Utilizing Response to Intervention (roti) As a Means of Studying Capacity Building and Motivation of Staff by School Leadership Teams

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UTILIZING RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION (RtI) AS A MEANS OF STUDYING CAPACITY BUILDING AND MOTIVATION OF STAFF BY SCHOOL LEADERSHIP TEAMS

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BY

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DEDICATION

To Finn Michael Mahoney

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”

-Nelson Mandela
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ABSTRACT

This research study explored the concept of capacity building and motivation of staff by school leadership teams in the successful development and implementation of educational initiatives, specifically Response to Intervention (RtI). A great deal of scholarship has addressed leadership and its effect on motivation, but few studies have investigated the necessary characteristics an effective school should encompass to generate widespread and sustainable capacity to raise the bar and close the gap of student achievement.

The central research questions of this study are:

1) In two Illinois public high schools with positive statewide reputations, according to the perspectives of each RtI leadership team, how has a central and singular focus been evidenced in the development and implementation of their RtI model in each high school?

2) In two Illinois public high schools with positive statewide reputations, according to the perspectives of each RtI leadership team, how has capacity building been evidenced in the development and implementation of their RtI model in each high school?

3) What are the implications for educational leaders to successfully motivate their RtI leadership teams to develop RtI processes?
4) What are the implications for educational leaders to successfully motivate their RtI leadership teams to implement these RtI processes with fidelity?

A qualitative case study was utilized as the methodology for this study. Participants included three building administrators and fifteen certified staff members from two suburban Chicago high schools. The three building administrators participated in Individualized Interviews. The fifteen certified staff members participated by completing Qualitative Questionnaires. Data analysis was completed through obtaining a copy of each high school’s goals and objectives. Each high school has been identified as having a positive statewide reputation in regards to their development and implementation of Response to Intervention (RtI). Participation in the study was voluntary and included the completion of letters of cooperation, letters of consent and a confidentiality agreement.

This study concluded two major high school points: a) while the principal must support the efforts of the leadership team, it is not necessary that s/he is the head of the initiative and b) The following list is intended to be followed explicitly and sequentially. Building leadership teams in high schools who wish to implement educational initiatives that align with their school and/or district goals must: (1) create a central and singular focus; (2) build consensus among staff; (3) share the plan that is created; (4) define roles and responsibilities; (5) build capacity among staff; (6) obtain “buy-in” from staff; (7) decentralize power; (8) involve various staff members/groups in decision-making; (9) inform/communicate/empower all stake-holders; and (10) develop and provide staff members with necessary tools.
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Leadership, according to James C. Hunter (1998) is the skill of influencing people to work enthusiastically toward goals identified as being for the common good. Motivation is the influence or drive that causes us to behave in a specific manner and has been described as consisting of energy, direction and sustainability (Kroth, 2007). In a school setting, how do school leadership teams motivate teachers to follow the mission and vision of the school and/or district? Research has indicated that predictors of motivation include job satisfaction, personal growth, perceived equity and organizational commitment (Fullan 2010; Maxwell 2008; Pink 2009). Zepeda (2007) states that, the principal must be in a position to promote continuous learning and development of teachers, continually challenging them to teach students to higher standards of accountability. Zepeda also states that the principal must be the instructional leader. She offers the following definition of an instructional leader: Strong leadership promotes excellence and equity in education and entails projecting, promoting, and holding steadfast to the vision; garnering and allocating resources; communicating progress; and supporting the people, programs, services, and activities implemented to achieve the school’s vision (p. 4).

Response to Intervention (RtI) is a major, current, educational initiative sweeping through schools, ensuring schools are held accountable for improving academic
achievement of all students. RtI is a multi-tier approach to the early identification and support of students with learning and behavior needs (Retrieved on February 25, 2011 from: www.rtinetwork.org). According to Michael Fullan (2010), educational initiatives cannot be successfully implemented unless every vital part of the whole system – school, community, district and government – contributes individually and in concert to forward movement and success. As one thinks of successes in one’s life, how many of these successes have been accomplished alone? Is Fullan’s “whole system” idea a new theory? Fullan (2010) offers eight characteristics (Exhibit 1) of an effective school district that he believes generate widespread and potentially sustainable capacity to raise the bar and close the gap of student achievement. Exhibit 1 is as follows:

1. **Focus:** a clear direction and relentless focus on student achievement through instructional improvement in the classroom. A school board needs a central and singular focus from which all other pieces can flow. A district must continuously strengthen its core by increasing teachers’ skills and knowledge, engaging students in learning, and ensuring the curriculum challenges students.

2. **Data:** access and use of data on student learning as a strategy for classroom and school improvement and to monitor progress. Data also help to shape targets for phased focuses of improvement. Data include the development and use of ongoing means of diagnosing student needs and addressing them through specific instructional responses.

3. **Leadership:** development of teacher, principal, and district leadership to share effective practices from each other and from the larger research base. Research is focused on teaching strategies that make a difference in high- and low-performing schools serving similar types of kids. Responses are then developed to deliver job embedded in service. Leadership roles are defined so that leaders participate as learners in working with teachers to address instructional needs.
4. Resources: allocating resources in accordance with this focus without a reliance on one-time, special funding. Resources should be clearly aligned to support the teaching and learning core of the district’s work.

5. Reduce Distractors: a concerted effort to reduce the distractors that undermine teachers’ and principals’ capacity to carry out this central strategy. Excessive bureaucracy, inconsistent messages, multiple non-classroom initiatives, and time-and-energy-consuming conflicts all distract from the focus of student achievement. Effective districts do not take on too many initiatives at once and are dropping distractors as well as adding things that help them focus.

6. Community: link to parents and the community and related agencies to provide support for students and educators and to intervene early in case of difficulties experienced by students and by schools.

7. Communication: a constant and consistent communication that focuses on the core message up and down and across the district. Everyone needs to know the central focus of teaching and learning priorities and how to achieve them. Research findings and effective practices need to be shared. Staying on message is crucial.

8. Esprit de Corps: a sense of identity and sense of community among teachers and principals and between schools and the district. People take pride in their work and that of their colleagues and feel a strong sense of affinity with the district as a whole. Allegiances are strong, and collaborative competition leverages the schools to stronger and stronger performance. (Fullan, 2010, p. 36)

Fullan (2010) states that the evidence shows that teachers respond to authentic opportunities to develop individual and collective capacity and the strong moral power of allegiance to their peers related to a higher cause. Fullan continues by saying the solution is not a program; it is a small set of common principles and practices relentlessly pursued. Educational leaders who know how to motivate others and who implement Fullan’s characteristics of effective schools are at an advantage and gather support more quickly, ultimately building individual and collective capacity and reaching the intended goal(s).
Conversely, educational leaders who struggle to motivate others and who do not implement Fullan’s characteristics of effective schools are at a disadvantage and have a difficult time reaching the intended goal(s). Educational leaders must use research to their advantage, because even good leaders face challenges while attempting to implement educational initiatives. According to Guhn (2007), the resistance to change (i.e., to an unfamiliar practice) is a human tendency that is easily understood when one considers that change typically requires new competencies and might lead to undesirable consequences – such as exposing one’s lack of competence. A school reform often creates a sense of insecurity and even fear among the implementers.

This dissertation examines how school leadership teams motivate and build capacity among staff to implement educational initiatives that align with their school and/or district goals. More specifically, this dissertation examines the educational initiative Response to Intervention (RtI) and how leadership teams motivate and build capacity around its implementation. To gain an understanding of the origin of RtI, it was necessary to provide a brief history of educational acts and outline initiatives that preceded RtI.

**The Road to Response to Intervention (RtI)**

**The Education for All Handicapped Children Act – 1975**

The Education for All Handicapped Children Act paved the way for educators to begin thinking about providing support for struggling learners. In November 1975, the Congress of the United States passed the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (PL 94-142), now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act 20 U.S.C. §
601 [2004] (IDEA). This law provided children with disabilities a right to a free, appropriate, public education (FAPE). According to the U.S. Department of Education (Retrieved on March 14, 2011 from: www.ed.gov), subsequent amendments … have led to an increased emphasis on access to the general education curriculum, the provisions of services for young children from birth to five, transition planning and accountability for the achievement of students with disabilities. It is common today to think of PL 94-142 as the first Federal Act to support special education instruction.

One result of the Education for all Handicapped Children Act was Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which worked in tandem with PL 94-142. While PL 94-142 was specific for special education instruction, Title I was found to be less specific and stated that it was to help “vulnerable” children. Ballard and Zettel (1979) believe, from the standpoint of federal policy, special education may in fact be remembered as the standard bearer in the promotion of increasing federal attention to the need for individualized education programs for at least all “vulnerable” children, handicapped and nonhandicapped. For example, PL 93-380 amendments to Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (supplementary assistance to economically disadvantaged children) carry a strong recommendation for individualized programs for all children served under that Title. Once again, the emphasis on PL 94-142 was to provide individualized special education programs, but it seems that disadvantaged or struggling students found benefits of this Act as well. According to the U.S. Department of Education, the purpose of [Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965] was to ensure that all children had a fair, equal and significant opportunity to
obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging state academic achievement standards and state academic assessments (Retrieved on March 14, 2011 from www.ed.gov). The U.S. Department of Education continued to say that this purpose can be accomplished by:

1) ensuring that high-quality academic assessments, accountability systems, teacher preparation and training, curriculum and instructional materials are aligned with challenging state academic standards so that students, teachers, parents and administrators can measure progress against common expectations for student academic achievement;

2) meeting the educational needs of low-achieving children in our nation's highest-poverty schools, limited English proficient children, migratory children, children with disabilities, Indian children, neglected or delinquent children and young children in need of reading assistance;

3) closing the achievement gap between high- and low-performing children, especially the achievement gaps between minority and nonminority students, and between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers;

4) holding schools, local educational agencies and states accountable for improving the academic achievement of all students, and identifying and turning around low-performing schools that have failed to provide a high-quality education to their students, while providing alternatives to students in such schools to enable the students to receive a high-quality education;

5) distributing and targeting resources sufficiently to make a difference to local educational agencies and schools where needs are greatest;

6) improving and strengthening accountability, teaching and learning by using state assessment systems designed to ensure that students are meeting challenging state academic achievement and content standards and increasing achievement overall, but especially for the disadvantaged;

7) providing greater decision making authority and flexibility to schools and teachers in exchange for greater responsibility for student
performance;

8) providing children an enriched and accelerated educational program, including the use of school-wide programs or additional services that increase the amount and quality of instructional time;

9) promoting school-wide reform and ensuring the access of children to effective, scientifically based instructional strategies and challenging academic content;

10) significantly elevating the quality of instruction by providing staff in participating schools with substantial opportunities for professional development;

11) coordinating services under all parts of this title with each other, with other educational services, and, to the extent feasible, with other agencies providing services to youth, children and families; and

12) affording parents substantial and meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children. (U. S. Department of Education. Office of Special Education Programs: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. 34 CFR 300.309(b).)

A Nation at Risk – 1981

In 1981, U.S. Secretary of Education, Terrel Howard Bell created the National Commission on Excellence in Education and directed it to present a report on the quality of education in America. This report, A Nation at Risk, was drafted after an 18-month study that outlined the problems affecting American education. According to Diane Ravitch (2010):

The report was an immediate sensation. Its conclusions were alarming, and its language was blunt to the point of being incendiary. It opened with the claim that ‘the educational foundations of our society [were] being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people. What was unimaginable a generation ago had begun to occur – others [were] matching and surpassing our educational attainments.’ The nation, it warned, had ‘been committing an act of unthinking, unilateral educational disarmament.’ Beset by conflicting
demands, our educational institutions ‘seemed to have lost sight of the basic purposes of schooling, and of the high expectations and disciplined effort needed to attain them. (p. 24)

The *A Nation at Risk* report provided solutions to get education in the United States back to where it once was. The reforms it recommended were appropriate to the nature of schools: strengthening the curriculum for all students; setting clear and reasonable high school graduation requirements that demonstrate students’ readiness for postsecondary education or the modern workplace; establishing clear and appropriate college entrance requirements; improving the quality of textbooks and tests; expecting students to spend more time on schoolwork; establishing higher requirements for new recruits into the teaching profession; and increasing teacher compensation (Ravitch, 2010). The thesis of this report was as follows:

All, regardless of race or class or economic status, [were] entitled to a fair chance and to the tools for developing their individual powers of mind and spirit to the utmost. This promise meant that all children by virtue of their own efforts, competently guided, [could] hope to attain the mature and informed judgment needed to secure gainful employment, and to manage their own lives, thereby serving not only their own interests but also the progress of society itself. (The National Commission on Excellence in Education [NCEE], 1984)

The benefit of *A Nation at Risk* was that it looked at each child; it was not specific toward special education, gifted or disadvantaged. The fact that the United States began to fall behind other industrialized nations with which it once competed drove this report, which ultimately forced reform initiatives to improve the educational system. The report went on to say that the people of the United States need to know that individuals in our society who do not possess the levels of skill, literacy and training essential to this new
era will be effectively disenfranchised, not simply from the material rewards that accompany competent performance, but also from the chance to participate fully in our national life (NCEE, 1984). *A Nation at Risk* was a passionately written, powerful document, which sought to level the playing field for all American children in hopes that America would have soon been global leaders once again.

*A Nation at Risk* encouraged states and the nation to craft genuine curriculum standards in many subjects; however, this movement floundered when the history standards came under attack. *A Nation at Risk* was a report, not a legal mandate; therefore, if leaders in states and school districts wanted to implement its recommendations, they could, but they were also free to ignore the report and its recommendations. Those interested in following *A Nation at Risk*’s recommendations often found themselves in disagreement, beginning with the history standards. Consequently, educational leaders retreated into the relative safety of standardized testing of basic skills, which was a poor substitute for a full-fledged program of curriculum and assessments. In the trade-off, Ravitch (2010) believed our education system ended up with no curricular goals, low standards, and dumbed-down tests. In response to this, the Clinton administration developed a program called Goals 2000, which gave states federal money to write their own academic standards (Ravitch, 2010).

**Goals 2000**

In March of 1994, President Clinton signed the Goals 2000: Educate America Act (P.L. 103-227). This legislation identified eight national education goals that were to be accomplished by the year 2000. This legislation was an act to improve learning and
teaching by providing a national framework for education reform; to promote the research, consensus building and systemic changes needed to ensure equitable educational opportunities and high levels of educational achievement for all students; to provide a framework for reauthorization of all federal education programs; to promote the development and adoption of a voluntary national system of skill standards and certifications; and for other purposes (Retrieved on March 14, 2011 from www.ed.gov).

Shortly after this Act was signed into law, Earley (1994) wrote about the legislation and found that the focus of Goals 2000 was on improving student learning by establishing goals for students and schools, encouraging states and school districts to adopt rigorous standards for their education system, and improving the quality of teaching in K-12 schools. Goals 2000 highlighted eight National Education Goals that authorized funds for K-12 school improvement, and established a framework to encourage state and local educational agencies to develop comprehensive plans that would provide coherent framework to integrate and implement federal education programs (Earley, 1994). The eight National Education Goals were as follows:

1. SCHOOL READINESS.--
   A. By the year 2000, all children in America will start school ready to learn.

2. SCHOOL COMPLETION.--
   A. By the year 2000, the high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90 percent.

3. STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND CITIZENSHIP.--
   A. By the year 2000, all students will leave grades 4, 8 and 12 having demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter including English, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history and geography; and every school in America will
ensure that all students learn to use their minds well, so they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning and productive employment in our nation's modern economy.

4. TEACHER EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT.--
A. By the year 2000, the nation's teaching force will have access to programs for the continued improvement of their professional skills and the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to instruct and prepare all American students for the next century.

5. MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE.--
A. By the year 2000, United States students will be first in the world in mathematics and science achievement.

6. ADULT LITERACY AND LIFELONG LEARNING.--
A. By the year 2000, every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

7. SAFE, DISCIPLINED, AND ALCOHOL- AND DRUG-FREE SCHOOLS.--
A. By the year 2000, every school in the United States will be free of drugs, violence, and the unauthorized presence of firearms and alcohol and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning.

8. PARENTAL PARTICIPATION --
A. By the year 2000, every school will promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children. (Retrieved on March 29, 2011 from www.ed.gov)

When Governor George W. Bush of Texas was elected president in 2000, he decided that education reform would be his first priority. He brought with him the Texas plan of testing and accountability. Bush’s No Child Left Behind program melded smoothly with a central feature of the Clinton administration’s Goals 2000 program: namely, leaving it to the states to set their own standards and pick their own tests (Ravitch, 2010).
No Child Left Behind – 2001

No Child Left Behind Act 20 U.S.C. § 6301 (2001) was legislation intended to close the achievement gap with accountability, flexibility and choice, so that no child was left behind. Large bipartisan majorities in Congress approved No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in the fall of 2001. Under ordinary circumstances, Republicans would have opposed the bill’s broad expansion of federal power over local schools, and Democrats would have opposed its heavy emphasis on testing. But after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Congress wanted to demonstrate unity, and the education legislation sailed through (Ravitch, 2010). NCLB also contained additional wording to expressly help all disadvantaged and/or struggling students. The Act states that, all students in grades 3-8 and in one grade in high school must be tested once a year in reading and mathematics. Students are expected to score at the "proficient" level or above on state-administered tests by 2014 and to make "Adequate Yearly Progress" toward that goal until then [No Child Left Behind Act 20 U.S.C. § 6301 (2001)]. For the first time, school districts would be held accountable if their students were not “proficient” in reading and mathematics. No Child Left Behind has been at the forefront of controversy, as it has required that all students meet or exceed state academic standards by 2014. Since NCLB was signed into law on January 8, 2002, the Illinois State Board of Education has aligned federal and state initiatives to support higher student achievement, stronger public schools and better-prepared teacher workforce, all in hopes to increase the achievement of all students.
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act – 2004

The purposes of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) are to ensure that all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living; to ensure that the rights of children with disabilities and parents of such children are protected; and to assist states, localities, educational service agencies and federal agencies to provide for the education of all children with disabilities (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act 20 U.S.C. § 601 [2004]). IDEA is a law ensuring services to children with disabilities throughout the nation. IDEA governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education and related services to more than 6.5 million eligible infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities (Retrieved on March 29, 2011 from http://idea.ed.gov/). According to the statute itself:

Disability is a natural part of the human experience and in no way diminishes the right of the individuals to participate in or contribute to society. Improving educational results for children with disabilities is an essential element of our national policy of ensuring equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency for individuals with disabilities. Before the date of enactment of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (Public Law 94-142), the educational needs of millions of children with disabilities were not being fully met because the children did not receive appropriate educational services; the children were excluded entirely from the public school system and from being educated with their peers; undiagnosed disabilities prevented the children from having a successful educational experience; or a lack of adequate resources within the public school system forced families to find services outside the public school system. (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act 20 U.S.C. § 601 [2004])
The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act ensured that students with disabilities would be afforded a quality education, much like their regular education peers.

Response to Intervention – 2004

In 2004, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was reauthorized and included a new instructional philosophy called Response to Intervention (RtI). According to the Illinois State Board of Education (2011), Response to Intervention (RtI) is a process designed to help schools focus on and provide high-quality instruction and interventions to students who may be struggling with learning. RtI is an attempt to curtail the over-identification of students as having a Specific Learning Disability. RtI is the practice of providing (1) high-quality instruction/intervention matched to student needs and (2) using learning rate over time and level of performance to (3) make important educational decisions” (Batsche, Cox, Elliott, Graden, Grimes, Kovaleski, Prasse, Reschly, & Scrag, 2005, p. 3). In essence, once a teacher identifies a student as a struggling learner, it is the teacher’s duty to implement an intervention that will match that student’s needs. Then, using tools to monitor the student’s progress, the teacher must document the progress over time. If sufficient progress occurs, the intervention should continue. If insufficient progress occurs, the teacher should work to identify more intensive intervention(s) to meet the students’ needs.

The State of Illinois RtI model, produced by the Illinois State Board of Education (2008), contains three essential components:

1) Three-tier model of school supports: Within an RtI framework, resources are allocated in direct proportion to student needs. This framework is typically depicted as a three-tier model (see Figure 1)
that utilizes increasingly more intense instruction and interventions. As Figure 1 shows, Tier 1 is the foundation and consists of scientific, research-based core instructional and behavioral methodologies, practices and supports designed for all students in the general curriculum. At Tier 2, supplemental instruction and interventions are provided in addition to core instruction to those students for whom data suggest additional instructional support is warranted. Tier 3 consists of intensive instructional interventions provided in addition to core instruction with the goal of increasing an individual student’s rate of progress.

2) Problem-solving method of decision-making: Across the tiers, the problem-solving method is used to match instructional resources to educational need. The problem-solving method is as follows:

a. Define the problem by determining the discrepancy between what is expected and what is occurring.
b. Analyze the problem using data to determine why the discrepancy is occurring.
c. Establish a student performance goal, develop an intervention plan to address the goal and delineate how the student’s progress will be monitored and implementation integrity will be ensured.
d. Use progress-monitoring data to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention plan.

3) Integrated data collection that informs instruction: Within an RtI model, progressively more intensive interventions and supports are coupled with more frequent progress monitoring of student achievement in order to guide the educational planning. At Tier 1, data are collected and are used as a general screening process for all students and to determine effectiveness of core instructional practices. At Tier 2, data are collected to determine the effectiveness of the intervention and determine if an instructional change is needed. At Tier 3, data are collected for the same reasons as Tier 2, but are collected on a more frequent basis so that educational decisions can be made in a timelier manner. Data systems used for screening and progress monitoring within an RtI model should be consistent across all three tiers and be scientifically based. (Retrieved on February 25, 2012 from http://www.isbe.net/pdf/rti_state_plan.pdf)

In addition to providing students with necessary academic assistance, a primary goal of RtI is to eliminate the over-identification of students who receive special
education and related services by providing Early Intervening Services (EIS). Beginning in the 2010-2011 school year, it was mandated that documentation of the RtI process should be part of the eligibility/evaluation process for students who are considered for special education and related services under the category of Specific Learning Disability (SLD). Even when students are identified as needing special education and related services, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act states that “to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not disabled, and special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability of a child is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily” (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. 34 CFR 300.309(b), 2006).

Under the leadership of Dr. Alexa Posny, the State of Kansas adopted the concept of Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS). Kansas has chosen MTSS as their statewide RtI framework (National Center on Response to Intervention, 2010). According to the Kansas Multi-Tier System of Supports website, MTSS “is a coherent continuum of evidence based, system-wide practice to support a rapid response to academic and behavioral needs, with frequent data-based monitoring for instructional decision-making to empower each Kansas student to achieve high standards (www.kansasmtss.org, 2008).” Now, as the Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative
Services, it is speculated that Dr. Posny’s concept of MTSS will become more widespread.

**Purpose of the Study**

Public schools who accept federal and state funds are required to implement initiatives directed by their respective government institutions. As early as 2004, public schools in the State of Illinois began to develop Response to Intervention plans in an effort to comply with state and federal mandates (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. 34 CFR 300.309(b), 2006). Now seven years after the introduction of RtI, some schools lead the way with this initiative. Utilizing RtI as a means of studying how building leadership teams motivate their staff and build capacity to implement educational initiatives that align with their school and/or district goal, this researcher examined the RtI leadership team’s ability to develop and implement an RtI plan from the perspective of the RtI leadership team. A Qualitative Questionnaire was provided to the building Response to Intervention leadership team. In addition, the administrator in charge of RtI and director of Special Education Services were interviewed at High School “A” and the administrator in charge of RtI was interviewed at High School “B”. Finally, each high school’s goals were obtained in an effort to identify any trends and/or themes that exist between the responses to the questionnaire and the interviews.

**Research Questions**

1) In two Illinois public high schools with positive statewide reputations, according to the perspectives of each RtI leadership team, how has a central
and singular focus been evidenced in the development and implementation of their RtI model in each high school?

2) In two Illinois public high schools with positive statewide reputations, according to the perspectives of each RtI leadership team, how has capacity building been evidenced in the development and implementation of their RtI model in each high school?

3) What are the implications for educational leaders to successfully motivate their RtI leadership teams to develop RtI processes?

4) What are the implications for educational leaders to successfully motivate their RtI leadership teams to implement these RtI processes with fidelity?

