacher's belief of RTI Implementation (DBDM)?
2. To what extent if any does a relationship exist between teachers' belief of RTI (FCSI) and academic achievements of AAF students on RTI (Tier 1 and 2)?
3. What is the relationship between a teacher's belief of academic achievement of African American Female students with disabilities (SWD) and the teacher's DBDM?
4. What is the relationship between a teacher's belief score of academic achievement of African American Female's students with disabilities (SWD) and the teacher's FCSI?

Research Design

A quantitative correlation research design was employed for this study as it explored the extent if any, that a relationship existed between a teacher's belief and implementation of learner-centered RTI. Adams and Lawrence (2014) addressed correlation design as a type of

research that hypothesizes the relationship of variables. Gay et al., (2011) noted that correlational research requires the gathering of data to determine the existence of a relationship between two or more quantifiable variables and the extent of that relationship. When a selected range of scores in one variable are cognate to scores on other variables, there is evidence of a relationship. Additionally, Gay et al., (2011) explained that correlational relationships have a pivotal role in making predictions.

The researcher decided that correlation design was the best method to adopt for this investigation. It addressed whether a significant difference in the relationship of a sample existed purely by chance or if this relationship can be generalizable to the population (Adams & Lawrence, 2014). Hence, it was crucial for this study to search for the statistical significance of the relationship between the extent to which teachers implement data-based decision making (DBDM) RTI practices and core and supplemental instructions (FCSI) to improve student performances for African American females, and the level of belief these teachers have in their ability to improve students' achievement. One advantage of the correlation design is that it focuses on the relationships that remain constant amongst variables (Adams & Lawrence, 2014). As a result, the present study's use of the state standardized assessments for math and reading and a teacher's belief and implementation of SWD, DBDM, and FCSI for RTI intervention was investigated. This hypothesis testing process allowed for insightful consideration to find this consistent relationship and test to see if a significant difference appears by pure chance (Adams & Lawrence, 2014).

Gay et al., (2011) pointed out that to be statistically significant, one must acquire a correlation coefficient distinctive from a correlation of zero, or irrelative. Therefore, a correlation coefficient lower than $+ .35$ or $-.35$ signals a relationship with little or no relationships between

variables. A correlation coefficient that falls within the range of $\pm .36$ to $\pm .64$ suggest a moderate relationship, and a high relationship between variables was indicated by a coefficient of $\pm .65$. However, Gay et al., (2011) pointed out that a correlation coefficient of plus or minus .60 or .70 are satisfactory for making predictions where groups are involved. Moderate to high significance lead to generalizations and will add to the body of existing research on interventions for minority students. High significance lead to predictions about the benefits of student-centered learning experiences for all students. A main disadvantage of the correlation design was that correlation does not determine causality. Hence, further research is needed to determine if a teacher's belief or perception of cultural learner-centered intervention practices will lead to increased or decreased student achievement.

Target Population, Sampling Method (power) and Related Procedures

The school district in Central Texas is home to over 43, 000 students and 6,000 employees. According to the KISD (2016), the district is the number two employer in the area with military base as the highest. The population consisted of 2,893 teachers from 32 elementary schools, and 16 secondary schools (11 middle schools and 5 high schools). The district's population is very diverse and includes 34% African American students, 28.9 % Hispanic, 25 % Caucasian, 4.2 Asian/Pacific Islander and 0.6 % Native American. The school consisted of a 42.9% military population. Additionally, the school districts have an At Risk population of 43.9%. It is paramount to note that assignments of military employees affect our student's mobility rate and teacher turnover rate ("Improvement Plan - DistrictImprovementPlan.pdf," n.d.)

The subpopulation consisted of 49 teachers from a secondary school located in Central Texas. The school is home to 691 students and 70 faculty and staff members. Teachers at this

school are responsible for 223 sixth grade students, 251 seventh grade students, and 217 eight-grade students. The ethnic makeup of students are 39.5% African Americans, 27.64% Hispanic, 22.14% White, 11% Pacific Islander, Asian 1.59%, and two or more races 7.24%. The school consists of a 33% military population close to the biggest military installation in the United States. Other special populations include 57% At Risk, 71.2 economically disadvantaged, 5.93% English Language Learners (ELL's), and 15.34% special education students. Additionally, there are 4.34% gifted students and 1.01% homeless ("Improvement Plan - DistrictImprovementPlan.pdf," n.d.).

To determine the sample size, the researcher conducted a G*Power 3.1 statistical test. Specifically, the researcher performed a correlation one-tailed test using A priori power analysis to compute the required sample size. For the test to be statistically significant and obtain a small percentage of variance, the researcher used a correlation of .09 $r^2 < .25$ for a medium effect. Hence, a correlation (r^2) of .2, was entered into the G*Power 3.1 software which resulted in equivalent effect size of 0.4472136. Along with an error probability of .05 and a Power (1- β error probability) of 0.95, gave us a sample size of 45 and an actual power of 0.9511155. Therefore, a medium effect size of .4 was be used to determine the magnitude of the teachers' belief and implementation of learner-centered cultural experiences and RTI (interventions) on students' achievement on standardized assessments. For the correlation to be significant at the 0.05 alpha and a probability error of 95% the researcher calculated a sample size of 45 secondary school teachers.

The researcher utilized a convenience sample of teachers for the current study. The sample was selected to identify teachers of the secondary school. In an attempt to ensure that this quantitative correlation research met the criteria considered scientifically based research, it

focused on the target population of 45 teachers at a secondary school. The desired sample size was 91% of the 49 teachers. Therefore the sample consisted of reading teachers, math teachers, social studies teachers, science teachers, Spanish teachers, the research teacher, the business teacher, tech apps teacher, the AVID teacher, the band teacher, and choir and art teacher. Additionally, the sample included special education inclusion teachers for reading and mathematics as they also provide intervention support for students in the content area as well as special education students.

The researcher received approval to conduct the study from the university IRB panel and following this approval sought permission from the superintendent of the school district. Participants received informed consent letters, detailing the purpose of the study, risks involved, benefits of the study and their right to withdraw from the study. Following this approval, data collection began.

Instrumentation

The Beliefs Survey is a self-report instrument that was created by Florida PS/RtI Statewide Project to evaluate educators' credence's about Problem-Solving/Response to Intervention (PS/RtI) practices (Castillo et al., 2010). Castillo et al. (2010) suggested that teachers' beliefs about students educational experiences and instructional strategies influence their willingness to implement new practices should be related to the implementation of the RTI framework. Data from Castillo et al., (2010) the Beliefs Survey was used to determine the teachers' belief level of improving African American Female (AAF) students' academic achievements. The mathematics and reading test data from the STAAR Assessment was used to establish students' performance as it relates to the teacher's belief of RTI implementation of intervention experiences. The survey was used to assess the beliefs and perceptions of the

teacher's skill relative to their implementation of the RTI Model. Castillo et al., (2010) believed that the fundamental practices of RTI should be related to the model's implementation. The Beliefs survey was retrieved online with expressed permission by the website to utilize the instrument, additionally permission was given by the Florida Problem Solving RTI to use and adapt the survey for specific schools and research purposes (Castillo et al., 2010). The survey was created by the Florida /Problem Solving Response to Intervention Statewide Implementation Project in 2007.

To ensure the relevant questions were ideal for teachers at the secondary school the researcher substituted the word Florida for Texas and did not ask for any teacher identification so as to ensure that the teacher's information remained anonymous, hence the researcher eliminated item 1 of the 27 questions from the survey. The survey consisted of two parts. Part I (Items 1-5) consisted of five questions that related to the teachers' project ID number, teachers' level of experience, and educational level. Item 1 of the survey consisted of a project ID that was designed to assure confidentiality of the participant whilst providing a method to match an individual's responses across instruments. The ID called for the last four digits of the participant's social security number and the last two digits of the year they were born. However, the researcher felt that by eliminating question one of the survey the participants would be more inclined to participate and respond honestly to the beliefs question. Hence, for the purposes of this research Part 1 consisted of Items 2-5 and derived information detailing the teacher's experiences and education.

Part II (Items 6-27) consisted of twenty-two questions focused on assessment practices, educational and intervention practices, core instructional strategies that relate directly to the

teacher's belief of RTI classroom experiences provided for student's academic ability for math and reading and the determination of special education eligibility for RTI students.

Data Collection

The RTI program used quantitative summative data such as the state tests and Universal Screeners for Math and Reading to discover students who are struggling academically. Additionally, the program used data from the yearly State Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Math and Reading to make a determination of placement. Hence, the use of Universal screeners such as the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) and the Scholastic Math Inventory (SMI) and the state assessments operated as quantitative data. The universal screeners and state assessments give the educators a realistic means of identifying students with a learning disability and eliminating those who do not have one. In a standard RTI model, an assessment of all students in academic and behavioral areas is carried out to identify students who are at-risk for school failure. Screening students this way sanctions educators to provide effective interventions predicated on evidence accumulated (Hughes & Dexter, 2011). The use of other quantitative data like attendance rates, the ratio of students to teacher, and socioeconomic status of students affects the student performance. Quantitative data sources offer a comprehensive and systematic analysis of any evaluation program. By incorporating this type approach to the assessment of the RTI program, the hope is that it will provide a better implementation program design.

The researcher collected student information and testing data from the school's data and management software program, Eduphoria. The investigator disaggregated the demographic data of RTI students in 8th grade using filters to identify African American Female RTI students and all RTI students, and students who met or fell below average math and reading achievement

levels as measured by the current year state test the State Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR). However, for the target of this investigation, the researcher analyzed the student's reading and math STAAR data as students' are required to meet a satisfactory standard for promotion to the next grade level. Additionally, students who did not satisfy this requirement were placed on Tier 2 interventions and given a second opportunity to meet the states required assessment before promotion. Students who failed this second opportunity remain in Tier 2 interventions and receive extended summer school opportunity to complete this evaluation for the third time. If the student failed this last chance, the student's records were reviewed, and a Grade Placement Committee (GPC) or Promotion and Retention Committee made the final determination for promotion. Therefore, demographic information and test data was easily exported from the Eduphoria into Excel spreadsheet.

