ABSTRACT

Shannon Boyle Castillo, IMPROVING THE RTI PROCESS IN GREENE COUNTY SCHOOLS (Under the direction of Dr. James O. McDowelle). Department of Educational Leadership, March 2017.

This study provides a comprehensive process to improve the implementation of RTI in an elementary school. Improvement Science was the approach used to assist in identifying the problem and created strategies to improve the standardization of an RTI process for Greene County Schools. The RTI process was not specifically enunciated in Greene County and therefore, teachers were unsure of a process to follow as well as how to document the process a student is making. RTI was originally implemented without formal guidelines and operational procedures. Therefore, it was necessary to develop these guidelines and operational procedures for this improved RTI process to function effectively to meet the needs of students and teachers in Greene County.

IMPROVING THE RTI PROCESS IN GREENE COUNTY SCHOOLS

A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership

East Carolina University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

by

Shannon Boyle Castillo

March, 2017

IMPROVING THE RTI PROCESS IN GREENE COUNTY SCHOOLS

by

Shannon Boyle Castillo

APPROVED BY:

DIRECTOR OF DISSERTATION:_____
James O. McDowelle, EdD

COMMITTEE MEMBER:_____
William A. Rouse, Jr., EdD

COMMITTEE MEMBER:_____
William J. Grobe, EdD

COMMITTEE MEMBER:_____
Patrick Miller, EdD

CHAIR OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP:

_____
William A. Rouse, Jr., EdD

DEAN OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL:

_____
Paul Gemperline, PhD

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Background and Rationale

Response to Intervention (RTI) is a tiered system of instructional support to assist students with learning needs. Greene County Schools has maintained a focus on RTI rather than the system of a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) implemented more widely in the state of North Carolina. The main difference between the two systems is the addition of behavioral interventions under MTSS. Under RTI students struggling academically are provided increased levels of support to accelerate their learning so that the student is on a trajectory to reach grade level expectations. The RTI Network (n.d.) states RTI is designed "for use when making decisions in both general education and special education, creating a well-integrated system of instruction and intervention guided by child outcome data" (para. 1). RTI implementation is highly praised in the literature. Buffum, Mattos, and Weber (2010) state that the purpose of RTI is "to systematically provide every student with the additional time and support to learn at high levels" (para. 24). However, the Greene County RTI process did not define the steps necessary to implement RTI. The purpose of this study is to describe in great detail a process to improve the implementation of RTI in an elementary school.

Teachers know it is best practice to provide RTI tiered interventions, however the process necessary to implement RTI is not specifically enunciated in Greene County. Therefore, teachers are unsure of a process to follow as well as how to document the progress the student is making. RTI is oftentimes viewed by teachers as something to do in addition to teaching, therefore educators become overwhelmed before they even begin to work within the RTI system. RTI, stripped to its essentials, is simply solving academic problems with strategic teaching. The RTI Network (n.d.) describes this strategic teaching as instruction that is and includes "high quality,

scientifically based instruction, ongoing student assessment, tiered instruction, and parent involvement" (para. 2). The purpose of this improvement science approach is to assist in the implementation of an improved consistent countywide process of RTI as well as the implementation of sound interventions relevant to the students in a particular school. The process to be used is improvement science. As a small-scale proof of concept (Langley, Moen, Nolan, Norman, & Provost, 2009), a systematic RTI process will be developed and implemented in a rural elementary school in eastern North Carolina, with the long term goal of replicating the successful implementation throughout the county school system. Through improvement science, the ambiguity will be taken out of the Greene County RTI process and teachers can teach effectively and implement the student-specific improved RTI process with fidelity. In 2007, North Carolina regional Department of Public Instruction (DPI) teams trained RTI county teams, composed mostly of school counselors and assistant principals. This training was then taken back to the schools and shared with the staff, primarily during the beginning of the school year meeting (D. Phillips, personal communication, January, 16, 2016). This training resulted in DPI compliance rather than training relevant and useful for teachers in the classroom. In 2010, the RTI process was referred to as the Problem Solving Model (PSM). There were at least fourteen core programs for teachers to use in the classroom. This arrangement did not allow teachers to dig deep into individual student data to determine the most foundational skill(s) for each struggling student. Therefore it became necessary for a more effective process to be developed. It is the position of Greene County senior administration that RTI must be a main focus for schools to improve student achievement (P. Miller, personal communication, July 10, 2014). It is also the understanding of the superintendent and assistant superintendent that the enhanced process

developed for RTI will be applied to the other schools within the county after running this process implementation on a small-scale proof of concept basis (see Appendix A).

West Greene Elementary underwent a major change in the summer of 2012. Originally it was a 3rd-5th grade school with approximately 730 students. West Greene Elementary has been converted to a 2nd and 3rd grade school with approximately 500 students. This change brought a convergence of two staffs under new administration and new state curriculum.

West Greene is in a rural, low-wealth, small community of about 21,000 people in Greene County, North Carolina. The main source of employment is through agriculture. All students in the county attend West Greene Elementary because it is the only 2nd and 3rd grade school. West Greene is located next to the central office and within 4 miles of all other schools. Social activities center around school-sponsored musical, academic, social, and sporting events as well as church events. The U.S. Bureau of the Census of Greene County (2014) reports the demographics include 59% Caucasian, 37% African American, 1.2% multi-racial, 2.2% American Indian, and 0.5% Asian. Currently 15% of the reported population is Hispanic. There are approximately 56 churches in Greene County within 266 square miles with an unemployment rate of 9.8%, which is higher than the state average.

I, along with a team, have created a flow map of the improved RTI process for schools to use from Kindergarten through twelfth grade for Greene County Schools. This team consisted of myself, another elementary principal, and two RTI facilitators. When developing the flow map, the team believed it was important to start at the very beginning, when a teacher first notices a student is struggling (E. Smith, personal communication, May 29, 2014). Then within each step of the RTI process, a description was added of what the teacher response should include as well as what documentation to collect. Each RTI data meeting was also added to the flow map to

indicate the number of weeks of intervention as well as when to meet to discuss moving a student up in the tiered process to intensify interventions if needed.

Problem of Practice Analysis

The magnitude and scope of the problem that created the need for this improvement project began to emerge with an incident that occurred at the end of the 2013-2014 school year. During a promotion/retention meeting with a second grade teacher and school administrators, the teacher stated that the student in question should be retained based on his academic level and lack of academic growth. When asked to show what interventions the teacher delivered to the student and the student's academic growth over the year, the teacher did not have proper documentation to show either. Therefore administration could not retain the student because the teacher was unable to provide documented interventions and student academic growth. At the time, RTI in Greene County did not have standardized procedures and teachers did not know when or how to go about documenting interventions in a tiered process. This negatively impacted the students' lack of accelerated learning and could have resulted in a learning disability going undetected. Buffum, Mattos, and Weber (2010) state that RTI's foundation is that we "should not wait until students fall far enough behind to qualify for special education to provide them with the help they need. Instead, schools should provide targeted and systematic interventions to *all* students as soon as they demonstrate the need" (para. 2). Therefore, the purpose of this study was to describe in great detail a process to improve the implementation of RTI in an elementary school.

The RTI Process

The RTI process begins with a universal screening of all students. Universal screeners provide "for frequent checks of student performance so that students who may need additional

instructional support can be identified and provided with support as early as possible" (McDougal, Graney, Wright, & Ardoin, 2010, p. 53). Reading 3D is used as the universal screener for Kindergarten through third grade in North Carolina. A universal screener is an assessment to help identify or predict which students need additional interventions. Each school has the autonomy to make decisions on how best to deliver interventions to students and track their progress. At the second and third grade level, the administrators and RTI facilitator met and created color-coded forms for the teachers. Teachers use green forms for students in Tier 1, yellow forms for Tier 2, and red forms for Tier 3. The higher the tier level, the greater is the intensity of the intervention. The tier system will be explained in detail in Chapter Two. The administrators and RTI facilitator met with teachers to describe the process laid out in the flow map and what each step actually looks like in practice. The training took place during their Professional Learning Team (PLT) meeting. Teachers each received a folder with the PowerPoint presentation (see Figure 2), the flow map (see Appendix B), RTI Important Notes detailing each step in the process (see Appendix C), and copies of each form needed to document student progress on individualized interventions (see Appendix D). A presentation was given detailing each stage of the flow map from the onset of a student experiencing difficulty until a determination was made of the child's academic status. Professional development was also given throughout the year to continue to highly train teachers in the enhanced RTI process and to implement it with fidelity. The process was followed the entire school year.

RTI is defined in literature but rarely is a process described that accompanies the definition. The Plan-Do-Study-Act Cycle was the framework used by the scholar-practitioner and stakeholders as the Model for Improvement to implement the systematic process for RTI at West Greene Elementary in Greene County, North Carolina. As improvement science states, it

was used in large part because the process implemented will be tested and run on a small scale to eventually expand to the rest of the schools in the county. Hall (n.d.) states that a successful approach for RTI implementation "is a phased one in which the implementation plan is limited to only some grade levels in the first year, is designed to expand to more grades in the second year, and so on" (para. 3). Therefore the small scale proof of concept was well suited for this specific problem of practice.

Many effective teachers are in their classrooms teaching and intervening with students to help them grow. The problem lies in the lack of a standardized process that provides the documentation to show how a teacher is working to meet the student's needs and the student's response to the interventions outlined in RTI. In meetings, the superintendent and assistant superintendent agreed that this was a problem in the county that should be addressed with a plan for improvement. This study will address the problem and the plan for improvement.

Statement of Problem

RTI was originally implemented without formal guidelines and operational procedures. Therefore, it is necessary to develop these guidelines and operational procedures for this improved RTI process to function effectively to meet the needs of students and teachers in Greene County.

Leadership Component of the Improvement Process

This project describes a process for school improvement in Greene County Schools. In meeting with the RTI facilitator at the school, a major issue stemmed from teachers unsure of a process to follow to correctly implement and document RTI interventions in the classroom (P. Holley, personal communication, March 11, 2015). In order to implement a standardized process for RTI, this researcher used the Path-Goal Theory of leadership. Path-Goal Theory is an

approach in which leaders motivate their followers. Many aspects of the RTI process are tedious and some of the characteristics of the followers, or teachers, include the need for affiliation, control, and clarity. Path-Goal Theory leadership adapts to the followers to motivate them based on their characteristics. When introducing the standardized RTI process to the teachers, I attempted to make each step as clear as possible. Path-Goal Theory of leadership

> shouts out for leaders to clarify the paths to the goals and remove or help followers around the obstacles to the goals. In its simplest form, the theory reminds leaders that the overarching purpose of leadership is to guide and coach followers as they move along the path to achieve a goal (Northouse, 2016, p. 123).

We have six professional learning teams (PLT's) at my school. Each team displays different characteristics and because of this, I have found that I must change how I mentor and coach them through the RTI process and use data to drive their instructional planning. During PLT meetings, teachers bring their data and we analyze it and discuss whether an intervention is working or needs to be intensified or modified. Some teachers become overwhelmed and at some points a directive leadership approach is necessary to "set clear standards of performance and make the rules and regulations clear to followers" (Northouse, 2016, p. 117). Many times, the PLT meeting lends to a Participative Leadership style to guide teachers through the process while integrating their suggestions into the decision-making. The Path-Goal Theory of leadership is vital to the implementation of a standardized RTI process. While teachers are highly determined to meet the needs of their students, RTI can be so frustrating, that teacher motivation suffers. Teachers report "feeling overwhelmed by the sheer volume of RTI information thrust at them" (Intervention Central, n.d., para. 2). Path-Goal leadership helps teachers carry out the RTI process without becoming overwhelmed.

Measure of Improvement

Success from this project will be in the form of a process for RTI accountability in Greene County Schools. With a specific process in place, teachers and staff will be able to work efficiently with students in meeting their needs, documenting their growth, and increasing in tiered support if the student is not growing at the expected rate. Success will be measured in the accuracy of teachers submitting an Exceptional Children's referral and the student actually qualifying for services. The submission of an accurate referral which results in the student receiving services is called the *strike rate*. The current rate, though derived from a very small sample, has varied from 0% to 100%. At the conclusion of this project, the goal would be that the strike rate would be maintained at 90%.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Response to Intervention (RTI) implementation with a focus on an effective process in an elementary school is the focus of this literature review. The literature was divided into three main categories: background of RTI as it relates to educational policies and laws, the process and implementation of RTI, and the professional development required to successfully implement and RTI system. The terms searched for this literature review included, but not limited to: "RTI process", "RTI interventions", "elementary RTI process". Literature selected for this review was from the last five years.

Background of RTI as it Relates to Educational Policies and Laws

The first national review of special education since the initiation of the Individuals with Disabilities Act of 1975 occurred in 2001. This is currently referred to as the President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education Report. The report contained major findings as well as recommendations. The following year, President George W. Bush reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and renamed it "No Child Left Behind" (NCLB). This act held states accountable for their testing, accountability, and school improvement. On December 3 2004, President Bush signed the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act into law. The law was revised to reflect the change from using the *discrepancy model* to the tiered process of Response to Intervention to identify students with a learning disability (LD). Within the tiered process of RTI, students will move up in the tiered level of support if they are non-responsive to the interventions provided to them. The purpose of RTI is to be proactive and reduce the number of children identified as having a learning disability by

providing solid reading instruction as well as periodic assessments to identify their growth and struggles (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006).

Public Law 94-142

Public Law 94-142 was passed in 1975. This law granted each child with a disability access to a free and appropriate public education. There were three efforts present in the law to "(a) improve how children with disabilities were identified and educated, (b) evaluate the success of these efforts, and (c) provide due process protections for children and families" (U.S. Department of Education, 2010, para. 2). Prior to this public law, children with disabilities were excluded from the public education system as well as gave children with limited access to education a free and appropriate public education. The four purposes of Public Law 94-142 were:

a. to assure that all children with disabilities have available to them … a free appropriate public education which emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs
b. to assure that the rights of children with disabilities and their parents … are protected,
c. to assist States and localities to provide for the education of all children with disabilities
d. to assess and assure the effectiveness of efforts to educate all children with disabilities (Education for All Handicapped Children Act, 1975).

President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education Report

President George W. Bush was quoted in his Executive Order 13227, "The education of all children, regardless of background or disability…must always be a national priority. One of the most important goals of my Administration is to support states and local communities in

creating and maintaining a system of public education where no child is left behind. Unfortunately, among those at greatest risk of being left behind are children with disabilities" (President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education, 2002, p. 7). In 2001, President George W. Bush authorized a study of issues related to federal, state, and local special education programs in order to improve the performance of students with disabilities (Berdine, 2003, para. 4). It was the first time there was a national review of special education since the initiation of the Individuals With Disabilities Act in 1975. The report contained a total of nine major findings and 33 recommendations. Three major recommendations include: (1) focus on the results – not the process, (2) embrace a model of prevention not a model of failure, and (3) consider children with disabilities as general education children first (Berdine, 2003). In regards to the first recommendation, "the system must be judged by the opportunities it provides and the outcomes achieved by each child" (Berdine, 2003, para. 7). The major purpose of IDEA is to meet the needs of every child receiving an education. This is demonstrated by the increased expectations and opportunities an educational system provides and the outcomes achieved by each child. The second recommendation makes reference to not using a *wait to fail* method and becoming proactive in early intervention.

The proposed eligibility process would focus on determining how well the student was able to respond to a prescriptive, individually designed educational intervention and subsequent evidence based or scientifically-based alterations of this intervention. The instructional provider, under this concept, would assume responsibility for documenting how effective interventions were in producing progress along prescribed content or subject matter" (Berdine, 2003, para. 11).

Through the use of early identification and research-based early interventions, educators are being proactive, rather than reactive. The third recommendation refers to special education

and general education teachers sharing the responsibility of the student, rather than the student being viewed as the primary responsibility of the special education teacher. Funding should not create an incentive to receive special education nor isolate children with learning or behavioral difficulties. This model of prevention, or teachers proactively intervening with at-risk students, is the basis of RTI. RTI is a proactive, rather than reactive, model for improvement for students.