**Conceptual Framework**

According to Michael Fullan (2010), collective capacity is when groups get better – school cultures, district cultures and government cultures. The big collective capacity and the one that ultimately counts are, when groups get better conjointly – also known as collective, collaborative capacity. Collective [collaborative] capacity generates the emotional commitment and the technical expertise that no amount of individual capacity working alone can come close to matching. It is this “collective capacity” that is believed to motivate school employees to implement educational initiatives to their fullest extent for the betterment of all students (p. xiii). According to Katzell and Thompson (1990), motivation refers to the conditions and processes that account for the arousal, direction, magnitude and maintenance of effort. This study utilized Response to Intervention (RtI) as a means of studying the processes and methods school leadership teams employ to
motivate faculty. To bring about improvement, principals must motivate teachers by communicating goals and fostering commitment to these, aligning resources with goals, and fixing problems (Finnigan, 2010). For the entire system to be on the move, relentless, resolute leadership from the top is needed. Leadership must focus on the right things that above all promote collective capacity and ownership. The top leadership needs to do a small number of critical things well; in particular, top leadership must establish high expectations and ambitious, but achievable targets. For example, the top leadership must: create objectives and targets of the school district that are negotiable within the subunits of districts and schools; form a partnership with the staff; increase its capacity to contribute to the partnership; invest in the capacity building by helping to identify and spread good practice; intervene in a non-punitive manner in situations that need improvement; engage in constant, transparent communication about results and next steps; and buttress the central-focused strategies with mid- to long-term reinforcements such as early learning for preschool children; teacher recruitment and development; and school and district leadership cultivation, support and development (Fullan 2008, Fullan 2010, Ravitch 2010, Thernstrom & Thernstrom 2003). And the leaders need to attend carefully to all core relationships – the public, parents, teacher unions and senior elements of the education sector itself (Fullan, 2010). For this study, members of the RtI leadership teams of two suburban high schools were provided questionnaires and interviewed in an effort to gain their perspectives of the leadership techniques used to motivate staff and build capacity during the development and implementation of their RtI plan. The two high schools are located in the suburban Chicago-land area.
Significance of the Study

With Response to Intervention being a federal initiative, all educational leaders find themselves immersed in the development of these processes and implementation of these plans with fidelity. The readers of this dissertation will benefit from learning the perspective of RtI leadership teams who have successfully built capacity among staff to develop and implement RtI, and how they believe their leadership motivated staff members to work toward their common goal. Ultimately, the reader should walk away with knowledge of the best leadership characteristics to build collective capacity among staff and motivate staff to successfully develop and implement educational initiatives.

Given the “new era of high standards, testing, and accountability,” this dissertation provides educational leaders with resources that support building capacity and motivating staff to implement educational initiatives (Ravitch, 2010, p.93). The following are just a few new changes infiltrating public education:

- The Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA) (Senate Bill 315; Public Act 96-0861) was passed by the Illinois General Assembly and signed by the Governor in January 2010. In Summary, PERA requires, among other things, that:
  - Upon the implementation date applicable to a school district or other covered entity, performance evaluations of the principals/assistant principals and teachers of that school district or other covered entity must include data and indicators of student growth as a “significant factor”.
  - By September 1, 2012, principals, assistant principals, teachers in contractual continued service (i.e., tenured teachers) and probationary teachers (i.e., nontenured teachers) be evaluated using a four rating category system (Excellent, Proficient, Needs Improvement, and Unsatisfactory).
  - Anyone undertaking an evaluation after September 1, 2012 must first complete a pre-qualification program provided or approved by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). (Retrieved on June 4, 2012 from http://www.isbe.state.il.us/PERA/default.htm).
Senate Bill 7, which stemmed in part from PERA addresses, among other things:
- A standard upon which the State Superintendent may initiate certificate/license action against an educator for incompetency;
- Requirements for the filling of new and vacant positions;
- Acquisition of tenure;
- Reductions in force/layoffs and recall rights;
- The system for the dismissal of tenured teachers;
- Required school board member training; and,

The Common Core State Standards Initiative:
- The Common Core State Standards Initiative is a state-led effort to establish a shared set of clear educational standards for English language arts and mathematics that states can voluntarily adopt. The standards have been informed by the best available evidence and the highest state standards across the country and globe and designed by a diverse group of teachers, experts, parents, and school administrators, so they reflect both our aspirations for our children and the realities of the classroom. These standards are designed to ensure that students graduating from high school are prepared to go to college or enter the workforce and that parents, teachers, and students have a clear understanding of what is expected of them. The standards are benchmarked to international standards to guarantee that our students are competitive in the emerging global marketplace. (Retrieved June 4, 2012 from www.corestandards.org).

**Methodology**

This study used qualitative case study research. Qualitative case studies share with other forms of qualitative research the search for meaning and understanding, the researcher as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, an inductive investigative strategy, and the end product being richly descriptive (Merriam, 2009). This researcher used a Qualitative Questionnaire that gained the perspectives of the high school RtI leadership team members concerning their philosophy and/or strategy to motivate and build capacity with staff during the development and implementation of the
school’s RtI plan. This researcher also conducted in-depth interviews of the administrator in charge of RtI and director of special education at High School “A” and the administrator in charge of RtI at High School “B” to gain additional insight into their march toward developing and implementing a successful RtI plan. Additionally, each school’s goals were obtained via their website and used as a data source to supplement the Qualitative Questionnaire and Individual Interviews. These qualitative data provided a first-hand account of the RtI leadership team’s work in building capacity and motivating faculty to develop and implement a successful RtI process.
CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter summarizes literature relevant to the topic of Response to Intervention (RtI), motivation and leadership, and Michael Fullan’s concept of capacity building. This study answers the following research questions:

1) In two Illinois public high schools with positive statewide reputations, according to the perspectives of each RtI leadership team, how has a central and singular focus been evidenced in the development and implementation of their RtI model in each high school?

2) In two Illinois public high schools with positive statewide reputations, according to the perspectives of each RtI leadership team, how has capacity building been evidenced in the development and implementation of their RtI model in each high school?

3) What are the implications for educational leaders to successfully motivate their RtI leadership teams to develop RtI processes?

4) What are the implications for educational leaders to successfully motivate their RtI leadership teams to implement these RtI processes with fidelity?
The Response to Intervention Model

If you are a secondary educator or a parent of a teenager and you have heard of Response to Intervention (RTI), it has likely been in reference to activities in early elementary school, not in your middle, junior or high school. There are, of course, exceptions. You might be in the throes of figuring out how to implement it at your school. However, up to this point, the RTI focus has been on the primary grades. Across the country, educators are beginning to expand RTI to secondary schools; so, whether or not your school is presently implementing RTI, you will want to have it on your radar screen. (Ehren, n.d.)

The Illinois State Response to Intervention (RtI) Plan includes the following components: Introduction, What is RtI?, Three-Tier Model of School Supports, Steps of Problem Solving, Progress Monitoring and Data Collection, Special Education Eligibility Considerations, Process for Statewide Implementation, Implementations Timelines, Funding Sources, ISBE (Illinois State Board of Education) Evaluation Plan and Supporting Resources (Retrieved on February 25, 2012 from http://www.isbe.net/pdf/rti_state_plan.pdf). However, nowhere in this document, including within the “Implementation Timelines,” does the plan state that this initiative is only for elementary schools. So why are more secondary schools not leading the way in terms of the development and implementation of Response to Intervention? To help the reader understand the role of Response to Intervention (RtI) in secondary schools, this researcher provides a thorough description of RtI.

RtI and IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act)

Prior to 2004, students were found eligible for special education services under the category of a specific learning disability (SLD) through the use of the discrepancy model [Individuals with Disabilities Act 34 CFR 300.309(b)]. The discrepancy model
compared the student’s ability (e.g., IQ score) with their achievement (e.g., grades) to
distinguish whether a significant discrepancy was established. If a significant discrepancy
was indeed identified, the student was found eligible for special education services.
Within the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), RtI
was introduced as an additional approach for SLD criteria for special education
eligibility. According to a “Question and Answer” document obtained from the U.S.
Department of Education, RtI was included in the reauthorization of IDEA in 2004 because:

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. (U.S. Department of Education, 2007)

Specifically, IDEA 2004 regulations states:

To ensure that underachievement in a child suspected of having a specific
learning disability is not due to a lack of appropriate instruction in reading
or math, the group must consider the following:

1) Data that demonstrates that prior to, or as part of, the referral process
the child receive appropriate instruction in general education settings
from qualified personnel; and

2) Data-based documentation of repeated assessments of achievement at
reasonable intervals, reflecting formal assessment of student progress
during instruction, which was provided to the child’s parents. [U.S.
Department of Education. Office of Special Education Programs:
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. 34 CFR 300.309(b)]
What is RtI?

Response to Intervention utilizes a three-tiered model of school supports. The Illinois State Response to Intervention Plan states, “Within an RtI framework, resources are allocated in direct proportion to student needs” (ISBE). The three-tiered model (see Figure 1) utilizes increasingly more intense instruction and intervention, relative to the needs of the student(s).

**Figure 1. Three-Tiered Model**

RtI is the practice of providing (1) high-quality instruction/intervention matched to student needs, and (2) using learning rate over time and level of performance to (3) make important educational decisions” (Batsche et al., 2005). To educational leaders, this
means strong core curricula must be implemented and directed toward the unique needs of each student. RtI is an integrated system including academics and behavior. The National Center on Response to Intervention states, “Response to Intervention integrates assessment and intervention within a multi-level prevention system to maximize student achievement and to reduce behavioral problems” (The National Center on Response to Intervention, 2012). Therefore, as teachers identify the diverse needs of their students through progress monitoring and data collection, they must differentiate instruction and tailor interventions based upon individual student need. Student progress must be monitored continuously throughout instruction and intervention to identify whether the student is responding accordingly to the intervention. Lastly, educational decisions must be made based upon data that has been collected and analyzed. Figure 2 represents the Illinois State Response to Intervention Plan Problem Solving Model.

The following is a description of the problem-solving method of decision making:

Across the tiers, the problem-solving method is used to match instructional resources to educational need. The problem-solving method (see Figure 2) is as follows:

(a) Define the problem by determining the discrepancy between what is expected and what is occurring. (b) Analyze the problem using data to determine why the discrepancy is occurring. (c) Establish a student performance goal, develop an intervention plan to address the goal and delineate how the student’s progress will be monitored and implementation integrity will be ensured. (d) Use progress monitoring data to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention plan. (Illinois State Board of Education, 2008)
Data that are collected from the RtI process must be used to inform instruction. The Illinois State RtI plan states, “Within an RtI model, progressively more intensive interventions and supports are coupled with more frequent progress monitoring of student achievement in order to guide the educational planning” (2008, p. 3). As the data is gathered and analyzed, the instructors begin to identify students who fall within tiers one, two and three. Differentiated instruction and interventions are used to meet the individual needs of each student in hopes they respond positively and make progress toward their academic and/or behavioral goals.

**Implementation Timeline**

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) has created a timeline for all public schools to follow. As noted earlier, this timeline does not emphasize RtI as a primary
school initiative; RtI is an initiative directed toward all Illinois public schools. The following timeline was presented by ISBE:

- **Spring 2008:**
  - Each district will complete a District Self-Assessment (template provided by ISBE) to determine its “Next Steps” in the development and implementation of their RtI plans for all learners.
  - ISBE will provide technical assistance and support to all districts in the implementation of RtI.
  - ISBE will identify targeted districts that would most likely benefit from greater assistance from the State.

- **Spring/Summer 2008:**
  - ISBE will utilize its grant-funded training and technical assistance initiatives and other available resources … to deliver intensive training and ongoing support to professional development trainers/coaches on the problem solving process, the three-tiered intervention model using RtI and coaching techniques.
  - The Trainers/Coaches will focus their technical assistance and coaching on those districts within their region most in need of assistance.

- **2008-2009 School Year:**
  - Trainers/Coaches will conduct RtI training for districts within their region, or districts will identify a team to send to various trainings throughout the year.

- **January 1, 2009:**
  - Local school districts must develop a plan for transitioning to the use of an RtI process.

- **2009-2010 School Year:**
  - Trainers/Coaches will conduct RtI training for districts within their region. (Illinois State Board of Education, 2008)

In addition to the 2008-2009 training topics, these trainings were targeted specifically to the needs of the districts within the region. The timeline published by the Illinois State Board of Education provides public schools a guide toward the development and implementation of their RtI plans. Why then, have some schools followed the lead of
ISBE and others have not, especially high schools? This dissertation utilized Response to Intervention (RtI) as a means of studying the motivation and capacity building of staff by school RtI leadership teams.

**Challenges of Response to Intervention at the Secondary Level**

In her article titled *Response to Intervention in Secondary Schools: Is It on Your Radar Screen?* (2009), Barbara Ehren, Ed.D., writes that many of the same challenges faced at the elementary level will also be faced at the secondary level. What increases the challenge at the secondary level is the complexity of the organization and the nightmare of scheduling, especially in high schools. The definition of tiers is an issue – who, what, how, and for how long? How intensive should the third tier be before it can be considered “specialized” and, therefore, more appropriately a special education service? In many public Illinois high schools, scheduling for the next school year is a substantial process beginning in late winter in an effort to provide students with the right mixture of graduation requirements and elective class. Because the scheduling process is often routinized, making room for individual interventions can be difficult. For example, Ehren states that a one-on-one tutorial approach used in elementary schools during the school day may be disruptive to the operation of a typical middle or high school. While it may be more difficult to develop and implement RtI in the secondary setting, it is not impossible.

At the secondary level, the focus is on learning content and using higher-level thinking skills within subject areas – a focus that does not readily lend itself to the use of universal screening tools, ongoing progress monitoring, and interventions that work
across subject areas. Secondary students attend multiple classes – some less than an hour in duration – taught by different teachers who may interact with each other rarely. This can hinder the identification and implementation of interventions across subjects. Teaming across subject areas requires additional time and scheduling flexibility. Successful implementation will most likely require high schools to adopt – if they have not already done so – practices and procedures for ongoing capacity-building and collaboration (Arnberger & Shoop, 2008; Canter, 2004; Canter, Klotz & Cowen, 2008; Duffy, 2007). It is important to reemphasize, while it may be more difficult to develop and implement RtI in the secondary setting, it is not impossible.

Research on Motivation and Leadership

Frederick Taylor

Throughout the first part of the 20th century, Frederick Taylor’s principles of scientific management provided the cornerstone for work design (Morgan, 1998). Frederick Taylor’s approach to leadership, known as scientific management, is still seen today in one form or another. Images of Organization by Gareth Morgan (1998) explained Taylor’s approach to the scientific management theory as follows:

1. **Shift all responsibility for the organization of work from the worker to the manager.** Managers should do all the thinking relating to the planning and design of work, leaving the workers with the task of implementation.

2. **Use scientific method** to determine the most efficient way of doing work. Design the worker’s task accordingly, specifying the precise way in which the work is to be done.

3. **Select** the best person to perform the job thus designed.
4. *Train* the worker to do the work efficiently.

5. *Monitor* worker performance to ensure that appropriate work procedures are followed and that appropriate results are achieved. (Morgan, 1998, p. 27)

Taylor’s theory created the explicit message that the leaders and/or managers were the brains of the operation and their subordinates were not to think, but to simply do the task that was outlined for them. His scientific approach called for detailed observation and measurement of work to find the optimum mode of performance (Morgan, 1998). Morgan’s discourse of scientific management details strengths and weaknesses. Most notably of the strengths, Morgan discusses the idea that a mechanistic approach to organizations works well under conditions when machines work well. This means, when there is a straightforward task to perform, when the environment is stable, when one wishes to produce the same product time and again, and when precision and efficiency are at a premium, then a scientific management approach is appropriate. Such an example of scientific management is an assembly line. Taylor’s approach to leadership found a home in many organizations in the early twentieth century. However, Elton Mayo’s Hawthorne studies, conducted in the 1920’s and 1930’s shed new light on organizational theory. Morgan (1998) writes that the studies are now famous for identifying the importance of social needs in the workplace and the fact that work groups can satisfy these needs by restricting output and engaging in other unplanned activities. Abraham Maslow joined the new theory of organization, which was built on the idea that individuals and groups … operate most effectively only when their needs are satisfied (Morgan, 1998).
Abraham Maslow

Organizations that treated people and systems like machines, as seen in the section above about Frederick Taylor’s scientific management theory believed that paying the right salary to workers would produce results. However, Abraham Maslow suggested that it was not money but rather a hierarchy of needs, which motivates humans. Maslow’s theory of motivation presented the human being as a psychological organism struggling to satisfy its needs in a quest for full growth and development (Morgan, 1998). Figure 3 provides examples of how organizations can satisfy needs at different levels of Maslow’s hierarchy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE OF NEED</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-actualizing:</td>
<td>Encouragement of complete employee commitment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Job a major expressive dimension of employee’s life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ego:</td>
<td>Creation of jobs with scope for achievement, autonomy, responsibility, and personal control.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work enhancing personal identity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feedback and recognition for good performance (e.g., promotions, “employee of the month” awards).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social:</td>
<td>Work organization that permits interaction with colleagues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social and sports facilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Office and factory parties and outings.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Security:</td>
<td>Pension and health care plans.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Job tenure.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Emphasis on career paths within the organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physiological:</td>
<td>Salaries and wages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Safe and pleasant working conditions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3. Levels of Maslow’s Hierarchy (Morgan, 1998, p. 39)
Many management theorists were quick to see that jobs and interpersonal relations could be redesigned to create conditions for personal growth that would simultaneously help organizations achieve their aims and objectives (Morgan, 1998).

James C. Hunter (2004), a modern-day leadership theorist, writes:

Relational and value-based leadership has been written and talked about for decades, with great authors defining it in different ways and calling it different things. In the end, most of these folks have been talking about the same things. And that is the simple truth that leadership and life are about people and relationships. (p. 17)

James C. Hunter

In his book, The Servant, Hunter (1998) defined leadership as “the skill of influencing people to enthusiastically work toward goals identified as being for the common good” (p. 28). More recently, Hunter (2004) has modified his definition of leadership to state that leadership is “the skills of influencing people to enthusiastically work toward goals identified as being for the common good, with character that inspires confidence” (p. 32). Hunter is very careful to use the word leadership rather than management. He states that management is about the things we do: the planning, the budgeting, the organization, the problem-solving, being in control, maintaining order, developing strategies, and a host of other things. Hunter (2004) clarifies his stance further by saying, “management is what we do,” and “leadership is who we are” (p. 32). James C. Hunter is the author of several books on the topic of servant leadership. The concept of servant leadership is exactly what it sounds like. Hunter believes in the “relationship” aspect of leadership and he is very quick to point out the difference between “power” and
“authority.” Hunter’s definitions of these terms further demonstrate value he places on relationships.

- **Power**: the ability to force or coerce others to do your will, even if they would choose not to, because of your position or your might.

- **Authority**: the skill of getting others willingly to do your will because of your personal influence. (2004, p. 53)

The final chapter in Hunter’s *The World’s Most Powerful Leadership Principle* is titled “On Motivation and Other Essentials.” Hunter (2004) believes that motivation is an important component of leadership. He writes “true motivation is about lighting a fire within people. True motivation is influencing and inspiring people to action and getting their internal generator running. Motivation is people moved to action because they *want* to act. They *want* to give their best and their all for the team. Daniel Pink, author of *Drive*, agrees with Hunter that long-term successes stem from people who are intrinsically motivated.

**Daniel Pink**


In environments where extrinsic rewards are most salient, many people work only to the point that triggers the reward --- and no further. So if students get a prize for reading three books, many won’t pick up a fourth, let alone embark on a lifetime of reading --- just as executives who hit their quarterly numbers often won’t boost earnings a penny more, let alone contemplate the long-term health of their company. (p. 8)
Pink provides readers with several “toolkits” that will help to stoke intrinsic motivation. While Pink does not have a one-size-fits-all answer to motivation, he offers three elements that he believes evoke true intrinsic motivation: autonomy, mastery and purpose.

According to Pink (2009), intrinsic motivation is fueled when people have autonomy over their task, their time, their technique, and their team. Pink continues to say that there is never a one-size-fits-all answer, so the best strategy for an employer would be to figure out what’s important to each individual employee.

Mastery is defined by Pink (2009) as the desire to get better and better at something that matters. Pink states that only engagement can produce mastery. In order to get employees engaged, which ultimately leads to mastery, Pink offered the following: the task should not be too easy or too difficult; it should be a notch or two beyond his current abilities, which stretch the body and mind in a way that made the effort itself the most delicious reward; the balance will produce a degree of focus and satisfaction that easily surpasses other, more quotidian, experiences. Once this engagement has taken place, mastery can be achieved.

The last of three elements that Pink (2009) believes will evoke intrinsic motivation is purpose. Pink states that autonomous people working toward mastery perform at very high levels. But those who do so in the service of some greater objective can achieve even more. It is the responsibility of the educational leader to develop a culture that allows its employees to be autonomous, build toward mastery and be driven toward a common purpose. In addition to providing leadership to a school building of
teachers, support personnel and students, the educational leader must be in a position to promote continuous learning and development of teachers who are challenged to teach students to higher standards of accountability (Zepeda, 2007). It is this very idea of instructional leadership that educational leaders have added to their list of job responsibilities.

**Professional Learning Communities**

Jolly (2008) insists that possibly the most promising practice driving cutting-edge change in schools today is the creation of professional learning communities. “These communities feature a different way for teachers to do their work, a different way of teaching, and a change in the fundamental culture of the school” (p. 15). It is the goal for teachers within learning communities to develop a sense of their own efficacy, work collaboratively, incorporate professional learning into their daily work, and use what they learn to change the way they teach. According to Jolly, it is important for the educational leader and facilitator to understand that the success of this collaborative process ultimately depends on the commitment of all educators involved. Jolly believes successful leadership of professional learning teams involves:

1) Setting a clear direction so that faculty members develop shared understandings about the school and its goals. Develop a clear direction to help faculty members make sense of their professional learning team work.

2) Developing people. Provide individualized team support and encouragement through direct feedback and contact with each professional learning team.
3) Redesigning the school. Organizational conditions sometimes wear down teachers’ good intentions and actually prevent professional learning teams from doing their work. Examine your school policies to identify and revise those that hinder collaboration and take the focus off quality instruction.

(Jolly, 2008)

**Instructional Leadership**

In her book *The Principal as Instructional Leader: A Handbook for Supervisors*, Sally Zepeda (2007) defines Instructional Leadership:

Strong leadership promotes excellence and equity in education and entails projecting, promoting, and holding steadfast to the vision; garnering and allocating resources; communicating progress; and supporting the people, programs, services, and activities implemented to achieve the school’s vision. (p. 4)

Leadership that focuses on instruction has a strong purpose and an equally strong commitment to student learning (Zepeda, 2007, p. 3). What makes instructional leadership difficult is having to attend to other day-to-day responsibilities such as: student discipline, communicating with parents, submitting reports to the district office and State, maintaining building operations, supporting staff, administering standardized tests, etc.

Regardless of the configuration of personnel who assist the principal, the final responsibility for success of the instructional program and its people – teachers and students – rests squarely on the shoulders of the principal, and this is a sobering proposition (Zepeda, 2007). In her book, *The Principal as Instructional Leader*, Sally Zepeda provides a concise summary of the role of the instructional leader:
Instructional leadership is an elusive concept; however, effective principals engage in work that supports teachers in improving their instructional practices, and this type of support occurs in classrooms, not the principal’s office. Instructional leadership is not a spectator sport. Effective principals are instructional leaders because they make a commitment to learning, and they connect to the work of improved student learning and teaching by building strong teams of teacher leaders.

It is essential for the principal to understand change, particularly why people resist change. Understanding change is important for the principal who strives to work with teachers improve their instructional practices. As a supervisor, the principal is engaged in helping teachers examine their instructional practices – what is working, what is not working, and how modifications can be made given the characteristics of students.

To supervise effectively, principals have a command of the tools needed to conduct classroom observations and support the talk about teaching that occurs before and after classroom observations. Moreover, the principal as supervisor is able to link supervision, professional development, and teacher evaluation as seamless processes while providing differentiated support through such activities as peer coaching, action research, and portfolio development.

One final role of the educational leader is to stimulate positive will and positive capacity within staff to promote active use. Several ways this can be accomplished is by providing access to resources, communicating effectively and efficiently, offering a forum for concerns to be addressed/voices to be heard, providing appropriate professional development opportunities, maintaining a consistent mission, vision and policy, and ensuring a solid evaluation process. Stimulating positive will and positive capacity will ultimately lead to retention of solid employees who are intrinsically motivated to become lifelong learners (Israel, 1994; & Israel & Kasper, 2004).
A Background of Michael Fullan’s “Capacity Building”

Capacity Building: Defined – Capacity building concerns competencies, resources, and motivation. Individuals and groups are high in capacity if they possess and continue to develop knowledge and skills, if they attract and use resources (time, ideas, expertise, money) wisely, and if they are committed to putting in the energy to get important things done collectively and continuously (ever learning). (Fullan, 2008, p. 57)

It is easy to define “capacity building,” but how does an educational leader successfully build capacity, ultimately leading to successful development and implementation of educational initiatives? Michael Fullan (2010) compiled the findings of Elmore and Burney’s (1999) study of District 2 in New York City (see Figure 3). Fullan (2010) refined their work and states that only a small minority of districts evidences these characteristics, but when they do they generate widespread and potentially sustainable capacity to raise the bar and close the gap of student achievement.