The second step in the process was to collect quantitative data from the Beliefs survey. Before data collection, the participants received an explanation of the study. Following data administration, the accumulated data from the Beliefs survey was exported from survey monkey and imported to Excel. The researcher disaggregated the data utilizing filters to ascertain the teachers' responses. Data extraction from Excel later uploaded into SPSS for data analysis and management.

Data Analysis Procedures

The collection of the STAAR information was entered into SPSS (a computer program that performs statistical calculations) using the scale score as measures of the student's mastery of the objectives of essential knowledge and skills intended for math and reading as set by the state. The collection of the teacher's Belief Survey measurement data was exported into SPSS where the respondents' answers were allocated a value to measure the different beliefs of

teachers. Responses were categorized as strongly agree 5, agree 4, neutral 3, disagree 2, and strongly disagree 1. Twenty-two of the 27-item teacher beliefs of RTI survey were analyzed using the Pearson rank bivariate correlation coefficient in SPSS.

Part I of the survey was used to collect information that solicited the teacher's educational background experience. Part II of the survey according to Castillo et al. (2010), examined the educators view in three domains: "beliefs about the academic ability and performance of students with disabilities, beliefs about data-based decision making, and beliefs about functions of core and supplemental instruction" (p.46).

For this research, the first domain was categorized as Factor 1 (*Academic Ability and Performance of Students with Disabilities*) evaluated the teacher's belief in the effectiveness academic abilities of the struggling learner, by summing items 9A, 9B, 10A, 10B, 11A, and 11B. Thus, an understanding of these beliefs will help with the provision of appropriate RTI services and the determination of special education eligibility for RTI students. Factor 2 (*Data Based Decision Making*) evaluated the teacher's belief in the teacher's conviction in the role of data for decision making purposes using the students' learner-centered experiences as related to RTI implementation by summing items 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, and 27 of the survey (Castillo et al., 2010). Factor 3 (Functions of Core and Supplemental Instruction) evaluated the teachers' belief of core and supplemental instructions as effective for the majority of the students achieving grade level benchmarks by summing items 7A, 7B, 8A, and 8B (Castillo et al., 2010). The three sections of the teacher's belief survey responses were correlated using a Pearson test for significance to each other and the student's achievement scores. A two-tailed test was initiated to establish the importance of the correlation.

Limitations and Delimitations of the Research Design

The quantitative correlational study may find that a relationship exists between teachers' belief level of RTI implementation and student achievement scores. However, this association of variables does not designate a causal relationship between the two. As a result, further investigations will need to be completed for causation. The instrument used to collect data in this study is a self-reporting tool. Respondents in the study are circumscribed to the word choices utilized in the teacher belief's survey. Therefore, the respondents cannot ask the investigator demystifying questions. Additionally, teachers depending on the nature of their assigned obligations may feel overworked and rush to answer questions.

The sample in this investigation is limited to one secondary school located in Central Texas. Respondents in this study were constrained to only 46 educators. The participants are teachers working in a medium sized secondary school with predominantly minority students of low socioeconomic status. The location, economic status, and ethnic makeup of the participant's students may engender constraints of external validity and findings. Hence, the relationship between the edifier's implementation of learner-centered practices in the classroom and students achievement scores limit the generalizability of the findings.

Delimitations subsist for the sample of teachers opted for study. Conduction of convenience sampling will facilitate the recruitment of participants and amassment of data. The researcher did not focus literature review of African American males (26% of the student population), Hispanic females (17% of the population), or Hispanic males (14% of the student population) whose minority status withal impact the edifier's implementation of learner-centered or culturally relevant RTI practices for students. The decision to fixate on African American female's achievement stemmed from the high representation of (27% of the student population)

of students attending the school and circumscribed availability of research for this sub-population of students.

Internal and External Validity

The quantitative correlation study was conducted to show evidence that a relationship existed between teachers' beliefs about the academic abilities and performance of Students with Disabilities (SWD), Data-Based Decision Making (DBDM), and Functions of Core and Supplemental Instruction (FCSI) for implementation of quality RTI intervention experiences for struggling African American Females (AAF) students' academic achievement and the level of belief these teachers have in their ability to improve the performance of these students. Adams and Lawrence (2014) suggested that internal validity is primarily concerned with the examination of the causal relationship. Hence, the relationship examined may lead to future research and studies to see if culturally relevant RTI will cause student's achievement to increase. It is important for the researcher to point out that although the current study did not investigate a causal relation, it is important that all variables were controlled as possible. The use of math and reading standardized assessment given to every secondary school student in the state of Texas, on the same testing window of one week, using the same script and testing environment dictated by TEA allows the educator to use results from the controlled assessment.

Additionally, the Beliefs Survey was administered on the same day in a group setting before a professional development of RTI was given. The removal of item one of the beliefs survey served to maintain the anonymity of the participants and reinforced the confidentiality of the responses. This anonymity helped to ensure that demographics attitudes and behaviors were the primary focus of the investigation. Hence, the researcher removed item 1 of the survey and

only items 2-27 were used. The adjustment did not impact the internal validity of the survey as the participant identification was not a factor used in the analysis and interpretation of the data.

Adams and Lawrence (2014) defined external validity as the extent to which we can verbally express that the results of a study are precise for variants of people in diverse environments tested with procedures that are not similar. The teacher and student population at the secondary school was unique with regards to teachers and students. However, African American students represent a majority of students, in a country where these students are often a minority. The study may be generalizable to African American females who share similar cultural upbringing and have a low socioeconomic status. The teacher's level of RTI knowledge and implementation of culturally relevant curriculum may differ and as such is generalizable to a more diverse population.

Expected Findings

Statistical analysis of the 46 teachers will reveal a positive correlation between the teachers' belief in the academic abilities and performance of Students with Disabilities (SWD), Data-Based Decision Making (DBDM), and Functions of Core and Supplemental Instruction (FCSI) and the academic achievement of African American female students in tier 1 or 2 of RTI.

Ethical Issues in the Study

Participants of the study were informed verbally and in writing about the purpose and intention of the research. Teachers received anonymity with regards to names. To ensure that the researcher did not waste the participants' time, the researcher used the results of the survey to gear future professional development for teacher success and implementation of a successful RTI program.

Summary

The intention of this study was to identify and describe variables that could help explain the teachers' perception, knowledge, and understanding of African American female cultures and the achievement levels of African American female students at a secondary school. The intention of the research was to improve instruction with the focus of re-engaging African American female students by integrating their culture into the curriculum, to facilitate learning in a non-traditional way by utilizing student's experiences, and to prevent the eventual dropout of African American female students. Furthermore, the investigator hoped to increase awareness of RTI as a critical component for improved teaching practices. This awareness will take the form of increased professional development for teacher growth and understanding.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

Introduction

This study used a quantitative correlation research design. The study attempted to determine if a relationship existed between teachers' beliefs about the academic abilities and performance of Students with Disabilities (SWD), Data-Based Decision Making (DBDM), and Functions of Core and Supplemental Instruction (FCSI) for implementation of quality RTI intervention experiences for struggling African American Females (AAF) students' academic achievement. The framework for this study was based on Dewey's theory of experience relative to the teacher's implementation of RTI in a secondary school environment. The research helped to identify related variables that may be useful for future experimental studies, and provided useful information on the achievement gap that exists in this secondary school.

To help guide this research the following questions were asked;

R1: To what extent if any does a relationship exist between African American Female (AAF) RTI students' academic achievement scores and teacher's belief of RTI Implementation (DBDM)?

R2: To what extent if any does a relationship exist between teachers' belief of RTI (FCSI) and academic achievements of AAF students on RTI (Tier 1 and 2)?

R3: What is the relationship between a teacher's belief of academic achievement of African American Female students with disabilities (SWD) and the teacher's DBDM?

R4: What is the relationship between a teacher's belief score of academic achievement of African American Female's students with disabilities (SWD) and the teacher's FCSI?

Description of the Sample

The researcher used one sample to conduct the study. The sample consisted of 46 teachers. The sample included secondary school reading teachers, math teachers, social studies teachers, science teachers, spanish teachers, the research teacher, the business teacher, tech apps teacher, the AVID teacher, the band teacher, choir, art teacher and special education teachers.

Procedures

The researcher received approval from the Concordia University IRB panel. The researcher distributed informed consent letters, detailing the purpose of the study, risks involved, benefits of the study and their right to withdraw from the study. Staff members returned the signed consent form to the principal investigator by placing them in her staff mail box. Once the participants returned their consent forms, the researcher administered the survey to the teachers using survey monkey. The researcher received 58 responses from the Castillo et al., (2010) Beliefs Survey from teachers, principal, counselors, librarian and secretary all of whom were certified teachers. Twelve staff members who were not listed as active teachers of record for this secondary school were immediately removed from the data to maintain the validity of the study. Therefore, for analysis, the researcher used data collected from 46 teachers who gave direct instructions to students daily to conduct her analysis.

Data from Castillo et al, (2010) Beliefs of RTI survey was coded and entered into Excel then transferred to the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPPSS) where it was correlated against the mathematics and reading test data from the STAAR Assessment scores of African American female students and all tier 1 and 2 RTI students. The researcher collected student information and testing data from the school's data and management software program, Eduphoria. The investigator disaggregated the demographic data of RTI students in 8th grade.

Therefore, demographic information was easily exported from the Eduphoria into excel spreadsheet.

Data Analysis of Multiple Measures

The collection of the STAAR information was entered into SPSS (a computer program that performs statistical calculations) using the scale score as measures of the student's mastery of the objectives of the STAAR for Math and Reading assessments as set by the state. The collection of the teacher's beliefs of RTI survey (created by the Florida /Problem Solving Response to Intervention Statewide Implementation Project in 2007 (Castillo et al., 2010) was administered during a professional development meeting and the data was entered into SPSS where the respondents' answers were allocated a value to measure the different beliefs of student.