No Child Left Behind Act

President Lyndon B. Johnson originally signed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) into law in 1965 during his War on Poverty campaign. He "believed that 'full educational opportunity' should be 'our first national goal'" (U.S. Department of Education, n.d., para. 1). The ESEA provided various means of funding for low-income students, special education centers, and grants to states to improve the quality of education. In January 2002, President George W. Bush reauthorized ESEA and renamed it No Child Left Behind (NCLB). NCLB holds states responsible for testing, accountability, and school improvement. "Individual schools, school districts and states must publicly report test results in the aggregate and for specific student subgroups, including low-income students, students with disabilities, English language learners, and major racial and ethnic groups" (New America Foundation, 2014, para. 4).

> Requiring public reports of test score results by race, NCLB has exposed the lack of focus on educational equity, even though the law does nothing to help schools or districts address the problem. Despite the fact that NCLB was frequently portrayed as a means to ensure that the most impoverished children would be better served by our nation's schools, the law has not led to significant improvements in schools where poor and

> disadvantaged children are concentrated (with the exception of a few schools and districts). (Boykin & Noguera, p. 140)

This act held states accountable for their testing, accountability, and school improvement. It also states that students should be grade-level proficient in reading and math by 2014 and schools make adequate yearly progress towards this proficiency goal. RTI is part of this accountability model, in that teachers are held accountable to meet each student's academic needs in the classroom. Teachers are to implement interventions based on those needs to increase their proficiency. In 2011, President Barack Obama allowed states to apply for a waiver to grant flexibility in meeting some of NCLB's requirements.

Every Student Succeeds Act

The House of Representatives as well as the Senate have passed the Every Student Succeeds Act. The bill holds states and school districts accountable for the growth of all students and preserves resources for students at risk, including students with disabilities, English Language Learners, homeless children, migrant children, and neglected children. According to the U.S. Department of Education, the bill will assist in ensuring educational equity by:

a. Holding all students to high academic standards that prepare them for success in college and careers.
b. Ensuring accountability by guaranteeing that when students fall behind states redirect resources into what works to help them and their schools improve, with a particular focus on the very lowest-performing schools, high schools with high dropout rates, and schools with achievement gaps.

c. Empowering state and local decision-makers to develop their own strong systems for school improvement based upon evidence, rather than imposing cookie-cutter federal solutions like the No Child Left Behind Act.
d. Reducing the often onerous burden of testing on students and teachers, asking sure that tests don't crowd out teaching and learning, without sacrificing clear, annual information parents and educators need to make sure children are learning.
e. Providing more children access to high-quality preschool.
f. Establishing new resources for proven strategies that will spur reform and drive opportunity and better outcomes for America's students. (U.S. Department of Education, 2015, para. 3)

The bill provides flexibility in best meeting the needs of their most disadvantageous students and eliminates the universal design of No Child Left Behind across the country. In this bill, in schools in which numerous students fail to reach their goals, the school district must ensure personalized interventions and supports are given to the school as well as the students being served. According to the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development's (ASCD) letter to the U.S. Senate, not only are they voicing the approval of this act of 125,000 members, but they detail why they are in favor of the legislation. The accountability that No Child Left Behind put on states, schools, and educational staffs, created an overemphasis on test scores and narrowed the curriculum in classrooms. States can now expand accountability systems to include educator effectiveness, school quality, and student performance. Effective educators grow their students academically and are tested on their performance. If a student is struggling, a teacher must analyze that student's data and determine where the deficiency lies. The teacher then must

deliver interventions based on the need of the student. This is the foundation of RTI and how RTI holds teachers accountable to be effective and lead to student growth and proficiency.

Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

In 2004, the introduction of RTI occurred when Congress modified the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). For years, students were identified as having a learning disability, however the credible, scientific evidence was not always present and/or lacking in detail. The mode in which children were identified as having a Specific Learning Disability (SLD) changed from using the *discrepancy model* to the RTI process of providing high quality education and monitoring and tracking how children perform in the classroom. The Individuals with Disabilities Act of 2004 defines a Specific Learning Disability in Title 20 United States Code Section 1401 (30):

a. In General. The term 'specific learning disability' means a disorder in 1 or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which disorder may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations.
b. Disorders Included. Such term includes such conditions as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia.
c. Disorders Not Included. Such term does not include a learning problem that is primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, of mental retardation, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage. (20 USC 1401(30))

The difference between a child's IQ and their academic achievement, otherwise known as the *discrepancy model*, was widely used when identifying children. Regulations 34 CFR

§§300.307, 300.309 and 300.311 require this scientific evidence when determining if a child has a specific learning disability. “Credit for introducing the RTI model into schools goes to special education, which has sought ways to bring greater scientific rigor to the process of determining who should be eligible for supports and services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)” (Sailor, 2009, p. 5). According to IDEA,

> the reports of both the House and Senate Committees accompanying the IDEA reauthorization bills reflect the Committees’ concerns with models of identification of SLD that use IQ tests, and their recognition that a growing body of scientific research supports methods, such as RTI, that more accurately distinguish between children who truly have SLD from those whose learning difficulties could be resolved with more specific, scientifically based, general education interventions. Similarly, the President’s Commission on Excellence in Special Education recommended that the identification process for SLD incorporate an RTI approach. (“Questions and Answers On Response to Intervention (RTI) and Early Intervening Services (EIS),” 2007, para. 7)

This *scientific research* supports the claim that for years, even decades, students were misidentified as having a specific learning disability. A sound RTI process is a proactive approach to hopefully provide appropriate and specific research-based interventions so that a student grows to the necessary level. If growth is not adequate, then the process of testing the student begins.

Title I – Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged

Title I provides funds to schools that have a high number of children from low-income families to assist in meeting state academic requirements. Title I funds can be used to enhance

academic programs to improve achievement. According to North Carolina Department of Public Instruction's Title I site,

> Title I is designed to support State and local school reform efforts tied to challenging State academic standards in order to reinforce and amplify efforts to improve teaching and learning for students farthest from meeting State standards. Individual public schools with poverty rates above 40 percent may use Title I funds, along with other Federal, State, and local funds, to operate a school-wide program" to upgrade the instructional program for the whole school. ("Title I, Part A," n.d.).

RTI and the State of North Carolina

Leandro v. State in 1997 involved five low-wealth counties in the state of North Carolina. The plaintiffs in the case stated that children in these low-wealth counties are not provided an adequate, sound education that children in wealth counties experience. The plaintiffs argued further that children in their counties are not provided an equal education in educational opportunities that are provided to children in wealthy counties (Leandro v. State, 1997). According to the North Carolina Constitution, "the people have a right to the privilege of education, and it is the duty of the State to guard and maintain that right" (NC Const. art. I, § 15). Because of this ruling, it is a teacher's obligation to provide an adequate, sound education for every student in his or her classroom. The tiered process of RTI ensures that the needs of students are being met.

North Carolina has shifted their definition of RTI to the Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) to include behavioral practices. Their definition of MTSS is "a multi-tiered framework which promotes school improvement through engaging, research-based academic and behavioral practices" ("Multi-Tiered System of Support," n.d., para. 1). The major difference between the

previous definition of RTI and the current definition of MTSS includes the behavioral aspect. West Greene Elementary is focused on the academic piece of RTI rather than to incorporate the behavioral piece from MTSS.

Process and Implementation of RTI

In an effort to clearly define the principles of RTI, Barnes and Harlacher (2008) state: "(1) a proactive and preventative approach to education, (2) ensuring an instructional match between student skills, curriculum, and instruction, (3) a problem-solving orientation and data-based decision making, (4) use of effective practices, and (5) a systems-level approach" (p. 419). North Carolina's MTSS website states that there are six critical components of MTSS (MTSS referred to in this site includes the RTI or academic component). These include (1) leadership, (2) data-based problem solving, (3) data evaluation, (4) three Tiers of instruction/intervention, (5) building capacity/infrastructure for implementation, and (6) communication and collaboration ("Multi-Tiered System of Support," n.d., para. 4). This approach creates confusion because there is much information on the components, yet little information for school leaders and teachers in regards to a process for schools to follow to ensure the correct implementation of RTI.

Sailor (2009) defines RTI as "a dynamic and systematic framework for matching school, and perhaps community, resources to identified student need in order for the student to successfully engage the teaching-learning process" (p. 65). RTI is a systematic process for struggling learners in the classroom. The core features of RTI include "(a) high quality, research-based classroom instruction, (b) universal screening, (c) continuous progress monitoring, (d) research-based secondary or tertiary interventions, (e) progress monitoring during interventions, and (f) fidelity measures" (McDougal et al., 2010, p. 21).

Multi-Tiered Instruction

RTI follows a tiered system of approach for instruction. According to Edward Shapiro from the Center for Promoting Research to Practice, "although the assessment components of RTI (universal screening and progress monitoring) are essential elements of implementation, it is the instruction that occurs as a function of the outcomes of the assessments that truly drives the changes we hope to see in students who are identified as being at some level of risk for not meeting academic expectations" ("Tiered Instruction and Intervention in a Response-to-Intervention Model," n.d., para. 1). All students receive research-based instruction in the classroom, considered Tier 1 instruction. Tier 1 is the core program. Once a student shows signs of struggle when receiving Tier 1 instruction, a secondary layer and measure of intervention is put into place, otherwise referred to as Tier 2 instruction. Students are frequently monitored in their progress of the interventions, commonly referred to as *progress monitoring*. The data is then graphed to follow the individual student's progress. If a student is still showing signs of not making progress on their Tier 2 instruction, a tertiary layer is put into place to further aid the student, followed by regular progress monitoring.

Universal Screener

The RTI process begins with a universal screening of all students. Universal screeners provide "for frequent checks of student performance so that students who may need additional instructional support can be identified and provided with support as early as possible" (McDougal et al., 2010, p. 53). "Universal academic screening data has several important uses. It can help the school to estimate efficiently the typical academic skill level of any grade, as well as proactively to identify those struggling students who need supplemental intervention support" (Intervention Central, n.d., para. 3). Universal screeners are to help identify or predict which

students need additional interventions. It is important that the universal screeners are done consistently, typically at the beginning, middle, and end of the year. In the state of North Carolina, Reading 3D is a universal screener for Kindergarten through third grade. There are two main components to Reading 3D, Dibels and Text Reading and Comprehension (TRC). Dibels assesses the foundational reading skills, such as phoneme segmentation and fluency. TRC measures a student's reading level associated with their oral and written comprehension. Students are assessed with Reading 3D three times a year with regular progress monitoring throughout. The use of a universal screener for all students is the first step in identifying students at risk for any learning difficulties. "Once a student has been designated at risk by one or more screening measures, the next step is to establish when more intensive Tier 2 interventions will begin" (Hughes & Dexter, n.d.). Proactive universal screening ensures that the right students are served at the right time for the right reason. Universal screeners pinpoint students at risk as well as particular areas in which a student has deficiencies so he/she can be referred to the problem-solving team to determine appropriate Tiered interventions.

Problem-Solving Team

The problem-solving team should be a multidisciplinary group. At West Greene Elementary, the problem-solving RTI School Team consists of the principal, assistant principal, RTI facilitator, classroom teacher, counselor (if needed), support staff as needed, including the Exceptional Children (EC) teacher, English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher, speech pathologist, teacher assistant, and parent. The RTI team meets as needed to discuss the movement of a student up in Tier. "On a learning team, teachers and school leaders work together to use data to understand what students are not learning and to find instructional gaps, then determine what they need to learn to help close those gaps" (Mizell, 2010, p. 11). It is

important to note that the RTI School Team is focused on solutions for each student, not on the problem.

Progress Monitoring and Data-Driven Instruction

Once a student has been assessed with a consistent universal screener and identified as struggling in a particular area, the teacher can then begin the process of identifying and administering tiered instruction. The professional learning team (PLT) meets every four weeks with the RTI facilitator, assistant principal, and program specialists such as reading remediation teachers, Exceptional Children's program (EC) teachers, English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers, and teacher assistants. The team to determine each student's progress reviews data from research-based interventions. A decision may come in multiple forms based upon the data. This may include keeping the same intervention but intensifying it in the form of increased time per week, or modifying the intervention to a different research-based intervention.

> It is the general education teacher that identifies students who need attention to the RTI team, establishes relationships with students, and then monitors and tracks data to determine if individual progress is being made. This is all accomplished at the same time while providing quality instruction to the rest of the class. (Appelbaum, 2009, p. 6)

When focusing on the data, it "helps keep discussions of instruction on a fairly high level, where teachers don't take it as personal criticism" (Chenoweth, 2009, p. 135). By focusing on data, teachers and schools are always looking at ways to improve student achievement and instruction. For schools to see improvement, they must work "collaboratively rather than in isolation. They developed common assessments and applied consistent standards rather than acting autonomously" (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Karhanek, 2004, p. 138). Principals at highly effective schools have created an intervention system that increases the level of intensity based

on each student's needs. Students move in and out of those levels or Tiers based on monitoring (Campsen, 2012).

Prior to the delivery of the research-based intervention, a baseline must be established. For example, if the intervention is to increase the fluency of a student, the teacher must first get a baseline of how many words the student reads correctly per minute. A goal is then established on the baseline number. The intervention on fluency is given a pre-determined number of times during the week and then the student is progress monitored at the end of the week to determine the number of correct words per minute is read. This number is graphed. The intervention is delivered for four weeks until the PLT meets again for their data meeting. The progress monitoring of students is to ensure that the intervention is working and adjustments may need to be made in regards to frequency or intensity. "If students do not improve after a designated time period they are moved to the next Tier of instruction for more targeted or intensive interventions. If students do improve, they may return to a lower Tier or remain in the same Tier for more supplemental instruction" (Appelbaum, 2009, p. 8). Analyzing specific data to drive instruction for students targets deficiencies and accelerates the learning process. Data-driven instruction is not merely the collection of data. It is what educators do with the data that increases student performance.

Tiered Levels of Support

There are three tiers of support for students in the RTI process. The higher the tier level, the more intensive are the interventions for the student. The first Tier is simply high-quality, effective teaching for all students in the classroom. Students in Tier 1 have an established benchmark and regular progress monitoring of their performance is accomplished and graphed to show growth. An example of this established benchmark is the Reading 3D universal screener. If

a student is not showing adequate progress towards his or her goal then the student is referred to Tier 2. The progress monitoring of a student leads to the interventions delivered.

At West Greene Elementary, Tier 2 has been described to teachers as a *second teacher* or *second layer* to help their student succeed. A student in Tier 2 may receive additional instruction using research-based interventions from a reading specialist to accelerate learning. The interventions used when a student is in Tier 2 are decided during the PLT data meeting. This teacher is also regularly progress monitoring the student's performance and graphing their growth. The graphs are reviewed during the PLT data meetings. If a student is not responding to the additional instruction, the intervention may be intensified prior to moving to Tier 3.

According to the process developed for West Greene Elementary, if a student moves into Tier 3, that means he or she did not respond or make adequate progress to Tier 1 nor Tier 2 level of instruction. Tier 3 is intensive instruction based on data. After a student receives Tier 3 instruction and is still not making adequate growth, a multidisciplinary evaluation must occur. The hope is that with a student receiving direct research-based interventions, he/she will respond and their learning will accelerate to hopefully be back on grade level. However, if a student is consistently not growing despite various attempts of interventions an evaluation must be given. This will determine if the student meets the criteria for a specific learning disability or eligible for any special education services.

A distillation of the literature discussed in this chapter describes a series of laws and court decisions that not only suggest but mandate that educators intervene in the academic process of at-risk students to preclude their misplacement in special programs. It is important to note this is not only good practice but a legal requirement.

An analysis of this literature review also illustrates there is an extensive amount of materials for educators on RTI and the three tiers, yet what remains unclear is a process for schools to follow so that children don't slip through the cracks. Frequently, schools review student data with the teacher at the end of the year and question why certain students didn't grow or if a student didn't grow and is very low, why the student wasn't tested for special education to determine if there is a learning disability. North Carolina's Department of Public Instruction has very little on their website about MTSS, but expects teachers to carry out an effective process for students. Through the use of a systematic process, a child cannot slip through the cracks without specific interventions delivered to assist in accelerate his or her learning.