The characteristics of an effective school district, according to Fullan, are:

1. Focus: a clear direction and relentless focus on student achievement through instructional improvement in the classroom. A school board needs a central and singular focus from which all other pieces can flow. A district must continuously strengthen its core by increasing teachers’ skills and knowledge, engaging students in learning, and ensuring the curriculum challenges students.

2. Data: access and use of data on student learning as a strategy for classroom and school improvement and to monitor progress. Data also help to shape targets for phased focuses of improvement. Data include the development and use of ongoing means of diagnosing student needs and addressing them through specific instructional responses.

3. Leadership: development of teacher, principal, and district leadership to share effective practices from each other and from the larger research base. Research is focused on teaching strategies that make a difference in high- and low-performing schools serving similar types of kids. Responses are then developed to deliver job embedded in
service. Leadership roles are defined so that leaders participate as learners in working with teachers to address instructional needs.

4. Resources: allocating resources in accordance with this focus without a reliance on one-time, special funding. Resources should be clearly aligned to support the teaching and learning core of the district’s work.

5. Reduce Distractors: a concerted effort to reduce the distractors that undermine teachers’ and principals’ capacity to carry out this central strategy. Excessive bureaucracy, inconsistent messages, multiple non-classroom initiatives, and time-and-energy-consuming conflicts all distract from the focus of student achievement. Effective districts do not take on too many initiatives at once and are dropping distractors as well as adding things that help them focus.

6. Community: link to parents and the community and related agencies to provide support for students and educators and to intervene early in case of difficulties experienced by students and by schools.

7. Communication: a constant and consistent communication that focuses on the core message up and down and across the district. Everyone needs to know the central focus of teaching and learning priorities and how to achieve them. Research findings and effective practices need to be shared. Staying on message is crucial.

8. Esprit de Corps: a sense of identity and sense of community among teachers and principals and between schools and the district. People take pride in their work and that of their colleagues and feel a strong sense of affinity with the district as a whole. Allegiances are strong, and collaborative competition leverages the schools to stronger and stronger performance. (p. 36)

In *All Systems Go*, by Michael Fullan (2010), Fullan provides four examples of whole-district successful reform in three different countries: Tower Hamlets in London, England; Long Beach Unified School District in California; York Region District School Board in Toronto; and Ottawa Catholic District in Ontario. Two of the school districts will be described below to allow the reader to gain perspective of their movement toward success in relation to Fullan’s framework of capacity building:
York Region District School Board (YRDSB)

In 1999, Bill Hogarth took over as the new director (superintendent) of York Region District School Board (YRDSB). Hogarth immediately set a goal that all YRDSB students should be reading at the end of first grade. “There started a 10-year journey of capacity building and deeper still what we call sustainable realization” (Fullan, 2010). Fullan continued to write that, “Bill put together a leadership team that never strayed off message as they built collective capacity” (p. 43). The leadership team constructed by Bill Hogarth developed the following list, which they stand by as their core of capacity building:

- Shared beliefs and understanding
- Embedded literacy coaches
- Time-tabled literacy block
- Principal leadership
- Early and on-going intervention
- Case-management
- Literacy professional development at school staff meetings
- In-school grade and subject meetings
- Book rooms with leveled books and resources
- Allocation of budget for literacy resources
- Action research focused on literacy
- Parental involvement
- Cross-curricular literacy connections. (Fullan, 2010, p. 44).

Fullan (2010) elaborates on the importance of the school districts core of capacity building when he writes:

There is no need to discuss the 13 parameters except to say that school teams and district staff work together (through professional-learning sessions and day-to-day job-embedded work) to implement the parameters in all schools and classrooms. I talked from the outset about the sine qua non importance of collective capacity building – the team, the group, the organization, and the system working together to get better. A visitor can
go into any one of the 192 schools in YRDSB and have similar conversations – the language of focused instruction is ubiquitous. A principal or vice principal can move to a new school and find a critical mass of kindred spirits … With focused collective capacity building, accountability to a large extent gets internalized in the group and in its individuals. (p. 43)

From Fullan’s statement, the reader can infer that it is not the particular parameters that allow for the building of capacity, but the collective focus of all stakeholders toward the district’s goals and objectives.

Through its reform process, YRDSB demonstrated collective efficacy. “Collective efficacy means that people have confidence in each other. Principals trust, value, and depend on their peers” (Fullan, 2010, p. 45). District and school leaders value the relationships they have with their teachers and trust that they are the “expert” in their field. District and school leaders collaborate with others to problem solve and make positive progress. Describing specific results evidenced at individual schools, Fullan writes:

With high expectations and careful capacity building within the school, and external learning connections to other schools and the district, in three short years the school dramatically improved … Ryan and his colleagues did this by focusing on the 13 parameters, respecting the collective agreement, getting union leaders on board as key supporters, and incorporating job-embedded learning “between the bells” as he called it – seemingly astounding result but this was accomplished by ordinary teachers focusing and being well led. (2010, p. 45)

**Ottawa Catholic District School Board**

In 2003, Jamie McCracken was hired as the director (CEO) of Ottawa Catholic District. Jamie’s predecessor created 13 new goals each year for the district to follow, but
there did not seem to be any follow through. Jamie knew that he was being hired to change that and create a cohesive school district. According to Fullan (2010):

Jamie started with some large-scale meetings that he called “reimagining days.” For the first time in the history of the system, he included nonprofessionals --- support staff, custodians, technicians, and bus drivers. Knowing something about [Fullan’s] emphasis on a small number of goals and staying the course, he selected three core priorities: success for students (e.g., ensuring high levels of critical literacy), success for staff (e.g., building Catholic collaborative learning communities through shared leadership), and stewardship of resources (e.g., aligning human and operational resources to support and close gaps in student achievement). These have been the same three priorities every year for the past seven years. The three new priorities created by the participants of Jamie’s “reimagining days” replaced the 13 or so annual random thrusts of the previous regime. (p. 50).

With or without knowing, Jamie had begun his tenure as superintendent by exercising principles Michael Fullan believes promote widespread capacity, which will raise the bar and close the gap of student achievement. Fullan (2010) encourages educational leaders to keep the message simple, keep it focused and consistent, and keep conveying it; and talk about the results, the problems, and the strategies as you go.

Ottawa Catholic District promotes these principles and as a result, the whole system, including the custodians, knows what the three goals are and how the system is doing relative to results.

The quantitative data Fullan provides support the notion that this school district has found the right path. Proficiency scores in reading, writing and math for all grade levels measured have seen significant improvement. It should be noted that proficiency scores are just one measure of success and must not be seen as a solitary measure. This development and success at Ottawa Catholic is occurring because they have mastered the
small number of key things that make all systems go. They combine a relentless focus (always on message), precision high yield instructional strategies, focus on data and results, and the cultivation of leadership at all levels to engage everyone in the moral purpose of improvement for all (Fullan, 2010).

Peter Senge (2010) who wrote the forward for Michael Fullan’s, *All Systems Go*, writes the following about the change in regards to education:

Today’s schools were born in the early stages of the industrial era. That is why they were organized like an assembly line (Grade 1, Grade 2, Grade 3, etc.). That is why they were based on standardized timetables governing each part of the day (complete with bells and whistles on the walls), and fixed, rigid curricula delivered by teachers whose job was first and foremost to maintain control, much like an assembly-line foreman. The Industrial Age school arose as part and parcel of an industrial-age economy based on exploiting natural (and many would argue social) capital to create productive and financial capital. The Industrial Age is ending … The challenge of our time is not economic competitiveness. The challenge is to build not only “sustainable” but regenerative societies – ones that enhance natural and social capital. (pp. x–xi)

Each of the theorists mentioned in this chapter have played and still play a role in educational leadership. However, Michael Fullan’s (2010) concept of *capacity building* has focused on today’s school and what it takes to foster success. The previous two school districts are examples of how success can be achieved in modern-day schools.

**Fullan’s Capacity Building: Concluded**

While individual successes have been identified in school districts in the United States, Fullan (2010) would venture to say that less than five percent of districts in the United States operate with the collective capacity that we have seen in the previous examples. With widespread success for the school districts practicing Fullan’s principles
of capacity building, why is it that this idea has not yet caught on? “The evidence shows that teachers will respond to authentic opportunities to develop individual and collective capacity and the strong moral power of allegiance to their peers related to a higher cause” (p. 58). Michael Fullan (2010) concludes that the solution is not a program; it is a small set of common principles and practices relentlessly pursued. Focused practitioners, not programs, drive success. As previously stated, Michael Fullan has established that the following are characteristics of an effective school district:

1. **Focus:** a clear direction and relentless focus on student achievement through instructional improvement in the classroom. A school board needs a central and singular focus from which all other pieces can flow. A district must continuously strengthen its core by increasing teachers’ skills and knowledge, engaging students in learning, and ensuring the curriculum challenges students.

2. **Data:** access and use of data on student learning as a strategy for classroom and school improvement and to monitor progress. Data also help to shape targets for phased focuses of improvement. Data include the development and use of ongoing means of diagnosing student needs and addressing them through specific instructional responses.

3. **Leadership:** development of teacher, principal, and district leadership to share effective practices from each other and from the larger research base. Research is focused on teaching strategies that make a difference in high- and low-performing schools serving similar types of kids. Responses are then developed to deliver job embedded in service. Leadership roles are defined so that leaders participate as learners in working with teachers to address instructional needs.

4. **Resources:** allocating resources in accordance with this focus without a reliance on one-time, special funding. Resources should be clearly aligned to support the teaching and learning core of the district’s work.

5. **Reduce Distractors:** a concerted effort to reduce the distractors that undermine teachers’ and principals’ capacity to carry out this central strategy. Excessive bureaucracy, inconsistent messages, multiple non-classroom initiatives, and time-and-energy-consuming conflicts all
distract from the focus of student achievement. Effective districts do not take on too many initiatives at once and are dropping distractors as well as adding things that help them focus.

6. Community: link to parents and the community and related agencies to provide support for students and educators and to intervene early in case of difficulties experienced by students and by schools.

7. Communication: a constant and consistent communication that focuses on the core message up and down and across the district. Everyone needs to know the central focus of teaching and learning priorities and how to achieve them. Research findings and effective practices need to be shared. Staying on message is crucial.

8. Esprit de Corps: a sense of identity and sense of community among teachers and principals and between schools and the district. People take pride in their work and that of their colleagues and feel a strong sense of affinity with the district as a whole. Allegiances are strong, and collaborative competition leverages the schools to stronger and stronger performance. (p. 36)

It is these theoretical propositions that provided the conceptual framework and the themes for data analysis for this dissertation. This qualitative case study drew from the experiences of two public Illinois high schools with positive statewide reputations for their development and implementation of Response to Intervention (RtI) to answer the following research questions:

1) In two Illinois public high schools with positive statewide reputations, according to the perspectives of each RtI leadership team, how has a central and singular focus been evidenced in the development and implementation of their RtI model in each high school?

2) In two Illinois public high schools with positive statewide reputations, according to the perspectives of each RtI leadership team, how has capacity
building been evidenced in the development and implementation of their RtI model in each high school?

3) What are the implications for educational leaders to successfully motivate their RtI leadership teams to develop RtI processes?

4) What are the implications for educational leaders to successfully motivate their RtI leadership teams to implement these RtI processes with fidelity?
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to utilize Response to Intervention (RtI) as a means of studying how building leadership teams from two public high schools in Illinois built capacity and motivated their staff to implement educational initiatives that align with their school and/or district goals. A qualitative case study was completed, with the researcher as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, using an inductive investigative strategy with the end product being richly descriptive (Merriam, 2009). This researcher examined the leadership team’s ability to build capacity, develop and implement a successful RtI plan from the perception of the RtI leadership team.

A phenomenological research approach was taken in this qualitative case study of building leadership teams as they motivated their staff and built capacity to implement educational initiatives within their school district. Phenomenology is a study of people’s conscious experience of their life-world, that is, their “everyday life and social action” (Schram, 2003, p. 71). Merriam (2009) states that the task of the phenomenologist is to depict the essence or basic structure of experience. This qualitative case study research design includes a Qualitative Questionnaire (see Appendix E), Individual Interviews (see Appendix G) and document analysis methodologies to gain insight on the following research questions:
1) In two Illinois public high schools with positive statewide reputations, according to the perspectives of each RtI leadership team, how has a central and singular focus been evidenced in the development and implementation of their RtI model in each high school?

2) In two Illinois public high schools with positive statewide reputations, according to the perspectives of each RtI leadership team, how has capacity building been evidenced in the development and implementation of their RtI model in each high school?

3) What are the implications for educational leaders to successfully motivate their RtI leadership teams to develop RtI processes?

4) What are the implications for educational leaders to successfully motivate their RtI leadership teams to implement these RtI processes with fidelity?

Chapter III describes the methodology used for this research study. It includes the research design, sample selection, procedures, instrumentation, data collection methods, data analysis, and ethical and validity issues.

**Research Design**

Applied qualitative research, used to improve the practice of a particular discipline, was conducted during this study. Many identify the following four characteristics as the key to understanding the nature of qualitative research: the focus is on process, understanding and meaning; the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis; the process is inductive; and the product is richly descriptive (Merriam, 2009). Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people
interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences (Merriam, 2009). This qualitative case study utilized Response to Intervention (RtI) as a means of studying the processes and methods school leadership teams employed to motivate faculty. The research of this two-pronged approach, building capacity to motivate staff and implementing educational initiatives, required a phenomenological qualitative case study.

Phenomenology was chosen for this study because it is a study of people’s conscious experience of their life-world, that is, their “everyday life and social action” (Schram, 2003). This type of qualitative case study research provided the researcher with first-hand descriptions of real life experiences of the RtI leadership teams from two Illinois public high schools who have been identified as having successfully developed and implemented a Response to Intervention plan. Merriam (2009) states, “The task of the phenomenologist, then, is to depict the essence or basic structure of experience.” She goes on to say, “Often these studies are of intense human experiences such as love, anger, betrayal, and so on” (p. 25). The research questions posed above served as a guide for the research objectives and funneled these human experiences into valuable data. These objectives focused on identifying schools that have proven effective in their development and implementation of Response to Intervention and discerning the level of capacity building toward motivation that occurred. Gaining feedback from the school’s RtI leadership team as well as certain key members of the administrative team provided rich description of real-life experiences throughout this process.
Sample Selection

The researcher began the research phase of this study by first selecting two Illinois public high schools that have been identified as developing and implementing successful Response to Intervention plans. Purposeful sampling was used to select the two suburban Chicago high schools for this qualitative case study. Purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned (Merriam, 2009). As a high school administrator, this researcher chose high schools as one criterion for this study. Selfishly speaking, this researcher hopes to use the results of this study to inform decisions that will be made within the district in which he works. Given the fact that these two Illinois public high schools have been identified as having favorable reputations, it was decided that the most could be learned from them. More specifically, the Response to Intervention team at each high school was used as the sample for this study. According to the Illinois State Board of Education (2011), the building level RtI team is made up of building staff members. These teams, according Illinois ASPIRE (2010), should be made up of four to eight people. The team should represent all building resources, which include but are not limited to: administrator, general education teacher, special education teacher and special services (i.e., school psychology, counselor, social worker). When appropriate, the student and parent(s)/guardian(s) should also be included. However, for the purposes of this study, students and parents/guardians were not included.
To maintain compliance with the Loyola University Chicago Institutional Review Board, this researcher requested consent from every individual who had contact with this qualitative case study research. First, consent was requested from the superintendent (see Appendix A) of each respective high school. After obtaining consent from the superintendent of each respective school district, the researcher requested consent from the building principal (see Appendix B). Once s/he granted consent for the qualitative case study to take place in their school, the researcher obtained consent from staff members selected for the study. These individuals were involved with the Qualitative Questionnaire (see Appendix E) as well as the Individual Interviews (see Appendix G). Once consent was granted from all members of this qualitative case study, the researcher moved forward with data collection.

**Site Description**

High School “A” is located in a northern suburb of Chicago, Illinois. High School “A” is one of three high schools in this particular school district. The 2012 Illinois School Report Card identified High School “A’s” district as having a total enrollment of 4,815 students with 2,661 of these students enrolled in High School “A.” While specific information is not outlined for each school, the following is true for the district: average teaching experience is 13.7 years, average teacher salary is $107,626; instructional expenditure per pupil is $12,667. High School “A” showed a growth of 2.3 percentage points on their overall Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE) performance from the 2009-2010 to 2010-2011 school years.
High School “B” is located in a western suburb of Chicago, Illinois. High School “B” is one of six high schools in this particular school district. The 2012 Illinois School Report Card identified High School “B’s” district as having a total enrollment of 12,307 students with 1,937 of these students enrolled in High School “B.” While specific information is not outlined for each school, the following is true for the district: average teaching experience is 13.5 years, average teacher salary is $99,570; instructional expenditure per pupil is $10,548. High School “B” showed a growth of 1.5 percentage points on their overall Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE) performance from the 2009-2010 to 2010-2011 school years.

Data Collection

While collecting data, it was important that the researcher maintain a clear vision of the research questions:

1) In two Illinois public high schools with positive statewide reputations, according to the perspectives of each RtI leadership team, how has a central and singular focus been evidenced in the development and implementation of their RtI model in each high school?

2) In two Illinois public high schools with positive statewide reputations, according to the perspectives of each RtI leadership team, how has capacity building been evidenced in the development and implementation of their RtI model in each high school?

3) What are the implications for educational leaders to successfully motivate their RtI leadership teams to develop RtI processes?
4) What are the implications for educational leaders to successfully motivate their RtI leadership teams to implement these RtI processes with fidelity?

Qualitative Questionnaires (see Appendix E), Individualized Interviews (see Appendix G) and document analysis was conducted in order to gain a global perspective of the development and implementation of RtI in each school. Each member of the RtI team at each respective high school was provided a Qualitative Questionnaire (see Appendix E). This Qualitative Questionnaire allowed members of the RtI team to express their unique experiences as they relate to the development and implementation of RtI, building capacity and motivating staff. At High School “A,” the administrator in charge of RtI as well as the director of special education services were then interviewed (see Appendix G) and at High School “B,” the administrator in charge of RtI was then interviewed (see Appendix G). The researcher conducted the interviews to learn more about the contextual factors that helped initiate their school’s role in Response to Intervention. Finally, obtaining each school’s goals, the researcher conducted document analysis to identify consistency between the Qualitative Questionnaire, Individualized Interviews and documents.

Multiple data collection sources were utilized to triangulate the data to ensure internal validity. Merriam (2009) offers a description of triangulation: “Using multiple investigators, sources of data, or data collection methods to confirm emerging findings” (p. 229). The instruments utilized began with a Qualitative Questionnaire (see Appendix E) distributed to the Response to Intervention teams of each respective high school. Next, Individualized Interviews occurred with the administrator in charge of RtI and director of
special education. Lastly, the researcher conducted a document analysis of each school’s goals that supported the research questions. With regard to the use of multiple methods of data collection, for example, how a participant responds in an interview can be checked against what is observed on site or what is read about in documents relevant to the phenomenon of interest (Merriam, 2009). This triangulation of data allowed the researcher to gain a more objective view of the data.

**Qualitative Questionnaires**

A Qualitative Questionnaire (see Appendix E) was used as the initial method of gathering data. This Qualitative Questionnaire was adapted from the Illinois ASPIRE Self-Assessment of Problem Solving Implementation by the Florida Problem Solving/Response to Intervention Project. This questionnaire was distributed to members of the RtI team in an attempt to distinguish whether capacity building has been evidenced in the development and implementation of their RtI model. The Qualitative Questionnaire is made up of four main categories: comprehensive commitment and support, data collection and team structure, three-tiered intervention system and problem-solving process and monitoring and action planning. Within each category, participants were asked to rank statements using the following scale: N – Not Started, I – In Progress, A – Achieved or M – Maintaining. A percentage was also created to accompany the rank to provide the participant with a more tangible measure. Finally, participants had the opportunity to offer comments/evidence with each rank. The questionnaire provided the researcher with a view of how members of the Response to Intervention team at each respective high school perceives different aspect of its road through the development and
implementation of RtI. The researcher used the Qualitative Questionnaire to discern patterns and trends that emerged. The Qualitative Questionnaire was distributed to all members of the RtI team, including, but not limited to the following individuals: the RtI coordinator, general education teacher, special education teacher and special services member (i.e., school psychology, counselor, social worker).

The researcher placed the Qualitative Questionnaire (see Appendix E) in the staff members’ school district mailbox. A self-addressed, stamped envelope accompanied the questionnaire. To maintain anonymity, the questionnaires were sent to a P.O. Box. The Qualitative Questionnaire detailed a due date, allowing sufficient time to provide meaningful feedback, while also affording the researcher a timely return of data. As the Qualitative Questionnaires made their way into the researcher’s hands, data analysis took place.

**Interviews**

DeMarrais (2004) defines an interview as a process in which a researcher and participant engage in a conversation focused on questions related to a research study. After acquiring consent, the researcher conducted Individual Interviews with two administrators at High School “A”: administrator in charge of RtI and director of special education services, and one administrator at High School “B”: administrator in charge of RtI. In qualitative research, the three most common types of interviews are: highly structured/standardized, semistructured and unstructured/informal. Merriam (2009) believes the problem with using a highly structured interview…is that rigidly adhering to predetermined questions may not allow you to access participants’ perspectives and
understandings of the world. For this study, a semistructured interview was conducted. The following are characteristics of a semistructured qualitative interview: interview guide includes a mix of more and less structured interview questions; all questions used flexibly; usually specific data required from all respondents; largest part of interview guided by list of questions or issues to be explored; no predetermined wording or order (Merriam, 2009). Individual Interviews served as an opportunity for the researcher to gain further insight from the educational administrators in charge of facilitating the development and implementation of RtI. The individualized interview protocol (see Appendix G) included open-ended questions, allowing the administrator to elaborate on his or her unique experiences. The questions related to building capacity as well as maintaining a singular focus throughout the development and implementation of the school’s Response to Intervention plan. Follow-up questions were asked when the researcher identified a need for clarification or further explanation.

Individual Interviews were conducted at the same time the Qualitative Questionnaires were distributed. Appendix G is the individualized interview protocol. The Individualized Interviews took place in-person and they were recorded for quality assurance. Stake (2010) recommends member checking: presenting a recording or draft copy of an observation or interview to the person providing the information and asking for correction and comment. Each individualized interview was transcribed and verified by the respective educational administrator for accuracy and approval. A confidentiality agreement (see Appendix H) was signed by the individual designated to transcribe the audio-taped interview. This verification is known as member checks. Merriam (2009)
affirms that the process involved in member checks is to take your preliminary analysis back to the participants and ask whether the researcher’s interpretation is accurate. Providing participants with this opportunity ensured internal validity of the research.

The school districts, high schools and staff members who agreed to participate in this qualitative case study were afforded full anonymity. As seen previously, the researcher used pseudonyms to provide the readers of this dissertation with findings of the study. “High School A” and “High School B” are the names the researcher uses to represent each respective high school. Likewise, when the researcher found it necessary to reference a staff member, that individual was referred to as “High School Principal A” or “High School Principal B.”

Documents

Each high school’s goals were obtained and used as a data source to supplement the Qualitative Questionnaire (see Appendix E) and Individual Interviews (see Appendix G). In fact, the Superintendent’s Letter of Cooperation (see Appendix A) states the following: “Documents will be used as a data source to supplement the Qualitative Questionnaire and Individual Interviews. Documents will be asked for within the individual interview portion of this qualitative case study research. Procurement of all documents will be strictly voluntary.” The researcher identified trends and themes that exist between the responses to the questionnaire by the members of the RtI team and the responses to the Individual Interviews by the educational administrators. Category construction, outlined in the next section, was used to identify trends and themes. The qualitative case study research instruments provided the researcher with unique, rich
descriptions of individual accounts and experiences. Guided by the research questions, these descriptions allowed the researcher to sort and analyze the data.