Responses were categorized as strongly agree 5, agree 4, neutral 3, disagree 2, and strongly disagree 1. Twenty-two of the 27- item teacher Belief Survey were analyzed using the Pearson's rank correlation coefficient in SPSS. Part I of the teacher survey consisted of four questions that relate to the teachers' level of experience and educational level. Part II consisted of 22 questions which was divided into three domains (factors). Factor 1 of the survey was categorized as the teacher's belief in the effectiveness of the struggling learner's academic abilities (Academic Ability and Performance of Students with Disabilities) by summing items 9A, 9B, 10A, 10B, 11A, and 11B. Factor 2 of the survey was classified teacher's belief in assessment practices for decision making of screening, progress monitoring, tiered interventions as related to RTI implementation by summing items 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, and 27 of the survey (Castillo et al., 2010). Factor 3 of the survey was classified as the teachers' belief of core and supplemental instructions as effective for the majority of the students

achieving grade level benchmarks by summing items 7A, 7B, 8A, and 8B (Castillo et al., 2010). The items that comprise these three domains or constructs are represented in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Belief Survey Constructs

Beliefs Survey Constructs	Survey Items
Academic Performance of Students with Disabilities	9A, 9B, 10A, 10B, 11A, and 11B.
Data Based Decision Making	12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, and 27.
Functions of Core and Supplemental Instruction	7A, 7B, 8A, and 8B.

The three sections of the teacher's belief survey responses were correlated using a Pearson test for significance to each other and the student's achievement scores. A two-tailed test was initiated to establish the importance of the correlation as it required a relatively significant difference between the sample and the population to reject the null.

Summary of Results

The teacher's belief of RTI survey was administered in a group setting before a professional development for RTI. The researcher explained the purpose of her research and provided the staff members with consent forms, whilst advising them of their rights to withdraw at any time. The researcher handed out 70 consent forms and received 58 signed consent forms. After reviewing the consent forms, the researcher emailed the survey link to all the staff members on the school distribution list. To ensure the integrity of the data, and ensure internal validity the researcher informed all survey participants once again that they had the right to

withdraw and that they were under no obligation to complete the forms or complete the survey. Of the 58 staff members who signed the consent forms, 56 of those members completed the survey in the professional development environmental set up, and two participants completed the survey a day later.

The researcher filtered the data using the demographics details that identified the staff member's as teachers as the criteria for separating the teachers from other members of staff. The data was compiled and a summary of the data was imported from survey monkey into excel. The researcher disaggregated the data to ensure that only the teachers' responses were recorded. This data was then uploaded into SPSS where the researcher performed a Pearson rank bivariate (a statistical analysis of two variables) correlation of the data. The researcher also used the result of all eight grade RTI students who took the math and reading standardized state assessment which was administered in a controlled setting. There were no threats to the internal validity of the data.

Utilizing the data of all the students labelled as having a success plan was instrumental in improving the external data. Additionally, the diverse nature of the teachers' background with regards to educational level, experience and age helped to increase the external validity of the sample. SPSS was an ideal statistical software program for this quantitative correlational research. It allowed the researcher to enter the information and effectively manage and analyze the data. The program also created tables that were easily exported into excel and made it easier to view. The data was processed very quickly and efficiently. Additionally, SPSS stores data and allows you to review and look at the data in different graphical formats. The statistical data also allowed for "better control of human error" and the ability to recalculate (Blaxter, Hughes, and Tight, 2010).

Detailed Analysis

Part I: Demographics. The demographics portion of the teacher survey consisted of four questions that relate to the teachers' level of experience and educational level. Forty-six teachers took the RTI teachers belief survey. Thirty-nine of those teachers were general education teachers and seven were special education teachers. Table 2 provides the results obtained from the demographic survey below.

Table 2

Demographic of Teachers

Answer Choices	Years of Experience
Less than 1 year	8.70%
1-4 years	26.10%
5-9 years	23.90%
10-14 years	17.40%
15-19 years	10.90%
20-24 years	2.20%
25 or more years	10.90%

As can be seen from the table above 8.7% of all teachers had less than one year of teaching experience. Twenty-six percent of all teachers had between one and four years of experience, 23.9% of all teachers had over five years of experience, but less than nine years, 17.4% of all teachers possessed an average of 12 years of experience 10.9% of all teachers had an average of 17 years of experience, and 13% of the teachers had over 25 years of teaching experience. Seventy-four percent of all teachers has been in their teaching position for less than 10 years, and 26% of all teachers has been in their position for more than ten years. Sixty-four percent of all teachers has a bachelor's degree, and 36% of all teachers have a Master's degree.

Part II: Factor 1 (Academic Ability and Performance of Students with Disabilities)

The proposal of the RTI program was designed to decrease referrals to special education by rendering well-designed instruction and intensified interventions in a general education classroom. Thereby helping to differentiate between learners who perform inadequately in schools due to determinants such as the inadequate prior instruction from students with LD and those who demand more intensive and specialized instruction (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). Therefore, it was important to assess the teacher's belief in academic and behavioral support in the general education classroom for students with learning difficulties, learning disabilities, and behavioral issues. By analyzing the teachers' belief in the academic abilities of students with disabilities and those receiving core and supplemental instruction the researcher will be able to help educators provide relevant intervention services for RTI implementation.

For the teachers' belief of the students' academic ability and performance of students' with disabilities for the provision of relevant RTI intervention services and practices, the question was asked to what extent if any does a relationship exist between AAF student's academic achievements and teachers' belief of RTI implementation (Tier 1 and 2 interventions). The researcher analyzed Factor 1 (*Academic Ability and Performance of Students with Disabilities*) of the survey which was classified as teacher's belief in the effectiveness of the struggling learner's academic abilities to provide relevant RTI interventions for implementation in the general education classroom, by evaluating and reviewing questions 9 through 11. Statistical analysis of the 46 participants who took the survey revealed that 27% of these educators agreed with the belief statements that students with disabilities can achieve grade level benchmarks in math and reading.

Statistical analysis of 63% of the teachers who were administered the belief survey disagreed with the belief that students with learning disabilities can achieve at grade levels, whilst only 15% shared that belief. A little more than a half of all teachers agreed that majority of the students with behavioral problems can achieve at grade levels and 20% of the teachers agreed with this belief. Findings of the teacher survey as shown in Appendix C.

Part II: Factor 2 (Data-Based Decision Making). The second section of Part II of the survey was categorized as the teacher's belief in the role of data for decision making purposes using the teacher's belief in assessment practices for decision making of screening, progress monitoring, tiered interventions as related to RTI implementation by summing items 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, and 27 of the survey (Castillo et al., 2010). Results from the survey are shown in Appendix C. However, it is important to note that 69% of the teachers believed that data-based decision making practices are important for progress monitoring and differentiation of instruction using the students' learner-centered experiences as related to RTI implementation in the classroom for students, whilst 14% of teachers disagreed with this concept.

When asked if general education teachers should implement more learner centered practices to address the needs of a more diverse student body, 83% of the teachers agreed. Ninety-one percent of the teachers believed that general education classrooms would be able to implement more differentiated and flexible approach if they had additional support in the classroom. Eighty percent of teachers believed that the use of additional interventions in the general education classroom would result in success for more students. Seventy-eight percent of teachers agreed that prevention and early intervention strategies in schools will result in fewer referrals and problem solving teams and placements in special education. Two-fifths of the teachers agreed that the severity of a student's academic problem is not determined by how far

behind the student is with regards to academic performance, but by how quickly the students respond to intervention. Thirty-seven percent of the teachers believed that a student's behavioral problem is determined not by how inappropriate his behavioral performance is but by how quickly he responds to intervention and 40% of teachers disagreed with this concept.

The question regarding the use of student-based data to determine intervention effectiveness as more accurate than teacher judgement revealed that 59% of teachers agreed on the use of progress monitoring as an RTI intervention practice. Alternatively, 15% of teachers disagreed that the use of student-based data as a progress measure was efficient and 26% of all teachers remained neutral on this belief. Seventy percent of teachers agreed that evaluating a student's response to intervention was a more efficient way of ascertaining what a student is competent of achieving than using scores from achievement test, while 30% of the participants disagreed or remained neutral on this belief. Fifty-two of teachers believe that additional time and resources should be allotted first to students who are not reaching benchmarks before meaningful time and resources are directed to students who are at or above benchmarks. Similarly, 52% of teachers agreed that graphing student data makes it easier for one to make decisions about student performance and needed interventions.

Seventy-four percent of the participants agreed that parental and any other student support were necessary for the successful implementation of RTI, on the other hand, 4% disagreed and 22% remained neutral. Ninety-eight percent of all teachers believe that parents or guardian should be involved in the problem-solving process as soon as a teacher has a concern about the student. However, only 74% of those teachers agreed that students respond better to interventions when their parents were involved in the development and implementation of those

interventions. Fifty percent of all teachers believed that all students could achieve on grade level if they received sufficient support and 33% of teachers disagreed.

Part II: Factor 3 (Functions of Core and Supplemental Instruction). Factor 3 of the survey was classified as the teachers' belief of core and supplemental instructions as effective for the majority of the students achieving grade level benchmarks by summing items 7A, 7B, 8A, and 8B (Castillo et al., 2010). Seventy-eight percent of the participants agreed that core and supplemental instructions as effective for the majority of the students achieving grade level benchmarks. Whilst 7% disagreed with this notion. Seventy-five percent of the teachers agreed that core instructions should result in at least 80% of students meeting standards for math and reading assessments, whilst 7% disagreed with this concept. Eighty-two percent of teachers believed that primary function of supplemental instruction is to ensure that students meet grade-level benchmarks.

Additional Detailed Analysis

Statistics for questions 6, 18, 19 and 26 revealed the following data. Statistical analysis of the 46 teacher who took the Beliefs Survey showed that 63% of the teachers who were administered the survey disagreed with the belief philosophy of the NCLB Act. Three fourths of the teachers (75%) agreed that IQ and achievement testing can be used to identify effective interventions for students with learning disabilities, while only 25% of teachers disagreed with the use of IQ testing as a means of providing effective interventions for students. Forty-six percent of the teachers believed that a student's behavioral problem is not determined by how inappropriate his behavioral performance is, but by how quickly he responds to intervention, and 41% of teachers disagreed with this concept. A little more than half the teachers (54%) that student currently identified as learning disabled do not have a learning disability but come to

school not ready to learn so they fall so far behind academically that current interventions are insufficient to close the academic gap. However, 24% of teachers differed in their belief of students falling too far behind to close the gap and 22% remained neutral.