Professional Development

The success of systematic RTI process depends directly on the professional development for staff. By providing professional development on RTI, schools will build the capacity of their staff. "To be effective, professional development requires thoughtful planning followed by careful implementation with feedback to ensure it responds to educators' learning needs" (Mizell, 2010, p. 10). I am personally involved in the research, initiation, and implementation of an improved, systematic RTI process at West Greene Elementary. The success of the teachers following the process is due directly to the front-loading of professional development delivered to the teachers and the support and feedback given throughout the year. Teachers were trained on each component of the process, including the universal screener, what to look for to identify at-risk students, how to initiate the RTI process, what each tier looks like and what to do, as well as analyzing the data and deciding upon which research-based intervention to deliver.

Leadership and RTI Success

In order for a sound RTI process to effectively improve student academic success, the leadership and staff must all be fully committed. The process is and needs to be transparent and the teachers, instructional assistants, and administration all must be involved and collaborate for the betterment of the students. The RTI process ensures that students at all levels, whether it is at the lowest end of the spectrum or to the highest, receive what he/she needs academically. Buffum et al. (2010) state that the purpose of RTI is "to systematically provide every student with the additional time and support to learn at high levels" (para. 24).

The Path-Goal Theory of Leadership is an effective leadership style to use when implementing a systematic process for RTI in a school. Path-Goal Theory of leadership

> shouts out for leaders to clarify the paths to the goals and remove or help followers around the obstacles to the goals. In its simplest form, the theory reminds leaders that the overarching purpose of leadership is to guide and coach followers as they move along the path to achieve a goal. (Northouse, 2016, p. 123)

In order to implement a standardized process for RTI, I plan to use the Path-Goal Theory of leadership. Path-Goal Theory is how leaders motivate their followers. Many aspects of the RTI process are tedious and some of the characteristics of the followers, or teachers, include the need for affiliation, control, clarity. Path-Goal Theory leadership adapts to the followers to motivate them based on their characteristics. When introducing the standardized RTI process to the teachers, I try to make each step as clear as possible. Path-Goal Theory of leadership

> shouts out for leaders to clarify the paths to the goals and remove or help followers around the obstacles to the goals. In its simplest form, the theory reminds leaders that the

> overarching purpose of leadership is to guide and coach followers as they move along the path to achieve a goal. (Northouse, 2016, p. 123)

We have six professional learning teams (PLT's) at my school. Each team displays different characteristics and because of this, I have found that I must change how I mentor and coach them through the RTI process and using data to drive their instructional planning. During our PLT meetings, teachers bring their data and we analyze it and discuss whether an intervention is working or needs to be intensified. Some teachers become overwhelmed and at some points a directive leadership approach is necessary to "set clear standards of performance and make the rules and regulations clear to followers" (Northouse, 2016, p. 117). Many times, the PLT meeting lends to a Participative Leadership style to guide teachers through the process with integrating their suggestions into the decision-making. The Path-Goal Theory of leadership is vital to the implementation of a standardized RTI process. While teachers are highly determined to meet the needs of their students, RTI can be so engulfing, that teacher motivation suffers. Teachers report "feeling overwhelmed by the sheer volume of RTI information thrust at them" (Intervention Central, n.d., para. 2). The leadership style is what can propel teachers to carry out the RTI process without becoming overwhelmed.

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) recommends building school-wide capacity and infrastructure. According to NCDPI, "This capacity and infrastructure usually include ongoing professional development and coaching with an emphasis on data-based problem-solving and multi-tiered instruction and intervention; scheduling that allows staff to plan and implement instruction and intervention; and processes and procedures for engaging in data-based problem-solving" ("Multi-Tiered System of Support," n.d., para. 3). At West Greene

Elementary, the professional development for the staff is on-going and specific with feedback given from administrators.

Empowering All Staff, Certified and Classified

A part of the professional development plan for RTI at West Greene Elementary is to empower all staff, including both certified and classified staff, in the RTI process. Not only were teachers trained in the RTI process, but teacher assistants were also trained. Teacher assistants received targeted training on the research-based interventions, Assistants work with students in small groups as well as one-on-one at West Greene to deliver prescribed interventions based on the data. The assistant is also trained in how to progress monitor such interventions. The interventions as well as frequency are decided upon during the PLT data meetings. It is the view from the school that it takes all hands-on to meet the academic needs of the students to best accelerate their learning progress. "One of the key aspects of tiered instruction is the importance of collaboration across all education professionals in the building" (Shapiro, n.d., para. 18).

Summary

A distillation of the literature discussed in this chapter describes a series of laws and court decisions that not only suggest but mandate that educators intervene in the academic process of at-risk students to preclude their misplacement in special programs. It is important to note this is not only good practice but a legal requirement.

This literature review has synthesized the vast body of literature on Response to Intervention that can be used by schools to become better informed. There is much research on the legislation requiring schools to meet the academic needs of students as well as research defining and describing each component of RTI. There is consensus in the literature on the need to implement RTI to ensure the acceleration of growth for students. However, literature is not

readily available on a systematic process describing the implementation of RTI. Due to the fact that there is very little to assist in setting up a school for success to follow the RTI process, it is a prevalent problem in Greene County. Students fall through the cracks when a learning disability goes undetected and the student continues to struggle year after year. The purpose of the small-scale proof of concept improvement project will be to develop a systematic process to successfully implement RTI and thereby assist in helping teachers and students succeed in the RTI system.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The Improvement Science Approach to the Problem of Practice

An area of needed improvement in Greene County Schools is the RTI process. The purpose of this chapter is to describe the small-scale proof of concept approach to improvement used in this study. I used Improvement Science as an approach to assist in identifying the problem and created strategies to improve the standardization of an RTI process for Greene County Schools.

Science of Improvement

The improvement of a system is directly related to subject matter knowledge as well as a *System of Profound Knowledge*. W. Edwards Deming "defined the System of Profound Knowledge as the interplay of the theories of systems, variation, knowledge, and psychology" (Langley, Moen, Nolan, Nolan, Norman, & Provost, 2009, p. 75). These four parts of profound knowledge, if understood by organizational leaders, should lead to the improvement of problems.

Appreciation for a System

A system or organization can be viewed both at the macro-level as well as on a micro-level. A system is "an interdependent group of items, people, or processes working together toward a common purpose" (Langley et al., 2009, p. 77). In the educational setting, the school district can be viewed at the macro-level, while the school or even classrooms can be viewed on the micro-level of a system. Greene County Schools' Mission Statement describes the interconnectivity within its' system as

> Greene County Schools is a school district in which teachers and students unite to create an atmosphere of mutual respect focused on teaching and learning in a safe, caring environment. Students are challenged by a rigorous curriculum delivered by teachers who

> facilitate learning at the mastery level. Teachers, students, and parents collaborate to ensure the achievement of our goals" (Greene County Schools' Mission Statement, 2015).

When all systems are working in conjunction, the result is benefit maximization for all students in Greene County to improve educationally. Benefit maximization is defined as "the best and most just decision is the one that results in the most good or the greatest benefit for the most people" (Strike, Haller, & Soltis, 2005, p. 17). Benefit maximization also applies to the standardization of the RTI process. The greatest benefit from this improved, consistent process is for the students of Greene County. The continuity from one classroom to the next as well as from one school to the next as students progress forward in grade level will ensure that their academic needs are met.

Understanding Variation

One of the leading developers of theory of variation was Walter A. Shewhart. Shewhart emphasized the significance of plotting data over time (Langley et al., 2009). In order to take proper action, one must understand the variation of data in the system. Sometimes data can be predictable, while other times it can be unpredictable, this variation can also be known as *common* or *special*. Common causes are "inherent in the process (or system) over time, affect everyone working in the process, and affect all outcomes of the process" (Langley et al., 2009, p. 79). Special causes are "not part of the process (or system) all the time, or do not affect everyone, but arise because of specific circumstances" (Langley et al., 2009, p. 80).

Examining the data of Greene County Schools' students found eligible for a learning disability by the IEP Team has been remarkably unpredictable over the past eight years. An unstable process is where "the magnitude of variation from one period to the next is

unpredictable" (Langley et al., 2009, p. 80). When a system leader can identify the special causes and take appropriate action, the system can revert to its original level of performance (Langley et al., 2009).

Teachers and school staff refer a student to the IEP Team for educational and psychological testing to determine if there is a learning disability hindering a student from making adequate growth. Each year, data is analyzed, including the total number of students referred to the IEP Team as well as how many of those students actually demonstrate they have a learning disability through testing. In regards to the Measure of Improvement, The current rate, though derived from a very small sample, has varied from 0% to 100%. For example, in school year 2008, 25 students were referred to the IEP team, but only 11 students, or 44%, were found eligible. At the conclusion of this project, the goal would be that the strike rate would be maintained at 90%. That *strike* rate varied widely from year to year. The run chart in Figure 1 demonstrates the variation in this data.

It is imperative that school leaders as well as county leaders identify appropriate causes in the variation of the data. The variation in this data can have many special causes, ranging from (a) a student with an ineffective teacher, (b) the expertise of the teacher involved in the process and how to best meet the needs of his or her students, and (c) fidelity in the RTI process. However, prior to the 2014-2015 school year, because of the haphazard process, there is no way to account for the variation of the data. Knowing this variation can help decide appropriate actions to bring about change in the system (Langley et al., 2009).

Building Knowledge

The foundation of improvement is "skillfully building knowledge by making changes and observing or measuring the results" (Langley et al., 2009). The Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA)

Run Chart of the Variation in Data of Students Found Eligible

for a Learning Disability by the IEP Team, 2007-2015

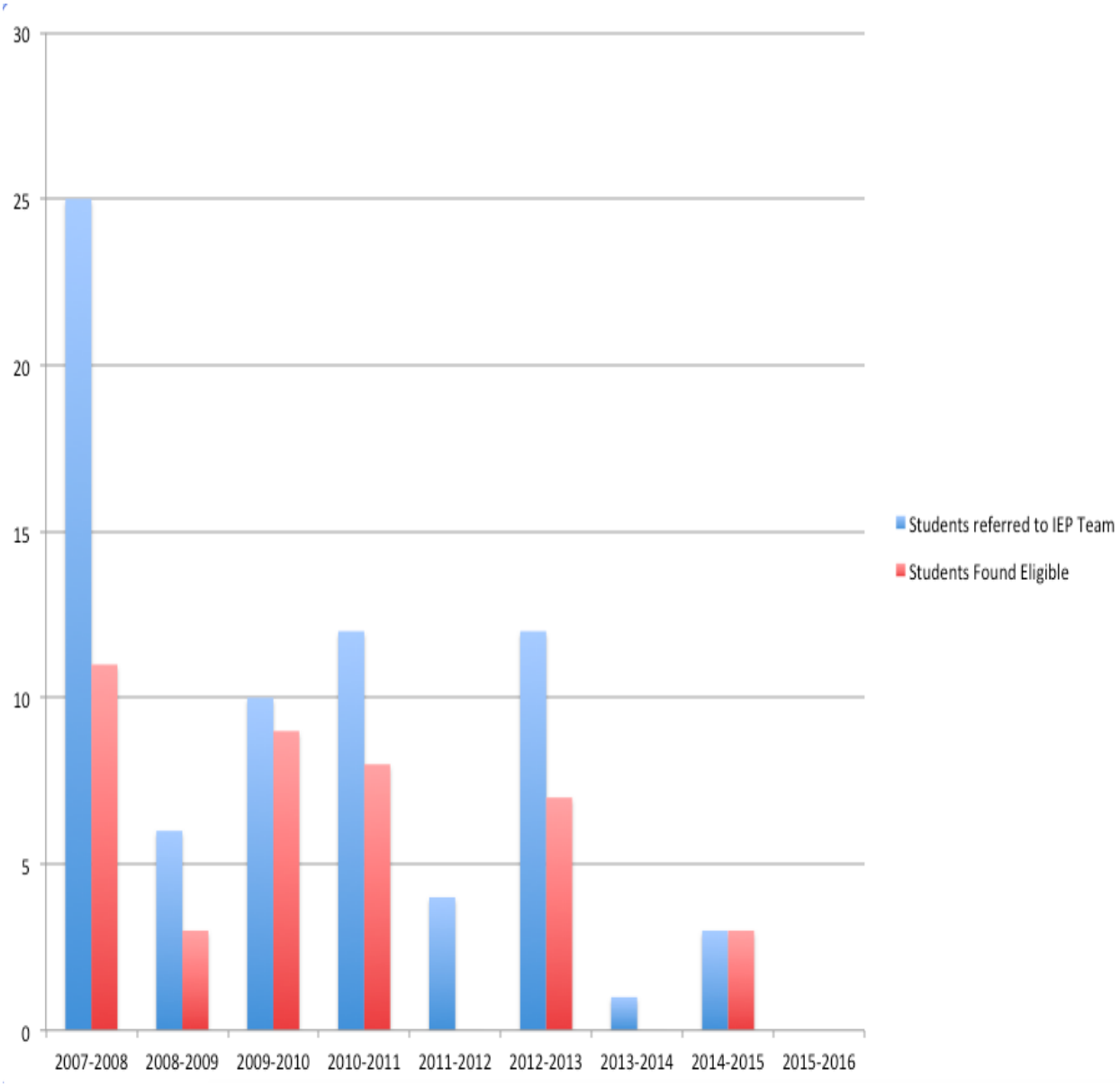


Figure 1. Run chart of the variation in data, 2007-2015.

cycles take into account the deductive and inductive learning when making change and improvements. The deductive approach is based upon the Plan and Do portions of the cycle. The inductive approach takes place from the Do and Study. "Gaps (anomalies) to the prediction are studied and the theory is updated accordingly. Action is then taken on the new learning" (Langley et al., 2009, p. 82). It is imperative through the improvement of the RTI process in Greene County to build knowledge and capacity of the teachers and staff. The more knowledge possessed will result in an effective RTI process to accelerate student achievement.

Human Side of Change

Psychology, or the human side of change, takes ideas, methods, tools, and theories into account when making changes in a social system. Improvement science assists in identifying the assumptions and beliefs behind decisions and actions as well as the differences in people. Langley et al. (2009) identifies some important factors that Greene County Schools may want to consider when implementing change in the system:

- Differences in people
- Behavior driven by motivation
- Fundamental attribution error
- Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation
- Attracting people to the change

As a leader and driving force behind this systems change for Greene County Schools, I plan to utilize these psychological contributions to guide the county through the RTI improvement process. These areas are important for building teacher's knowledge about the changes in the RTI process that will result in student achievement.

Measure of Improvement

The main question for this study is "Teachers are constantly working to meet the needs of each of his or her students, however, what is the process the teacher will follow to correctly prescribe interventions to meet those needs, document the growth, and quite possibly keep a learning disability from going undetected?" Success from this project will be in the form of an improved standardized process for RTI accountability in Greene County Schools. With an established process, teachers and staff will be able to work efficiently with students in meeting their needs, documenting their growth, and moving the student up in tiered support if the student is not growing at the expected rate. Success will be measured in the accuracy of students reaching an Exceptional Children's referral after receiving tiered instruction and actually qualifying for services, otherwise known as the *strike rate*.

PDSA Cycle

Improvement Science is the development, testing, and implementation of changes to improve a process. The Model for Improvement is based on three fundamental questions, "(1) What are we trying to accomplish? (2) How will we know that a change is an improvement? (3) What changes can we make that will result in improvement?" (Langley et al., 2009, p. 5). The Plan-Do-Study-Act Cycle is the framework used by stakeholders as the Model for Improvement to implement the systematic process for RTI at West Greene Elementary in Greene County, North Carolina. Improvement Science is used in large part because the process implemented is being tested and run on a small scale to eventually expand to the rest of the schools in the county. Due to the fact that there is very little to assist in setting up a school for success to follow the RTI process, it is a prevalent problem in Greene County. Two PDSA cycles are in the process as

part of this study with the data analysis and recommendations in Chapter Four. Success from this project will be in the form of a process for RTI accountability in Greene County Schools.