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis is the process of making sense out of the data (Merriam, 2009). According to Yin (2009), the most preferred strategy used in examining case study evidence is to follow the theoretical propositions that led to your case study. Yin continues to say that the propositions would have shaped your data collection plan and therefore would have given priorities to the relevant analytic strategies. The use of this strategy allows the researcher to focus his attention on certain data and ignore other data. This qualitative case study utilized the conceptual framework of Michael Fullan, author of several bestsellers on school leadership and change. To review, Fullan (2010) offers eight characteristics of an effective school district that he believes generate widespread and potentially sustainable capacity to raise the bar and close the gap of student achievement:

1. Focus: a clear direction and relentless focus on student achievement through instructional improvement in the classroom.

2. Data: access and use of data on student learning as a strategy for classroom and school improvement and to monitor progress.

3. Leadership: development of teacher, principal and district leadership to share effective practices from each other and from the larger research base.

4. Resources: allocating resources in accordance with this focus without a reliance on one-time, special funding. Resources should be clearly aligned to support the teaching and learning core of the district’s work.
5. **Reduce Distractors**: a concerted effort to reduce the distractors that undermine teachers’ and principals’ capacity to carry out this central strategy.

6. **Community**: link to parents and the community and related agencies to provide support for students and educators and to intervene early in case of difficulties experienced by students and by schools.

7. **Communication**: a constant and consistent communication that focuses on the core message up and down and across the district.

8. **Esprit de Corps**: a sense of identity and sense of community among teachers and principals and between schools and the district.

It is these theoretical propositions that provided the conceptual framework for this dissertation and the themes for data analysis. The original objectives and design of this case study were based on such propositions, which, in turn, reflected a set of research questions, review of the literature and new hypotheses or propositions (Yin, 2009).

When beginning analysis, it is important that the researcher should spend some time organizing the data (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Organization of data made analysis much more efficient. Through organization, data was sorted and made to “fit” together for ease of access. In terms of data collection and analysis, to help maintain a sense of organization, the researcher created a log of data-gathering activities. This log was referenced during data analysis to ensure accuracy. In addition, the researcher kept a journal to reflect on thoughts, ideas and themes that came to light. Marshall and Rossman (2011) believe that writing notes, reflective memos, thoughts and insights is invaluable for generating the unusual insights that move the analysis from the mundane and obvious to the creative.
While reviewing the Qualitative Questionnaires as well as the Individual Interviews, this researcher constructed categories. According to Merriam (2009), assigning codes to pieces of data is the way you begin to construct categories. Merriam continues: After working through the entire transcript in this manner, you go back over your marginal notes and comments (codes) and try to group those comments and notes that seem to go together. Patterns, regularities and themes will begin to emerge through coding and the construction of categories. The challenge, according to Merriam, is to construct categories or themes that capture some recurring pattern that cuts across your data.

This researcher analyzed Qualitative Questionnaires, Individual Interviews and documents in an attempt to cross-check data that had been collected at different times and places throughout this qualitative case study research. Because each method [of data collection] revealed different aspects of empirical reality, multiple methods … were employed (Denzin, 2009). According to Denzin, this is termed triangulation … the principle that multiple methods must be used in every investigation, since no method is ever free of rival causal factors.

**Validity and Reliability**

As a researcher, it is extremely important to ensure that your study is trustworthy. Though qualitative researchers can never capture an objective “truth” or “reality,” there are a number of strategies that you as a qualitative researcher can use to increase the “credibility” of your findings (Merriam, 2009). Probably the most well-known strategy to shore up the internal validity of a study, Merriam continues, is what is known as
triangulation. This strategy includes using multiple sources of data to crosscheck the data that has been collected. Finding consistency within your data after this “cross-check” has been completed provides evidence of validity and reliability. In this study, the data collected provide triangulation, which ensure validity and reliability. Member checks, another strategy for promoting validity and reliability were also completed. Member checks consist of taking acquired data back to the individual(s) from whom they were derived to ask if they are accurate. In this study, once the interviews were transcribed, they were provided to the interviewee for member check. Rich, thick descriptions were also used as a strategy to promote validity and reliability. According to Merriam (2009), this strategy entails providing enough description to contextualize the study such that readers will be able to determine the extent to which their situations match the research context, and, hence, whether findings can be transferred. With these strategies, this researcher believes objectivity was achieved.

**Bias and Limitations of the Study**

In qualitative case study research where the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection, it can be easy to reflect on personal experiences and/or feelings. The researcher recognized biases and personal insight and separated this while data collection took place. The strategy used to assist the researcher in his bias control and recognition was to keep a paper notebook journal. The paper notebook journal included dates and times of relevant research events as well as field notes and self-reflections. These notes were reflections on what worked (or not) in gaining access, entry, maintaining access,
ethics and gathering data. Thus emotions, passions and biases were turned into research tools (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

While this qualitative case study sought to gather rich descriptions and real-life experiences of educational leaders who have effectively and efficiently developed and implemented a Response to Intervention plan, there still may be limitations.

This case study included two public Illinois high schools rather than multiple high schools. A larger field of participants could expand the implications for instructional leadership. This limitation could affect the data.

While the Qualitative Questionnaires were distributed to all members of the RtI team, interviews were only conducted with the administrator in charge of RtI and director of special education. The interview protocol (see Appendix G) was used to guide the
researcher in his quest to answer the research questions. These questions revolved around Michael Fullan’s (2010) framework of building capacity among staff. Not interviewing all members of the RtI team provided limited first-hand accounts of the team.

Observations were not conducted as a data collection component in this case study. The researcher was comfortable with accessing data through the Qualitative Questionnaire as well as the Individual Interviews. Observations, while they would have provided the researcher with a first-hand account, could have skewed the objectivity of the researcher. The lack of observations could present limitations to data.

Lastly, students and parents were excluded from this case study. The research questions ask for the perspective of each RtI leadership team; therefore, students and parents were not necessary for this study.

Despite these limitations, educators must understand what it takes to successfully develop and implement educational initiatives. This understanding was much more apparent after an analysis of two public Illinois high schools that have been identified as having statewide, favorable reputations for completing such an act. It is the constant quest for improvement and learning from one another that offers educational leaders valuable tools to improve their schools. The implications for instructional leaders highlighted by this particular case study demonstrate its significance and worthwhile.

Summary

Chapter III has clarified the methodology of this particular case study. The methodology described in this chapter details the techniques the researcher used to accurately gather data to answer the following research questions:
1) In two Illinois public high schools with positive statewide reputations, according to the perspectives of each RtI leadership team, how has a central and singular focus been evidenced in the development and implementation of their RtI model in each high school?

2) In two Illinois public high schools with positive statewide reputations, according to the perspectives of each RtI leadership team, how has capacity building been evidenced in the development and implementation of their RtI model in each high school?

3) What are the implications for educational leaders to successfully motivate their RtI leadership teams to develop RtI processes?

4) What are the implications for educational leaders to successfully motivate their RtI leadership teams to implement these RtI processes with fidelity?
CHAPTER IV
PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

The purpose of this study was to utilize Response to Intervention (RtI) as a means of studying how building leadership teams from two suburban Chicago public high schools in Illinois built capacity and motivated their staff to implement educational initiatives that align with their school and/or district goals. This qualitative case study research design included a Qualitative Questionnaire (see Appendix E), Individual Interviews (see Appendix G) and document analysis methodologies to gain insight on the following research questions:

1) In two Illinois public high schools with positive statewide reputations, according to the perspectives of each RtI leadership team, how has a central and singular focus been evidenced in the development and implementation of their RtI model in each high school?

2) In two Illinois public high schools with positive statewide reputations, according to the perspectives of each RtI leadership team, how has capacity building been evidenced in the development and implementation of their RtI model in each high school?

3) What are the implications for educational leaders to successfully motivate their RtI leadership teams to develop RtI processes?
4) What are the implications for educational leaders to successfully motivate their RtI leadership teams to implement these RtI processes with fidelity?

The following qualitative research protocol was used to conduct this research:

![Qualitative Research Protocol](image)

*Figure 5. Qualitative Research Protocol*

**Qualitative Questionnaire**

**High School “A”**

High School “A” is located in a northern suburb of Chicago, Illinois. High School “A” is one of three high schools in this particular school district. The 2012 Illinois School Report Card identified High School “A’s” district as having a total enrollment of 4,815 students with 2,661 of these students enrolled in High School “A.” The pie chart below displays the demographic breakdown for High School “A” during the 2012-2013 school year.

![Demographic Information (2012)](image)

*Figure 6. High School “A” Demographic Information*
While specific information is not outlined for each school, the following is true for the district: average teaching experience is 13.7 years, average teacher salary is $107,626; instructional expenditure per pupil is $12,667. Individualized Interviews with members of the High School “A” administrative team revealed that RtI was developed and implemented shortly after its authorization in 2004. However, these interviews reveal that many adjustments have been made and their latest RtI “plan” began its implementation in the 2011-2012 school year.

After being granted consent from the respective superintendent and building principal, this researcher was put in contact with the administrator in charge of RtI at High School “A.” High School “A” asked that ten (10) Qualitative Questionnaires be provided to their RtI team. The Qualitative Questionnaires were sent to High School “A” on Monday, October 22, 2012 and it was requested they be returned by Monday, November 12, 2012. Of the ten Qualitative Questionnaires sent to High School “A”, nine (90%) were returned.

**High School “B”**

High School “B” is located in a western suburb of Chicago, Illinois. High School “B” is one of six high schools in this particular school district. The 2012 Illinois School Report Card identified High School “B’s” district as having a total enrollment of 12,307 students with 1,937 of these students enrolled in High School “B.” The pie chart below displays the demographic breakdown for High School “B” during the 2012-2013 school year.
While specific information is not outlined for each school, the following is true for the district: average teaching experience is 13.5 years, average teacher salary is $99,570; instructional expenditure per pupil is $10,548. Individualized Interviews with members of the High School “B” administrative team revealed that RtI was developed and implemented shortly after its authorization in 2004. However, similar to High School “A,” these interviews revealed that adjustments have been made along the way and their latest RtI plan began its implementation in the 2009-2010 school year.

Figure 7. High School “B” Demographic Information

After being granted consent from the respective superintendent and building principal, this researcher was put in contact with the administrator in charge of RtI at High School “B.” High School “B” asked that nine Qualitative Questionnaires be provided to their RtI team. To maintain consistency, these Qualitative Questionnaires were sent to High School “B” on Monday, October 22, 2012 and it was requested they be returned by Monday, November 12, 2012. Of the nine Qualitative Questionnaires sent to High School “B”, six (approximately 67%) were returned.
Standardized Test Results

In regards to test results, the table below compares the results of High School “A” and High School “B” on the Prairie State Achievement Exam for three years, beginning with 2010 and ending with 2012. In 2010, 62% of students met or exceeded state standards on the PSAE, followed by 64% in 2011 and 61% in 2012 at High School “A.” At High School “B,” 59% of students met or exceeded state standards on the PSAE in 2010, followed by 61% in 2011 and 63% in 2012.

![Compare Schools](https://iirc.niu.edu/)

Figure 8. Prairie State Achievement Exam Results

In terms of Annual Yearly Progress (AYP), the graphs below display the results for High School “A”, High School “B” and the State of Illinois respectively. The AYP data reflects each school’s PSAE Performance by Subgroup in Reading and Mathematics from 2010 to 2012.
Figure 9. High School “A” AYP Performance
Figure 10. High School “B” AYP Performance
Figure 11. State of Illinois AYP Performance
The following line graphs represent the most notable trends from the data presented above. While the following graphs do not represent every subgroup and/or area tested, the information presented serve as a representative sample of the data displayed previously in this chapter.

![Graph](image)

*Figure 12. Grade 11 – PSAE Performance by AYP Subgroups – Reading 2010-2012 Hispanic Students (percentage of)*

In the graph above, High School “A” reduces their percentage of students who fall in the “below” and “warning” categories of the PSAE performance by 13%. High School “B” reduces their percentage of students who fall in the “below” and “warning” categories of the PSAE performance by 5%. Finally, the State of Illinois as a whole remains unchanged at 67%.

The following line graphs represent the most notable trends from the data presented above.
In the graph above, High School “A” reduces their percentage of students who fall in the “below” and “warning” categories of the PSAE performance by 6%. High School “B” reduces their percentage of students who fall in the “below” and “warning” categories of the PSAE performance by 10%. Finally, the percent of students in the State of Illinois as a whole who fall in the “below” and “warning” categories of the PSAE performance increases by 1%.

The following line graphs represent the most notable trends from the data presented above.
In the graph above, High School “A” reduces their percentage of students who fall in the “below” and “warning” categories of the PSAE performance by 4%. High School “B” reduces their percentage of students who fall in the “below” and “warning” categories of the PSAE performance by 5%. Finally, the percent of students in the State of Illinois as a whole who fall in the “below” and “warning” categories of the PSAE performance increases by 1%.

The following line graphs represent the most notable trends from the data presented above.
In the graph above, High School “A” reduces their percentage of students who fall in the “below” and “warning” categories of the PSAE performance by 10%. High School “B” reduces their percentage of students who fall in the “below” and “warning” categories of the PSAE performance by 10%. Finally, the percent of students in the State of Illinois as a whole who fall in the “below” and “warning” categories of the PSAE performance decreases by 3%.

The following line graphs represent the most notable trends from the data presented above.
In the graph above, High School “A” reduces their percentage of students who fall in the “below” and “warning” categories of the PSAE performance by 2%. High School “B” reduces their percentage of students who fall in the “below” and “warning” categories of the PSAE performance by 9%. Finally, the State of Illinois as a whole remains unchanged at 67%.

The largest gains the State of Illinois achieved were with Hispanic students in the area of mathematics. From 2010 to 2012, three percent of Hispanic students who tested in the PSAE increased their scores to fall within the “meets” and “exceeds” categories. The trends seen within the data above prove these two high schools worthy of being research sites. Each high school demonstrates their ability to close the achievement gap for multiple subgroups, ultimately increasing the academic achievement of students.
The Design of the Qualitative Questionnaire

Each high school chosen for this qualitative case study has been identified by the Illinois Alliance for School-based Problem-solving and Intervention Resources in Education initiative (Illinois ASPIRE) as having favorable reputations for its development and implementation of Response to Intervention (RtI). Illinois ASPIRE is operated under a State Personnel Development Grant from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education & Rehabilitation Services.

The Qualitative Questionnaire (see Appendix E) consisted of four sections:

1. **Consensus: Comprehensive Commitment and Support**
2. **Infrastructure Development: Data Collection and Team Structure**
3. **Implementation: Three-Tiered Intervention System and Problem-Solving Process**
4. **Implementation: Monitoring and Action Planning**

Within each category, participants were asked to rank statements using the following scale: N – Not Started, I – In Progress, A – Achieved or M – Maintaining. A percentage also accompanied the rank to provide the participant with a more tangible measure. Finally, participants had the opportunity to offer comments/evidence with each rank. The Qualitative Questionnaire was intended to share the RtI team’s perspective of the development and implementation of RtI in their high school. The data enabled the researcher to discern patterns and trends of the members of this high school leadership team. The Qualitative Questionnaire did not request identifying information from each participant, such as years of experiences, position, credentials, etc. The Qualitative
Questionnaire allowed the researcher to compare and contrast data with Fullan’s eight characteristics of an effective school district. Utilizing triangulation of the Qualitative Questionnaire, Individualized Interviews and document analysis, this researcher was able to identify important themes, trends and patterns. Merriam (2009) offers a description of triangulation: “Using multiple investigators, sources of data, or data collection methods to confirm emerging findings” (p. 229).

**Questionnaire Results from High School “A”**

The following data were generated from the Qualitative Questionnaires received from the participants at High School “A”:

Question 1: District level leadership provides active commitment and support (e.g., meets to review data and issues at least twice each year).

Of the nine who responded, four of the participants selected *Achieved*, two participants selected *In Progress*, two selected *Maintaining* and one participant selected *Not Started*.

![Question 1](image)

*Figure 17. High School “A” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 1*
Question 2: The school leadership provides training, support and active involvement (e.g., principal is actively involved in School-Based Leadership Team meetings).

Of the nine who responded, four of the participants selected In Progress, two selected Achieved, two selected Maintaining and one selected Not Started.

![Question 2](Figure 18. High School “A” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 2)

Question 3: Faculty/staff support and are actively involved with problem solving/RtI (e.g., one of top three goals of the School Improvement Plan, 80% of faculty document support, three-year timeline for implementation available).

Of the nine who responded, five of the participants selected In Progress, two selected Achieved, one selected Maintaining and one selected Not Started.
Figure 19. High School “A” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 3

Question 4: A School-Based Leadership Team is established and represents the roles of an administrator, facilitator, data mentor, content specialist, parent, and teachers from representative areas (e.g., general ed., special ed.).

Of the nine who responded, four of the participants selected *Achieved*, three selected *Not Started*, two selected *Maintaining* and none selected *In Progress*.

Figure 20. High School “A” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 4

Question 5: Data are collected (e.g., beliefs survey, satisfaction survey) to assess level of commitment and impact of PS/RtI on faculty/staff.
Of the nine who responded, three of the participants selected *Not Started* and *Maintaining*, two selected *In Progress*, and one selected *Achieved*.

Figure 21. High School “A” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 5

Question 6: School-wide data (e.g., DIBELS, Curriculum-Based Measures, Office Discipline Referrals) are collected through an efficient and effective systematic process. Of the nine who responded, three of the participants selected *In Progress* and *Achieved*, two selected *Maintaining* and one selected *Not Started*. 
Figure 22. High School “A” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 6

Question 7: Statewide and other databases (e.g., Progress Monitoring and Reporting Network [PMRN], School-Wide Information System [SWIS]) are used to make data-based decisions.

Of the nine who responded, four of the participants selected *Not Started*, three selected *In Progress*, two selected *Achieved* and none selected *Maintaining*.

Figure 23. High School “A” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 7

Question 8: School-wide data are presented to staff after each benchmarking session (e.g., staff meetings, team meetings, grade-level meetings).
Of the nine who responded, six of the participants selected *Not Started*, two selected *Achieved*, one selected *Maintaining* and none selected *In Progress*.

*Figure 24. High School “A” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 8*

Question 9: School-wide data are used to evaluate the effectiveness of core academic programs.

Of the nine who responded, six of the participants selected *In Progress*, three selected *Achieved* and none selected *Not Started or Maintaining*.

*Figure 25. High School “A” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 9*
Question 10: School-wide data are used to evaluate the effectiveness of core behavior programs.

Of the nine who responded, four of the participants selected *In Progress*, three selected *Not Started*, two selected *Achieved* and none selected *Maintaining*.

*Figure 26. High School “A” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 10*

Question 11: Curriculum-Based Measurement (e.g., DIBELS) data are used in conjunction with other data sources to identify students needing targeted group interventions and individualized interventions for academics.

Of the nine who responded, four of the participants selected *Achieved*, three selected *In Progress*, one selected *Not Started* and one selected *Maintaining*. 
Question 11: Office Disciplinary Referral data are used in conjunction with other data sources to identify students needing targeted group interventions and individualized interventions for behavior.

Of the nine who responded, four of the participants selected Achieved, two selected In Progress, one selected Not Started and one selected Maintaining.

Question 12: Data are used to evaluate the effectiveness (RtI) for Tier 2 intervention programs.
Of the nine who responded, five of the participants selected *In Progress*, three selected *Achieved*, one selected *Maintaining* and none selected *Not Started*.

![Bar chart for Question 13](chart13.png)

*Figure 29. High School “A” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 13*

Of the nine who responded, six of the participants selected *In Progress*, two selected *Achieved*, one selected *Not Started* and none selected *Maintaining*.

![Bar chart for Question 14](chart14.png)

*Figure 30. High School “A” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 14*

Question 14: Individual student data are utilized to determine the response to Tier 3 interventions.

Of the nine who responded, six of the participants selected *In Progress*, two selected *Achieved*, one selected *Not Started* and none selected *Maintaining*.

Question 15 A: Special Education Eligibility determination is made using the RtI model for the following ESE programs: Emotional/Behavioral Disabilities (EBD)
Of the nine who responded, three of the participants selected *In Progress*, three selected *Maintaining*, two selected *Achieved* and one selected *Not Started*.

**Figure 31.** High School “A” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 15A

Question 15 B: Special Education Eligibility determination is made using the RtI model for the following ESE programs: Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD).

Of the nine who responded, four of the participants selected *Achieved*, three selected *Maintaining*, two selected *In Progress* and none selected *Not Started*.

**Figure 32.** High School “A” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 15B

Question 16 A: The school staff has a process to select evidence-based practices: Tier 1.
Of the nine who responded, four of the participants selected *In Progress*, two selected *Achieved*, two selected *Maintaining* and one selected *Not Started*.

![Figure 33. High School “A” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 16A](image1)

**Question 16 A**

Question 16 B: The school staff has a process to select evidence-based practices: Tier 2.

Of the nine who responded, five of the participants selected *In Progress*, two selected *Maintaining*, one selected *Achieved* and one selected *Not Started*.

![Figure 34. High School “A” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 16B](image2)
Question 16 C: The school staff has a process to select evidence-based practices: Tier 3.

Of the nine who responded, four of the participants selected In Progress, two selected Achieved, two selected Maintaining and one selected Not Started.

![Question 16 C](image)

*Figure 35. High School “A” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 16C*

Question 17: The School-Based Leadership Team has a regular meeting schedule for problem-solving activities.

Of the nine who responded, four of the participants selected Achieved, three selected In Progress, two selected Maintaining and none selected Not Started.

![Question 17](image)

*Figure 36. High School “A” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 17*
Question 18: The School-Based Leadership Team evaluates target student’s Rti at regular meetings.

Of the nine who responded, three of the participants selected In Progress, two selected Achieved, two selected Maintaining and two selected Not Started.

Figure 37. High School “A” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 18

Question 19: The School-Based Leadership Team involves parents.

Of the eight who responded, five of the participants selected Not Started, two selected In Progress, one selected Maintaining and none selected Achieved. **One participant commented “I don’t know” and chose not to select a response.

Figure 38. High School “A” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 19
Question 20: The School-Based Leadership Team has regularly scheduled data day meetings to evaluate Tier 1 and Tier 2 data.

Of the nine who responded, four of the participants selected Not Started, three selected In Progress, two selected Achieved and none selected Maintaining.

Figure 39. High School “A” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 20

Question 21 A: The School has established a three-tiered system of service delivery: Tier 1 Academic Core Instruction clearly identified.

Of the nine who responded, five of the participants selected Achieved, two selected In Progress, two selected Maintaining and none selected Not Started.

Figure 40. High School “A” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 21A
Question 21 B: The School has established a three-tiered system of service delivery: Tier 1 Behavioral Core Instruction clearly identified.

Of the nine who responded, three of the participants selected Achieved, two selected In Progress, two selected Maintaining and one selected Not Started.

Figure 41. High School “A” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 21B

Question 21 C: The School has established a three-tiered system of service delivery: Tier 2 Academic Supplemental Instruction/Programs clearly identified.

Of the nine who responded, four of the participants selected In Progress, four selected Achieved, one selected Maintaining and none selected Not Started.

Figure 42. High School “A” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 21C
Question 21 D: The School has established a three-tiered system of service delivery: Tier 2 Behavioral Supplemental Instruction/Programs clearly identified.

Of the nine who responded, four of the participants selected In Progress, four selected Achieved, one selected Maintaining and none selected Not Started.

Figure 43. High School “A” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 21D

Question 21 E: The School has established a three-tiered system of service delivery: Tier 3 Academic Intensive Strategies/Programs are evidence-based.

Of the nine who responded, four of the participants selected In Progress, four selected Achieved, one selected Maintaining and none selected Not Started.

Figure 44. High School “A” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 21E
Question 21 F: The School has established a three-tiered system of service delivery: Tier 3 Behavioral Intensive Strategies/Programs are evidence-based.

Of the nine who responded, five of the participants selected *In Progress*, two selected *Achieved*, one selected *Maintaining* and one selected *Not Started*.

![Bar Chart](image)

*Figure 45. High School “A” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 21F*

Question 22 A: Teams (e.g., School-Based Leadership Team, Problem-Solving Team, Intervention Assistance Team) implement effective problem solving procedures including: Problem is defined as a data-based discrepancy (GAP Analysis) between what is expected and what is occurring (includes peer and benchmark data).

Of the nine who responded, five of the participants selected *In Progress*, two selected *Achieved*, two selected *Maintaining* and none selected *Not Started*. 
Figure 46. High School “A” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 22A

Question 22 B: Teams (e.g., School-Based Leadership Team, Problem-Solving Team, Intervention Assistance Team) implement effective problem solving procedures including: Replacement behaviors (e.g., reading performance targets, homework completion targets) are clearly defined.