Additionally, the correlation of the teacher's belief of Data-Based Decision Making (DBDM) and Functions of Core and Supplemental Instructions (FCSI) shows a positive and statically significant relationship of .398**. A correlation for the data suggested that the role of data in decision making is significantly related to the educators' belief about student learning and functions of core and supplemental instructions.

Correlations of African American Female (AAF) math and reading assessments revealed a negative relationship between the student's reading and math assessments. The correlations between pairs of variables are reveals a negative correlation of -0.149. Significant correlations are noted. Correlations of all RTI student's level and their math and reading assessments revealed a strong negative relationship between the student's tier level and their math and reading assessments. The relationship between pairs of variables are revealed a significant correlation of -.384**.

R1: To what extent if any does a relationship exist between African American Female (AAF) RTI students' academic achievement scores and teacher's belief of RTI

Implementation (DBDM)?

The hypothesis that there is no relationship between teachers' implementation of RTI and the level of belief these teachers have in their ability to improve AAF-RTI students' academic achievement was analyzed for statistical significance. Of the 19 AAF-RTI students who took the Reading STAAR assessment, 68% of the students met standards on the Reading assessment. Seventy-four percent of the student met standards for the Mathematics STAAR assessment.

Sixty-eight percent of the AAF-RTI students were on Tier 1 level, and 32% of the students were on Tier 2 Level.

To answer the question to what extent if any does a relationship exist between African American Female (AAF) RTI students' academic achievement scores and teacher's belief of RTI Implementation (DBDM), the researcher analyzed the relationship between the 19 AAF-RTI scores and Factor 2 (*Data-Based Decision Making*) section of the survey. Factor 2 of the survey was categorized as teacher's belief of Data Based Decision Making as related to RTI for implementation in a general education classroom. Hence, the teacher's belief in RTI implementation (DBDM) was correlated with the 19 AAF-RTI students' math and reading assessments and each other for statistical significance. The correlations between the teachers' RTI implementation(DBDM) and Math assessment equals 0.494* which is statistically significant and different from zero based on a two-tailed test at the .05 alpha level. There is a positive relationship between these two variables. The correlations between pairs of variables are published in Table 3. Significant correlations are noted.

Table 3

Correlation Measures of RTI Implementation (DBDM) and AAF-RTI Achievement

Factors	Measures	Data-Based Decision Making
AAF Math Test	Correlation Coefficient	0.494*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002
	N	46
AAF- Reading Test	Correlation Coefficient	-0.182
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.457
	N	46

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

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Additionally, the researcher explored the relationship between all RTI students and RTI implementation (DBDM) section of the survey for comparison of the data attained for AAF-RTI

students'. Of 87 RTI eight grade students who took the Reading STAARS assessment 53% of students met standards on the Mathematics assessment. Fifty-two percent of the students met standards for the Reading STAAR test. Fifty-six percent of all RTI students were on Tier 1 level and 44% of the students were on Tier 2 Level. The relationship between teachers' belief of RTI implementation and the RTI students' achievement was analyzed for statistical significance.

The thirteen questions were correlated with the 87 RTI students' math and reading assessments and each other for statistical significance. The correlations between pairs of variables are disclosed in Table 4. A correlation for the data below revealed that the teacher's belief in RTI implementation (DBDM) and the students' math and reading scores were not significantly related. The correlations between the teachers' belief in RTI Implementation (DBDM) and math assessment equals 0.002 and -0.12 for the teachers' the teachers' belief in RTI Implementation (DBDM) and reading.

Table 4

Correlation Measures of RTI Implementation (DBDM) and Students' Achievement

Factors	Measures	Data-Based Decision Making
All Students Math Assessment	Correlation Coefficient	0.002
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.885
	N	46
All Students Reading Assessment	Correlation Coefficient	-0.12
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.429
	N	46

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

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The data derived from the research shows inconsistencies with the null hypothesis and, thus, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis that there is no relationship between teachers' belief of RTI implementation and AAF-RTI students' achievement when it was analyzed for statistical significance.

R2: To what extent if any does a relationship exist between teachers' belief of RTI (FCSI) and academic achievements of AAF students on RTI (Tier 1 and 2)?

To answer the question to what extent if any does a relationship exist between African American Female (AAF) RTI students' academic achievement scores and teacher's belief of RTI (FCSI scores), the researcher analyzed Factor 3 (*Functions of Core and Supplemental Instruction*) and the 19 (AAF) RTI scores. This section of the survey was categorized as the teachers' belief of RTI (FCSI) as effective for the majority of the students achieving grade level benchmarks by summing items 7A, 7B, 8A, and 8B of the survey. These items were correlated with the 19 AAF-RTI students' math and reading assessments and each other for statistical significance. The correlations between pairs of variables are published in Table 5. Significant correlations are noted in the table.

Table 5

Correlation Measures of RTI Beliefs' (FCSI) and AAF-RTI Achievement

Factors	Measures	FCSI
AAF Math Assessment	Correlation Coefficient	0.490*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.033
	N	46
AAF- Reading Assessment	Correlation Coefficient	-0.235
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.333
	N	46

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

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Factor 3 of the survey categorized as teacher's belief in RTI (FCSI) in a general education classroom, was also correlated with the 87 RTI students' math and reading assessments and each other for statistical significance. The correlations between pairs of variables are recorded in Table 6.

Table 6

Correlation Measure of Teacher Belief in RTI (FCSI) and RTI Student's Assessments

Factors	Measures	FCSI
All Students Math Assessment	Correlation Coefficient	0.022
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.884
	N	46
All Students Reading Assessment	Correlation Coefficient	0.062
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.680
	N	46

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

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The data derived from the research shows inconsistencies with the null hypothesis and, thus, the researcher rejects the null hypothesis that there is no relationship between teachers' belief of RTI (FCSI scores) and the level of belief these teachers have in their ability to improve RTI students' achievement when it was analyzed for statistical significance.

R3: What is the relationship between a teacher's belief of academic achievement of African American Female students with disabilities (SWD) and the teacher's DBDM?

To answer the question to what is the relationship between a teacher's belief of academic achievement of African American Female students with disabilities (SWD) and the teacher's DBDM the researcher explored the relationship between the teachers' belief scores of Academic Ability and Performance of SWD and Data-Based Decision Making for $n = 46$ participants. The correlation of the teacher's belief of Academic Ability and Performance of Students with Disabilities (SWD) for RTI provision of relevant intervention services and Data-Based Decision Making (DBDM) equals .439** which is statistically significant and different from zero based on a two-tailed test at the .05 and .01 alpha level.

There is a positive relationship between these two variables. The Pearson correlation is fair, which indicates a very consistent positive relationship between the educators' belief of student learning and the role data plays in decision making.

Table 7

Correlation Measure of Teacher's SWD and DBDM.

	Factors	Measure	SWD	DBDM
Pearson	SWD	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.439**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	0.002
		N	46	46

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

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

R4. What is the relationship between a teacher's belief score of academic achievement of African American Female's students with disabilities (SWD) and the teacher's FCSI?

To answer the question to what is the relationship between a teacher's belief score of academic achievement of African American Female students with disabilities (SWD) and the teacher's FCSI the researcher explored the relationship between the teachers' belief scores of SWD and FCSI for $n = 46$. The analysis identified in Table 8 examined the relationships between the teachers' belief of for $n = 46$ participants. The correlation of the teacher's belief of Academic Ability and Performance of Students with Disabilities (SWD) for RTI provision of relevant intervention services and FCSI equals .215 which was not statistically significant. Hence, a weak relationship existed between the pair of variables.

Table 8

Correlation Measures of the Teacher's SWD and FCSI.

	Factors	Measure	SWD	FCSI
Pearson	SWD	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.215
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.151
		N	46	46

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

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Summary

The quantitative correlation research model selected to conduct the study identified variables that determined the extent of a relationship with teachers of AAF students and the belief these teachers had in their ability to improve student achievement. The researcher analyzed the data using the statistical software SPSS and Excel to examine the data. Statistical significance of .494* was observed for the AAF math achievement and the teachers belief of RTI Implementation (DBDM) practices. Statistical significance of .490** was also observed for the AAF math achievement and belief of RTI (FCSI) practices. Significant correlations of .439** were also observed when looking at the relationship between a teacher's belief of academic achievement of AAF students with disabilities and the teachers' belief score for Data Based Decision Making (DBDM). Therefore, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis that there is no relationship between the teachers' RTI belief for improving academic achievement for AAF students and the implementation of RTI in the classroom. The research helped to identify related variables that may be useful for future experimental studies and provided useful information.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Discussion

Introduction

The objective of this dissertation was to investigate the relationship between the teachers' beliefs about the academic abilities and performance of students with disabilities (SWD), data-based decision making (DBDM), and functions of core and supplemental instruction (FCSI) teachers' for implementation of quality RTI learner-centered intervention practices for struggling learners and the degree of belief these educators possess in their competency to improve the academic accomplishment of these learners. Fisher, Frey and Hite (2016) suggested that learning takes place through the experience of interactions, and if these interactions are specific and intentional, the acquisition of knowledge will impact student learning. Dewey (1938) believed if educators encouraged learners to utilize their experience they would be able to relate to the learning. The linking of education and personal experiences. Dewey (1938) believed, that this linking of education and experience will increase the learners' capacity for knowledge. The successful educational attainment of students despite their race or economic status is paramount to educators, hence the researcher focused on African American female students at the secondary school level.

Chapter 5 culminates a summary of the results, discussion of the result as it correlates to the teachers' implementation of quality RTI learner-centered intervention experiences for struggling learners, and the degree of belief these educators possess in their competency to enhance the academic accomplishment of these students. Additionally, discussion of the results as it relates to the literature, implications of the results for future practice, policy and theory, limitations and recommendations for further research and finally a conclusion of the research

was analyzed. This study adds to the body of literature with regards to the implementation of quality learner-centered practices for struggling students at the secondary level.