Plan – Cycle 1

I met with Mr. Emery Smith, principal at Snow Hill Primary School, May 29, 2014 to design an improved process for teachers to follow for RTI. We began our meeting by answering the question, "What does a teacher do at the first sign of a student struggling?" From this point, a process was mapped out as a flow chart of what to do at each tier of RTI as demonstrated in Figure 2.

The first RTI/PLT data meeting was incorporated to initiate the RTI process as well as the number of weeks to deliver the intervention. Under each stage of the flow map, detailed instructions were included for teachers and staff to follow to be sure the proper documentation is followed and what should be discussed at each RTI data meeting. RTI facilitators reviewed the flow map and necessary revisions were made. Forms were developed for the teachers to document core program supports already provided for the student, the intervention to be delivered, the frequency and intensity of the intervention, and the graph to document the baseline and progress monitoring data. Forms were color-coded to assist teachers in knowing which form matches the tier the student is in. Green forms are used for students in Tier 1, yellow for students in Tier 2, and red for students in Tier 3. A plan was devised to deliver the professional development for the teachers as well as how to collect and analyze the intervention data.

Do – Cycle 1

The administrators and RTI facilitator met with teachers to describe the process laid out in the flow map and what each step actually looks like in practice. The training took place during their Professional Learning Team (PLT) meeting. Teachers each received a folder with the

GREENE COUNTY SCHOOLS

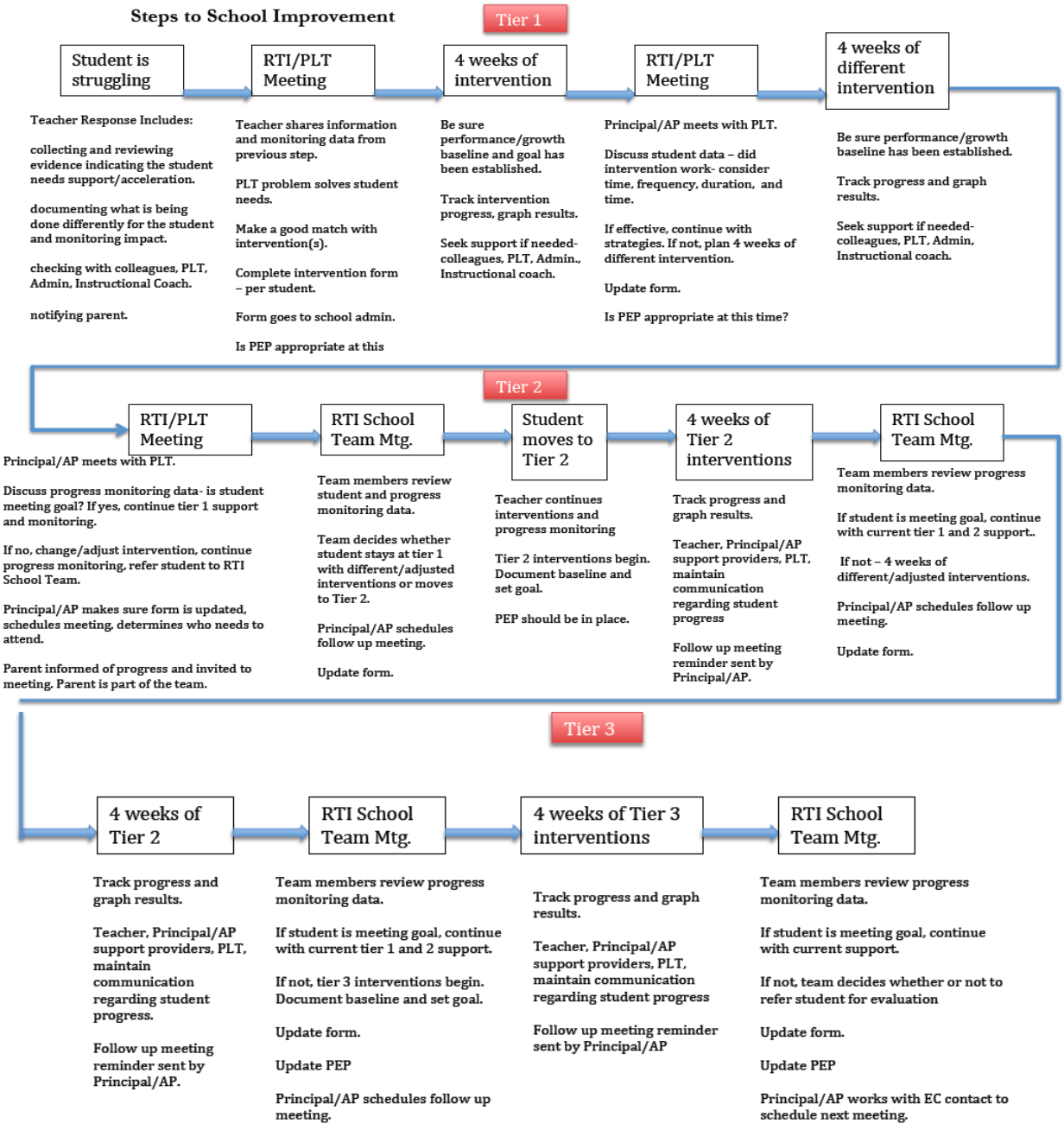


Figure 2. Flow map of the steps to school improvement for Greene County Schools.

PowerPoint presentation (see Appendix B), the flow map (see Figure 2), RTI Important Notes detailing each step in the process (see Appendix C), and copies of each form needed to document student progress on individualized interventions (see Appendix D). A presentation was given detailing each stage of the flow map from the onset of a student struggling. Professional development was also given throughout the year to continue to highly train teachers in the RTI process and to implement it with fidelity. The process was followed an entire school year.

Study – Cycle 1

Many teachers were concerned about time. This was a multi-faceted concern. One concern was teachers were limited in the time it took away from their classroom instruction to deliver one-on-one interventions. Even though many interventions take five to ten minutes to deliver, it wasn't uncommon for a teacher to have five to seven students in RTI. Another concern about time was during their PLT data meetings. Teachers came to the meeting during their planning time. This planning time was while the students were in their encore class (such as art, music, P.E., or library). While the teachers had 45 minutes, by the time teachers took their students to the class and left to pick them back up, it really only left 30 minutes to meet. This was not adequate time to review the data and make informed data-driven decisions on student interventions.

Act – Cycle 1

About 50% of students at West Greene Elementary received additional services by support teachers outside of the classroom. This included EC, ESL, Reading Acceleration, etc. What this meant for teachers is that they were constantly interrupted to send students to support teachers and re-teaching what the student missed upon their return. In addition, the students leaving the classroom were students in the RTI process that the teacher needed to find time to

deliver the interventions necessary. As a result, a revised master schedule was developed to improve the process for the following school year.

Plan – Cycle 2

On March 13, 2015, I went with the principal and two elementary teachers to a local elementary school that has implemented "Power Hour" in their master schedule to meet the needs of their students. Their school has a large percentage of their students receiving support services as well. I developed a revised master schedule with the principal and two teachers to incorporate "Power Hour" based upon this school visit for the 2015-2016 school year. Students in a particular PLT all went at the same time to their support teacher for an entire hour, four times a week. Previously, students only went for about 30 minutes to their support teacher, thereby students have been receiving additional targeted instruction based upon their skill deficiencies.

Do – Cycle 2

Teachers received continued professional development on the RTI process as well as how to best structure their day to adjust to the Power Hour master schedule. The revised master schedule as well as the RTI process was followed an entire school year. Teacher assistants have been strategically placed with the Power Hour teachers to pull students and deliver interventions.

Study – Cycle 2

Many classroom teachers saw the benefit in the revised master schedule. The support teachers value the increased time with their students to target specific needs of their students. Through the training of teacher assistants in interventions, many assistants have expressed the importance they feel as well as the impact they are having in working individually with students.

Act – Cycle 2

The plan is to continue with the revised Power Hour master schedule and the RTI process at West Greene Elementary in the following years to come. One major factor that may influence the structure of the Power Hour schedule and the utilization of teacher assistants is state funding of these employees. Teacher assistants have been strategically trained in delivering interventions and if the funding is cut, it will negatively impact students. The Exceptional Children's Department of Greene County will continue to analyze the *strike rate* data and I will present briefings to senior administrators and the school board. A resource will be created for the other schools to reference when developing their school model for RTI. This resource will include the RTI process as well as a PowerPoint to present to the staff in how to follow the standardized process.

PDSA – Cycle 3

I plan to present to K-12 Greene County school administrators the RTI flow map by using the RTI Framework Presentation. I will also explain the forms needed at each tier level and the expectations of teachers and staff, and give support where needed.

PSDA – Cycle 4

I plan to present to the Greene County School Board the RTI Process and how students have benefited from individualized instruction based on need. I will also present the Strike Rate run chart with the most current data included.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Background and Rationale

Response to Intervention (RTI) is a tiered system of instructional support to assist students with learning needs. Greene County Schools has maintained a focus on RTI rather than the system of a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) implemented more widely in the state of North Carolina. The main difference between the two systems is the addition of behavioral interventions under MTSS. Under RTI, students experiencing academic difficulty are provided increased levels of support to accelerate their learning so that the student is on a trajectory to reach grade level expectations. The RTI Network (n.d.) states RTI is designed "for use when making decisions in both general education and special education, creating a well-integrated system of instruction and intervention guided by child outcome data" (para. 1). RTI implementation is highly praised in the literature. Buffum et al. (2010) state that the purpose of RTI is "to systematically provide every student with the additional time and support to learn at high levels" (para. 24). However, the Greene County RTI process did not define the steps necessary to implement RTI. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to describe in great detail a process to improve the implementation of RTI in an elementary school.

Teachers know it is best practice to provide RTI tiered interventions, however the process necessary to implement RTI was not specifically enunciated in Greene County. Therefore, teachers were unsure of a process to follow as well as how to document the progress the student is making. RTI is oftentimes viewed by teachers as something to do in addition to teaching; therefore, educators become overwhelmed before they even begin to work within the RTI system. RTI, exposed to its essentials, is simply solving academic problems with strategic teaching. The RTI Network (n.d.) describes this strategic teaching as instruction that is and

includes “high quality, scientifically based instruction, ongoing student assessment, tiered instruction, and parent involvement” (para. 2). The purpose of this improvement science approach was to assist in the implementation of an improved, consistent countywide process of RTI as well as the implementation of sound interventions relevant to the students in a particular school. The process used was Improvement Science. As a small-scale proof of concept (Langley et al., 2009), a systematic RTI process was developed and implemented in a rural elementary school in eastern North Carolina, with the long term goal of replicating the successful implementation throughout the county school system. Through improvement science, the ambiguity was taken out of the Greene County RTI process and teachers taught more effectively and implemented the student-specific improved RTI process with fidelity. In 2007, North Carolina regional Department of Public Instruction (DPI) teams trained RTI county teams, composed mostly of school counselors and assistant principals. This training was then taken back to the schools and shared with the staff, primarily during the beginning of the school year meeting (D. Phillips, personal communication, January, 16, 2016). This training resulted in DPI compliance rather than training relevant and useful for teachers in the classroom. In 2010, the RTI process was referred to as the Problem Solving Model (PSM). There were at least fourteen core programs for teachers to use in the classroom. This arrangement did not allow teachers to dig deep into individual student data to determine the most foundational skill(s) for each academically struggling student. Therefore it became necessary for a more effective process to be developed. It was the position of Greene County senior administration that RTI be a main focus for schools to improve student achievement (P. Miller, personal communication, July 10, 2014). It was also the understanding of the superintendent and assistant superintendent that the enhanced process developed for RTI would be applied to the other schools within the county

after running this process implementation on a small-scale proof of concept basis (see Appendix A).

I, along with a team, created a flow map of the improved RTI process for schools to use from Kindergarten through twelfth grade for Greene County Schools. This team consisted of myself, another elementary principal, and two RTI facilitators. When developing the flow map, the team believed it was important to start at the very beginning, when a teacher first notices a student is struggling academically (E. Smith, personal communication, May 29, 2014). Then within each step of the RTI process, a description was added of what the teacher response should include as well as what documentation to collect. Each RTI data meeting was also added to the flow map to indicate the number of weeks of intervention as well as when to meet to discuss moving a student up in the tiered process to intensify interventions if needed.

The RTI Process

The RTI process begins with a universal screening of all students. Universal screeners provide "for frequent checks of student performance so that students who may need additional instructional support may be identified and provided with support as early as possible" (McDougal et al., p. 53). Reading 3D is used as the universal screener tool for Kindergarten through third grade in North Carolina public schools. A universal screener is an assessment to help identify or predict which students need additional interventions to support his or her learning. Each school has the autonomy to make decisions on how best to deliver interventions to students and track their progress. At the second and third grade level, the administrators and RTI facilitator met and created color-coded forms for the teachers. Teachers use green forms for students in Tier 1, yellow forms for Tier 2, and red forms for Tier 3. The higher the tier level, the greater is the intensity of the intervention. The administrators and RTI facilitator met with

teachers to describe the process laid out in the flow map and what each step actually looks like in practice of RTI. This training took place during their Professional Learning Team (PLT) meeting of each team of grade level teachers. Teachers each received a folder with the PowerPoint presentation (see Appendix B), the flow map (see Figure 2), RTI Important Notes detailing each step in the process (see Appendix C), and copies of each form needed to document student progress on individualized interventions (see Appendix D). The administrators' and RTI facilitator's presentation was given detailing each stage of the flow map from the onset of a student experiencing difficulty until a determination was made of the child's academic status. Professional development was also given throughout the year to continue to highly train teachers in the enhanced RTI process and to implement it with fidelity. The process was followed the entire school year.

RTI is defined in literature but rarely is a process described that accompanies the definition. The Plan-Do-Study-Act Cycle was the framework used by the scholar-practitioner and stakeholders as the Model for Improvement to implement the systematic process for RTI at West Greene Elementary in Greene County, North Carolina. As Improvement Science states, it was used in large part because the process implemented will be tested and run on a small scale to eventually expand to the rest of the schools in the county. Hall (n.d.) stated that a successful approach for RTI implementation "is a phased one in which the implementation plan is limited to only some grade levels in the first year, is designed to expand to more grades in the second year, and so on" (para. 3). Therefore the small scale proof of concept was well suited for this specific problem of practice.

Many effective teachers are in their classrooms teaching and intervening with students to help them grow academically. However, there was a lack of a standardized process that provides

the documentation to show how a teacher is working to meet the student's needs and the student's response to the interventions outlined in RTI.

Statement of Problem

RTI was originally implemented without formal guidelines and operational procedures. Therefore, it was necessary to develop these guidelines and operational procedures for this improved RTI process to function effectively to meet the needs of students and teachers in Greene County.

Methodology - Science of Improvement

The improvement of a system is directly related to subject matter knowledge as well as a *System of Profound Knowledge*. W. Edwards Deming "defined the System of Profound Knowledge as the interplay of the theories of systems, variation, knowledge, and psychology" (Langley et al., 2009, p. 75). These four parts of profound knowledge, if understood by organizational leaders, should lead to the improvement of problems.