Of the nine who responded, five of the participants selected In Progress, two selected Achieved, two selected Maintaining and none selected Not Started.

Figure 47. High School “A” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 22B

Question 22 C: Teams (e.g., School-Based Leadership Team, Problem-Solving Team, Intervention Assistance Team) implement effective problem solving procedures
including: Problem analysis is conducted using available data and evidence-based hypotheses.

Of the nine who responded, four of the participants selected *In Progress*, two selected *Achieved*, two selected *Maintaining* and one selected *Not Started*.

**Figure 48.** High School “A” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 22C

Question 22 D: Teams (e.g., School-Based Leadership Team, Problem-Solving Team, Intervention Assistance Team) implement effective problem solving procedures including: Intervention plans include evidence-based (e.g., research-based, data-based) strategies.

Of the nine who responded, five of the participants selected *In Progress*, two selected *Achieved*, two selected *Maintaining* and none selected *Not Started*. 
Figure 49. High School “A” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 22D

Question 22 E: Teams (e.g., School-Based Leadership Team, Problem-Solving Team, Intervention Assistance Team) implement effective problem solving procedures including: Intervention support personnel are identified and scheduled for all interventions.

Of the nine who responded, five of the participants selected In Progress, two selected Achieved, two selected Maintaining and none selected Not Started.

Figure 50. High School “A” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 22E
Question 22 F: Teams (e.g., School-Based Leadership Team, Problem-Solving Team, Intervention Assistance Team) implement effective problem solving procedures including: Intervention integrity is documented.

Of the nine who responded, three of the participants selected Not Started, three selected Maintaining, two selected In Progress and none selected Achieved.

![Question 22 F](image)

*Figure 51. High School “A” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 22F*

Question 22 G: Teams (e.g., School-Based Leadership Team, Problem-Solving Team, Intervention Assistance Team) implement effective problem solving procedures including: Response to intervention is evaluated through systematic data collection.

Of the nine who responded, three of the participants selected Not Started, two selected In Progress, two selected Achieved and two selected Maintaining.
Question 22 G

![Question 22 G](image)

Figure 52. High School “A” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 22G

Question 22 H: Teams (e.g., School-Based Leadership Team, Problem-Solving Team, Intervention Assistance Team) implement effective problem solving procedures including: Changes are made to intervention based on student response.

Of the nine who responded, four of the participants selected Achieved, three selected In Progress, one selected Not Started and one selected Maintaining.

![Question 22 H](image)

Figure 53. High School “A” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 22H

Question 22 I: Teams (e.g., School-Based Leadership Team, Problem-Solving Team, Intervention Assistance Team) implement effective problem solving procedures including: Parents are routinely involved in implementation of interventions.
Of the nine who responded, five of the participants selected *Not Started*, two selected *Achieved*, one selected *In Progress* and one selected *Maintaining*.

**Figure 54. High School “A” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 22I**

Question 23: A strategic plan (implementation plan) exists and is used by the School-Based Leadership Team to guide implementation of PS/RtI.

Of the nine who responded, four of the participants selected *In Progress*, three selected *Achieved*, two selected *Maintaining* and none selected *Not Started*.

**Figure 55. High School “A” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 23**

Question 24: The School-Based Leadership Team meets at least twice each year to review data and implementation issues.
Of the nine who responded, five of the participants selected *Achieved*, three selected *Maintaining*, one selected *In Progress* and none selected *Not Started*.

![Question 24 Graph](image)

*Figure 56. High School “A” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 24*

Question 25: The School-Based Leadership Team meets at least twice each year with the District Leadership Team to review data and implementation issues.

Of the nine who responded, five of the participants selected *Achieved*, three selected *Maintaining*, one selected *In Progress* and none selected *Not Started*.

![Question 25 Graph](image)

*Figure 57. High School “A” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 25*

Question 26: Changes are made to the implementation plan as a result of school and district leadership team data-based decisions.
Of the nine who responded, three of the participants selected *Achieved*, two selected *Not Started*, two selected *In Progress* and two selected *Maintaining*.

**Figure 58.** High School “A” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 26

Question 27: Feedback on the outcomes of the PS/RtI Project is provided to school-based faculty and staff at least yearly.

Of the nine who responded, three of the participants selected *Achieved*, two selected *Not Started*, two selected *In Progress* and two selected *Maintaining*.

**Figure 59.** High School “A” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 27
Questionnaire Results from High School “B”

The following data were generated from the Qualitative Questionnaires received from the participants at High School “B”:

Question 1: District level leadership provides active commitment and support (e.g., meets to review data and issues at least twice each year).

Of the six who responded, five of the participants selected *Achieved*, one participant selected *In Progress*, none selected *Maintaining* and none participant selected *Not Started*.

![Question 1](Figure 60. High School “B” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 1)

Question 2: The school leadership provides training, support and active involvement (e.g., principal is actively involved in School-Based Leadership Team meetings).

Of the six who responded, four of the participants selected *Achieved*, two selected *Maintaining*, none selected *Maintaining* and none selected *Not Started*.
**Figure 61.** High School “B” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 2

Question 3: Faculty/staff support and are actively involved with problem solving/RtI (e.g., one of top three goals of the School Improvement Plan, 80% of faculty document support, three-year timeline for implementation available).

Of the six who responded, three of the participants selected *In Progress*, three selected *Achieved*, none selected *Maintaining* and none selected *Not Started*.

**Figure 62.** High School “B” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 3
Question 4: A School-Based Leadership Team is established and represents the roles of an administrator, facilitator, data mentor, content specialist, parent, and teachers from representative areas (e.g., general ed., special ed.).

Of the six who responded, four of the participants selected *In Progress*, one selected *Achieved*, one selected *Maintaining* and none selected *Not Started*.

*Figure 63. High School “B” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 4*

Question 5: Data are collected (e.g., beliefs survey, satisfaction survey) to assess level of commitment and impact of PS/RtI on faculty/staff.

Of the six who responded, three of the participants selected *In Progress*, one selected *Not Started*, one selected *Achieved*, and one selected *Maintaining*. 
Figure 64. High School “B” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 5

Question 6: School-wide data (e.g., DIBELS, Curriculum-Based Measures, Office Discipline Referrals) are collected through an efficient and effective systematic process.

Of the six who responded, four of the participants selected Achieved, one selected In Progress, one selected Maintaining and none selected Not Started.

Figure 65. High School “B” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 6

Question 7: Statewide and other databases (e.g., Progress Monitoring and Reporting Network [PMRN], School-Wide Information System [SWIS]) are used to make data-based decisions.
Of the six who responded, three of the participants selected *In Progress*, three selected *Achieved*, none selected *Not Started* and none selected *Maintaining*.

*Figure 66. High School “B” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 7*

Question 8: School-wide data are presented to staff after each benchmarking session (e.g., staff meetings, team meetings, grade-level meetings).

Of the six who responded, four of the participants selected *Achieved*, one selected *In Progress*, one selected *Maintaining* and none selected *Not Started*.

*Figure 67. High School “B” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 8*
Question 9: School-wide data are used to evaluate the effectiveness of core academic programs.

Of the six who responded, two of the participants selected In Progress, two selected Achieved, two selected Maintaining and none selected Not Started.

Figure 68. High School “B” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 9

Question 10: School-wide data are used to evaluate the effectiveness of core behavior programs.

Of the six who responded, three of the participants selected In Progress, two selected Maintaining, one selected Achieved and none selected Not Started.

Figure 69. High School “B” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 10
Question 11: Curriculum-Based Measurement (e.g., DIBELS) data are used in conjunction with other data sources to identify students needing targeted group interventions and individualized interventions for academics.

Of the six who responded, three of the participants selected *In Progress*, one selected *Not Started*, one selected *Achieved* and one selected *Maintaining*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| ![Bar Chart](image)

*Figure 70. High School “B” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 11*

Question 12: Office Disciplinary Referral data are used in conjunction with other data sources to identify students needing targeted group interventions and individualized interventions for behavior.

Of the six who responded, three of the participants selected *In Progress*, two selected *Achieved*, one selected *Maintaining* and none selected *Not Started*. 
Question 12: Data are used to evaluate the effectiveness (RtI) for Tier 2 intervention programs.

Of the six who responded, three of the participants selected In Progress, one selected Not Started, one selected Achieved and one selected Maintaining.

Question 13: Individual student data are utilized to determine the response to Tier 3 interventions.

Of the six who responded, three of the participants selected In Progress, one selected Not Started, one selected Achieved and one selected Maintaining.
Question 14

Figure 73. High School “B” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 14

Question 15 A: Special Education Eligibility determination is made using the RtI model for the following ESE programs: Emotional/Behavioral Disabilities (EBD).

Of the six who responded, three of the participants selected In Progress, two selected Achieved, one selected Maintaining and none selected Not Started.

Question 15 A

Figure 74. High School “B” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 15A

Question 15 B: Special Education Eligibility determination is made using the RtI model for the following ESE programs: Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD).

Of the six who responded, three of the participants selected In Progress, two selected Achieved, one selected Maintaining and none selected Not Started.
Figure 75. High School “B” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 15B

Question 16 A: The school staff has a process to select evidence-based practices:

Tier 1

Of the six who responded, three of the participants selected In Progress, two selected Achieved, one selected Maintaining and none selected Not Started.

Figure 76. High School “B” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 16A

Question 16 B: The school staff has a process to select evidence-based practices:

Tier 2.

Of the six who responded, three of the participants selected Achieved, two selected In Progress, one selected Not Started and none selected Maintaining.
Figure 77. High School “B” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 16B

Question 16 C: The school staff has a process to select evidence-based practices: Tier 3.

Of the six who responded, three of the participants selected Not Started, two selected Achieved, one selected In Progress and none selected Maintaining.

Figure 78. High School “B” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 16C

Question 17: The School-Based Leadership Team has a regular meeting schedule for problem-solving activities.

Of the six who responded, four of the participants selected Achieved, one selected In Progress, one selected Maintaining and none selected Not Started.
Question 17

Figure 79. High School “B” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 17

Question 18: The School-Based Leadership Team evaluates target student’s students’ RtI at regular meetings.

Of the six who responded, four of the participants selected In Progress, two selected Achieved, none selected Not Started and none selected Maintaining.

Question 18

Figure 80. High School “B” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 18

Question 19: The School-Based Leadership Team involves parents.

Of the six who responded, five of the participants selected In Progress, one selected Achieved, none selected Not Started and none selected Maintaining.
Figure 81. High School “B” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 19

Question 20: The School-Based Leadership Team has regularly scheduled data day meetings to evaluate Tier 1 and Tier 2 data.

Of the six who responded, three of the participants selected Achieved, two selected In Progress, one selected Not Started and none selected Maintaining.

Figure 82. High School “B” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 20

Question 21 A: The School has established a three-tiered system of service delivery: Tier 1 Academic Core Instruction clearly identified.
Of the five who responded, two of the participants selected *In Progress*, two selected *Maintaining*, one selected *Achieved* and none selected *Not Started*. *One Participant did not complete this page.*

*Figure 83. High School “B” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 21A*

Question 21 B: The School has established a three-tiered system of service delivery: Tier 1 Behavioral Core Instruction clearly identified.

Of the five who responded, three of the participants selected *In Progress*, two selected *Maintaining*, none selected *Not Started* and none selected *Achieved*. *One participant did not complete this page.*

*Figure 84. High School “B” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 21B*
Question 21 C: The School has established a three-tiered system of service delivery: Tier 2 Academic Supplemental Instruction/Programs clearly identified.

Of the five who responded, three of the participants selected *In Progress*, one selected *Achieved*, one selected *Maintaining* and none selected *Not Started*. *One participant did not complete this page.*

![Question 21 C](image)

*Figure 85. High School “B” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 21C*

Question 21 D: The School has established a three-tiered system of service delivery: Tier 2 Behavioral Supplemental Instruction/Programs clearly identified.

Of the five who responded, three of the participants selected *In Progress*, one selected *Achieved*, one selected *Maintaining* and none selected *Not Started*. *One participant did not complete this page.*
Figure 86. High School “B” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 21D

Question 21 E: The School has established a three-tiered system of service delivery: Tier 3 Academic Intensive Strategies/Programs are evidence-based.

Of the five who responded, two of the participants selected Not Started, two selected In Progress, one selected Maintaining and none selected Achieved. *One participant did not complete this page.

Figure 87. High School “B” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 21E

Question 21 F: The School has established a three-tiered system of service delivery: Tier 3 Behavioral Intensive Strategies/Programs are evidence-based.
Of the five who responded, two of the participants selected *In Progress*, one selected *Not Started*, one selected *Achieved* and one selected *Maintaining*. *One participant did not complete this page.

![Question 21 F](image)

*Figure 88. High School “B” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 21F*

Question 22 A: Teams (e.g., School-Based Leadership Team, Problem-Solving Team, Intervention Assistance Team) implement effective problem solving procedures including: Problem is defined as a data-based discrepancy (GAP Analysis) between what is expected and what is occurring (includes peer and benchmark data).

Of the five who responded, three of the participants selected *In Progress*, one selected *Achieved*, one selected *Maintaining* and none selected *Not Started*. *One participant did not complete this page.*
Question 22 B: Teams (e.g., School-Based Leadership Team, Problem-Solving Team, Intervention Assistance Team) implement effective problem solving procedures including: Replacement behaviors (e.g., reading performance targets, homework completion targets) are clearly defined.

Of the five who responded, three of the participants selected In Progress, one selected Achieved, one selected Maintaining and none selected Not Started. *One participant did not complete this page.

Figure 90. High School “B” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 22B

Question 22 C: Teams (e.g., School-Based Leadership Team, Problem-Solving Team, Intervention Assistance Team) implement effective problem solving procedures
including: Problem analysis is conducted using available data and evidence-based hypotheses.

Of the five who responded, three of the participants selected *In Progress*, one selected *Achieved*, one selected *Maintaining* and none selected *Not Started*. *One participant did not complete this page.*

![Question 22 C](image)

*Figure 91. High School “B” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 22C*

Question 22 D: Teams (e.g., School-Based Leadership Team, Problem-Solving Team, Intervention Assistance Team) implement effective problem solving procedures including: Intervention plans include evidence-based (e.g., research-based, data-based) strategies.

Of the five who responded, three of the participants selected *In Progress*, one selected *Achieved*, one selected *Maintaining* and none selected *Not Started*. *One participant did not complete this page.*
Figure 92. High School “B” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 22D

Question 22 E: Teams (e.g., School-Based Leadership Team, Problem-Solving Team, Intervention Assistance Team) implement effective problem solving procedures including: Intervention support personnel are identified and scheduled for all interventions.

Of the five who responded, two of the participants selected In Progress, two selected Maintaining, one selected Achieved and none selected Not Started. *One participant did not complete this page.

Figure 93. High School “B” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 22E
Question 22 F: Teams (e.g., School-Based Leadership Team, Problem-Solving Team, Intervention Assistance Team) implement effective problem solving procedures including: Intervention integrity is documented.

Of the six who responded, three of the participants selected *Achieved*, two selected *In Progress*, one selected *Not Started* and none selected *Maintaining*.

![Figure 94. High School “B” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 22F](chart)

Question 22 G: Teams (e.g., School-Based Leadership Team, Problem-Solving Team, Intervention Assistance Team) implement effective problem solving procedures including: Response to intervention is evaluated through systematic data collection.

Of the six who responded, three of the participants selected *In Progress*, three selected *Achieved*, none selected *Not Started* and none selected *Maintaining*. 
Question 22 G

![Bar chart for Question 22 G with labels: Not Started (Less than 24% of the time), In Progress (25% - 74% of the time), Achieved (75% - 100% of the time), Maintaining, and N = 6.](image)

Figure 95. High School “B” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 22G

Question 22 H: Teams (e.g., School-Based Leadership Team, Problem-Solving Team, Intervention Assistance Team) implement effective problem solving procedures including: Changes are made to intervention based on student response.

Of the six who responded, four of the participants selected *Achieved*, two selected *In Progress*, none selected *Not Started* and none selected *Maintaining*.

![Bar chart for Question 22 H with labels: Not Started (Less than 24% of the time), In Progress (25% - 74% of the time), Achieved (75% - 100% of the time), Maintaining, and N = 6.](image)

Figure 96. High School “B” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 22H
Question 22 I: Teams (e.g., School-Based Leadership Team, Problem-Solving Team, Intervention Assistance Team) implement effective problem solving procedures including: Parents are routinely involved in implementation of interventions.

Of the six who responded, three of the participants selected *In Progress*, two selected *Achieved*, one selected *Not Started* and one selected *Maintaining*.

*Figure 97. High School “B” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 22I*

Question 23: A strategic plan (implementation plan) exists and is used by the School-Based Leadership Team to guide implementation of PS/RtI.

Of the six who responded, three of the participants selected *In Progress*, two selected *Maintaining*, one selected *Achieved* and none selected *Not Started*.
Figure 98. High School “B” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 23

Question 24: The School-Based Leadership Team meets at least twice each year to review data and implementation issues.

Of the six who responded, three of the participants selected Achieved, two selected Maintaining, one selected In Progress and none selected Not Started.

Figure 99. High School “B” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 24

Question 25: The School-Based Leadership Team meets at least twice each year with the District Leadership Team to review data and implementation issues.

Of the six who responded, three of the participants selected Achieved, two selected Maintaining, one selected Not Started and none selected In Progress.
Question 25: Changes are made to the implementation plan as a result of school and district leadership team data-based decisions.

Of the six who responded, three of the participants selected *Maintaining*, two selected *Achieved*, one selected *Not Started* and none selected *In Progress*.

*Figure 100. High School “B” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 25*

Question 26: Feedback on the outcomes of the PS/RtI Project is provided to school-based faculty and staff at least yearly.

Of the six who responded, three of the participants selected *Maintaining*, two selected *Achieved*, one selected *In Progress* and none selected *Not Started*.

*Figure 101. High School “B” Qualitative Questionnaire Question 26*
When analyzing the responses obtained from the RtI team leaders’ Qualitative Questionnaires compared to Michael Fullan’s eight characteristics of effective school districts that he believes generates widespread and potentially sustainable capacity to raise the bar and close the gap of student achievement, the following data were present. While the following tables do not represent every comment/evidence written on the Qualitative Questionnaire, the information presented serve as a representative sample of the data displayed previously in this chapter as it relates to each of Fullan’s characteristics.
Table 1

**Questionnaire Data Compared to Fullan’s Characteristics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fullan’s Characteristic</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Comments/Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focus</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Questions: 3, 17, 21 a-f, 22d, 23 | N= 3%  I= 43%  A=37%  M=17% | -Certain departments are ahead of others.  
-Every department has an RtI goal in their respective School Improvement Plan.  
-Different teams at different levels of development.  
-Department-level PLCs.  
-Depends on department.  
-Use of 5-year plan/School Improvement Plan. |
| **Data**                |        |                   |
| Questions: 1, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 20, 22a, 22c, 26 | N= 20%  I= 40%  A=30%  M=10% | -Meet monthly.  
-Data retreat, yearly.  
-Data retreat, department meetings, RtI meetings, Institute Days.  
-Lots of discussion and each department has various data collected.  
-Some data better than others.  
-RTIM Direct; school wide database.  
Progress monitor.  
-Once or twice a year.  
-Certain departments do this more often.  
-In Math and Reading.  
-Problem-solving teams look at such data weekly.  
-More in some programs |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>High School “A”</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>n = 9</strong></td>
<td>than others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-We are not always looking at data. We are often talking about how to share data we already collect or what we should collect.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
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<th><strong>Leadership</strong></th>
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</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Questions: 2, 4, 24, 25</td>
<td>N= 11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I= 17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A=44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M=28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction attends every meeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Assistant Principal is leader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Principal level could be more.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Each department is represented through a PLC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-No parents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-District team, review board and department meetings.</td>
</tr>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Resources</strong></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question: 22d</td>
<td>N= 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I= 50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A=30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M=20%</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Community</strong></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Questions: 19, 22 i</td>
<td>N= 59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I= 17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A=12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M=12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-As needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-I don’t know.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Sometimes.</td>
</tr>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Communication</strong></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Questions: 16 a-c, 22 b, 27</td>
<td>N= 11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I= 45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A=22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M=22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Department dependent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Common assessment; common final.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Department dependent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Department dependent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Still developing criteria for T2 to T3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Through department/building meetings.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2

Questionnaire Data Compared to Fullan’s Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fullan’s Characteristic</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Comments/Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focus</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Questions: 3, 17, 21 a-f, 22 d, 23 | N= 5%  
I= 47%  
A=25%  
M=23% | -At one point it was, but not currently involving all staff.  
-Teams have been developed with all staff to be part of.  
-Weekly meetings. |
| **Data**                |        |                   |
| Questions: 1, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 20, 22a, 22c, 26 | N= 6%  
I= 38%  
A=38%  
M=18% | -New system of collection recently implemented.  
-Have, and getting used to using it.  
-By principal, 3-4 times per year.  
-Early intervention teams.  
-EFT teams. |
| **Leadership**         |        |                   |
| Questions: 2, 4, 24, 25 | N= 4%  
I= 21%  
A=46%  
M=29% | -Not sure about providing training, but will let us participate.  
-Not sure if all are represented.  
-Still a work in progress.  
-At least once a year.  
-PBIS team. |
| **Resources**          |        |                   |
| Question: 22d          | N= 0%  
I= 40%  
A=20%  
M=40% | All staff are not aware of. |
| **Community**          |        |                   |
| Questions: 19, 22 i    | N= 8%  
I= 67%  
A=25%  
M=0% | -Discussions about this.  
-Very important element. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>n = 6</th>
<th>High School “B”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communication</strong></td>
<td>N= 14%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Questions: 16 a-c, 22 b, 27</td>
<td>I= 34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A=34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M=18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-This has been the hardest for us.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Individualized Interviews**

Additional qualitative data were obtained through interviews conducted at each high school. Again, each high school chosen for this qualitative case study has been identified by the Illinois Alliance for School-based Problem-solving and Intervention Resources in Education initiative (Illinois ASPIRE) as having favorable reputations for its development and implementation of Response to Intervention (RtI). The individualized interview protocol (appendix G) set out to gain the perspective of chosen members of the building leadership team. At High School “A”, the Assistant Principal of Student Services and Special Education Director were interviewed. At High School “B”, the Associate Principal was interviewed. The interview with High School “A” Assistant Principal of Student Services took place on Friday, October 19, 2012 and lasted approximately 45 minutes. The interview with High School “A” Special Education Director took place on Thursday, November 8, 2012 and lasted approximately 30 minutes. The interview with High School “B” Associate Principal took place on Saturday, October 13, 2012 and lasted approximately one hour. Each individualized interview was recorded and transcribed by a third party, and verified by the respective educational administrator for accuracy and approval as a means to member check (Merriam 2009).
As part of the individualized interview protocol, questions were constructed to coincide with Michael Fullan’s eight characteristics of effective school districts that he believes generates widespread and potentially sustainable capacity to raise the bar and close the gap of student achievement. The eight characteristics are as follows: Focus, Data Leadership, Resources, Reduce Distractors, Community, Communication and Esprit de Corps. The purpose of the questions, which focused on different aspects of educational leadership, was to obtain an understanding of unique experiences and perceptions of these educational leaders. It is important for this researcher to note that access to the Special Education Director was denied by High School “B” for the purpose of the individualized interview. The questions and the responses are provided below.

**High School “A” Individualized Interviews**

**Focus:**

**In regards to RtI, describe your school’s “goal(s).”**

**High School “A” Assistant Principal:** Last year, what we started off with was really a building consensus, kind of getting a sense of where we were at, what we knew, what we didn’t know, so we developed a survey. It was distributed to both high schools, but we started it here. The survey was based on, it included questions about their knowledge of the tiers, their knowledge of interventions, their beliefs, their perceptions of RtI, and what their professional training experiences have been. We were able to aggregate all the scores from the teachers, but also break them down into departments as well, to see where people were at. Some of the things we found were surprising in that some departments really had very little knowledge of RtI or they didn’t quite understand
what it is. Other departments were a little bit further along, like our math and English departments, which was good news. Really last year in terms of goals was just a consensus and also developing an RtI team, a district team. That was a big goal and I know that’s one of your questions. I don’t mean to bounce right to is, but that is one of our goals; where we were at, a multi-year plan, a team, which consisted of myself, I lead that team. We are in concert with our sister school. The district level consisted of all the department directors, specifically ELL, math, English, science, social studies and special education. We’ve included reading specialists, our psych/social workers, and our Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, who have been part of those meetings as well. We meet monthly with specific agendas and a sense of what’s happening.