Summary of the Results

The severity of a gap, according to Williams-Tileston (2011), between achievement test and IQ ability determined if a student had a learning disability. Hence, students did not receive any interventions before referral as the discrepancy model relied on a system that waited for educational failure before the prognoses of a learning disability (Buffum et al., 2011). Therefore, the students' personal experience as it related to academic success was never a consideration for special education diagnoses until the implementation of the RTI framework. Using John Dewey's theory of experience, the consequentiality of the learner's experience is perceived as fundamental to the prosperity of a culturally responsive RTI curriculum to ameliorate student achievement. It follows that; Dewey's philosophy of learner-centered instruction of quality experiences is appropriate for the intervention of struggling students. Bates (2015) maintained the provision of quality experiences for students, allow for engagement and an opportunity for learners to cement those experiences. Teachers are responsible for ensuring that students evaluate and internalize these experiences.

With the introduction of RTI in school districts, an unusual amount of responsibility fell on teachers to document the intervention of struggling learners. RTI however, remains ambiguous for most educators Regan et al., (2015) the opportunity to provide quality experiences for all students before they leave school prematurely stems from a lack of teacher clarity. Therefore, as noted by Dewey (1938), a need for a comprehensive theory of experience is an appropriate use of curriculum and instructional materials which will, guide schools to create more opportunities for learner-centered experiences. To accomplish this objective, the researcher

questioned the teachers' belief of RTI practices and correlated their belief with the mathematics and reading achievement scores of students receiving intervention services. To accomplish this objective, the researcher asked the following questions;

R1: To what extent if any does a relationship exist between African American Female (AAF) RTI students' academic achievement scores and teacher's belief of RTI Implementation (DBDM)?

R2: To what extent if any does a relationship exist between teachers' belief of RTI (FCSI) and academic achievements of AAF students on RTI (Tier 1 and 2)?

R3: What is the relationship between a teacher's belief of academic achievement of African American Female students with disabilities (SWD) and the teacher's DBDM?

R4: What is the relationship between a teacher's belief score of academic achievement of African American Female's students with disabilities (SWD) and the teacher's FCSI?

When students struggle to learn, the task of educators is to design creative and engaging intervention tactics for students to learn. Therefore, a need for targeted intervention experiences can help to strengthen the instruction and intervention practices in the classroom. The present study was designed to re-engage African-American female students by integrating their culture into the curriculum, to promote learning in a nontraditional method to close the achievement gap, and to avert failure of AAF students. The researcher concentrated on secondary edifiers of AAF students. The administration of the survey to edifiers aimed at eliciting the teachers' response to the implementation of quality RTI intervention experiences for struggling learners, and the teachers' notion in their capacity to improve student performance

The administration of the teacher's belief survey in a group setting before a professional development of RTI allowed the researcher to amass data more effectively. Forty-six teachers completed the beliefs survey. The data was compiled, and a summary of the data was imported from survey monkey into excel. The researcher disaggregated the data to ascertain that only the teachers' responses recorded. Importing the data to SPSS allowed the researcher to perform a Pearson rank bivariate correlation. The researcher uploaded and used the result of all eight-grade RTI students who took the math and reading standardized state assessment in a controlled setting. There were no threats to the internal validity of the data.

The utilization of SPSS for statistical analysis of the data sanctioned the researcher to examine quantitative data. The summary of data availed the researcher to describe, and quantify the magnitude of the sodality between the teachers' notion of RTI practices and student achievement. The model in the study consisted of four variables to include math scores, reading scores, provision of relevant intervention services, differentiation of instruction, progress monitoring, and student support. The program sanctioned the correlational matrixes that provided graphic exhibits of the data.

The remnant of Chapter five will detail discuss the magnitude of the findings to expound the researcher's personal interpretation of the results. The foci will constitute the essence of the discussion: how the results relate to the community of practice; it's sodality to the literature; and the results as it relates to the community of scholars. The researcher will utilize the findings to make recommendations for future research and practice. The implicative suggestion of the results for practice, policy and theory will be discussed. The conclusion of this chapter will include a summary the researcher's findings and recommendations for future research.

Discussion of the Results

The researcher set out to see if the hypothesis that there is no relationship between African American female students academic achievement and teachers' implementation of RTI influences the level of belief these teachers have in their ability to improve AAF-RTI students' academic achievement showed any statistical significance. Of the 19 AAF-RTI students who took the Reading STAAR assessment, 68% of the students met standards on the Reading assessment. Seventy-four percent of the student met standards for the Mathematics STAAR test. Additionally, the researcher looked at the 87 RTI students who took the Reading STAAR assessment, 53% of the students met standards on the Reading assessment. Fifty- two percent of the student met standards for the Mathematics STAAR test.

Correlations of African American Female (AAF) math and reading assessments revealed a negative relationship between the student's reading and math assessments. The correlation of the AAF-RTI student's math and reading assessment of -0.149 suggested that as the math scores increased the reading scores decreased. However, there was no statistical significance between the two variables. The lack of statistical significance for AAF-RTI students may be indicative of reading and comprehension difficulties that exist for struggling AAF students at this secondary school. Further, correlations of all RTI students' math and reading assessments revealed a significant negative relationship between the student's reading and math assessments. The correlation of the student's math and reading assessment of -0.384** suggest that as the math scores increased the reading scores decreased or vice versa. This association suggests that almost 40% of the variability in the math scores can be explained or determined by the student's reading score.

R1: To what extent if any does a relationship exist between African American Female (AAF) RTI students' academic achievement scores and teacher's belief of RTI Implementation (DBDM)?

Factor 2 (*Data-Based Decision Making*) of the survey was categorized as the teacher's belief in the role of data for decision making purposes using the students' learner-centered experiences as related to RTI implementation in a general education classroom. Majority of teachers believed that the use of additional interventions in the general education classroom would result in success for more students. Eighty-three percent of those teachers believed that general education teachers should implement more learner centered practices to address the needs of a more diverse student body and 91% of the teachers believed that general education classrooms would be able to implement more differentiated and flexible approach if they had additional support in the classroom. Evidence exist for the teacher's belief of the execution of learner centered practices in the general for RTI implementation.

To answer the question to what extent if any does a relationship existed between AAF-RTI students' academic achievement scores and teacher's belief of RTI Implementation (DBDM), the researcher analyzed the academic scores of the AAF-RTI students and the DBDM scores of the teachers' Belief Survey. The correlations between pairs of variables revealed that a significance of .494* existed between the teacher's belief in data-based decision making practices and the students' math scores. Implying that almost 50% of the variability in the math scores can be explained or determined by the teachers' belief of data-based decision making practices for RTI implementation. This leads the researcher to believe that when increased data is used in the decision making process for RTI implementation the student's math scores will increase. Interestingly, a negative correlation of -0.182 existed between the students' reading scores and

the teachers' belief in the use of data for the provision of relevant intervention services for RTI. Suggesting that there is a weak negative relationship between the teachers' belief for data-based decision making process and the students reading scores. Thus, it can be inferred that when the teachers' belief score for RTI implementation increases the students' math score will increase and when the belief score increased the reading score decreased.

The researcher believes that these results provide data that suggest there is a gap between the teachers' belief of implementation of data-based decision making practices for reading and math as it relates to the teachers' belief in their ability to increase academic scores. This difference can be attributed to challenging issues educators face when focusing on reading preparedness for struggling students in all content area subjects (Bender, 2011). He noted that at the secondary level reading of expository texts requires different instructional skills that dictate the strategies needed for instruction. Therefore, when a student's reading concerns are complicated by cultural factors, lack of motivation to read, and teachers' unpreparedness to teach reading skills in different content area subjects, the subject area teacher may become overwhelmed (Bender, 2011; Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Faggella-Luby & Deshler, 2008).

R2: To what extent if any does a relationship exist between teachers' belief of RTI (FCSI) and academic achievements of AAF students on RTI (Tier 1 and 2)?

To answer the question to what extent if any does a relationship exist between secondary teachers knowledge of RTI and the academic achievements of all RTI students the researcher analyzed Factor 3 (*Functions of Core and Supplemental Instruction*) of the survey which was classified as teacher's belief of the effectiveness of the academic abilities of the struggling learner to supplement, augment and sustain relevant RTI interventions services for implementation in the general education classroom.

The correlations between pairs of variables revealed a correlation of .490** with statistical significance existing between the teachers' belief of the functions of core and supplemental instructions and their math scores, and a negative relationship of -.235 for reading. Suggesting that there is a weak negative relationship between the increased teacher belief of core and supplemental instructions of teachers and the students reading scores. This relationship implies that a variability in the math scores can be explained or determined by the teachers' belief of core and supplemental instructions for RTI intervention. These results lead the researcher to believe that when the teacher's belief of RTI increases AAF students' academic achievement for math increases. The negative correlation for reading suggest that reading problems may exist for students at this secondary school. The researcher believes that the existence of a weak negative relationship can be attributed to the teachers' lack of belief in implementing core and supplemental reading strategies in the classroom for all students.

R3: What is the relationship between a teacher's belief of academic achievement of African American Female students with disabilities (SWD) and the teacher's DBDM?

To answer the question what is the relationship between a teacher's belief of academic achievement of African American Female students with disabilities (SWD) and the teacher's DBDM, the researcher explored the relationship between the teachers' belief scores of SWD and DBDM. The analysis examined the relationships between the teachers' belief of academic ability and performance of students with disabilities and data-based decision making for $n = 46$ participants. The correlation of the teacher's belief of academic ability and performance of SWD for and DBDM equals .439** which is statistically significant and different from zero based on a two-tailed test at the .05 and .01 alpha level.

The results of this study indicated that when the teachers' DBDM scores increased, their belief score of SWD increased also. This positive relationship is corroborated by the concept that data-based decision making is central to the RTI process. The data-based decision-making process occurs at all levels of RTI implementation and all levels of instruction ("RTI Training Webcast - Data-Based Decision Making | RTI Action Network," n.d.). Hence, it is consequential to continue to utilize data for continued screening of students with disabilities and to make better decision to enhance their learning experiences.

R4. What is the relationship between a teacher's belief score of academic achievement of African American Female's students with disabilities (SWD) and the teacher's FCSI?

To answer the question to what is the relationship between a teacher's belief score of academic achievement of African American Female students with disabilities (AAF-SWD) and the teacher's FCSI the researcher explored the relationship between the teachers' belief scores of SWD and FCSI. The analysis of the relationships between the teachers' belief of academic ability and performance of SWD and FCSI for $n = 46$ participants revealed a positive correlation between the variables. However, the relationship was not statistically significant. The absence of a statistically significant relationship was indicative of the concept that knowledge of core and supplemental instruction is not the only integral component of the teachers' belief in the academic ability and performance of AAF-SWD.