PDSA Cycle

Improvement Science is the development, testing, and implementation of changes to improve a process. The Model for Improvement is based on three fundamental questions, "(1) What are we trying to accomplish? (2) How will we know that a change is an improvement? (3) What changes can we make that will result in improvement?" (Langley et al., 2009, p. 5). The Plan-Do-Study-Act Cycle was the framework used by stakeholders as the Model for Improvement to implement the systematic process for RTI at West Greene Elementary in Greene County, North Carolina. Improvement Science was used in large part because the process implemented was tested and run on a small scale to eventually expand to the rest of the schools in the county in the near future. Due to the fact that there was very little to assist in setting up a

school for success to follow the RTI process, it was a prevalent problem in Greene County. There were four, planned, PDSA cycles to improve the RTI process. The first PDSA was the preliminary step to design an improved process for teachers to follow for RTI. The process began by asking the question, "What does a teacher do at the first sign of a student struggling academically?" From this point, a process was mapped out by administrative and instructional personnel, including myself, another principal, and RTI specialists. Administrators and the RTI specialists met with teachers to describe the process and what each step actually looks like in practice in the classroom. A result of the first step in the PDSA cycle included many teachers concerned about time. Time taken away from classroom instruction to deliver one-on-one interventions as well as inadequate planning time to review data and make informed data-driven decisions on student interventions. The second PDSA cycle incorporated the use of *Power Hour* into the master schedule for teachers to meet the academic needs of their students. Students received double the amount of intervention time by intervention specialists as compared to the previous school year. The intervention teachers were able to deliver additional targeted instruction based upon the students' skill deficiencies. Continued professional development on the RTI process was given as well as how to best for teachers to structure their day to adjust to the Power Hour master schedule. An addition to this schedule was the strategic placement of teacher assistants within the Power Hour intervention teacher's blocks of time to pull students and deliver interventions as well. As a result of this PDSA cycle many teachers realized the benefit in the revised master schedule. The intervention teachers also valued the increased time with their students to target specific academic needs of their students. A third facet of this PDSA cycle was the importance teacher assistants felt in having a direct impact on student achievement while working individually with the students. The third and fourth PDSA cycles included the

presentation of the RTI process as well as the strike rate data to K-12 Greene County school administrators as well as the Greene County School Board. In the interim, I have moved away from Greene County. It is the investigator's surmise that since I was no longer an employee that it would be more appropriate for those working in the system to present to the county administrators and school board. In lieu of that presentation, I engaged in extended dialogue with several Greene County associates, including an Exceptional Children's Compliance Specialist and Chief Academic Officer.

Measure of Improvement

This project was successful in implementing a process for RTI accountability in Greene County Schools. Now with a specific process in place, teachers and staff have been able to work efficiently with students in meeting their needs, documenting the students' academic growth, and increasing in tiered support if the student is not growing at the expected rate. Not only having a process for RTI is a measure of success but the accuracy of teachers submitting an Exceptional Children's referral and the student actually qualifying for services is an additional measure of success. The submission of an accurate referral which results in the student receiving services is called the *strike rate*. The current rate, though derived from a very small sample, has varied from 0% to 100%. The goal was for the strike rate be maintained at 90%. This past school year demonstrated a strike rate of 78%, or 7 out of 9 students qualified, as shown in the run chart of the variation of data in Figure 3 and in Figure 4. The strike rate would have been 88%, however a parent requested testing and the student did not qualify for Exceptional Children's services. The variation in strike rate continues to be a wide range, however the goal continues to be the maintenance of 90%.

Run Chart of the Variation in Data of Students Found Eligible for a Learning Disability by the IEP Team, 2007-2016

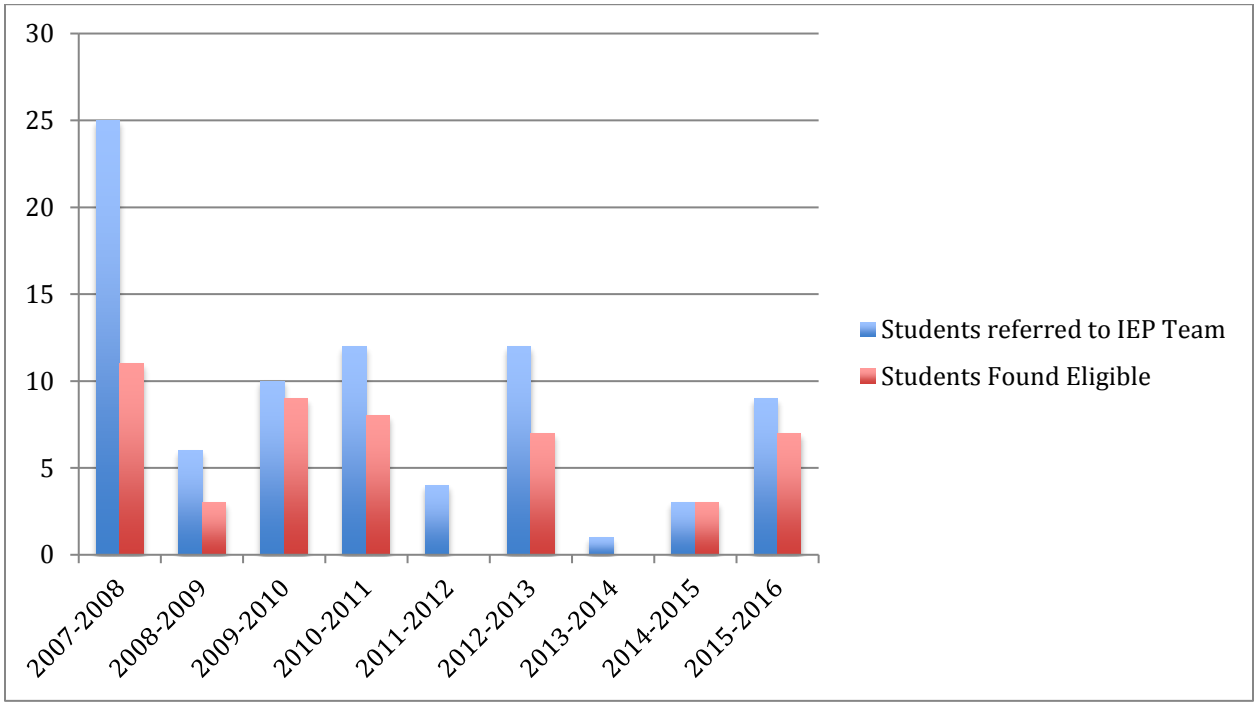


Figure 3. Run chart of the variation in data, 2007-2016.

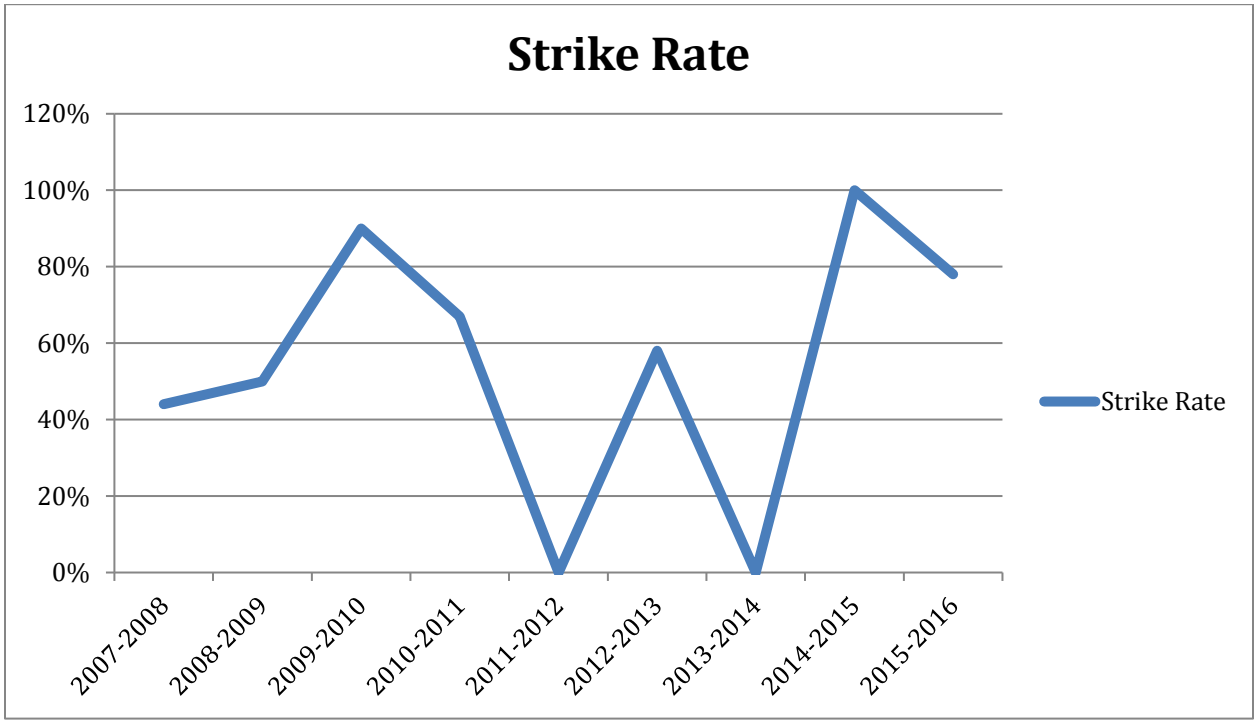


Figure 4. Strike rate.

As noted in the visual graphics above, the variation of the strike rate is large. It is with great anticipation and hope that the strike rate will be maintained at 90%. This 90% means that of all the Exceptional Children's referrals made, 90% of the referrals will qualify for services. The proactive nature of the RTI process established is conducive to students growing academically and not necessitating a referral. However, after all academic interventions are delivered, and a student is continuing to struggle, then there may be a learning disability preventing that student from growing. Of those referrals made, it is hopeful that 90% will qualify for EC services.

According to Destiny Phillips, Exceptional Children's Compliance Specialist, "systematic interventions are in place prior to an EC referral with data to support either no growth or sporadic growth" (personal communication, July 12, 2016). She also stated that the data received from the teachers is reliable, firm, no refuted by contradictory data, and can produce graphics that can be used to effectively evaluate students and be tracked over the course of a student's academic career. Through the use of the improved RTI process, not only has parent involvement increased in the assistance of their child at home, but it has also held parents accountable to additionally help their child at home. Parents are having to follow-up on increasing attendance rates as well as the well-being of their child, such as hearing and vision screening. "Parents also understand where their child is with the data tracking being visual. They may not understand it, but when they see it on a graph, it helps them to understand" (D. Phillips, personal communication, July 12, 2016). Greene County has established a district level MTSS team, consisting of principals, teacher/interventionists for grades K-8, as well as district staff. The team attends training provided by North Carolina's Department of Public Instruction and meets monthly to ensure the process is functioning as intended (F. Creech, personal communication, August 29, 2016). Greene County has also created a position for a district

MTSS coordinator that serves K-12 and assists with training, paperwork, and compliance to the local process that I established. This position also includes ongoing engagement with parents. Additional specialized training for instructional staff on tier 3 interventions has also occurred. A quarterly district data review meeting with school administration to examine school improvement goal progress and student group performance and growth has also been established (F. Creech, personal communication, August 29, 2016). Figures 5 and 6 are examples of the RTI data graphs based on the student progress in third and second grade.

Final Product

The final product created for Greene County Schools to use for the RTI process consists of a detailed flow map. This improved process was designed for teachers to follow for RTI. The process was written from a teacher's point of view at the first sign of a student struggling academically and what the teacher's response should include. This process was developed by a team consisting of myself, another elementary principal, and two RTI facilitators. When developing the flow map, the team believed it was important to start at the very beginning, when a teacher first notices a student is struggling. Within each step of the RTI process, a description was added of what the teacher response should include as well as what documentation of the interventions to collect. The team believed that there should not be any guesswork when initiating the RTI process for a student. RTI is defined in literature but rarely is a process described that accompanies the definition. Each RTI data meeting was also added to the flow map to indicate the number of weeks of academic intervention as well as when to meet to discuss moving a student up in the tiered process to intensify interventions if needed. Color-coded forms were also developed to document academic core program supports provided for the student, as well as the specific academic intervention to be delivered with the frequency and intensity of the

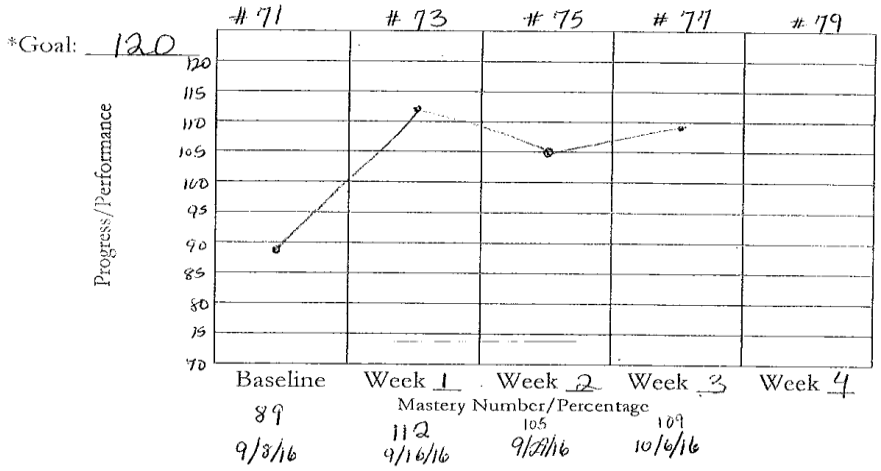
Tier III Interventions

Student Name: _____ Date of Rdg RTI/PLT Meeting: 10/11/16 Teacher Name: Paitsel

*(**If no growth, schedule meeting with Admin after deciding on Alternate Intervention/ Frequency.*
*If minimal growth, continue current intervention and layer a second intervention **)*

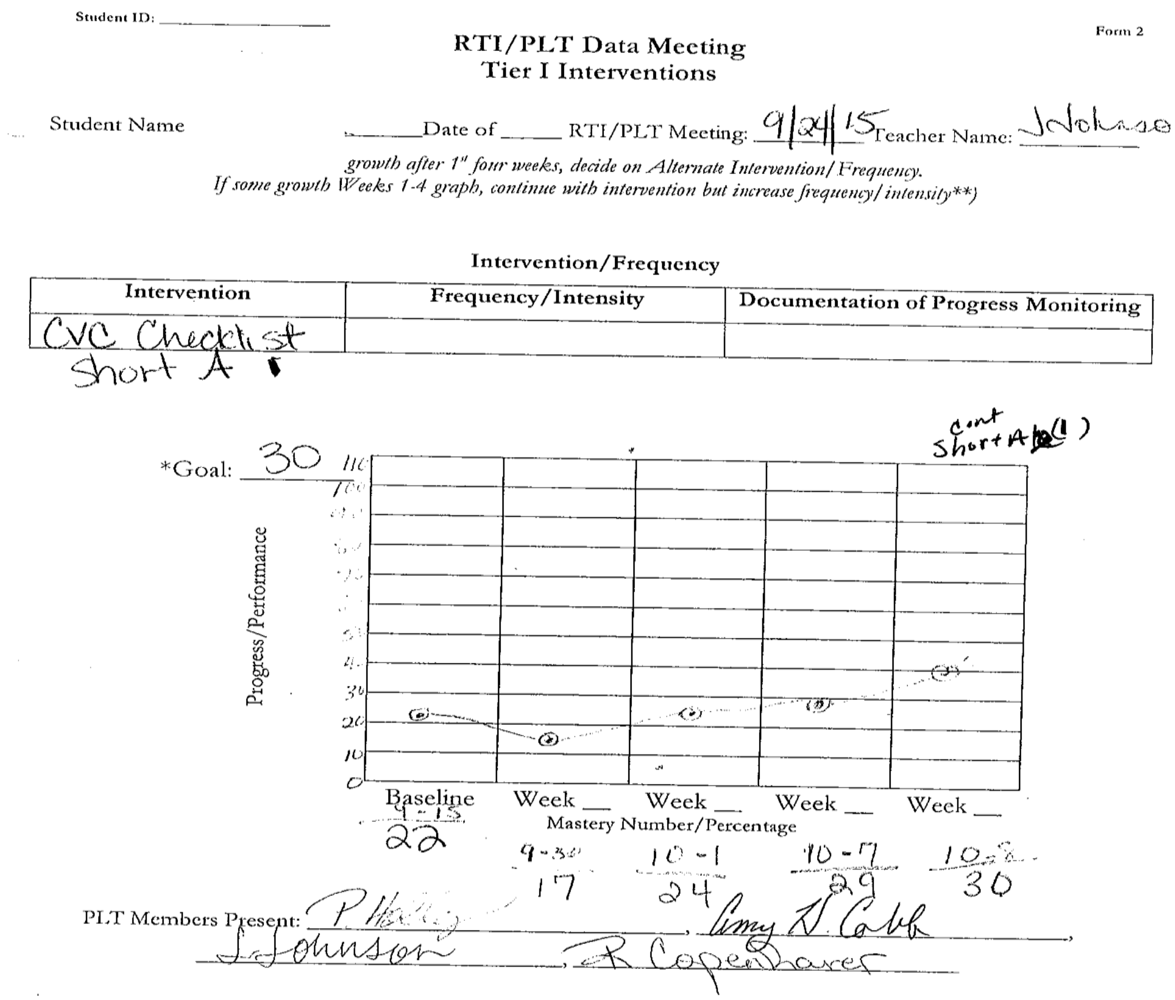
Layers of Interventions/Frequencies

Tier I Intervention	Frequency/Intensity	Documentation of Progress Monitoring
Written Retell	3xs/wk 20 mins	Written Response Rubric
Tier II Layered Intervention	**Frequency/Intensity**	**Documentation of Progress Monitoring**
Rdg A-Z Comp	4xs/week 30 min	Comp Quizzes
Tier III Layered Intervention	**Frequency/Intensity**	**Documentation of Progress Monitoring**
LLI Fluency + Comp	4xs/wk 30 mins	ORF & Comp A'ments



PLT Members Present: _____, _____, _____, _____

Figure 5. Third grade example of RTI Data Graph.