Also one of goals too, part of this year is that each department has its own School Improvement Plan, so starting last year we made them complete the triangle that everybody knows. A different spin – some people have an upside-down triangle, regular triangle, whatnot, but we had them list the interventions by tier. What they had available and what the teachers were doing, and that actually was mandated by the district to be included in the School Improvement Plan. So regardless of people were at and what they were doing, some triangles were pretty empty, some a little more complete than others. It was really to get it on people’s radar that, you know what, this is not a…because one of the things that we got from the survey was, oh, this will come and go. It’s a fad. Having it in the School Improvement Plan gave it a little more weight, that this is something that
people really need to pay attention to, to get a better understanding of what it is and how the departments fit into that framework.

High School “A” Special Education Director: The approach that I participate in is more at the department level and each department identifying what’s important through professional learning communities to distinguish tiers and what interventions look like at tiers for specific departments. My overarching goal, however, for the building would be for special ed to follow Tier 3 and not be a Tier 3 intervention.

Describe how a classroom teacher’s knowledge of RtI relates to student achievement.

High School “A” Assistant Principal: It’s everything, right? It’s a general education initiative. I think initially some of the perceptions were that it’s a special education initiative, kind of a special education grand scheme to avoid kids being found eligible for special education and trying to decrease the amount of referrals and whatnot, which, that has happened as a result of what we’re doing. In terms of how critical it is it’s the tier 1. I think the gen ed teacher, which is Tier 1, the teacher effect on learning, is the number one factor influencing kids and how well they do. And I think within an RtI framework, high-quality instruction, high-quality interventions, looking at data, looking at kids grades, their percentages, making sure teachers are data literate and using that data to make good decisions for kids in terms of what interventions are appropriate, how to differentiate, they’re the most critical pieces of the model – the gen ed teachers. That’s really getting them to understand their place, and for the most part a lot of the best practices they engage in, they’ve been doing it for years anyway. So it’s getting them to
understand that RtI is not something that’s being imposed on them or it’s another “thing” to do. A lot of times it’s just sitting down with the departments and talking to teachers to hear about what their practices are. Really, to be honest, they have been engaging in differentiation of instruction, different ways to present information to kids. Also, it’s not only academically, but also behaviorally in the classroom as well because there some teachers with their masters who have been able to balance both the academic differentiation as well as the behavioral expectations for kids in the class, so they’re absolutely critical.

High School “A” Special Education Director: The knowledge of it doesn’t necessarily relate to student achievement because you can know about something and it not impact students at all, right? But what has been most helpful, especially to the special education department, is knowing that we have other resources outside of our department for Tier 3. For example we have a case of a student who is a junior. She’s in a reading class; she doesn’t necessarily need to be in this reading class, but her reading is depressed. She’s a student with a learning disability and a reading need, so there were some concerns about whether or not if what we’re doing is working. So we had a gen ed building-wide reading specialist assess her, which is clearly a Tier 3 because it’s one-to-one. Really parse out for us the specific skills that she can do, that she is not doing, and look at those in isolation so that we can have some applicability to our instruction, and that was outstanding. It was extremely time consuming, but it was so worthwhile because it told us as a department that the placement was appropriate, even though the kid doesn’t need another reading credit to graduate, even though she could be taking an elective.
Because she has this reading need, we’re not just holding her. What we’re doing is making a difference.

**Who ultimately is responsible for making decisions related to RtI?**

*High School “A” Assistant Principal:* You want a lot of people responsible. Our goal this year – you had mentioned our district goal and I talked about what we did last year – this year our goal is the infrastructure of RtI. What I mean by that is really decentralizing the power. Decentralizing the decision making ability and what I mean by that is I want the responsibility to be diffused. Dealing with complex kids, complex learning profiles, you can’t have a top-down approach. It’s not going to work. It’s going to be ineffective and it’s not broadening the circle of the people involved in this. I want a lot of people part of the decision making process because that creates buy-in from the staff and again, that takes away that this is another thing that’s imposed upon us. So decentralizing that power, what does that look like specifically? This year we’ve really worked on developing PLCs within individual departments in linking departments together in support. For instance, math, for Algebra I, freshman algebra, they have PLC that meets weekly. One of my social workers or a psychologist on that team and we just hired this year a math intervention specialist who is a paraprofessional, a former teacher. In this economy we hit a homerun with a certified teacher who is a real go-getter and is really well-versed in the problem solving model.

*High School “A” Special Education Director:* The team. There is a gen ed building-wide team called Review Board and that team consists of a couple of administrators, myself included, but also special services people, teachers and curriculum
directors from math and English. So when cases are presented, usually a counselor or a dean will bring a case to Review Board, we talk about the kid and then, we as a team, decide where he is on the RtI Continuum and what else needs to happen on that continuum. And in the department, very similar. You know, all of our kids get specialized instruction if they have an IEP. But then, based on their individual needs, if there’s a reading need then we decide which reading intervention, in addition to instruction, that kid will get. So it’s a team decision.

**What drives the decision-making?**

High School “A” Assistant Principal: Basically, data has been everything that has been driving all of our goals and decisions.

High School “A” Special Education Director: The presenting factors of the kid – whatever that kid’s profile looks like.

**Data:**

**Describe how your school uses data to improve student achievement.**

High School “A” Assistant Principal: I think what’s nice about sharing the decision making is all the teachers coming in, bringing in kids, looking at data, looking at their grades, grade distribution – you know, how many Ds, how many Fs – who’s passing. That’s a good way for classroom teachers – we talked about earlier how are they important or how is their knowledge of RtI important – it’s important because they always look at and they are always revising their curriculum based on what kids are actually learning, their outputs. That’s been a great process; it’s a work in progress because this is unnatural for the teachers really at a high school level. At the grammar
school level, I think you have certain grade levels meet, subject areas. It’s much easier, the infrastructure. Here it’s a little bit more difficult to find time in the day for them to meet, but we’ve done that and it’s really decreased a lot of our failure rate as a result. We really started this process last year and kind of piloted it, but seeing the teachers meet right out here in the hallway, or actually there is a conference room down the hallway, that’s an example of who is ultimately responsible for the decision making. I will sit with the directors and kind of come up with a vision together about what we want to do and what we want to accomplish, but that was really vetted out last year with the five-year multi-year plan about what we wanted for each year to have accomplished. For instance, you mentioned EPAS, a couple years ago we developed a local growth model here with EPAS data. so starting with the Explore test all the way through ACT we can take our kids’ performance, our kids, not from the state or national standardization, but our kids within this township who attend our schools, we can say with confidence, depending on what they score on the Explore, for the most part we know what their score is going to be in four years. And what we found from that is that we have four grade weight in terms of classes, grade weight 5, 4, 3 and 2 – grade weight 3 being our college prep, regular level, 4 honors, 5 AP. We were finding that kids that were scoring with certain Explore scores, let’s say 14 or 13 and below, that they were coming in our – what we did a couple years ago – they were coming in with our math and in our grade weight 2 – there was a 6% chance of them ever achieving college readiness standards. English was a little bit higher, science was very similar. So we knew that what we had right now we could predict that in four years where they were going to be and it wasn’t acceptable. Also with that data
too, we disaggregated it and our data really mirrored on a national level the disproportionality. We were seeing that Asians and whites were scoring significantly higher than our blacks and Latinos. So not only did we see that kids coming in with a certain Explore score were not going to be college recruit ready, we also saw that certain ethnic and minority groups were also not going to be able to achieve what we wanted them to achieve. So really what we did here was, as what we would say here, is alter their academic destiny. We restructured, we’re restructuring, resequencing all of our departments, most notably math, English, and science this year. We’re using summer school quite a bit as a way to get kids ahead. So kids who take algebra in 8th grade for example and pass the proficiency exam here, because the Explore doesn’t really test algebra, we give them a proficiency exam so they have a full year of 8th grade algebra, pass the proficiency exam, and freshman year they start geometry. So we start them on a path towards more rigor and they have more access to AP courses and more advanced classes. For kids that are not, there is mandatory summer school if they score at a certain level. Mandatory, in reading and math. So they’re here. We had 2,200 kids here this past summer. That’s the same size as our sister school – here at High School A, we have 2,700 students. So really summer school as part of the RtI process has become our third semester. Whereas before it was a credit recovery, it still is for certain kids, it’s also a way to advance. There have been a lot of discussions, that’s why the teams and the PLCs are so critical because you’ve got to get buy-in for that. Some teachers think that’s great. Others think six weeks in bio is not enough to prepare them for chemistry, physics and what’s beyond. So, there are so many different moving parts and so many things to talk
about, but I think it all starts with data, because with data you can then look at things and
things are very explicit. There are things that you think you know, but then when you see
the data it may change the way you think. It goes from a subjective lens to a very
objective data driven decision, and that’s a great starting point so I think using ePass data,
grade distributions, and when I say grade distributions I’m talking about within particular
classes and courses. If it’s global studies, if it’s Algebra I, if it’s English I – those grades,
that progress report at quarter or semester – are they falling? Are 80% of those kids
passing? If only 50 or 60 are, it might be a curricular issue. So that’s why the district
teams will look at that data and challenge each other in a professional way about where
we’re at. Then from those meetings, they’ll work with individual departments with their
teacher leaders, so there’s a lot going on.

High School “A” Special Education Director: For those kids who – well, we use a
lot of different data. What we do is take a look at a kid who’s being progress monitored
in any particular area. Let’s just use reading and math, alright, or kids who have reading
and math needs. So, if a kid is in a special ed reading class and we’re giving him the
intervention we use, Reading Plus, and he gets that three times a week, so we have these
data points on him, by skill, by accuracy and all these other areas that we take a look at.
Once we gather sufficient data, which we consider to be at least six data points, we begin
the conversation. If this kid is achieving at the rate, you know, following that trend line,
that expected trend line, then we start discussing whether or not this is a kid who, first,
we can cut back the intervention a little bit. And secondly, is this a kid who could make it
in a gen ed reading class with supports?
Leadership:

How were members of your school’s RtI team selected? Did members volunteer?

Were members chosen?

High School “A” Assistant Principal: We relied and leaned on the psychs and social workers more heavily just because of their backgrounds, they’re more problem solving in theory and orientation and what they do. And teaming is very natural, so I saw them as my point people and I got them trained. Then, I assigned each one of those psychs and social workers to a department. Then they started working with their directors and their teacher leaders on the process and that’s kind of like the C to the PLC. So then, they would then say let’s meet, if it’s once a week, bi-monthly, once a month, obviously the more frequent the better, but you have to take baby steps. You can’t enter it into the schedule if it doesn’t allow for a lot of flexibility or a lot of time for teaming. We have to be cognizant of that and work around it.

High School “A” Special Education Director: I don’t know.

What training have the members of this team received in regards to RtI?

High School “A” Assistant Principal: Professional training, professional development, I should mention that in year one, like last year when we talked about consensus and beliefs and perceptions of RtI, the surveys and whatnot, prior to that year and ongoing last year was professional development. That was provided through state conferences, through iASPIRE or VanGuard. Our teams would meet at their administrative buildings once a month and it really started with our psych/social workers and counselors. The training through iAspire, through state conferences and also the
national conferences like NASP (National Association for School Psychs), they’ll do a lot of work with RtI. They always have. I think in years past I’ve brought them to presentations by George Batsch, Kevin Feldman from Oregon or out west, I don’t remember where he was from. That was out in Naperville a couple of years ago and I’d bring big teams in and to be honest, it was a little unnatural. Not unnatural, but it was a lot on the academic side of RtI. So my psychs and social workers, their wheel house, their areas of specialty are the social/emotional/behavioral side. So I got them to really buy-in and kind of stretch beyond what their typical scope of responsibilities were and utilize their strengths, which was problem-solving, facilitation, documentation, use of data and then they didn’t have to be the experts in the academics, they could be the experts in the facilitation of the problem-solving model but they could teach that. I shouldn’t say teach it, model it for the teachers and for the most part, they get that model as well, especially the science teachers. And then once they start realizing that RtI is not this imposition, another thing to do, it’s really kind of natural what they’re already doing and it’s collaboration with each other and talking about kids and looking at what they’re doing and talking about their practices. It creates a different climate and I think instead of one that’s top-down, you guys are going to do this, now that why I’m talking about the diffuse responsibility. It’s beautiful when it happens. We’re getting there.

High School “A” Special Education Director: I don’t know.

Resources:

How do you support this initiative within your school?
High School “A” Assistant Principal: I remember talking to [a local expert in RtI] once years ago, but he always said five to seven years is kind of how long it really takes to get it up and running and I’m like, oh my gosh, that’s way too long, there’s no way. He’s right. It really is, especially at a high school. It really is a climate/culture shift. But you have to have also directors as well who are willing to be flexible and, you know, we’re fortunate. And then what happens is, we concentrated on the departments and the leaders and the teachers that wanted to engage. The ones who we sensed some resistance initially, you know what, we’ll get to that. What’s happening is, there’s a tipping point here so ELL is engaged, social studies is engaged, math is engaged, and English. They’re in different places, but they’re moving. Now science is like, wait a minute, I’ve got to hitch my wagon to this because I don’t want to be the one that’s left out. So now they’ve reached out to us in student services about starting a PLC, even questions like, “Now, what is a PLC, is it two people, is it three people?” So they’re asking questions now and that was really what we had hoped would happen but we really, initially put all our efforts and time into the departments and individuals that were willing to engage in the process knowing that hopefully, predictably, other departments would follow. I also think that in any high school you have to have very strong administrative support. I think you have to have a plan, a multi-year plan. It doesn’t happen all at once; you take baby steps in the approach because you’ll overwhelm people.

High School “A” Special Education Director: I’m making sure that the tools that we use to base our decisions on are used with fidelity.
Describe the types of staff development opportunities available to staff. Describe any opportunities staff members have to demonstrate their expertise.

High School “A” Assistant Principal: What’s happening now, I forgot to mention, and it’s a big piece. Now you have, when it’s diffused, you start having teacher leaders teaching teachers. So on Institute Days now we’re having sessions on problem solving, on RtI academic infrastructure, on the behavioral aspects of RtI, which I haven’t talked about much yet. I’ve concentrated more on the academic end. We didn’t want to do everything at once. I thought on the behavioral piece we did pretty well so far, but our focus was on the academic end of it and getting the departments and working within that framework and getting the tiers established. And also too, while that Tier 1 is critical, I know I’m jumping around but there’s so much, that we were able to get common core, has been a big part of this. Our classes and teachers are now teaching, not the same way, but they’re teaching the expectations of, one kid what they’re learning in one course, if it’s Algebra I is not going to be different in another classroom by another teacher. So that’s been a big difference. And also too, we have all common final exams.

High School “A” Special Education Director: We’ve had this year already an ALIX training. That’s one of our math interventions, so we offered a half-day training on ALIX for teachers. We had an Aims-Web, which is what we use for writing. We do a cross-period so it’s a one period training and we offered it periods 1-4. Contractually, none of our teachers are scheduled for four periods so on their open period they can come and learn about Aims-Web, how to set it up, how to make class lists, and we’ve also done the same thing for STAR, which is progress monitoring in reading and math. So ALIX
and Aims-Web and Reading Plus are interventions. STAR we use for progress monitoring. All of the trainings I mentioned were led by staff members.

**What do you think is most important in the development of a teacher?**

_**High School “A” Assistant Principal:**_ Well, it’s ongoing, right? I think depending on where a teacher is in their career, there are going to be different levels of importance for a first or second year teacher, versus maybe a teacher in year three, four or five than for a teacher in year six, seven and eight and moving on. I think depending on where they’re at in their career what’s important is going to differ. I think the first couple years is more about survival, it’s more about adapting, it’s more about knowing what they know. Maybe their focus is more on being liked by the kids and that’s where they get their self-esteem as a teacher. Maybe that has more weight to it than maybe the effectiveness and the outputs. And then as they move along – think about the hierarchy – Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs – I think you can look at that the same as for a teacher. So once those safety concerns – and there’s tenure and there are all types of variables. Here in our building we use Peer Assistance and Review, the PAR model, for our teachers in their first and second year where there are consulting teachers working with the teachers there and they’re evaluated 10 or 15 times a year, getting constant feedback. So what’s most important here for the first two years of a teacher’s existence is just establishing that rapport and relationship with their consulting teacher and their department. Years after they get through that process they become more confident in their teaching abilities. Maybe you’re looking at more of their instructional delivery and looking at more of the kids and what they’re getting out of the lessons and what they’re actually learning. Then
as you move down the line as teachers get more confident and become more expert, maybe they’re giving back. They’re involved with committees; they’re working on RtI and trying to be more collaborative. And then certainly, hopefully, and I have a psych background, as they get toward the end of their career they’re looking back to the profession, either teaching or mentoring and reinventing themselves that way.

**High School “A” Special Education Director**: Most important in the development of a teacher…honestly, soft skills. I believe that I can pick up a math book – I don’t have a math background – but I can pick up a math book and a math curriculum and if that’s all I do all day long, I can train myself to become an excellent math teacher. But – I can’t pick up any book and learn how to connect with kids, with colleagues, engage them in the process and make it meaningful. Books can’t teach me how to do that.

**What do you think is most important in the development of a leader?**

**High School “A” Assistant Principal**: In the development of a leader I think you have to have a very strong mentor. You have to have someone who – it’s the same thing as a teacher. You go through stages as an administrator. My first couple years as a principal at an alternative high school I was drowning because I didn’t know all the ins and outs, the technical aspects of the job let alone the adaptive piece to it. I had to rely a lot on a mentor within the district to bounce things off of. When you’re drowning, treading water would be a good day! I think that’s one element to it, but I think you can put the most weight into that. In terms of development of a leader that’s most important but also surrounding them with not just one mentor, but also a good administrative team that’s supportive and that meets frequently. If there’s collaboration and a sense of
community and family that’s part of the culture and fabric of a district as a beginning leader in the development, I think that’s critical.

High School “A” Special Education Director: Most important in developing leadership is being willing to aggressively mentor. I’ve had a few mentors, not many, but one or two throughout the course of my career who weren’t afraid to hurt my feelings and because of that, there’s no doubt that I became better. It goes beyond just suggesting, oh, maybe next time why don’t you try, or, you know, it probably would have worked differently had you said this. But no, they’ve actually cared enough to say, “that really sucked”. You know…”you should have said”, “next time do”…It’s aggressive, it hurts, but it’s what you need to start really getting to where you need to be. That’s good leadership.

Reduce Distractors:

What, if anything, got in the way or made it difficult to move forward with your development and implementation of RtI?

High School “A” Assistant Principal: There’s no doubt about it, the school day stinks here. I think we do the best we can. RtI, I’ve talked a lot about the academic piece, and our next phase that we are moving into is the behavioral/social/emotional piece. We have a lot of ideas and right now we are looking at purchasing a survey assessing the climate and culture of the building so we can start identifying where we want to apply our resources, the social/emotional piece. But the school day is the biggest hindrance because we only have a 10-minute homeroom and it’s hard to deliver any type of social/emotional learning curriculum through that. Also, the teachers teach five courses with preps and a
lunch and their open preps may not be consistent with other teachers teaching the same course. So we’ve had to rely a lot on our late starts and ideally what we need to do here is really create a schedule where once a week there’s a late start possibly at the beginning or the end of the day. Obviously, that would have to be a committee with students, parents, coaches, and look at all the variables to see what would be most convenience, but at least that once a week it would be established there where these PLCs would be natural.

During the school day there’s no room and that’s really the biggest hindrance. A lot of people say we’ll add to the staff, this or that, but that comes in time. I think everything comes in thirds. You have a third that’s going to be on – everyone’s with you – they think alike and they’re motivated the same. You’re going to have a third that are kind of looking around not sure which way they’re going to go or be influenced by – are they going to be influenced by the go-getters and the more progressive, or are they going to be influenced by the bottom third, the naysayers, the disgruntled, the mediocre teachers, the ones that are checking in right at bell and leaving right at bell where there’s very little investment outside of the 42-minute periods they have. That’s a hindrance but I think it’s secondary to the school day, because those folks will come along. There’ll be a tipping point and we’ll keep broadening that circle of individuals that’ll be involved in this. At some point they’ll just have to because they’ll be the only ones. And I think also too it will be interesting as we see how Senate Bill 7 and PERRA affects some of those bottom third teachers and how that motivates them, but that’s yet to be seen. We’re starting to see the affects of that now, actually, where it’s more the performance of teachers and the kids in the classroom, it’s hey, I’ve been here for 20 years, you can’t talk to me or tell me
what to do. So our school day, just to get back to that, at some point we’re going to put together a committee made up of administrators, staff, support staff, parents, teachers and community people just to get a sense of looking at different models. Is it block scheduling, is it 50 minute classes, is it a period – 50 minutes, just kind of a basic, how much is the homeroom, are we going to have an advisory model here where you have a 20-25 minute homeroom each day and you can infuse post-secondary curriculum, social/emotional curriculum, community service curriculum? And we have a big student mentoring curriculum here as well where our juniors and seniors come into the homerooms and work with the younger kids. So we have a lot of things we can do and infuse, but the school day is just horrendous.

Community:

How has the school-community as a whole supported the development and implementation of RtI? Describe how you might utilize community resources to benefit your students.

High School “A” Assistant Principal: How do you utilize community resources? I think you have to, especially now with the economy and funding being cut, you have to be able to mobilize everyone here and come together, so what we’ve done is establish a Township Youth Coalition. We meet once a month – that’s the Police Department, that’s the library, that’s us, the district, it’s the Food Pantry. It’s all the different agencies, Response Center, Turning Point, peer services – it’s all the community resources that we have. We meet once a month at the district office or the police station and talk about what’s going on and what’s happening in the community, where things are at and how
can we better support each other. And then we’ll invite parents into that if they have concerns. So it’s creating partnerships within the community and I think that’s how you can advance RtI, but you’re not calling it RtI. You’re developing relationships and partnerships that will help for better student outcomes for all our kids. Also the different ethnic backgrounds – we’re very diverse here and we highlight each year different ethnic backgrounds in terms of – its Greek, Syrian – and I think that’s how you build a good partnership with the community and move RtI through – it’s through relationships and partnerships.

High School “A” Special Education Director: Well, it’s a state mandate, so that’s what we talk about. We must have an RtI Plan and we must be able to articulate what it looks like and we do that across department and we try to keep that fairly consistent as a building. Our stance is this is what we need to be doing, this is the direction that we’re going in and these are the tools that we’ve selected at this time to use.

Communication:

How do you ensure a consistent message is communicated to all stakeholders in regards to RtI?

High School “A” Assistant Principal: We don’t talk to the community and use the words RtI or MTSS, Multi-Tiered Systems of Support. We’re not going to get technical, but we’ll talk to the community about the restructuring of our curriculum in terms of lower-weighted classes. We’ll talk about how we’re addressing their child’s social/emotional needs and behavioral needs through our different initiatives and programming efforts. We’ll never come out and say, this is RtI, this is what we’re doing
– there’s no such thing as that – it’s ridiculous and I hear a lot of educators talk about that. It’s not a thing you do, oh, we’re doing RtI. I think you talk to the community about the initiatives in ways that are understandable and obviously measurable, that’s a big piece of it, but using the local growth data, using EPAS data, as now the state would call Tier 1 type of data, and also talking about what we’re doing as a district in terms of our common assessments, our common finals. We educate the community through our parent workshops, we have freshman through senior nights here, and we have coffee with the counselors, coffee with the principal. Any kind of way and avenue that we can interact and interface with the community we talk about these initiatives, but not so much in RtI. We’ll say there’s a framework, and this is how it looks, and it encompasses a lot of things and I think that’s how you involve them.

High School “A” Special Education Director: Mostly in department meetings, goal setting meetings, day-to-day conversations through email. Being in charge of special ed we have a lot of IEP meetings so teachers know that the expectation is for them to come with some evidence that we are monitoring our kids’ progress and that we’re using that data to make instructional decisions. So in our department, probably more than anywhere else, we get many opportunities to do that because we’re always meeting about kids.

Esprit de Corps:

Talk about the community you have tried to create among your staff in regards to RtI.
High School “A” Special Education Director: I think we’ve hit on this, but it’s mostly about making sure we’re using the resources in a meaningful way. So if I say when you come to the table we should have six data points, I don’t want to see them Monday through Friday of last week are five, you know, but that the tools are bigger than the mandate. That’s the biggest piece for me – the tools are bigger than the mandate. It’s feudal. The kids already don’t like it but they might like it more if we figure out how to engage them and show them that the closer they get to the target the closer they get to gen-ed.

Describe a moment you were most proud of in establishing RtI in your high school and why.