Discussion of the Results in Relation to the Literature

The first question of the study sought to determine if a relationship between AAF-RTI students' academic achievement scores and teachers' belief of RTI Implementation (DBDM), the researcher analyzed the academic scores of the AAF-RTI students and the DBDM scores of the teachers' Belief Survey. The data derived from the research shows inconsistencies with the null

hypothesis. Thus, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis that there is no relationship between the teachers' belief of DBDM learner-centered practices for RTI implementation of African American females and the level of belief these teachers have in their ability to increase student achievement. The significant relationships noted for the teachers' belief in intervention practices and student achievement for AAF indicate that John Dewey's theory of experience, where the learner's experience is fundamental to the success of a learner centered RTI curriculum to improve student achievement is valid. Therefore, one can predict that if teachers implement DBDM learner-centered instructions using student experiences academic achievements will increase, and a lack of it will lead to a decline in performances. It follows that; Dewey's philosophy of learner-centered instruction of quality experiences is appropriate for the intervention of struggling students. However, it is important to note that this relationship needs to be interpreted with caution as the research focused on the beliefs of 46 participants at one secondary school located in Central Texas. Subsequently, the researcher maintained that the provision of quality learner centered experiences for students is related to student engagement and academic achievement. Therefore, it is necessary for teachers to use DBDM practices to investigate and gather knowledge of their student's cultural experiences and allow their students evaluate and internalize those experiences to improve instructional practices in the classroom. Thus, the process of associating the concept of learning as social experiences will allow educators to create multiple avenues to reach students with different faculties, interest, and learning needs (Dewey, 1938; Vygotsky, 1978).

The second question in this research was designed to extract data to identify the existence or degree of a relationship between a teachers' belief of RTI and academic achievements of struggling students. The data derived from the research shows inconsistencies with the null

hypothesis. Thus, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis that there is no relationship exist between teachers' belief of RTI (FCSI) and the level of belief these teachers have in their ability to increase academic achievements of AAF students on RTI (Tier 1 and 2).

The significant relationships noted for the teachers' belief of instructional practices for RTI and student achievement for AAF denote that John Dewey's theory of experience, where the learner's experience is fundamental to the prosperity of a learner-centered RTI curriculum to improve student achievement is valid. Consequently, one can predict that if edifiers' erudition of core and supplemental instructions for proactive interventions using a needs-based framework that provides accommodations based on a student's needs for quality learner-centered experiences increases, the academic achievements of students will increment, and a lack of it will lead to a decline in performances.

These results further support the continuity of experience for life learners. Dewey (1938) explicated that life edification modifies past and present circumstances and will ultimately affect the quality of future experiences. Hence, the results are in accordance with the essential components of RTI that suggest that a strong core and supplemental curriculum with high quality and researched-based classroom instruction must be continuous along with the provision of differentiated instruction, continued assessments, and progress monitoring. Therefore, a teachers' belief of the AAF learning experience will allow for modifications that will enhance their learning experience.

The third question in this research was designed to extract data to identify the existence of a relationship between a teacher's belief of academic achievement of AAF-SWD and the teacher's DBDM. The researcher explored the relationship between the teachers' belief scores of SWD and DBDM. The data derived from the current study indicated a significant positive

relationship between the pair of variables. Therefore, it can be inferred that data-based decision making is integral to the academic success of AAF-SWD and a lack of it can lead to failure.

Data-based decision making process occurs at all levels of RTI implementation and all levels of instruction. The ability to devise instructional decisions based on assessments, observations and culture plays a critical role for the success of AAF student's. Using data for screening, progress monitoring and developing individualized education plan (IEP) for students allows the educators to create instructional experiences for students that will engage and motivate them to continue to learn ("RTI Training Webcast - Data-Based Decision Making | RTI Action Network," n.d.).

Hence, the students' personal experience as it related to academic success should be included in the data collection and used as a consideration for tiered interventions and special education diagnoses. Utilizing John Dewey's theory of experience, the importance of the learner's experience is seen as fundamental to the success of a learner-centered curriculum to improve student achievement.

The final question in this research was designed to extract data to identify the existence of a relationship between a teacher's belief score of academic achievement of African American Female's students with disabilities (AAF-SWD) and the teacher's FCSI. Contrary to expectations this study did not find a significant relationship between the variables. The absence of a statistically significant relationship infers that core and supplemental instruction is not critical to the academic ability and performance of AAF-SWD. The results indicated that increased teacher belief of core and supplemental instructions or lack thereof does not predict increased student achievements. Interestingly, although the degree of the teachers' belief of FCSI and AAF-SWD did not show significance, additional data established a significant association existed for the teachers' belief of FCSI and DBDM. The correlation of the teacher's belief of data-based

decision making (DBDM) and functions of core and supplemental instructions (FCSI) showed a positive and statically significant relationship of .398**. This data was evidence that the role of data in decision making is significantly related and critical to the educator's belief about student learning and functions of core and supplemental instructions. These results are consistent with the literature which states that when the educator utilizes data-driven or evidence based information to inform instructional approaches for the struggling learner, targeted instructional learning experiences is instrumental for the learner to (“RTI Training Webcast - Data-Based Decision Making | RTI Action Network,” n.d.). The researcher cautiously interpreted this data as the possibility of the functions of core and supplemental instructions alone will not predict increased student achievement.

Hence, the instructional quality that provides for learning experiences must empower the learner to become a critical consumer of the information acquired. Similarly, the plan of intervention by the teacher should provide quality-learning experiences that determine the level of frequency, intensity and progress monitoring. The goal is to provide a benefit to all students by equipping them with the appropriate tools to thrive academically. Dewey’s concept of learning offers educators an ideal approach of personal experiences to engage the student by creating multiple avenues for student engagement and intervention. Hence, students with different abilities, interest, and learning need experience equally appropriate ways to learn. Additionally, teachers will determine if data is relevant to move students between tiers. To implement the RTI process teachers must not only understand the importance of high-quality deliverance of instruction but how to incorporate experience-based education for students (Bates, 2015). Hence, by educating teachers on the importance of using data-based decision making

practices to inform the direction of the instructional quality educators will be able to equip students with the right experiences to succeed.

Implication of the Results for Practice, Policy, and Theory

The researcher believes that future research and studies should be conducted to critically discern if culturally-relevant RTI practices will result in increased student's achievement. The current study did not investigate a causal relation; however, data collected from this study implicated a significant relationship existed for AAF students' achievement scores and teachers' belief of RTI implementation. The present study corroborates the association between Dewey's theory of experiential learning and increased student achievement and contributes additional evidence that suggests cultural backgrounds of students serve a significant role in students' academic accomplishments. An implication of this is that if the ideals and expectations of students' upbringing influence their attitude about educational achievement, it will be beneficial for the educators and policy makers to examine a culturally relevant RTI system at the secondary school level. Hence, it is vital for teachers and educational leaders to be informed and educated about environmental factors in and out of the classroom to include diverse cultures that may transform the learning experiences of all students. Teachers and administrators can use this knowledge about the student's experiences to continually challenge students of all races to ensure they are engaged in learning.

The present study raises the possibility that there is a need for teacher preparation of RTI for successful implementation which will lead to increased student achievement. Continued teacher training for the implementation of RTI practices and policies are crucial to keeping students academically engaged and challenged. Additionally, the current research also noted significant relationships for data-based decision making practices, functions of core and

supplemental instructions, and academic abilities and performances of students with disabilities. These findings have meaningful implications for the effective coordination of the integral segments of the RTI structure. Therefore, teacher belief and training of the implementation of data-based decision practices for screening, progress monitoring and tiered levels of instruction are critical for the continuity of experiences for continued student achievements. Dewey's belief in the continuity of experiences suggest that the past and present experiences will shape our future experiences. Therefore, the alignment of the essential components of RTI with a strong core curriculum and researched-based classroom instruction must be ongoing along with the provision of differentiated instruction, continued assessments, and progress monitoring to ensure that students learning experiences are meaningful and engaging.

To strengthen the learning environment, educational policies and curriculum writers must incorporate different learning experiences that are meaningful to students in the curriculum. Additionally, policymakers should require that culturally relevant RTI be implemented in teacher preparatory courses and continued professional development for teachers to incorporate these strategies for struggling learners. Therefore, the creation of a curriculum where students can help to design their learning experiences based on home, neighborhood, school, church and media may foster problem-solving and critical thinking skills. The researcher believes that by understanding the importance of RTI and providing relevant information to students, a teacher may promote growth and improve academic success. Although the current study is based on a small sample of participants, the findings suggest the implications of this research are transferable to other schools within the district where the demographic make-up of the students is similar. However, future research should concentrate on other struggling minorities and the implementation of learning practices based on their experiences.

Recommendations for Further Research

Further research should be undertaken to investigate the teachers' understanding and implementation of culturally relevant RTI practices for African American females using learner centered practices. Researchers can focus on mixed methods studies that allows educators the ability to view the implementation process from multiple perspectives where the findings are substantiated by qualitative and quantitative data, and the depth and range of the study are exhaustive. Therefore, by analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data and interpreting the results, future research can provide greater insight and in-depth understanding of the research.

A natural progression of this work is to analyze the relationship between the teachers' belief of culturally relevant RTI practices and student behavior as it relates to academic achievement. Research questions that could be asked include; how does culturally relevant RTI practices improve student's behavior? The study can also be expanded by observing trends and patterns of teachers of successful minority students. Therefore, further studies that include culturally relevant RTI and student achievement as it relates to behavior needs to be undertaken.

Conclusion

The present study set out to examine a system of targeted intervention services which holds the possibility of narrowing the achievement gap and increasing the academic achievement standards of struggling minority students. The intention of the research was to improve teacher instruction and RTI implementations with the focus of re-engaging AAF students by integrating their culture into the curriculum, and facilitate learning using the student's experiences to prevent academic disengagements. Therefore, the researchers aim was to inform and bring awareness to relationships of relevant RTI practices to help improve student achievement. The literature, based on African American females and RTI practices provided some culturally relevant

experiential intervention strategies to engage African American females. The research showed that significant relationships exist for African American students and their teachers' belief of RTI implementation of learner centered activities.