Student ID: ____________

Form 2

RTI/PLT Data Meeting
Tier I Interventions

Student Name ______Date of ______ RTI/PLT Meeting: 9/24/15 Teacher Name: JJohnson

growth after 1st four weeks, decide on Alternate Intervention/Frequency.
If some growth Weeks 1-4 graph, continue with intervention but increase frequency/intensity**)

Intervention/Frequency

Intervention	Frequency/Intensity	Documentation of Progress Monitoring
CVC Checklist Short A		

PLT Members Present: P. ______, Amy D. Cobb, J. Johnson, R. Copenhaver

Figure 6. Second grade example of RTI Data Graph.

intervention, as well as the graph to document the baseline and progress monitoring data. The following flow map is the detailed RTI process for teachers to follow.

The RTI facilitator and the administrators delivered professional development for the teachers in how to read and use the above flow map in their classroom. Each stage of the flow map was detailed for the teachers from the onset of a student struggling academically. The teachers also received a folder with a copy of the presentation, flow map, and a document detailing each step in the process. After the initial meeting with teachers, professional development was given throughout the school year to continue to highly train teachers in the RTI process as well as how to best structure their day to include time needed to deliver and document these academic interventions. It was very important that teachers implemented it with fidelity, not only for the process to work but to also meet the academic needs of their students.

Recommendations

It is with strong recommendation that the process for school improvement developed during this research be implemented and expanded upon in other schools in the state. The process is not school specific, yet it details what a school should do to intervene and remediate. It is useable, in that it begins with a student struggling academically and what a teacher and school team should do from the point of first intervention. Each school is unique, in that the number of staff available to work with a student and deliver interventions can vary. However, every school has students that are struggling academically. It is with strong conviction that the basic procedures established in this RTI process will work in any school setting. This process follows the basic procedures needed to address a student struggling academically and the teacher being proactive to intervene to address those skill deficiencies. The Individuals with Disabilities Act has been revised to reflect the change from using the discrepancy model to the tiered process of

Response to Intervention to identify students with a learning disability (LD). The discrepancy between a child's academic progress as compared to their IQ is the measurement used when determining exceptional children's placement. In the next couple of years, North Carolina will no longer use the discrepancy model. The RTI intervention data will be solely used when determining exceptional children's placement. Many schools will be in need of an RTI model and process to follow to fidelity. This model, as shown in Figure 2, will be very useful for schools to utilize.

With the implementation of this RTI model, extensive professional development should be continued. The professional development should include data analysis to best determine the onset of a student struggling academically, a refinement of skills needed to deliver best-practice interventions, as well as additional research-based interventions to deliver based on a student's academic need.

The school or county's RTI facilitator should continue to perform fidelity checks on the teachers following the process, the documentation of the interventions, as well as the data meetings. It would be very beneficial for the RTI facilitator to attend the scheduled, periodic data meetings so that the type of interventions being delivered are best-practice and are research-based as well as to check on the academic progress the students are making. The RTI facilitator should see an accelerated growth of student data so long as the interventions being delivered are best meeting the student's academic need.

Teacher and administrator preparation programs do not best prepare either for the delivery of RTI in a school. Again, RTI is defined during the preparation programs, but rarely is a process described that accompanies the definition for a teacher or school to follow. It is vital for teachers as well as administrators entering the workforce to fully understand RTI. The

process of RTI best meets the academic needs of students in a classroom or school. It is the surmise of the investigator that a teacher or administrator in training must witness the RTI in practice. A teacher or administrator in training should visit a school in which the teachers are following the RTI process and delivering research-based interventions. It would also be the position of the investigator for the preparation programs to include training on the flow map in detail. The flow map breaks down each tier of RTI as well as each step of the process of what a teacher should do. This training is vital to the school improvement process.

REFERENCES

Appelbaum, M. (2009). *The one-stop guide to implementing RTI academic and behavioral interventions, K-12*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. (2015). *Letter of support.* Retrieved from http://www.ascd.org/ASCD/pdf/siteASCD/policy/ASCD-Letter-Senate-ESSA-2015.pdf

Barnes, A. C., & Harlacher, J. E. (2008). Clearing the confusion: Response-to-intervention as a set of principles. *Education and Treatment of Students, 31*(3), 417-431. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/42899986?seq=3#page_scan_tab_contents

Berdine, W. H. (2003). *The President's commission on excellence in Special Education: Implications for the Special Education practitioner.* Retrieved from http://www.ldonline.org/article/6364/

Boykin, A., & Noguera, P. (2011). *Creating the opportunity to learn.* Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Buffum, A., Mattos, M., & Weber, C. (2010). The why behind RTI. *Educational Leadership, 68*(2), 10-16. Retrieved from http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/oct10/vol68/num02/The-Why-Behind-RTI.aspx

Campsen, L. (2012). *Professional learning communities, data-driven decision making, and response to intervention.* RTI Action Network. Retrieved from http://www.rtinetwork.org/rti-blog/entry/1/192

Chenoweth, K. (2009). *How it's being done.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

Collier, C. (2010). *RTI for diverse learners more than 200 instructional interventions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

DuFour, R., DuFour, R., Eaker, R., & Karhanek, G. (2004). *Whatever it takes: How professional learning communities respond when kids don't learn.* Bloomington, IN: National Educational Service.

Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, Pub. L. 94-142, 89 Stat.773, (1975).

Fuchs, D., & Fuchs, L. S. (2006). Introduction to response to intervention: What, why, and how valid is it? *Reading Research Quarterly, 41*(1), 93-99. Retrieved from https://www.uv.uio.no/forskning/om/helga-eng-forelesning/introduction-to-responsivenes-to-intervention.pdf

Greene County QuickFacts from the U.S. Census Bureau. (2015, September 23). Retrieved from http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/37/37079.html

Hall, S. (n.d.). Create your implementation blueprint: Avoiding implementation pitfalls. Retrieved from http://www.rtinetwork.org/getstarted/develop/create-your-implementation-blueprint-avoiding-pitfalls

Hughes, C., & Dexter, D. (n.d.). *Universal screening within a response-to-intervention model.* Retrieved from http://www.rtinetwork.org/learn/research/universal-screening-within-a-rti-model

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1400. (2004).

Intervention Central. (n.d.a). *Promoting teacher understanding about RTI.* Retrieved from http://www.interventioncentral.org/blog/rti-archived-blog-entries-2010/promoting-teacher-understanding-about-rti

Intervention Central. (n.d.b). *Tier 1/Schoolwide screening: Assessing the entire student population for academic risk.* Retrieved from http://www.interventioncentral.org/response_to_intervention_school_wide_screening

Jablonski, A. (n.d.). Multi-tiered system of support. Retrieved from http://www.ncpublicschools.org/curriculum/responsiveness/

Langley, G., Moen, R., Nolan, K., Nolan, T., Norman, C., & Provost, L. (2009). *The improvement guide: A practical approach to enhancing organizational performance* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Leandro v. State, 488 SE 2d 249 – NC: Supreme Court. (1997).

McDougal, J. L., Graney, S. B., Wright, J. A., & Ardoin, S. P. (2010). *RTI in practice: A practical guide to implementing effective evidence-based interventions in your school*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Mizell, H. (2010). *Why professional development matters*. Retrieved from http://learningforward.org/docs/pdf/why_pd_matters_web.pdf?sfvrsn=0

Multi-Tiered System of Support. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://mtss.ncdpi.wikispaces.net/file/view/mtss.CriticalComponentssummary.2015.(3).pdf

NC Const. art. I, § 15

New America Foundation. (2014). *No Child Left Behind – Overview*. Retrieved from http://febp.newamerica.net/background-analysis/no-child-left-behind-overview

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. (n.d.). *Multi-tiered system of support.* Retrieved from http://www.ncpublicschools.org/curriculum/responsiveness/

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. (2005). *Accountability Services Division*. Retrieved http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/

Northouse, P. G. (2016). *Leadership: Theory and practice* (7th ed.). Thousand Oaks: SAGE.

President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education. (2002). *A new era: Revitalizing special education for children and their families.* Retrieved from http://www.ed.gov/inits/commissionsboards/whspecialeducation/reports/pcesefinalreport.pdf

Sailor, W. (2009). *Making RTI work: How smart schools are reforming education through schoolwide response-to-intervention*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Shapiro, E. (n.d.). *Tiered instruction and intervention in a response-to-intervention model.* Retrieved from http://www.rtinetwork.org/essential/Tieredinstruction/Tiered-instruction-and-intervention-rti-model

Strike, K., Haller, E., & Soltis, J. (2005). *The ethics of school administration* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

TITLE I, PART A. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/program-monitoring/titleIA/

U.S. Department of Education. (n.d.). *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*. Retrieved from http://www.ed.gov/esea

U.S. Department of Education. (2007). *Q and A: Questions and answers on response to intervention (RTI) and early intervening services (EIS).* Retrieved from http://idea.ed.gov/explore/view/p/%2Croot%2Cdynamic%2CQaCorner%2C8%2C

U.S. Department of Education. (2010). *Thirty-five years of progress in educating children with disabilities through IDEA, Archived Information.* Retrieved from http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/idea35/history/index_pg10.html

U.S. Department of Education. (2015). *Fact sheet: Congress acts to fix No Child Left Behind.* Retrieved http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/fact-sheet-congress-acts-fix-no-child-left-behind

What is RTI? (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.rtinetwork.org/learn/what/whatisrti

APPENDIX A: PERSONAL COMMUNICATION FROM DR. PATRICK MILLER

Superintendent
Patrick C. Miller, Ed.D.

GREENE COUNTY SCHOOLS
Teaching 21st Century Students 21st Century Skills

301 Kingold Boulevard
Snow Hill, NC 28580

March 11, 2015

To whom it may concern:

I have met with Mrs. Shannon Castillo and discussed her proposal for creating a standardized process for RTI in Greene County Schools. I am in agreement that this work has the potential to be very beneficial for the school system and I support it fully. It is my hope that her work will serve all our schools by creating a consistent process for school improvement.

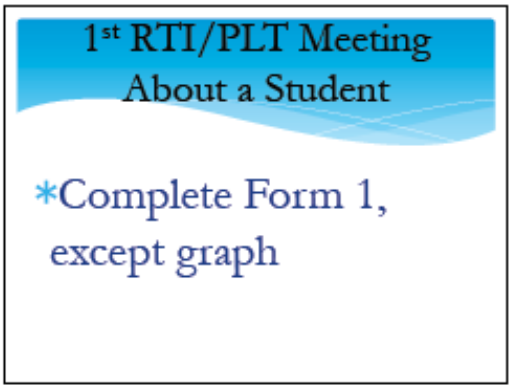
If more information is needed, please feel free to contact me,

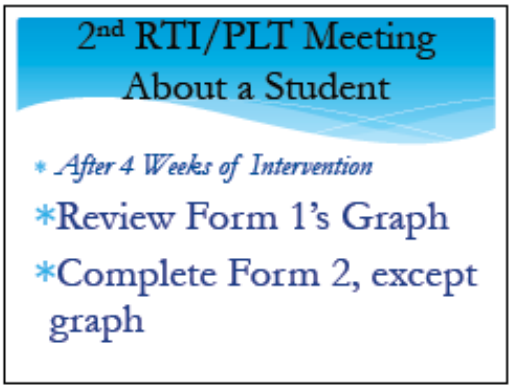
Respectfully,

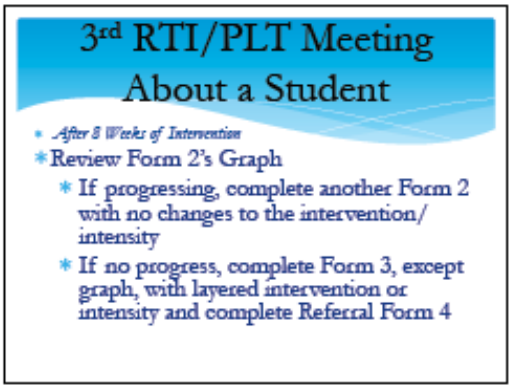
Patrick C. Miller, Ed.D.
Superintendent

Telephone (252) 747-3425 • Fax (252) 747-5942

APPENDIX B: RTI PROCESS PRESENTATION







RTI School Team Meeting

- Meeting is to determine if student stays at Tier 1 or moves to Tier 2

4th RTI/PLT Meeting About a Student

- *After 12 Weeks of Intervention*
- Review Form 3's Graph
  - If progressing, complete another Form 3 with no changes to the intervention/intensity
  - If no progress, complete Form 5, except graph, with different layered intervention or intensity

5th RTI/PLT Meeting About a Student

- *After 16 Weeks of Intervention*
- Review Form 5's Graph
  - If progressing, complete another Form 5 with no changes to the intervention/ intensity
  - If no progress, complete Form 6, except graph, with different layered intervention or intensity and update Form 4

RTI School Team Meeting

* Meeting is to determine if student stays at Tier 2 or moves to Tier 3

6th RTI/PLT Meeting About a Student

* *After 20 Weeks of Intervention*
* Review Form 6's Graph
  * If progressing, complete another Form 6 with no changes to the intervention/intensity
  * If no progress, complete Form 6, except graph, with different layered intervention or intensity

7th RTI/PLT Meeting About a Student

* *After 24 Weeks of Intervention*
* Review Form 6's Graph
  * If progressing, complete another Form 6 with no changes to the intervention/ intensity
  * If no progress, complete Form 6, except graph, with different layered intervention or intensity and update Form 4

RTI School Team Meeting

* Meeting is to determine if student stays at Tier 3 or moves to EC Evaluation

RTI School Team

* JoAnn Pennington, Principal
* Shannon Castillo, Assistant Principal
* Pamela Holley, RTI Facilitator
* Classroom Teacher
* CFST (if needed) (Including Guidance Counselor, Social Worker, Nurse)
* Support Staff: ESL, EC, Speech (if needed)
* Parent

APPENDIX C: RTI IMPORTANT NOTES

2nd & 3rd Grade RTI Important Notes

- Every 4 weeks, your PLT group will meet in room 12 to discuss RTI students

RTI/PLT Meeting

- At the beginning of the year, you will meet with Mrs. Holley to receive your RTI students' folders. During this meeting you will fill out a "Form 1" for each student struggling. You will fill out the entire form except for the graph. You give a short-term goal, on the graph. Be sure each PLT member present signs.
- Make a good match with intervention and frequency/intensity. Use the provided Intervention Sheet in google.
- It is right after your RTI/PLT meeting that the intervention begins and you progress monitor for 4 weeks.
- Each week, you will graph student progress on your graph on "Form 1".
- Notify the parent in writing/email that their child is struggling.