High School “A” Assistant Principal: I’ve got to be honest, it just happened the other day when I saw all of the geometry teachers out here in a circle, they couldn’t find a conference room because they were all taken for whatever reason, but they were out here in a circle with one of our staff members from student services, all sitting there talking about kids that they’re having difficulty with, either academically the kids were struggling, or behaviorally. I couldn’t believe it because I’ve been in the district here since 1999, starting as a school psychologist and high schools are notorious for operating in silos and kind of working on appointment-based – you know, you check in, you check out, you come in, you leave. To see them do that because, really, we’ve always talked about it and we’ve always said it would be so great to work with the teachers because a lot of the issues that come to us, there are academic deficits. Typically, if a kid has a disability it’s in multiple classes or multiple areas; it’s writing, reading, and it’s going to
be in math. We’re not just seeing specific dyslexia or a specific dysgraphia (sp) or dyscalculia – clinical terms. But they are much more complicated, they present a much more complicated picture and to see the teachers there, I couldn’t believe it to be honest with you. Especially the math department – holy smokes.

High School “A” Special Education Director: We have a kid in one of our reading classes and we had his IEP meeting a couple weeks ago. At that meeting he mentioned how he wants to be in gen ed reading – he thinks he can handle it. So I said let’s see what the data looks like and, sure enough, the data was there, the teachers talked not just about his ability to demonstrate growth on a progress monitoring tool but about his executive functioning, the work habits he brings to class every day, how he follows up, how he comes prepared. So this is a kid who, at semester, we will change his schedule and he’ll be in a gen ed reading.

High School “B” Individualized Interview

Focus:

In regards to RtI, describe your school’s “goal(s).”

High School “B” Associate Principal: We have a very, very strong push toward RtI, but I think it’s also, I’m a big systems and organizational person, and I think that it’s masked amongst our PBIS efforts because we believe that student behavior is so strongly connected to the tier 1 - if you have a good person, if you have the resources, if you have good collaborative instruction with your teachers, and parents and community members are involved, a lot of people call that RtI, but the reason people get nervous is because we also have PBIS and many schools in Illinois weren’t so much into PBIS so every was just
RtI. So we really see this as a huge umbrella. We have associate principals of curriculum and instruction, and people think curriculum and instruction are so separate from, for example student services, but they are so interconnected. Everything revolves around both of those things and they always end up in the same place. So that’s what we talk about a lot, that there’s not such a difference for us. We definitely would consider that RtI. The school goals are exactly the same as the district goals, so we’re constantly monitoring student success by the number of A’s, B’s and C’s. We consider D’s and F’s failures and we do weekly eligibility reports for all of our kids, not just our athletes or kids in clubs, it’s for everybody. Every Monday we have that data and we have those pinpoints of where kids are at because of these assessments along the way. So every Monday every teacher has that information and so does our, what we call our early intervention teams, they work in the student services area, that consist of a special education teacher, a counselor, either social worker or psych, and a dean. We have six teams and they track those kids, and they’ll have those kids for four years, so they really get to know these kids because they’re assigned by counselors so our counselors keep our kids for four years. They monitor that progress, and then they have weekly meetings with interventions.

**Describe how a classroom teacher’s knowledge of RtI relates to student achievement.**

High School “B” Associate Principal: I think even with the new evaluation system in Illinois, teachers are becoming more and more responsible for tracking the data of all their students. I think that the classroom teachers now are into RtI, I think they are well-
versed in RtI, I think it was a hard concept for a lot of high school folks to grasp a few years back, but I do believe that all teachers are collecting data, they’re making those conference calls home and they understand that we have a system in place where we have the Tier I, the Tier 2 and the Tier 3 interventions for our students. But I think that’s a priority and I think that’s where we’ve shifted, [the principal] and I have become very, very academic focused, I’m not sure that was truly, like I said you had some PBIS issues so they were dealing with discipline more than they were addressing the Tier 1. There was a lot going on in the Tier 2 and 3 but not so much completely in the overall curriculum for the school. So the teachers have a broad knowledge of RtI and how that relates to that student achievement now, knowing that it begins and it really ends, because even when we get to Tier 3 and we’re doing a special lab and we’re doing time studies and behavior individual plans at the Tier 3 level, they’re so intricately involved, that I think they have a really clear understanding of it.

**Who ultimately is responsible for making decisions related to RtI?**

High School “B” Associate Principal: Here at High School B, we do have a data retreat team and we meet two to three times a year, looking at the data of the building, so immediately when we came in a year ago July, we had a data retreat and really looked at where our kids were as far as truly, not only comparing to the rest of the schools in the district, but also across the state. We also have to consider socioeconomic and cultural differences, because we have a large ESL population.
What drives the decision-making?

High School “B” Associate Principal: Our decision making is it’s always data driven. It’s always based on PLT discussions and looking at grades and looking at trends. Everything from looking at summer school enrollments, what we do in transition programs and also in math, and follow them to see how they’re doing. A lot of times administrators and divisions are alerting us to things, and then when we come to the bigger meetings, like the data retreats or student services upstairs, we know how to operate.

Data:
Describe how your school uses data to improve student achievement.

High School “B” Associate Principal: We do a lot of articulation meetings with our sender schools, so prior to those students even coming over to our building we know some of their deficiencies or some of their strengths and we really play up on those. We have, for example, 20 identified freshmen coming over that aren’t ESL, that aren’t special ed who have that support already that we’ve identified already and put into our academic resource center where they get one-on-one help for 35 minutes every other day. So we are kind of targeting our efforts and teachers are really, really driving that. We have an RtI facilitator, but that person is only .4 fte and she works closely with me so we’re monitoring some of that data. I also have another teacher who’s working on his administrative internship and he’s working with me in my academic resource center collecting data on kids.
We track everything that we do, for example last year I started the Saturday Success Academy and I have that from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Last year I had it 14 Saturdays, this year 10 Saturdays, and I’ve strategically placed where they are in the quarter or where they are before finals and we average 55 students on Saturdays but it’s also gotten up to 130 students at times. I hire teachers, and this is one of those other things, again, like I was saying, if you don’t meet and exceed the State of Illinois would pay for these data retreats. So that’s the cool thing, but we may not have these monies anymore. The other thing I think that happens is if you’re a Title I school. For example three of our schools in our district are Title I, three are not. So you do have those low income students, you do have the at-risk or identified but money does come with that. So we’re lucky in that we have these intensified efforts that when we came over and I knew that we needed them we put them in place immediately. Say for example, all my freshmen who are 14 or below on the Explore Test are required to take three weeks of summer school in a language arts transition class and in that class we teach Read 180. The other thing is, I’m real familiar with writing grants at a lot of places I’ve been, so I know you have to have the research-based curriculum in order to get federal funding. So the Title I pays for our Read 180, so our kids immediately coming over as freshmen are double-blocked in English if they score 14 or below on their Explore. I think we’ve moved into 12 actually, because we’ve been finding out that sometimes when we went to 14 those kids could handle more. So anything below a 12, they are locked into a two-block English class where they have Read 180 one block and then they have their regular English curriculum for freshmen. The other thing that we do is we find that if they are
scoring low in their math, we double-block them in math. Because on our block schedule, if you don’t see those kids every day, that’s a problem. Our low math kids who have to take the two years in pre-algebra or they’re just scoring lower as sophomores; we have all those kids double-blocked so those kids we see every day instead of every other day. But they are identified early on, when they are freshmen so, hopefully, just like our ELL kids are too, not all of them of course but the ones who scored lower are double-blocked so we’re hoping that they’re exiting those programs by the time they’re sophomore or juniors. The Saturday Academy adds to that because then they can come on Saturdays and get that extra help they might need in other areas that they’re not double-blocked in and that’s working really well. The IT team is watching that very closely and they monitor everything. We’re really lucky, we just got a new system called Tynet; it used to be called Maximus. Maximus is the data mining part of it and also our special education piece, you know, our IEPs, it also does data mining so we’re just going into that this year where we’ll be able to track those kids and mine that data for test scores, grades, etc. all four years that they’re here. It’s also a discipline tracking system, so that will be nice for all of our teachers. We’re going to train them how to use it on Institute Day, October 29th.

Our math teachers are now doing an interdisciplinary curriculum and it’s really based upon Gil Bands of the CRS and they’re really moving away from the textbook algebra and geometry, and so they’re working with these kids based upon skill and improving on the skill as retesting so their assessment is looking much, much different than it did. That’s exciting. They need to put those benchmarks within Mastery Manager when tracking those kids. We constantly invest in CRS skills and the vocabulary in every
single curriculum. I do a lot of walk-ins and I never walk in a room where that learning objective or that target’s not on the board, and everybody knows what it is and it lists the CRS skills they’re working on that day. Kids are talking that language. And we just did something really cool, last year was our first year, we put in an ACT practice test because these kids had never had that and I said no, no, no, we’re going to be doing this in January, we’re going to do it through Mastery Manager, we’re going to get these reports, we’re going to sit down and break this out through our PLTs and then we’re going to do power point presentations for these kids and talk about, this is where you’re falling down, this is where you’re not getting it, this is what you need to know, and so each curricular area was put together by the division head and myself and also our assessment center and we show those power points to the kids. We also do academic forums here, like Tuesday I’ll be doing an academic forum for 45 minutes with all of our juniors, talking to them about exactly what the ACT is, what it looks like, what they’re going to be tested on, when are our testing days, what we’re going to be doing about this, why you need to know this, showing them Naviance, talking to them about that, because a lot of our kids get to the junior year and even though they don’t even realize what they’re learning in their classes and per se, the reason for it.

So you do these forums early on, and we do them every single year, with testing and working with the classes individually. But for those kids, leaving that forum they’ll receive their IACT from their sophomore year and they’ll look at all their answers. They’ll be taking that home and they’ll see every question they missed, with the correct answer. They come to Saturday Academy to get help like, why did I miss that question, I
don’t get it. We also take a week of curriculum time after they see those power points to work with those kids individually, when we have time to work on their homework or on those questions, because we’re in the block, remember, and they have time to ask us about those tests before they move on to the next test. Then they take ownership. We then send all of this home electronically to our parents through an email blast so that they’re seeing exactly what we told our kids today. The other thing we started this year is the AVID program, have you ever heard of that? It’s called Advancement Via Individual Determination – it’s across the country – again, remember I’m a grant person. This program is completely researched-based and it’s really good instruction; it’s amazing instruction. What you do is target kids in that middle population, maybe first-generation college students, students that are able to do it but, maybe for some reason they don’t have that support at home, or they come from a single parent home, lower socioeconomics, maybe minorities, but that’s not always true and we target 25 kids that absolutely would go over to the center schools, they have to interview in order to be part of this program, it’s a four-year program, and we literally work with them for four years and they have AVID instructors and we go to summer workshops and institutes for a week, where I have a team of 12 in every curriculum area that travel with me, and they also have a counselor and a social worker attached to them because some of these kids come with baggage, and we target them to get them to honors and AP classes and we target them to get them to college, with scholarships. We work in everything from Socratic seminars to Cornell notes to other strategic learning. We do tutorology with them so they have tutors that come in from the university every third meeting time to
tutor them so they have to come up with the essential questions and they work together as a group and a collaborator. You should look it up because it’s called Wicker, that’s the method, but you should look it up because what’s really cool about that is when it starts in your building it’s just good teaching and then everyone else starts doing it. So right now, every Institute Day we give our teachers an opportunity to teach each other, so we opened up the first day of school with Cornell notes and we showed them how to use Cornell notes. We didn’t show them last year, so this was a boost. You cannot believe how many kids in our building now are keeping binders (the AVID kids all have binders). We look at the Cornell notes, we’re looking at what they’re doing and how they’re taking those notes, and really they’re producing their own study guides if you look at how they do those Cornell notes. It’s kind of cool because that the best thing about AVID. Even though we start out with this group of 25, and we’ll have this class all the way through, next year we’ll have so many kids we’ll have two sections of AVID and we’ll really target those kids. We give them that boost and now we have parents calling us and asking, “Why can’t my kid be part of that?”

Every Friday we have a career speaker in, so imagine how many careers they’re going to see over four years? They also take college visits, one a quarter at least, so they are visiting college campuses all over the country. This is why I say that it’s not just an RtI thing because sometimes I think it’s so much bigger than that. Every freshman in this building is going to take a day-long trip to Northern Illinois to be on a college campus. We’ll break that up over three days because we can’t take them all at once, to make sure they get that experience. Every year we’ll do that with each of our classes because these
kids don’t understand what the end is. Bringing a student services background to curriculum instruction is what RtI is all about. Because people that have that background and know what student services needs and know what special education kids need and know what 504 kids have done, that really brings into the forefront what we need to do at the curriculum level. It’s funny, being in this position 30 years ago was much, much different. It was all about master scheduling, making sure we had textbooks and doing the different things that we did, now it’s taken on a whole other realm of, you’ve got to know all that student services material too as far as doing a behavior plan or why are we doing that resource study or why are we targeting “that” intervention for “these” kids. I think that’s been very, very helpful.

**Leadership:**

How were members of your school’s RtI team selected? Did members volunteer?

Were members chosen?

   High School “B” Associate Principal: Our RtI team works very, very closely with our PBIS team and a lot of those people are the same members because we have that overlap on purpose. We also have this data retreat team and I would really consider those people our RtI team. We call them our data retreat because we’re constantly looking at that data and that is our focus. How do they become members? Did they volunteer for that team? We asked who would like to be part of that team and we looked at the people…No, back up, that’s how we were going to start. We started with our A Team and we said OK Division Heads, OK people, you guys know your teams, and remember, we were still new, the principal and I. Who are our strongest people that could really help us
with this? It’s not that we don’t have great people everywhere, but who could do this with us. Then we asked them, we didn’t make them, we just asked them if they would be a part of it. We didn’t get a single “no.” That’s how my AVID team together and that’s how we do everything in our building. We purposely start out with a target. Now do we disclude (sic) somebody that asks, hey, can I be a part of that team? We’ve not. We’ve not had to. They were also a part of that team. But we always start out that way because we want people to make the commitment. We want people who are going to come to those monthly meetings or go to that week-long summer institute and come to my monthly meetings, so we’re real sensitive to people’s time. We make sure that they know all of that before they commit.

**What training have the members of this team received in regards to RtI?**

**High School “B” Associate Principal:** As far as the RtI teams, all members have had some type of training. For example, our things blend. A lot of our people (RtI, data retreat) are extremely trained. We constantly do training at our Institute Days, about RtI, so we’re always weaving that back in. We always do rotations at our Institute Days where we’ll work with the staff in three different groups, mixing them up because we don’t want it departmental because we really do want things interdisciplinary. We always have three sessions and one of them always involves a piece of RtI. They are each an hour long.

**Resources:**

**How do you support this initiative within your school?**
High School “B” Associate Principal: We talked about the growth models here, we’re always talking about that not only for our kids but also for our staff, and we have made so many significant changes in our very first year. Everything from, we walked in here and half our teachers were still on desktops so within that time, immediately, everyone got laptops. That was kind of a change for them. The other thing that we did is, instructionally, as an administrative team, we go in for multiple-day observations. Last year, and remember, we’re talking blocks so it’s 90 minutes, but we would go in for two and three days in a row for all of our first, second and third year teachers. Not only was the Division Head doing it, I was doing it. And we continue to do that. With the new evaluation system we’re still there, even though we’re doing a lot of walk-throughs with the tenured people. The other thing that we do is we have a great mentoring program with the district and every new teacher gets a mentor for two years and it’s pretty intense. And also, within our building, we have a new teacher orientation a day before school starts, with two teacher leaders that lead that team. I’m part of a team, but I purposely step out of that team a lot and they have lunches once a month. Fox example, we have Parent/Teacher Conferences coming up so they’ll have lunch next week for an hour and they’ll talk about if they’re ready for Parent/Teacher Conferences, etc., and these are for brand new teachers. The more seasoned teachers, of course we do another program with them, with work with them on data, behavior, if that’s where we’re at. Every month has a topic so we continually work on that. Then again, like I said, Institute Days are always all about that. Half of Institute Day is totally dedicated to PLT work where they’re looking at
data or making those RtI interventions or decisions or what else we should be doing in order to create academic success here.

**Describe the types of staff development opportunities available to staff. Describe any opportunities staff members have to demonstrate their expertise.**

**High School “B” Associate Principal:** We constantly do training at our Institute Days, about RtI, so we’re always weaving that back in. We always do rotations at our Institute Days where we’ll work with the staff in three different groups, mixing them up because we don’t want it departmental because we really do want things interdisciplinary. We always have three sessions and one of them always involves a piece of RtI. They are each an hour long.

**What do you think is most important in the development of a leader?**

**High School “B” Associate Principal:** I think one of the biggest roles for them is looking at that data and working with their teachers as far as instruction, and the division heads have really headed that up. Another great thing about being in this district, than other places I’ve been in Illinois, is that you have six schools to draw from so we are like role models. If we see that a teacher might be struggling in a certain area, we are more than happy to talk about that growth model and send them to another building, or maybe we see an expert teacher, not only in another building but in another division here. We do a lot of those things with our teachers and make those purposeful suggestions to them so that they can get that support and also see how that plays in a classroom.
Reduce Distractors:

What, if anything, got in the way or made it difficult to move forward with your development and implementation of RtI?

High School “B” Associate Principal: We made a lot of changes last year and I think part of that was a little overwhelming to them, so this year we promised that all those things that we implemented are staying in place and I think that really builds that camaraderie and builds that trust. We told them that we knew it was a lot of change and they really bought into that. There were a lot of different interventions put in; the whole math curriculum changed, so that was a huge deal and they did that in August, a week before school started, so there was a lot of trust put into people. I think that we’re only going to build on that momentum because we didn’t put a lot of different things in this year. We’re staying with those things that we put in place and those programs and you’re going to see that in some of the graphics that I show you, that they feel much, much more comfortable about. The other thing is we have excellent teachers; we have AP readers in this school and they have presented at conferences. We constantly encourage our people to present at conferences and be district leadership team members and we have district teams that meet once a week. Everything from counselors to curriculum areas to division heads, and we purposely do that so that they can bring back new ideas or share what they’re doing and best practices. And that’s been very, very helpful for us.
Community:

How has the school-community as a whole supported the development and implementation of RtI? Describe how you might utilize community resources to benefit your students.

High School “B” Associate Principal: I would tell you that when I leave this place, I’m a freshman this year, I’m going to graduate in four years, (retiring), I think what I’ll leave this place with, and the best thing about the staff here, and I found this from the very first day I came in, I have never seen a staff that cares about kids more, that really, really truly cares, but I sometimes think what gets in the way when you’re like that, is you lose the academic focus. Not that I don’t think they’re good teachers – I don’t think that for one minute. What I mean by that is that sometimes when you look at these kids in that manner – and I am a counselor background, I am student services background, so I don’t mean any disrespect – but sometimes when you’re constantly looking at SEL, you know, social emotional learning, you think oh, they’re poor or, oh, they don’t have their homework because they have a bad home or, don’t be so hard on them, they don’t have any money or, you don’t understand their family – I want to say stop! Because they’ve lost focus of, that child would feel good if they were academically successful. It’s what comes first. So I think putting those supports in place, knowing that those people are there building those resiliency skills with these kids, I’m all about it. But I’m also about having hard conversations with them, their families. I never look at a kid, we all look at families here and we talk with them about how we can build the support because a lot of times, and that’s why we started AVID. I don’t think these parents don’t
want to be good parents. I don’t believe there’s a single parent out there that wants to be a bad parent. Sometimes I think they just don’t know how to help their child or, they’re a single parent mom and they’re working three jobs. So it’s how can we help these young people? With technology, that’s helped us a lot. We have more iPad pilots in High School B than any school in the district right now so a lot of our kids now have access to technology that maybe they didn’t have before. Maybe a family only has one computer at home and mom and three brothers are using it. So now we’re looking at these initiatives as far as having these iPads and these kids with technology and doing reverse classrooms, watch my lecture at home and they come in and we’ll work on those problems together that they didn’t get. We see a lot of that with our teachers and really, those teacher leaders writing those pilots and having that access to technology this year. I don’t want you to think for one minute that doing all that is easy because those teachers tell me now, I didn’t realize how hard this was going to be. It’s a lot of work in the front end, so these teachers that have been doing the iPad pilots for three and four years in district are really seeing the benefits. Again, we’re looking at the data, and those kids in the AP Spanish class with iPads, the data shows that they’re increasing their AP scores.

**Communication:**

**How do you ensure a consistent message is communicated to all stakeholders in regards to RtI?**

*High School “B” Associate Principal:* I think that we do it often, for example we have a newsletter, our student newspaper is excellent. They cover all of these agenda items. Everything that I’ve talked about has been covered in the student newspaper in the
last year. Everything. So kids automatically know about it. I also do an email blast every Friday on what we’re doing, what’s happening, and our principal is amazing. Amazing – at data. So we not only communicate almost weekly with our parents about what’s happening, we send charts and progress of everything that we do so that they’re aware of what we’re doing. And remember we don’t only do it once. We constantly do updates. Let me give you an example. We had a huge tardy problem and we watched the whole first semester. We had 200 students tardy every morning, so we watched and we said, what is wrong with this? So we made sure, even prior to second semester starting, about two months earlier, we talked to our students and we talked to our parents and we made sure we sent newsletter blasts, we made sure they were aware. We’re starting tardy tables the first day of second semester. Then you know every day we have tardy tables. We make the students immediately when they come in do a tardy. We were averaging 200, and that was what was reported, and you know, there’s always what’s not reported. This was a cultural shift – we have many – this was a cultural shift – so when we looked at that within that first week, it dropped to 22. Because they knew we were not playing. And then they knew that we were going to be consistent. Remember, that’s what I told you about our teachers – we promised them that we’re going to be consistent that we’re not going to get a new reading program, that we’re not going to stop tardy tables, or that we’re not going to have art, we can’t stop it, we’ve got to be diligent. So every morning we’re out there, administrator-wise, before that first bell rings, division heads, deans, assistant principals, we’re out there letting those kids know that we care about them and letting them know that it’s important to be on time. We don’t always just tell them the
negative part, “You’re late.” We tell them why it’s important to be on time and that this is a life-long deal. Do you know how many we average now? Fourteen. And that was last year. They knew it wasn’t going away. What was so funny was they asked me, “Are we going to do this next year?” I said, “You bet!” (laughs) “You bet.” Every day we’re going to be out here telling you how much we care about you. And parents know that too. We send them those charts and those graphs. We show them the rise in those taking AP and the AP scores. We show them the rise in the ACT kids, what they got on their practice ACT, after those interventions, and all those scores that rose for the real ACT and that PSAE. These are things that these parents have never had before. You know I don’t blame anyone for anything that wasn’t happening prior. I have this Division Head and I love her. She constantly says to me, “Lee we don’t know that. We didn’t know that.” I think what’s helpful is that we have these relationships where it’s so OK that you didn’t know that. There are a lot of things that I don’t know and they will help me. I think they know culture and I think that’s the biggest gift, that when you come into a building that people share what’s really, really good here. Like I told you from the very start, I have not met teachers that care more but it’s how we structure those interventions to make sure that we’re making those inroads to make these scores go up, to help these kids be academically responsible and get into colleges.

**Esprit de Corps:**

Talk about the community you have tried to create among your staff in regards to RtI.
High School “B” Associate Principal: Our principal is our leader. I look at her every day and I am in awe of her and that I’ve been so lucky because when you move as much as I do, you’re exposed to a lot of leaders. And one of the things I find about her is that she’s very data driven. She is constantly – I’ve got to tell you something funny about her – this year we kicked off with two Institute Days and she is all about the data. She is also about, I know people need to talk about things, that’s why we have all those working groups. We can look at the data, but I want to talk to you about it too. I don’t just want to show you something and think, it’s good. So it’s that growth model she always talks about. That very first Institute Day, of course she shows her graphs, she shows her charts and she always says to them, “Oh, I know you get tired of this,” but she had the cheerleaders sneak in, they got up on Institute Day, in the middle of our administrative presentation at the very first Institute Day to kick the school year off, and they did a cheer on data (both laugh) about how we score and why we should score that way. They made up a data cheer. That staff was up clapping - because this is what we have to do with data. We have to put a face on that chart. Because people get tire of data, but they never get tired of the students. So when those cheerleaders say, “This is why we need to do better, this is why we’re scoring better, and they spell out the word data – it was so clever!

Describe a moment you were most proud of in establishing RtI in your high school and why.