On the question of teachers' relationship of AAF students' academic achievement scores and their teachers' belief of implementation for RTI, significant findings revealed that if teachers implement quality instructions using a students' experience academic achievements will flourish. Accordingly, the researcher predicts that when the student culture is taken into consideration student achievement will increase. This leads the researcher to believe that a look at current RTI practices for minority students in secondary schools is crucial for educators as this may affect the decisions necessary to narrow the achievement gap and reduce the number of special education referrals in schools. Henceforward, it is critical for future scholars and researchers to study specific culturally relevant RTI practices in schools that show minority students with high achievement. This will allow teachers to fortify the instructional core of their curriculum and increase relevant learning experiences for students of all races, ethnicities, gender, socioeconomic status and religious beliefs.

The second aim of the study was to provide clarity for the successful implementation of the critical components of the RTI framework using the student's experience as a tool. The study revealed significant relationships between teachers' belief of RTI and academic achievements for struggling students, and a weak relationship for teachers' belief of academic abilities and performance of SWD and FCSI. This data corroborated the literature that suggested that increased teachers' belief of core and supplemental instructional knowledge will help to increase student achievement, and there is an existing need for clarity of implementation. The theory of using a RTI system to differentiate and build student's ability to learn at high levels is a teaching

strategy that needs transparency. Consequently, the use of a culturally relevant RTI model to close achievement gaps in schools is a feat that requires educators and policy makers to make an overt commitment to bridge these deficiencies.

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APPENDIX A: School Permission Letter

CU IRB | 1
Revised September 2015

9/9/2016

Dear Institutional Review Board:

The purpose of this letter is to inform you that I give Janelle Muhammad permission to conduct the research titled Teachers of African American Females Implementation of RTI in Secondary Schools, at [REDACTED] Middle School. This also serves as assurance that this school complies with requirements of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) and will ensure that these requirements are followed in the conduct of this research.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

APPENDIX B: IRB Approval Letter



DATE: September 28, 2016

TO: Janelle Muhammad

FROM: Concordia University - Portland IRB (CU IRB)

PROJECT TITLE: [958337-1] Teachers of African American Females Implementation of RTI in Secondary Schools

REFERENCE #: EDD-20160910-Graham-Muhammad

SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: APPROVED

APPROVAL DATE: September 28, 2016

EXPIRATION DATE: September 28, 2017

REVIEW TYPE: Administrative Review

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The Concordia University - Portland IRB (CU IRB) has APPROVED your submission. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Administrative Review based on the applicable federal regulations. The CU IRB conducted an IRB review – and approved your project. At the same time, the CU IRB deemed that the project could have been exempted from IRB review according to federal regulations. The research appears to fit the category of Classroom Educational Research, which is described below*. Whether or not to grant this exemption is at the discretion of the local IRB(s). Therefore, if you are conducting research within another institution, you will have to present this research to that institution and follow their procedure and decision on the review process they require before you can begin your research.

You are responsible for contacting and following the procedures and policies of Concordia University and any other institution where you conduct research.

Attached is a stamped copy of the approved consent form. You must use this approved consent form. Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and obtaining of informed consent. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. The form needed to request a revision is called a Modification Request Form, which is available at www.cu-portland.edu/IRB/Forms.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others (UPIRSOs) and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. Please email the CU IRB Director directly, at obranck@cu-portland.edu, if you have an unanticipated problem or other such urgent question or report.

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to this office.

This project has been determined to be a Minimal Risk project. Based on the risks, this project requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate forms for this procedure. Your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date of September 28, 2017.

You must submit a close-out report at the expiration of your project or upon completion of your project. The Close-out Report Form is available at www.cu-portland.edu/IRB/Forms.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years after the completion of the project.

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. OraLee Branch at 503-493-6390 or irb@cu-portland.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

*** Federal Regulations 45 CFR 46 Exemption Category Classroom Educational Research, as summarized by the CU IRB:** Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices such as: (i) research on regular and special education instructional strategies; or (ii) research on the effectiveness of, or the comparison among, instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods. As noted above, research must be conducted in "established or commonly accepted educational settings" and involve "normal educational practices" to be exempt under this category. The study must not contrast one group with and the other without the instructional strategy, and must not divide into subpopulations based upon race, gender, or other protected class. In the United States, the exemption for procedures involving survey, interview or observation does not apply to research with children under the age of 18, except for when the investigator(s) do not participate in the activities being observed. Whether or not to extend this exemption is at the discretion of the local IRB(s).

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Concordia University - Portland IRB (CU IRB)'s records. September 28, 2016

APPENDIX C: Beliefs Survey

54 Beliefs Survey — Supplements

Blank Copy of Beliefs Survey

Problem Solving/Response to Intervention
Developed by the Florida PS/RtI Statewide Project — <http://floridarti.usf.edu>

Beliefs Survey

Beliefs Survey

1. **Your PS/RtI Project ID:** _____ →

Your PS/RtI Project ID was designed to assure confidentiality while also providing a method to match an individual's responses across instruments. In the space provided (first row), please write in the last four digits of your Social Security Number and the last two digits of the year you were born. Then, shade in the corresponding circles.

0	0	0	0	0	0
1	1	1	1	1	1
2	2	2	2	2	2
3	3	3	3	3	3
4	4	4	4	4	4
5	5	5	5	5	5
6	6	6	6	6	6
7	7	7	7	7	7
8	8	8	8	8	8
9	9	9	9	9	9

Directions: For items 2-5 below, please shade in the circle next to the response option that best represents your answer.

2. Job Description:

- ☐ PS/RtI Coach
 ☐ Teacher-General Education
 ☐ Teacher-Special Education
☐ School Counselor
 ☐ School Psychologist
 ☐ School Social Worker
☐ Principal
 ☐ Assistant Principal

Other (Please specify): _____

3. Years of Experience in Education:

- ☐ Less than 1 year
 ☐ 1 – 4 years
 ☐ 5-9 years
☐ 10 – 14 years
 ☐ 15-19 years
 ☐ 20-24 years
☐ 25 or more years
 ☐ Not applicable

4. Number of Years in your Current Position:

- ☐ Less than 1 year
 ☐ 1 – 4 years
 ☐ 5-9 years
☐ 10 – 14 years
 ☐ 15-19 years
 ☐ 20 or more years

5. Highest Degree Earned:

- ☐ B.A./B.S.
 ☐ M.A./M.S.
 ☐ Ed.S.
 ☐ Ph.D./Ed.D.

Other (Please specify): _____

Problem Solving/Response to Intervention
Developed by the Florida PS/RTI Statewide Project — <http://floridarti.usf.edu>

Beliefs Survey

Directions: Using the scale below, please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements by shading in the circle that best represents your response.

- ① = Strongly Disagree (SD)
② = Disagree (D)
③ = Neutral (N)
④ = Agree (A)
⑤ = Strongly Agree (SA)

	SD	D	N	A	SA
6. I believe in the philosophy of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) even if I disagree with some of the requirements.	①	②	③	④	⑤
7. Core instruction should be effective enough to result in 80% of the students achieving benchmarks in					
7.a. reading	①	②	③	④	⑤
7.b. math	①	②	③	④	⑤
8. The primary function of supplemental instruction is to ensure that students meet grade-level benchmarks in					
8.a. reading	①	②	③	④	⑤
8.b. math	①	②	③	④	⑤
9. The majority of students with learning disabilities achieve grade-level benchmarks in					
9.a. reading	①	②	③	④	⑤
9.b. math	①	②	③	④	⑤
10. The majority of students with behavioral problems (EH/SED or EBD) achieve grade-level benchmarks in					
10.a. reading	①	②	③	④	⑤
10.b. math	①	②	③	④	⑤
11. Students with high-incidence disabilities (e.g. SLD, EBD) who are receiving special education services are capable of achieving grade-level benchmarks (i.e., general education standards) in					
11.a. reading	①	②	③	④	⑤
11.b. math	①	②	③	④	⑤
12. General education classroom teachers should implement more differentiated and flexible instructional practices to address the needs of a more diverse student body.	①	②	③	④	⑤

Problem Solving/Response to Intervention
 Developed by the Florida PS/RTI Statewide Project — <http://floridarti.usf.edu>

Beliefs Survey

	SD	D	N	A	SA
13. General education classroom teachers would be able to implement more differentiated and flexible interventions if they had additional staff support.	①	②	③	④	⑤
14. The use of additional interventions in the general education classroom would result in success for more students.	①	②	③	④	⑤
15. Prevention activities and early intervention strategies in schools would result in fewer referrals to problem-solving teams and placements in special education.	①	②	③	④	⑤
16. The “severity” of a student’s academic problem is determined not by how far behind the student is in terms of his/her academic performance but by how quickly the student responds to intervention.	①	②	③	④	⑤
17. The “severity” of a student’s behavioral problem is determined not by how inappropriate a student is in terms of his/her behavioral performance but by how quickly the student responds to intervention.	①	②	③	④	⑤
18. The results of IQ and achievement testing can be used to identify effective interventions for students with learning and behavior problems.	①	②	③	④	⑤
19. Many students currently identified as “LD” do not have a disability, rather they came to school “not ready” to learn or fell too far behind academically for the available interventions to close the gap sufficiently.	①	②	③	④	⑤
20. Using student-based data to determine intervention effectiveness is more accurate than using only “teacher judgment.”	①	②	③	④	⑤
21. Evaluating a student’s response to interventions is a more effective way of determining what a student is capable of achieving than using scores from “tests” (e.g., IQ/Achievement test).	①	②	③	④	⑤
22. Additional time and resources should be allocated first to students who are not reaching benchmarks (i.e., general education standards) before significant time and resources are directed to students who are at or above benchmarks.	①	②	③	④	⑤
23. Graphing student data makes it easier for one to make decisions about student performance and needed interventions.	①	②	③	④	⑤
24. A student’s parents (guardian) should be involved in the problem-solving process as soon as a teacher has a concern about the student.	①	②	③	④	⑤

Problem Solving/Response to Intervention
 Developed by the Florida PS/RI Statewide Project — <http://floridarti.usf.edu>

Beliefs Survey

	SD	D	N	A	SA
25. Students respond better to interventions when their parent (guardian) is involved in the development and implementation of those interventions.	①	②	③	④	⑤
26. All students can achieve grade-level benchmarks if they have sufficient support.	①	②	③	④	⑤
27. The goal of assessment is to generate and measure effectiveness of instruction/intervention.	①	②	③	④	⑤

THANK YOU!