4 Weeks of Intervention

- Be sure performance/growth baseline and goal has been established
- Track intervention progress and **graph** results for the appropriate week
- Seek support if needed – colleagues, PLT, admin, coach

RTI/PLT Meeting

- After 4 weeks, you will meet to discuss data during your RTI/PLT Data Meeting.
- You will fill out "Form 2" entirely during this second meeting, except for the graph.
- Discuss whether the intervention worked – consider the time, frequency, duration
  - If the student made NO growth after the 1st four weeks of intervention, decide on Alternate Intervention/Frequency.
  - If minimal growth during Weeks 1-4 graph, continue with intervention but increase frequency/intensity on "Form 2"
- It is right after your RTI/PLT meeting that the intervention begins and you progress monitor for 4 weeks.
- Each week, you will graph student progress on your graph on "Form 2".

4 Weeks of Intensified Intervention or Different Intervention

RTI/PLT Meeting

- After 4 weeks, you will meet again on the same subject area to discuss data during your RTI/PLT Data Meeting. Discuss progress monitoring data – is student meeting goal?
  - If yes, you must continue the interventions/frequency since it is working. Continue Tier 1 support (complete " Form 2") and progress monitoring.

- If no or if the student made minimal growth during the 8 weeks, ***continue current intervention and layer a second intervention***. Change/adjust intervention/frequency and schedule a meeting with administration. You will fill out "Form 3" entirely during this meeting, including the short-term goal, except for the graph.

- If the student made NO growth after the first 8 weeks, schedule a meeting with admin after deciding on Alternate Intervention/Frequency and completion of GCS RTI/MTSS Referral ("Form 4").
- It is right after your RTI/PLT meeting that the intervention begins and you progress monitor for 4 weeks.
- Each week, you will graph student progress on your graph on "Form 3".
- Administration schedules a meeting with the RTI Team.

RTI School Team Meeting

- Team members review student and progress monitoring data.
- Team decides whether student stays at Tier 1 with different/adjusted interventions or moves to Tier 2.

RTI/PLT Meeting (Student Moves to Tier 2)

- After 4 weeks, you will meet again on the same subject area to discuss data during your RTI/PLT Data Meeting. You will fill out "Form 5" entirely during this meeting, including the short-term goal, except for the graph. If the student has grown to expectations, you need to continue the interventions/frequency since it is working.
- If there was no or minimal growth during this 4 week period on "Form 5", continue current intervention and layer a different intervention.

4 Weeks of Intensified Intervention or Different Intervention

RTI/PLT Meeting

- After 4 weeks, you will meet again on the same subject area to discuss data during your RTI/PLT Data Meeting. Discuss progress monitoring data – is student meeting goal?
  - If yes, you must continue the interventions/frequency since it is working. Continue Tier 2 support (complete "Form 5") and progress monitoring.
  - If the student made NO growth after the 8 weeks, schedule a meeting with admin after deciding on Alternate Intervention/Frequency (Form 6) and update GCS RTI/MTSS Referral ("Form 4") to be a Tier 3 referral.
- It is right after your RTI/PLT meeting that the intervention begins and you progress monitor for 4 weeks.
- Each week, you will graph student progress on your graph on "Form 6".
- Administration schedules a meeting with the RTI Team.

RTI School Team Meeting

- Team members review student and progress monitoring data.
- Team decides whether student stays at Tier 3 with different/adjusted interventions or EC Referral.

RTI School Team

- JoAnn Pennington, Principal
- Shannon Castillo, Assistant Principal
- Pamela Holley, RTI Facilitator
- Classroom Teacher
- CFST, if needed (including Guidance Counselor, Social Worker, Nurse)
- Support Staff (ESL, EC, Speech), if needed
- Parent

APPENDIX D: RTI FORMS AND LETTERS

Student ID: _____ Form 1

RTI/PLT Data Meeting
Tier I Interventions

Student Name:_____Date of _____ RTI/PLT Meeting: _____ Teacher Name: _____

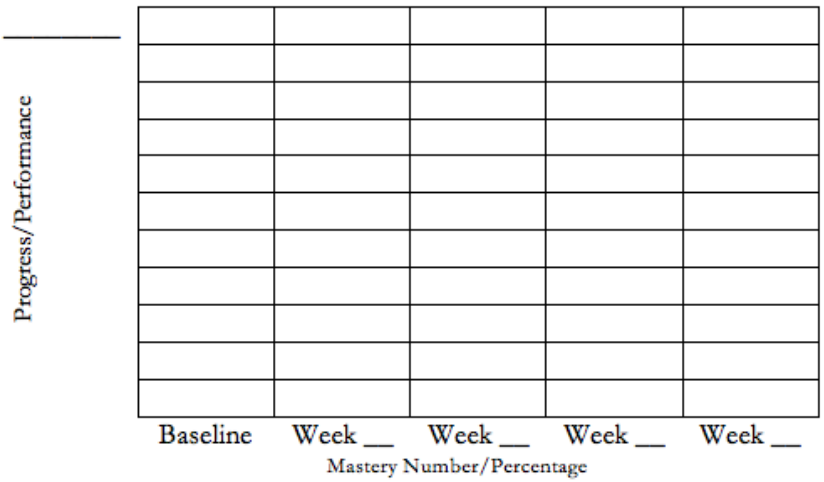
Targeted Skill Area: _____ Universal Screener (mClass, Dibels, etc.): _____

Research-Based Core Program Support Strategies			
What are you already doing?			
Learning Environment	**Curriculum**	**Instruction**	**Modifications**
☐ Regular Classroom	☐ Use of Leveled Text	☐ Explicit Instruction	☐ Check Homework Daily
☐ Inclusion Classroom	☐ Tiered Assignments	☐ Scaffolding of Instruction	☐ Modified Assignments
☐ Small Group	☐ Curriculum Compacting	☐ Pre-Teach Information	☐ Extended Time
☐ One to One	☐ Advanced Content/Curriculum	☐ Re-Teach Information	☐ Read Aloud Assignments or Tests
☐ Flexible Grouping	☐ Interest-based Projects	☐ Cooperative Learning	☐ Preferential Seating
☐ Remediation/Acceleration	☐ Independent Research Project	☐ Use of Aids, Organizers or Study Guides	☐ Chunking of Material/Tasks
☐ Other:	☐ Specialized Curriculum	☐ Additional Practice Opportunities	☐ Other:
☐	☐ Other:	☐ Using Differentiated Teaching Techniques & Tools	☐
☐	☐	☐ Other:	☐

Intervention/Frequency

Intervention	Frequency/Intensity	Documentation of Progress Monitoring

*Goal: _____



Student ID: _____ Form 2

RTI/PLT Data Meeting
Tier I Interventions

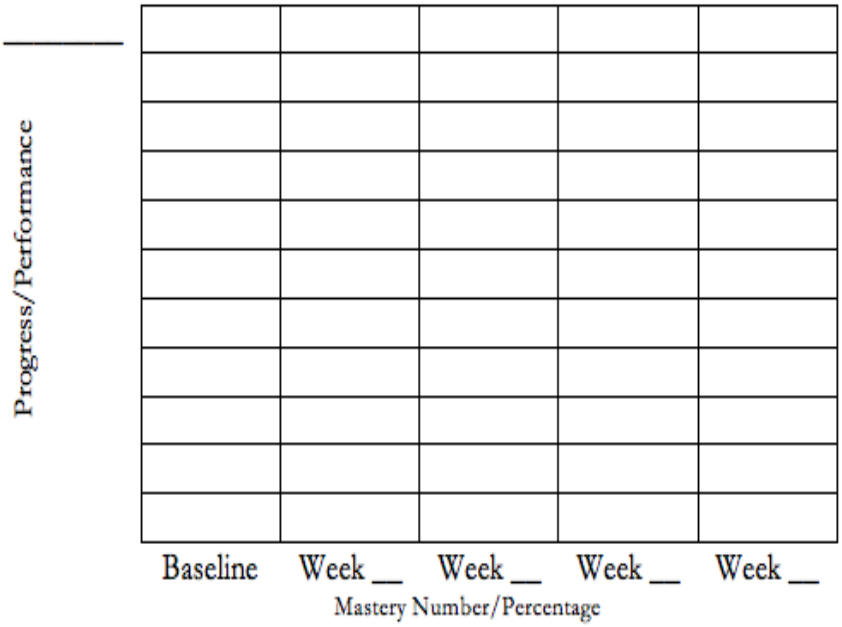
Student Name:_____Date of _____ RTI/PLT Meeting: _____ Teacher Name: _____

*(**If no growth after 1st four weeks, decide on Alternate Intervention/Frequency.*
*If some growth Weeks 1-4 graph, continue with intervention but increase frequency/intensity**)*

Intervention/Frequency

Intervention	Frequency/Intensity	Documentation of Progress Monitoring

*Goal: _____



PLT Members Present: _____, _____,

_____, _____

WEST GREENE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

303 Kingold Boulevard
Snow Hill, NC 28580
252-747-3955

JoAnn H. Pennington, Principal
Shannon Castillo, Assistant Principal
Jimmy Summerville, Assistant Principal

Responsiveness to Instruction (RtI)
Tier I Parent Notification

Student: _____

Date: _____

Dear Parent/Guardian:

This letter is notify you that your child is experiencing some difficulty in class with _____ and the current data indicates that he/she child is performing below grade level expectations. I will be working with other personnel in the school to put interventions in place to assist your child in this area. If no improvement is made with our first round of interventions, our school's Responsiveness to Instruction (RtI) Team will contact you and begin a screening process for your child so that we can better understand his/her instructional needs and offer suggestions about ways to address those needs.

Continue to monitor and assist with homework, stress good study habits, and encourage your child to give 100% every day. We look forward to working with you to help your child be more successful. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me.

Classroom Teacher _____ Date _____

Parent's Signature: _____ Date _____

(Please sign and return this form to your child's teacher to acknowledge that you are aware that your child is performing below grade level expectations and that extra measures are being taken to help your child be successful in his/her academic endeavors.)

Student ID: _____ Form 3

RTI/PLT Data Meeting
Tier I or II Interventions

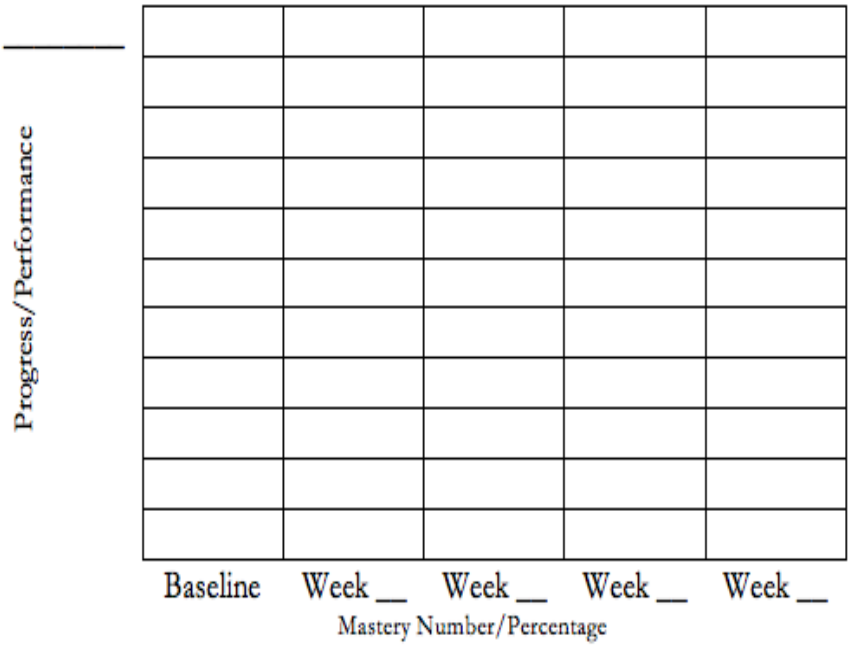
Student Name:_____Date of _____ RTI/PLT Meeting: _____ Teacher Name: _____

*(**If no growth after eight weeks, schedule meeting with Admin after deciding on Alternate Intervention/Frequency. If minimal growth during eight weeks, continue current intervention and layer a second intervention **)*

Layers of Interventions/Frequencies

Tier I Intervention	Frequency/Intensity	Documentation of Progress Monitoring
Layered Intervention	**Frequency/Intensity**	**Documentation of Progress Monitoring**

*Goal: _____



PLT Members Present: _____, _____,

_____, _____

GCS RTI/MTSS Referral to Tier II/III

School _____ Date of Referral: _____

Student's Name: _____ Teacher's Name: _____

Additional staff that work with this student: _____

Grade _____ Targeted Area(s) of Concern _____

Reason for Referral: [] Initiate Tier II [] Review Tier II [] Initiate Tier III [] Review Tier III

Is this student ESL? [] Yes [] No Number of years in US Schools? _____

Is this student EC? [] Yes [] No Has student been previously tested? _____

Has this student been previously retained? [] Yes [] No If yes, retention grade? _____

~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~ Summary of MTSS Information ~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

Start date of Tier I Intervention/Documentation _____

Current Tier Level _____ How many weeks at this Tier? _____

How many research-based interventions have been attempted in the primary area of concern during the duration of the current Tier?

Indicate how above interventions(s) were delivered. Check all that apply.
[] Small group instruction – Frequency: _____ [] 1:1 Instruction – Frequency _____
[] Instruction by Specialist – Frequency: _____ [] Tutoring – Frequency _____

~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~ Meeting Preparation Checklist ~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

The following has been attached to reflect current information:
[] Attendance History *(Current & last 3 years)* [] Plan has been reviewed periodically (every 4-6 weeks)
[] Behavior History [] Current Screener & Performance Data
[] Tier I Parent Notification Form [] Individualized goals, interventions, & documentation
[] Communication with Parents (minimum of two contacts such as written notes, progress reports, & emails)

Comments: _____

When all the documentation has been attached, submit this packet to RTI/MTSS Facilitator and contact Administration to schedule meeting. You will be contacted soon to schedule a meeting.

~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~ TO BE COMPLETED BY MTSS TEAM ~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

Conclusion/Decision made by MTSS Meeting

Date _____

[] Continue/Modify MTSSPlan [] Develop Tier II Plan [] Develop Tier III Plan [] Refer to IEP Team
[] Other: _____

Team Signatures: _____ _____ _____

_____ _____ _____

WEST GREENE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

303 Kingold Boulevard
Snow Hill, NC 28580
252-747-3955

JoAnn H. Pennington, Principal
Shannon Castillo, Assistant Principal
Jimmy Summerville, Assistant Principal

Responsiveness to Instruction (RtI)
Tier II Parent Notification

Student:
Teacher:
Date:

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Our school's Responsiveness to Instruction (RtI) Team plans to begin a screening process for your child so that we can better understand his/her instructional needs and offer suggestions about ways to address those needs. The screening process may include one or more of the following:

1. Use of various classroom interventions
2. Vision and hearing screening
3. Classroom observations
4. Completion of Social and Developmental History
5. Review of school records
6. Informal reading, math or written language inventories
7. Various diagnostic and progress monitoring assessments

After screenings are complete, we would like to meet with you to discuss your child's academic performance. If we determine additional assistance is necessary for your child to be successful in school, we would like your help in developing an Intervention Plan. Your involvement is essential to your child's academic development! The Intervention Plan will include home academic activities as well as classroom interventions. These activities and interventions will provide additional opportunities to practice and enhance skills that are needed to be successful in school.

Thank you for all that you do. We look forward to working with you to help your child become successful. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free email me (pamelaholley@greene.k12.nc.us) or call me at (252) 747-3955 ext. 406.

Sincerely,

Pamela Holley
RtI Facilitator
West Greene Elementary School

WEST GREENE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

303 Kingold Boulevard
Snow Hill, NC 28580
252-747-3955

JoAnn H. Pennington, Principal
Shannon Castillo, Assistant Principal
Jimmy Summerville, Assistant Principal

Tier II/III Problem-Solving Parent Invitation

School: West Greene Elementary

DATE:

TO: Parents

FROM: Pamela Holley – RTI Facilitator

PROGRESS OF: _____

Student's Name

A TIER II PROBLEM-SOLVING TEAM MEETING HAS BEEN SCHEDULED FOR:

Date	Time	Location

You are invited to attend. The Tier II Problem-Solving Team meets on a regular basis to offer assistance to students, teachers and parents regarding students' success in school. We would like to discuss your child's progress at this upcoming meeting.

The following people are scheduled to attend:

Parent/Guardian
RTI Facilitator – Mrs. Holley
Teacher

Our goal is for each child to have a successful school experience. Please feel free to call me at 747-3955 ext 406 or pamelaholley@greene.k12.nc.us.

Parent Signature: _____
(Sign and return to child's teacher)

[] I will attend this meeting as scheduled above.

[] I will be unable to attend. Please contact me to reschedule.

Email: _____

Phone: _____

cc: Persons scheduled to attend

Student ID: _____ Form 5

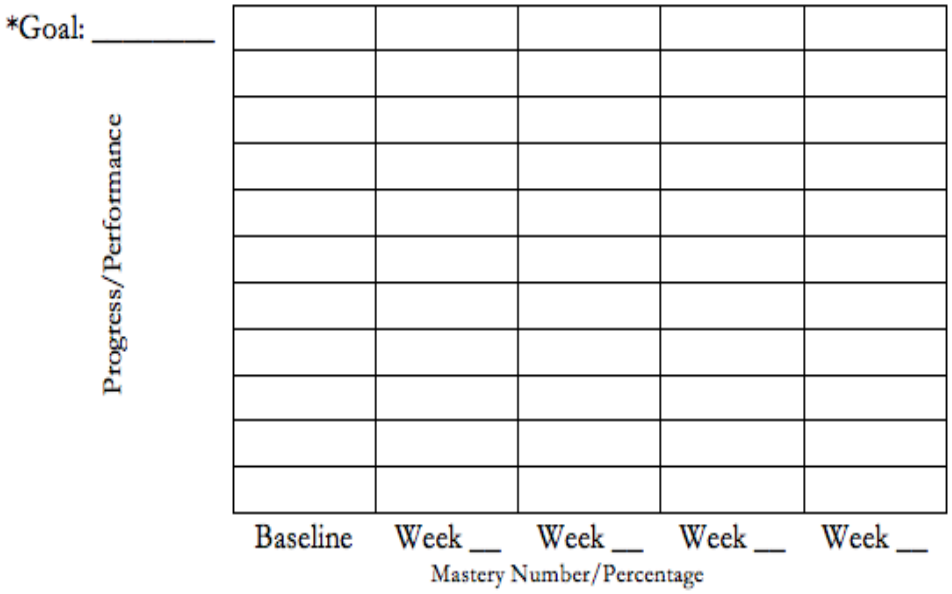
RTI/PLT Data Meeting
Tier II Interventions

Student Name:_____Date of _____ RTI/PLT Meeting: _____ Teacher Name: _____

*(** If minimal growth on "Form 5", continue current intervention and layer a third intervention **)*

Layers of Interventions/Frequencies

Tier I Intervention	Frequency/Intensity	Documentation of Progress Monitoring
Tier II Layered Intervention	**Frequency/Intensity**	**Documentation of Progress Monitoring**



PLT Members Present: _____, _____,

_____, _____

Student ID: _____ Form 6

RTI/PLT Data Meeting
Tier III Interventions

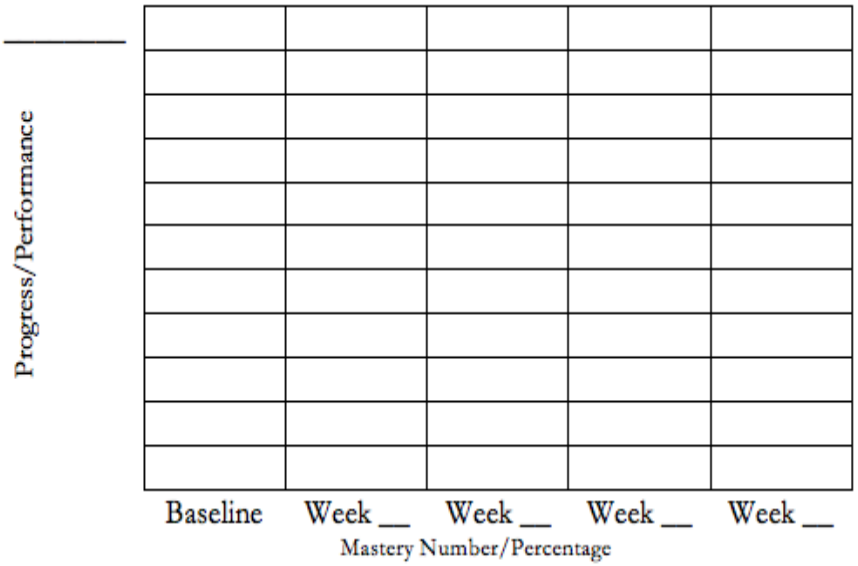
Student Name:_____Date of _____ RTI/PLT Meeting: _____ Teacher Name: _____

*(**If no growth, schedule meeting with Admin after deciding on Alternate Intervention/Frequency.*
*If minimal growth, continue current intervention and layer a second intervention **)*

Layers of Interventions/Frequencies

Tier I Intervention	Frequency/Intensity	Documentation of Progress Monitoring
Tier II Layered Intervention	**Frequency/Intensity**	**Documentation of Progress Monitoring**
Tier III Layered Intervention	**Frequency/Intensity**	**Documentation of Progress Monitoring**

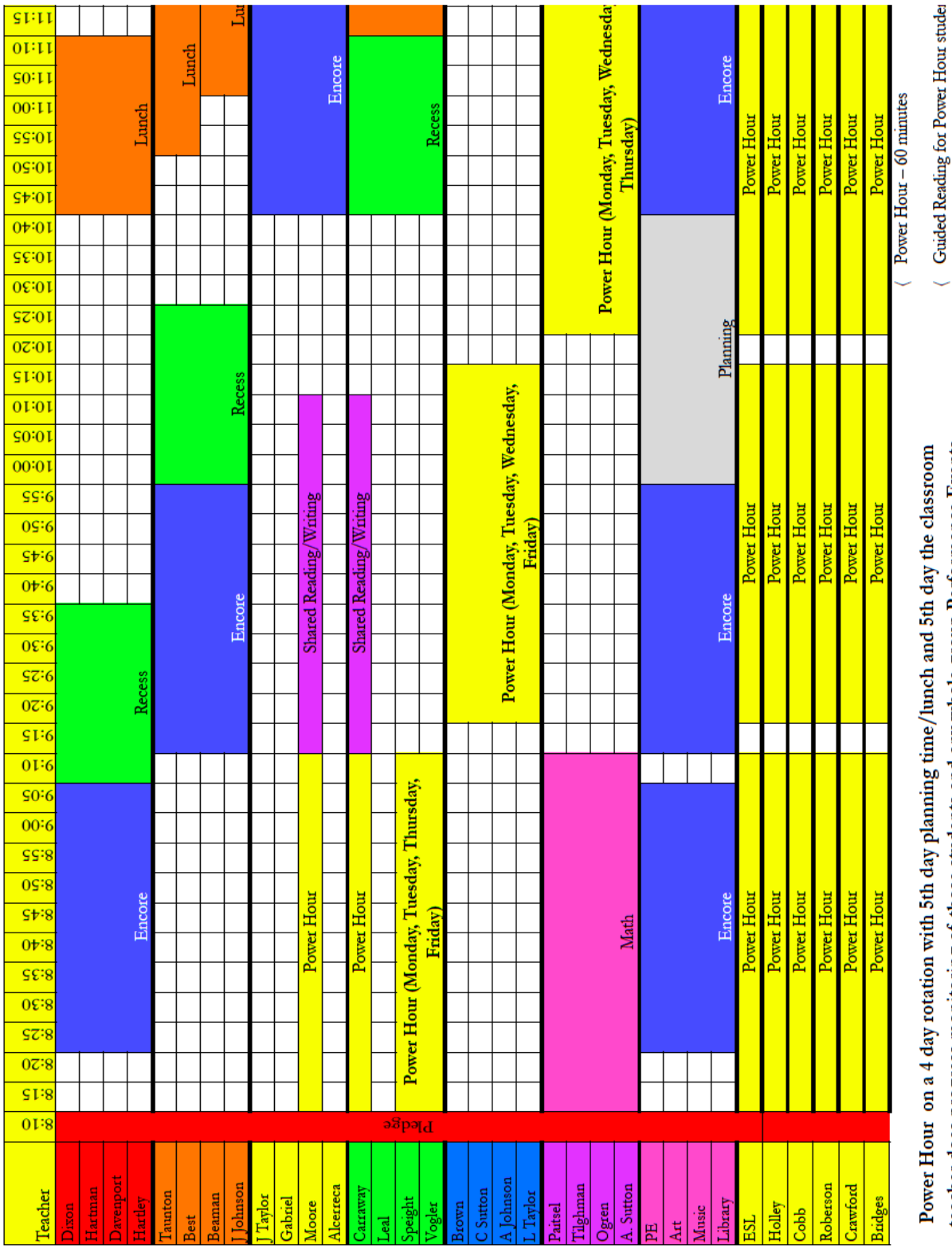
*Goal: _____



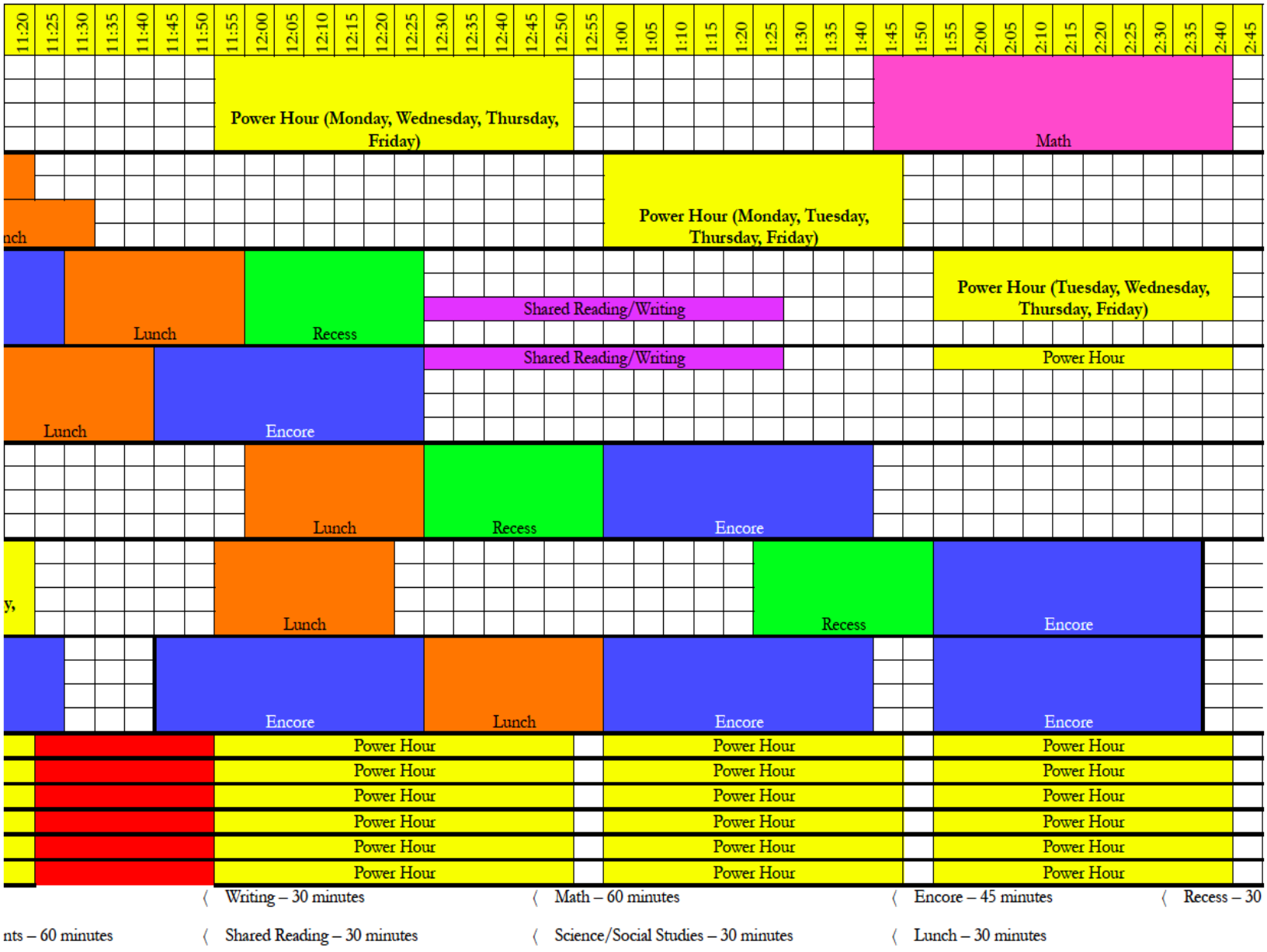
PLT Members Present: _____, _____,

_____, _____

APPENDIX E: POWER HOUR MASTER SCHEDULE



Power Hour on a 4 day rotation with 5th day planning time/lunch and 5th day the classroom teacher does progress monitoring of those students and any whole group Performance Events


11:20
11:25
11:30
11:35
11:40
11:45
11:50
11:55
12:00
12:05
12:10
12:15
12:20
12:25
12:30
12:35
12:40
12:45
12:50
12:55
1:00
1:05
1:10
1:15
1:20
1:25
1:30
1:35
1:40
1:45
1:50
1:55
2:00
2:05
2:10
2:15
2:20
2:25
2:30
2:35
2:40
2:45
Power Hour (Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday)
Math
Power Hour (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday)
nch
Lunch
Recess
Shared Reading/Writing
Power Hour (Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday)
Shared Reading/Writing
Power Hour
Lunch
Encore
Lunch
Recess
Encore
y,
Lunch
Recess
Encore
Encore
Lunch
Encore
Encore
Power Hour
Power Hour
Power Hour
Power Hour
Power Hour
Power Hour
Power Hour
Power Hour
Power Hour
Power Hour
Power Hour
Power Hour
Power Hour
Power Hour
Power Hour
Power Hour
Power Hour
Power Hour
⟨ Writing – 30 minutes
⟨ Math – 60 minutes
⟨ Encore – 45 minutes
⟨ Recess – 30
nts – 60 minutes
⟨ Shared Reading – 30 minutes
⟨ Science/Social Studies – 30 minutes
⟨ Lunch – 30 minutes

APPENDIX F: IRB APPROVAL

EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY
University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board Office
4N-70 Brody Medical Sciences Building· Mail Stop 682
600 Moye Boulevard · Greenville, NC 27834
Office **252-744-2914** · Fax **252-744-2284** ·
www.ecu.edu/irb

Not Human Subject Research Certification

From: Social/Behavioral IRB
To: Shannon Castillo
CC: Jim McDowelle
Date: 5/24/2016
Re: UMCIRB 16-000647
Social/Behavioral IRB

On 5/24/16, the IRB Staff reviewed your proposed research and determined that it does not meet the federal definitions of research involving human participants, as applied by East Carolina University.

Therefore, it is with this determination that you may proceed with your research activity and no further action will be required. However, if you should want to modify your research activity, you must submit notification to the IRB before amending or altering this research activity to ensure that the proposed changes do not require additional UMCIRB review.

The UMCIRB appreciates your dedication to the ethical conduct of research. It is your responsibility to ensure that this research is being conducted in accordance with University policies and procedures, the ethical principles set forth in the Belmont Report, and the ethical standards of your profession. If you have questions or require additional information, please feel free to contact the UMCIRB office at 252-744-2914.