APPENDIX D: RTI Belief Survey Data

1. Your PS/RtI Project ID: Your PS/RtI

Project ID was designed to assure confidentiality while also providing a method to match an individual's responses across instruments. In the space provided (first row), please write in the last four digits of your Social Security Number and the last two digits of the year you were born. Then, shade in the corresponding circles.

2. Job Description:		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
1. Job Description:	0.0%	0
Teacher-General Education	84.8%	39
Teacher-Special Education	15.2%	7
School Counselor	0.0%	0
School Psychologist	0.0%	0
School Social Worker	0.0%	0
Principal Assistant	0.0%	0
Principal Teachers' Assistant	0.0%	0
Other	0.0%	0
Other (please specify)		1
<i>answered question</i>		46
<i>skipped question</i>		0

3. Years of Experience in Education:

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Less than 1 year	8.7%	4
1 – 4 years	26.1%	12

5-9 years	23.9%	11
10 – 14 years	17.4%	8
15-19 years	10.9%	5
20-24 years	2.2%	1
25 or more years	10.9%	5
Not applicable	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		46
<i>skipped question</i>		0

4. Number of Years in your Current Position:

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Less than 1 year	15.2%	7
1 – 4 years	34.8%	16
5-9 years	23.9%	11
10 – 14 years	10.9%	5
15-19 years	8.7%	4
20 or more years	6.5%	3
<i>answered question</i>		46
<i>skipped question</i>		0

5. Highest Degree Earned

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
A.A./A.S./A.B.S	0.0%	0
B.A./B.S.	63.0%	29
M.A./M.S.	37.0%	17
Ed.S.	0.0%	0
Ph.D./Ed.D.	0.0%	0
N/A	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		46
<i>skipped question</i>		0

6. I believe in the philosophy of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) even if I disagree with some of the requirements.

Answer Options	SD	D	N	A	SA	Rating Average	Response Count
	2	6	8	21	9	3.63	46
answered question							46
skipped question							0

7. Core instruction should be effective enough to result in 80% of the students achieving benchmarks in

Answer Options	SD	D	N	A	SA	Rating Average	Response Count
Reading	0	3	8	23	12	3.96	46
Math	0	3	9	22	12	3.93	46
						<i>answered question</i>	46
						<i>skipped question</i>	0

8. The primary function of supplemental instruction is to ensure that students meet grade-level benchmarks in

Answer Options	SD	D	N	A	SA	Rating Average	Response Count
Reading	0	3	5	31	7	3.91	46
Math	0	3	6	30	7	3.89	46
						<i>answered question</i>	46
						<i>skipped question</i>	0

9. The majority of students with learning disabilities achieve grade-level benchmarks in

Answer Options	SD	D	N	A	SA	Rating Average	Response Count
Reading	5	24	10	6	1	2.43	46
Math	4	25	10	6	1	2.46	46
answered question							46
skipped question							0

10. The majority of students with behavioral problems (EH/SED or EBD) achieve grade-level benchmarks in

Answer Options	SD	D	N	A	SA	Rating Average	Response Count
Reading	5	18	13	7	2	2.62	45
Math	5	19	13	7	2	2.61	46
answered question							46
skipped question							0

11. Students with high-incidence disabilities (e.g. SLD, EBD) who are receiving special education services are capable of achieving grade-level benchmarks (i.e., general education standards) in

Answer Options	SD	D	N	A	SA	Rating Average	Response Count
Reading	3	11	11	17	4	3.17	46
Math	3	11	11	17	4	3.17	46
<i>answered question</i>							46
<i>skipped question</i>							0

12. General education classroom teachers should implement more differentiated and flexible instructional practices to address the needs of a more diverse student body.

Answer Options	SD	D	N	A	SA	Rating Average	Response Count
	0	3	5	30	8	3.93	46
<i>answered question</i>							46
<i>skipped question</i>							0

13. General education classroom teachers would be able to implement more differentiated and flexible interventions if they had additional staff support

Answer Options	SD	D	N	A	SA	Rating Average	Response Count
	0	1	3	17	25	4.43	46
<i>answered question</i>							46
<i>skipped question</i>							0

14. The use of additional interventions in the general education classroom would result in success for more students.

Answer Options	SD	D	N	A	SA	Rating Average	Response Count
	0	1	8	22	15	4.11	46
<i>answered question</i>							46
<i>skipped question</i>							0

15. Prevention activities and early intervention strategies in schools would result in fewer referrals to problem-solving teams and placements in special education.

Answer Options	SD	D	N	A	SA	Rating Average	Response Count
	0	7	3	29	7	3.78	46
<i>answered question</i>							46
<i>skipped question</i>							0

16. The “severity” of a student’s academic problem is determined not by how far behind the student is in terms of his/her academic performance but by how quickly the student responds to intervention.

Answer Options	SD	D	N	A	SA	Rating Average	Response Count
	1	16	7	18	1	3.05	43
<i>answered question</i>							43
<i>skipped question</i>							3

17. The “severity” of a student’s behavioral problem is determined not by how inappropriate a student is in terms of his/her behavioral performance but by how quickly the student responds to intervention

Answer Options	SD	D	N	A	SA	Rating Average	Response Count
	4	15	10	15	2	2.91	46
<i>answered question</i>							46
<i>skipped question</i>							0

18. The results of IQ and achievement testing can be used to identify effective interventions for students with learning and behavior problems.

Answer Options	SD	D	N	A	SA	Rating Average	Response Count
	4	8	13	16	5	3.22	46
<i>answered question</i>							46
<i>skipped question</i>							0

19. Many students currently identified as “LD” do not have a disability, rather they came to school “not ready” to learn or fell too far behind academically for the available interventions to close the gap sufficiently

Answer Options	SD	D	N	A	SA	Rating Average	Response Count
	2	9	10	20	5	3.37	46

<i>answered question</i>	46
<i>skipped question</i>	0

20. Using student-based data to determine intervention effectiveness is more accurate than using only “teacher judgment.”

Answer Options	SD	D	N	A	SA	Rating Average	Response Count
	1	6	12	21	6	3.54	46
answered question							46
skipped question							0

21. Evaluating a student's response to interventions is a more effective way of determining what a student is capable of achieving than using scores from "tests" (e.g., IQ/Achievement test).

Answer Options	SD	D	N	A	SA	Rating Average	Response Count
	0	4	10	28	4	3.70	46
answered question							46
skipped question							0

22. Additional time and resources should be allocated first to students who are not reaching benchmarks (i.e., general education standards) before significant time and resources are directed to students who are at or above benchmarks.

Answer Options	SD	D	N	A	SA	Rating Average	Response Count
	3	11	8	18	6	3.28	46
answered question							46
skipped question							0

23. Graphing student data makes it easier for one to make decisions about student performance and needed interventions.

Answer Options	SD	D	N	A	SA	Rating Average	Response Count
	1	4	17	20	4	3.48	46
answered question							46
skipped question							0

24. A student's parents (guardian) should be involved in the problem- solving process as soon as a teacher has a concern about the student.

Answer Options	SD	D	N	A	SA	Rating Average	Response Count
	0	0	1	28	17	4.35	46
answered question							46
skipped question							0

25. Students respond better to interventions when their parent (guardian) is involved in the development and implementation of those interventions.

Answer Options	SD	D	N	A	SA	Rating Average	Response Count
	0	2	10	23	11	3.93	46
answered question							46
skipped question							0

26. All students can achieve grade-level benchmarks if they have sufficient support

Answer Options	SD	D	N	A	SA	Rating Average	Response Count
	4	11	8	18	5	3.20	46
answered question							46
skipped question							0

27. The goal of assessment is to generate and measure effectiveness of instruction/intervention.

Answer Options	SD	D	N	A	SA	Rating Average	Response Count
	1	2	9	29	5	3.76	46
answered question							46
skipped question							0

APPENDIX E: Statement of Original Work

The Concordia University Doctorate of Education Program is a collaborative community of scholar-practitioners, who seek to transform society by pursuing ethically-informed, rigorously-researched, inquiry-based projects that benefit professional, institutional, and local educational contexts. Each member of the community affirms throughout their program of study, adherence to the principles and standards outlined in the Concordia University Academic Integrity Policy. This policy states the following:

Statement of academic integrity.

As a member of the Concordia University community, I will neither engage in fraudulent or unauthorized behaviors in the presentation and completion of my work, nor will I provide unauthorized assistance to others.

Explanations:

What does “fraudulent” mean?

“Fraudulent” work is any material submitted for evaluation that is falsely or improperly presented as one’s own. This includes, but is not limited to texts, graphics and other multi-media files appropriated from any source, including another individual, that are intentionally presented as all or part of a candidate’s final work without full and complete documentation.

What is “unauthorized” assistance?

“Unauthorized assistance” refers to any support candidates solicit in the completion of their work, that has not been either explicitly specified as appropriate by the instructor, or any assistance that is understood in the class context as inappropriate. This can include, but is not limited to:

- ☐ Use of unauthorized notes or another’s work during an online test
- ☐ Use of unauthorized notes or personal assistance in an online exam setting
- ☐ Inappropriate collaboration in preparation and/or completion of a project
- ☐ Unauthorized solicitation of professional resources for the completion of the work.

Statement of Original Work

I attest that:

1. I have read, understood, and complied with all aspects of the Concordia University-Portland Academic Integrity Policy during the development and writing of this dissertation.
2. Where information and/or materials from outside sources has been used in the production of this dissertation, all information and/or materials from outside sources has been properly referenced and all permissions required for use of the information and/or materials have been obtained, in accordance with research standards outlined in the *Publication Manual of The American Psychological Association*

Janelle Muhammad

Digital Signature

Janelle Muhammad

Name (Typed)

4/10/2017

Date