High School “B” Associate Principal: I think my most proud day was Institute Day, this year, that first one, when we shared with them their data. And I’m not going to tell you that everything was perfect, because it wasn’t. Oh my gosh, it wasn’t. But when
we looked at it and we had made huge gains – I’m going to share some graphs with you:
Enrollment in AP classes, math scores going up, EPAS scores up 6 points, looking at
English scores, looking at the growth in ACTs from the time they took the practice test
until they ended it, and then looking at the 30 plus club here last year and I posted it
everywhere in the building. Seeing that list grow last year from 41 to, already I have over
80 kids. I ended last year with 41 and already this year I have 80? That’s exciting! I think
you have to keep putting it in front of them. Another initiative my principal started when
she first came here. We walked into this building and it was very, very white. You come
in here now and we have hundreds of pictures of kids in action, studying, at conferences,
in fine arts, kids participating in the building, and those academic achievements all over.
They’re all over our building, so kids are reading about: That guy went to High School B
and he’s, you know, this now. He works for CNN. You know, cool things like that. They
see that career experience and that’s why Abbott is so valuable, they see what people can
become. A lot of times I think we all become what we know. I became a teacher because
I had a teacher inspire me. I became a principal because I had a principal inspire me. I
think, what would I have become if I would have met a financial planner, or an internist,
or a CPA or whatever. I think maybe I would have considered something else. I just want
to give them those opportunities.

Data Collection Summary from Semi-Structured Individualized Interviews

When analyzing the responses obtained from the three school leaders’ semi-
structured Individual Interviews compared to Michael Fullan’s eight characteristics of
effective school districts that he believes generates widespread and potentially sustainable
capacity to raise the bar and close the gap of student achievement, the following data were present. While the following tables do not represent every comment made during the semi-structured Individual Interviews, the information presented serve as a representative sample of the data displayed previously in this chapter as it relates to each of Fullan’s characteristics.

Table 3

*Interview Data Compared to Fullan’s Characteristics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fullan’s 8 Characteristics</th>
<th>High School “A” Assistant Principal</th>
<th>High School “A” Special Ed. Director</th>
<th>High School “B” Associate Principal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>-Building consensus.</td>
<td>- It was extremely time consuming, but it was so worthwhile because it told us as a department that the placement was appropriate.</td>
<td>- The school goals are exactly the same as the district goals, so we’re constantly monitoring student success...</td>
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<td></td>
<td>-[RtI] was mandated by the district to be included in the School Improvement Plan.</td>
<td></td>
<td>-[The principal] and I have become very, very academic focused.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Within an RtI framework, high-quality instruction, high-quality interventions, looking at data, looking at kids grades, their percentages, making sure teachers are data literate and using that data to make good decisions for kids in terms of what interventions are appropriate, how to differentiate, they’re the most critical pieces of the model – the generic teachers.</td>
<td></td>
<td>- The teachers have a broad knowledge of RtI and how that relates to that student achievement now, knowing that it begins and it really ends, because even when we get to Tier 3 and we’re doing a special lab and we’re doing time studies and behavior individual plans at the Tier 3 level, they’re so intricately involved, that I think they have a really clear understanding of it.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- A couple years ago we developed a local growth model here with EPAS data.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Our classes and teachers are now teaching, not the same way, but they’re teaching the expectations of, one kid what they’re learning in one course, if it’s Algebra I is not going</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fullan’s 8 Characteristics</td>
<td>High School “A” Assistant Principal</td>
<td>High School “A” Special Ed. Director</td>
<td>High School “B” Associate Principal</td>
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<td>to be different in another classroom by another teacher. So that’s been a big difference.</td>
<td>- The presenting factors of the kid [drive the decision-making]. - Once we gather sufficient data, which we consider to be at least six data points, we begin the conversation. - Being in charge of special ed we have a lot of IEP meetings so teachers know that the expectation is for them to come with some evidence that we are monitoring our kids’ progress and that we’re using that data to make instructional decisions. - Here at High School B, we have a data retreat team and we meet two to three times a year, looking at the data of the building…comparing to the rest of the schools in the district, but also across the state. - Our decision making is it’s always data driven. It’s always based on PLT discussions and looking at grades and looking at trends. - We track everything that we do… - We do a lot of articulation meetings with our sender schools, so prior to those students even coming over to our building we know some of their deficiencies or some of their strengths and we really play up on those.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Data</td>
<td>- Data has been everything that has been driving all of our goals and decisions. -[Departments] are always revising their curriculum based on what kids are actually learning, their outputs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>-Dealing with complex kids, complex learning profiles, you can’t have a top-down approach. - So that’s why the district teams will look at that data and challenge each other in a professional way about where we’re at. -We relied and leaned on the psychs and social workers more heavily just because of their backgrounds, they’re more problem solving in theory and orientation and what they do. And</td>
<td>- Most important in developing leadership is being willing to aggressively mentor. - Our RtI team works very, very closely with our PBIS team… - We’re constantly looking at that data and that is our focus. - A lot of our people (RtI, data retreat) are extremely trained. We constantly do training at our Institute Days. - If we see that a teacher might be struggling in a certain area, we are more than happy to talk about that growth model and send them to another building, or maybe we</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fullan’s 8 Characteristics</td>
<td>High School “A” Assistant Principal</td>
<td>High School “A” Special Ed. Director</td>
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<td>Teaming is very natural, so I saw them as my point people and I got them trained.</td>
<td>- Professional training/development was provided through state conferences, through iASPIRE or Vanguard. - Here in our building we use Peer Assistance and Review, the PAR model, for our teachers in their first and second year where there are consulting teachers working with the teachers there and they’re evaluated 10 or 15 times a year, getting constant feedback.</td>
<td>- Professional training was provided through state conferences, through iASPIRE or Vanguard. - Here in our building we use Peer Assistance and Review, the PAR model, for our teachers in their first and second year where there are consulting teachers working with the teachers there and they’re evaluated 10 or 15 times a year, getting constant feedback. - We constantly encourage our people to present at conferences and be district leadership team members and we have district teams that meet once a week. Everything from counselors to curriculum areas to division heads, and we purposely do that so that they can bring back new ideas or share what they’re doing and best practices.</td>
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**Resources**

- Start having teacher leaders teaching teachers.
- We are looking at purchasing a survey assessing the climate and culture of the building so we can start identifying where we want to apply our resources.

**Reduce Distractors**

- At the grammar school level, I think you have certain grade levels meet,
- But what has been most helpful, especially to the special education department, is knowing that we have other resources outside of our department for Tier 3… we had a gen ed building-wide reading specialist assess her, which is clearly a Tier 3 because it’s one-to-one.
- I’m making sure that the tools that we use to base our decisions on are used with fidelity.

- We have a great mentoring program with the district and every new teacher gets a mentor for two years and it’s pretty intense.
- Within our building, we have a new teacher orientation a day before school starts, with two teacher leaders that lead that team.
- Instructionally, as an administrative team, we go in for multiple-day observations.

- We made a lot of changes last year and I think part of that was a
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Fullan’s 8 Characteristics</th>
<th>High School “A” Assistant Principal</th>
<th>High School “A” Special Ed. Director</th>
<th>High School “B” Associate Principal</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>subject areas. It’s much easier, the infrastructure. Here it’s a little bit more difficult to find time in the day for them to meet, but we’ve done that and it’s really decreased a lot of our failure rate as a result. - The school day is the biggest hindrance because we only have a 10-minute homeroom and it’s hard to deliver any type of social/emotional learning curriculum through that... So we’ve had to rely a lot on our late starts. - We’re going to put together a committee made up of administrators, staff, support staff, parents, teachers and community people just to get a sense of looking at different models. Is it block scheduling, is it 50 minute classes, is it a period - 50 minutes, just kind of a basic, how much is the homeroom, are we going to have an advisory model here where you have a 20-25 minute homeroom each day and you can infuse post-secondary curriculum, social/emotional curriculum, community service curriculum?</td>
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<td>little overwhelming to them, so this year we promised that all those things that we implemented are staying in place and I think that really builds that camaraderie and builds that trust.</td>
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<td>Community</td>
<td>- So what we’ve done is establish a Township Youth Coalition. We meet once a month – that’s the Police Department, that’s the</td>
<td>- We must have an RtI Plan and we must be able to articulate what it looks like and we do that across department and we try to keep that fairly consistent</td>
<td>- Putting those supports in place, knowing that those people are there, building those resiliency skills with these kids, I’m all about it. But I’m also</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fullan’s 8 Characteristics</td>
<td>High School “A” Assistant Principal</td>
<td>High School “A” Special Ed. Director</td>
<td>High School “B” Associate Principal</td>
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<tr>
<td>library, that’s us, the district, it’s the Food Pantry. It’s all the different agencies, Response Center, Turning Point, peer services – it’s all the community resources that we have. We meet once a month at the district office or the police station and talk about what’s going on and what’s happening in the community, where things are at and how can we better support each other. And then we’ll invite parents into that if they have concerns. - You’re developing relationships and partnerships that will help for better student outcomes for all our kids.</td>
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<td>as a building.</td>
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<td>about having hard conversations with them, their families.</td>
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<td>Communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>- You talk to the community about the initiatives in ways that are understandable and obviously measurable, that’s a big piece of it, but using the local growth data, using EPAS data, as now the state would call Tier 1 type of data, and also talking about what we’re doing as a district in terms of our common assessments, our common finals. We educate the community through our parent workshops, we have freshman through senior nights here, and we have coffee with the counselors, coffee with the principal.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Our stance is this is what we need to be doing, this is the direction that we’re going in and these are the tools that we’ve selected at this time to use. - So in our department, probably more than anywhere else, we get many opportunities to do that because we’re always meeting about kids.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- We not only communicate almost weekly with our parents about what’s happening, we send charts and progress of everything that we do so that they’re aware of what we’re doing. And remember we don’t only do it once. We constantly do updates.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Esprit de Corps</td>
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<tr>
<td>- In terms of development of a leader that’s most</td>
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<tr>
<td>- It’s mostly about making sure we’re using</td>
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<tr>
<td>- I have never seen a staff that cares about kids more</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**Fullan’s 8 Characteristics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assistant Principal</th>
<th>Special Ed. Director</th>
<th>Associate Principal</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>important but also surrounding them with not just one mentor, but also a good administrative team that’s supportive and that meets frequently. If there’s collaboration and a sense of community and family that’s part of the culture and fabric of a district as a beginning leader in the development, I think that’s critical. - I saw all of the geometry teachers [sitting on the floor in the hallway] in a circle, they couldn’t find a conference room because they were all taken for whatever reason, but they were out here in a circle with one of our staff members from student services, all sitting there talking about kids that they’re having difficulty with, either academically the kids were struggling, or behaviorally.</td>
<td>the resources in a meaningful way.</td>
<td>- Our principal is our leader. I look at her every day and I am in awe of her and that I’ve been so lucky because when you move as much as I do, you’re exposed to a lot of leaders. - We have hundreds of pictures of kids in action, studying, at conferences, in fine arts, kids participating in the building, and those academic achievements all over. They’re all over our building, so kids are reading about: That guy went to High School B and he’s, you know, this now. He works for CNN. You know, cool things like that.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Document Analysis**

The school goals of each high school were obtained from their respective website. After reviewing these goals, this researcher has analyzed the documents and compared them to Michael Fullan’s eight characteristics of effective school districts that he believes generates widespread and potentially sustainable capacity to raise the bar and close the gap of student achievement, the following data were present. While the following tables do not represent every word written, the information presented serve as a representative
sample of the goals displayed on the school website and made public to the school and community as it relates to each of Fullan’s characteristics.

**Presentation of Data Summary**

The methodology that was used to conduct this research was a qualitative case study. This qualitative case study research design included Qualitative Questionnaires, Individual Interviews and document analysis. After providing a rich description of the research sites, the Qualitative Questionnaire data are displayed with a narrative and graph, question by question. Next, the responses from the Individualized Interviews are revealed, verbatim, along with a representative sample of the data displayed previously as it relates to each of Fullan’s characteristics. Finally, utilizing documents each district has publicly shared, this researcher has exposed relevant documents relating to goals of the school and district.

Table 4

*Document Data Compared to Fullan’s Characteristics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fullan’s 8 Characteristics</th>
<th>High School “A”</th>
<th>High School “B”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focus</strong></td>
<td>Only three goals are presented for the current school year.</td>
<td>Only three goals are presented for the current school year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Data</strong></td>
<td>- (EPAS) growth will surpass that of the previous cohort by 10%</td>
<td>- Increase student success rate per course by at least five percentile points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leadership</strong></td>
<td>- Foster a building-wide culture of literacy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Improve academic performance of students considered at-risk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Resources</strong></td>
<td>the school improvement plan outlines increased interventions, year by year, to improve student achievement for students identified as “at-risk.”</td>
<td>High School “B” also relies heavily on a problem-solving model, which outlines each RtI tier as well as the interventions that are aligned with each tier.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reduce</strong></td>
<td>Only three goals are presented for the</td>
<td>Only three goals are presented for the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fullan’s 8 Characteristics</td>
<td>High School “A”</td>
<td>High School “B”</td>
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<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Distractors</strong></td>
<td>current school year.</td>
<td>current school year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community</strong></td>
<td>Enhance students’ positive engagement in the school community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communication</strong></td>
<td>The school goals were easily accessible on the school’s website.</td>
<td>The school goals were easily accessible on the school’s website.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Esprit de Corps</strong></td>
<td>- Enhance students’ positive engagement in the school community</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- build a climate of Respect school-wide</td>
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</table>

Chapter V concludes the study with discussion of research questions, findings and conclusions. The discussions include implications for educational leadership in public high schools in Illinois, as well as, recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION, FINDINGS, AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to utilize Response to Intervention (RtI) as a means of studying how building leadership teams build capacity and motivate their staff to implement educational initiatives that align with their school and/or district goals. This researcher examined the RtI leadership team’s ability to develop and implement an RtI plan from the perception of the RtI leadership team. There were four central research questions that guided this study:

1) In two Illinois public high schools with positive statewide reputations, according to the perspectives of each RtI leadership team, how has a central and singular focus been evidenced in the development and implementation of their RtI model in each high school?

2) In two Illinois public high schools with positive statewide reputations, according to the perspectives of each RtI leadership team, how has capacity building been evidenced in the development and implementation of their RtI model in each high school?

3) What are the implications for educational leaders to successfully motivate their RtI leadership teams to develop RtI processes?

4) What are the implications for educational leaders to successfully motivate their RtI leadership teams to implement these RtI processes with fidelity?
In this chapter, the researcher analyzes these data and makes conclusions based on the findings of data presented in Chapter IV. The following methods were used to collect these data:

1) Qualitative Questionnaires.
2) Individualized Interviews.
3) Document analysis of each high school’s goals as reported through their respective websites.

Nine participants from High School “A” and six participants from High School “B” took part in the Qualitative Questionnaire. Two administrators from High School “A” and one administrator from High School “B” participated in the Individualized Interviews. Member checking was conducted to provide each interview participant an opportunity to review their statements for accuracy and approval. A journal was kept by the researcher to reflect on thoughts, ideas and themes that came to light as well as acknowledge any personal biases. Finally, documents were obtained and analyzed in an attempt to triangulate the data.

Findings are presented in the following sections:

1) Conclusions through the presentation of relevant literature and data from this study.
2) Recommendations for educational leaders based on this study.
3) Limitations.
4) Recommendations for future research.
5) Summary and aspirations for the future.
Conclusions

Research Question 1: In two Illinois public high schools with positive statewide reputations, according to the perspectives of each RtI leadership team, how has a central and singular focus been evidenced in the development and implementation of their RtI model in each high school?

Relevance of Research Data to Literature

Michael Fullan (2010) identifies “focus” as one of eight characteristics of effective school districts that he believes generate widespread and potentially sustainable capacity to raise the bar and close the gap of student achievement. Some of the key words found in his description of “focus” are as follows: clear direction, relentless focus, central and singular focus. Fullan (2010) references findings by Karen Louis, Ken Leithwood, and associates from their Wallace Foundation study of leadership in a sample of nine states, 43 districts, and 180 schools. They believe one of the most powerful sources of the district influence on schools and students was the development of school leaders’ “collective sense of efficacy” about their work (Louis, Leithewood & associates, 2009). Fullan (2010) believes that districts contribute most powerfully to principals’ collective sense of efficacy by establishing clear purposes that become widely shared. Fullan encourages educational leaders to keep the message simple, keep it focused and consistent, and keep conveying it.

In his book Drive, Daniel Pink (2009) identifies purpose as one of three elements he believes will evoke intrinsic motivation. Pink says that purpose is a powerful source of energy, one we’ve often neglected or dismissed as unrealistic. In his book, he recognizes
that many entrepreneurs, executives, and investors are realizing that the best performing companies stand for something and contribute to the world. This idea of *purpose* translates to educators as *focus*.

Jolly (2008) insists that possibly the most promising practice driving cutting-edge change in schools today is the creation of professional learning communities. Jolly believes successful leadership of professional learning teams involves: Setting a clear direction so that faculty members develop shared understandings about the school and its goals. By developing a clear direction, members of the leadership team help faculty members make sense of their professional learning team work.

**Relevance of Research Data**

Data from the Qualitative Questionnaires show that 54% of the RtI leadership team members from High School “A” believe they have *achieved* or are *maintaining* their *focus* as it relates to the development and implementation or RtI. One participant from High School “A” references the establishment of their five-year plan as the clear direction and focus they have been provided for an avenue of increasing academic achievement. Data from the Qualitative Questionnaire also identifies 43% of the RtI leadership team members from High School “A” believe their *focus* as it relates to the development and implementation of RtI is *in progress*. This reveals that the activity occurs approximately 25% to 74% of the time.

Additional data from the Qualitative Questionnaires show that 48% of the RtI leadership team members from High School “B” believe they have *achieved* or are *maintaining* their *focus* as it relates to the development and implementation or RtI. One
comment from a participant from High School “B” states that “teams have been
developed with all staff to be part of.” Data from the Qualitative Questionnaire also
identifies 47% of the RtI leadership team members from High School “B” believe their
focus as it relates to the development and implementation of RtI is in progress. This
reveals that the activity occurs approximately 25% to 74% of the time.

In an Individualized Interview, High School “A” Assistant Principal identified
“building consensus” as a starting point. High School “A” was concerned with “getting a
sense of where [they] were at, what [they] knew, and what [they] didn’t know.” High
School “A” developed a survey, requested input from all staff and then developed a
“plan.” This 5-year plan has provided the staff at High School “A” the clear direction and
relentless focus that Fullan (2010) writes about.

High School “B” Associate Principal stated that “[they] have a very, very strong
push toward RtI.” She continues to say that she is “a big systems and organizational
person.” She stated that High School “B” has a very defined process for RtI with team
members who have specific roles and responsibilities. These specific roles and
responsibilities allow High School “B” to strengthen its core by increasing teachers’
skills and knowledge, engaging students in learning, and ensuring the curriculum
challenges students.

Therefore, a central and singular focus was evidenced by both building
administrators and RtI team members in each respective high school through their
perspectives of the development and implementation of RtI. When High School “A”
attempted to build consensus among staff, they were ultimately getting their staff on the
same page, so to speak. High School “A” decided the best way to create the central and
singular focus was to first understand each staff member’s knowledge of RtI before they
developed and shared their “plan.” High School “B” labeled their approach to RtI as
“very defined.” With a central and singular focus, staff members at High School “B”
have a deep understanding of RtI and their school’s systemic approach to its
implementation. Each high school’s goals reflect this central and singular focus as well.
There are three goals for each high school which all address improvement of academic
success for all students directly relating to RtI. The central and singular focus evidenced
by High Schools “A” and “B” is the first step toward the successful development and
implementation of RtI.

Research Question 2: In two Illinois public high schools with positive statewide
reputations, according to the perspectives of each RtI leadership team, how has capacity
building been evidenced in the development and implementation of their RtI model in
each high school?

Relevance of Research Data to Literature

Fullan (2010) identified eight characteristics of an effective school. He states that
only a small minority of districts evidences these characteristics, but when they do they
generate widespread and potentially sustainable capacity to raise the bar and close the
gap of student achievement. The characteristics of an effective school district, according
to Fullan, are: Focus, Data, Leadership, Resources, Reduce Distractors, Community,
Communication and Esprit de Corps.
Abraham Maslow first suggested that humans were motivated by a hierarchy of needs. He believed that if human needs were met, they would be motivated to complete their tasks. Many of Abraham Maslow’s “types of need” can be seen in Michael Fullan’s (2010) *Esprit de Corps* characteristic of an effective school. Specifically, Fullan (2010) states that *Esprit de Corps* includes the following: a sense of identity and sense of community among teachers and principals and between schools and the district. People take pride in their work and that of their colleagues and feel a strong sense of affinity with the district as a whole. Allegiances are strong, and collaborative competition leverages the schools to stronger and stronger performance.

Sally Zepeda (2007) defines Instructional Leadership: Strong leadership promotes excellence and equity in education and entails projecting, promoting, and holding steadfast to the vision; garnering and allocating resources; communicating progress; and supporting the people, programs, services, and activities implemented to achieve the school’s vision. Zepeda’s definition of leadership hits on many of Michael Fullan’s characteristics of an effective school.

One role of the educational leader is to stimulate positive will and positive capacity within staff to promote active use. Several ways this can be accomplished is by providing access to resources, communicating effectively and efficiently, offering a forum for concerns to be addressed/voices to be heard, providing appropriate professional development opportunities, maintaining a consistent mission, vision and policy, and ensuring a solid evaluation process. Stimulating positive will and positive capacity will ultimately lead to retention of solid employees who are intrinsically motivated to become
lifelong learners (Israel, 1994; & Israel & Kasper, 2004). This concept, stimulating positive will and positive capacity, relates directly to Fullan’s (2010) eight characteristics.

**Relevance of Research Data**

Data from the Qualitative Questionnaires returned by participants in High School “A” reflect the following: 40% of participants believe their goal in relation to data has been achieved or is being maintained. One participant commented that there is “lots of discussion and each department have various data collected.” Another participant commented that “we are often talking about how to share data we already collect or what we should collect.” Seventy-two percent of participants believe their goal in relation to leadership has been achieved or is being maintained. One participant commented that “each department is represented through a PLC.” Fifty percent of participants believe their goal in relation to resources has been achieved or is being maintained. Finally, 44% of participants believe their goal in relation to communication has been achieved or is being maintained. Multiple participants indicated that communication often occurs through their respective department.

Data from the Qualitative Questionnaires returned by participants in High School “B” reflect the following: 56% of participants believe their goal in relation to data has been achieved or is being maintained. Two participants noted that this is accomplished through “teams.” Another participant commented that the principal reviews data “3-4 times per year.” Seventy-five percent of participants believe their goal in relation to leadership has been achieved or is being maintained. Sixty percent of participants believe
their goal in relation to resources has been achieved or is being maintained. Finally, 52% of participants believe their goal in relation to communication has been achieved or is being maintained. One participant indicated that communication has “been the hardest for [them].”

The high schools in this research study exhibited Michael Fullan’s eight characteristics of effective schools. While all of the characteristics were identified throughout this research study, several characteristics were seen to be paramount to the success of each high school. Specifically, capacity building was achieved through focus, data, leadership, resources and communication. Each high school identified the importance of using data to drive decision making. High School “A” Assistant Principal stated that data are “everything.” High School “B” even created a school goal that is based on the data they receive from student standardized test scores as stated on the website. This proves that they believe in the importance of data and communicate this to their stakeholders.

Leadership stood out as a characteristic that each high school embodies which builds capacity among staff. This characteristic includes the development of staff to share effective practices and strategies. It also recognizes the importance of leaders participating as learners. High School “A” developed a school goal that stresses the importance of creating a culture of literacy within the school community as stated on the website. This goal addresses an instructional outcome that is paramount to the overall success of a student.
Each high school recognizes the importance of allocating resources in accordance with the focus to support the teaching and learning core of the district’s work. The school goals for each high school in this research study explicitly state the importance of increasing interventions for struggling learners. By creating a goal that ties directly to the central and singular focus of the school, each school is building capacity and motivating staff to implement their educational initiative.

Research Question 3: *What are the implications for educational leaders to successfully motivate their RtI leadership teams to develop RtI processes?*

*Relevance of Research Data to Literature*

Michael Fullan (2010) believes when focused collective capacity building is present accountability to a large extent gets internalized in the group and in its individuals. This accountability serves as a motivation because staff members take ownership and do not want to let down their colleagues.

In *All Systems Go*, Fullan (2010) offers the following observations from four schools of whole-district successful reform in three different countries: collective focus of all stakeholders toward the district’s goals and objectives, and combining a relentless focus (always on message), precision high yield instructional strategies, focus on data and results, and the cultivation of leadership at all levels to engage everyone in the moral purpose of improvement for all will motivate staff.

James C. Hunter (2004), a modern-day leadership theorist, writes:

Relational and value-based leadership has been written and talked about for decades, with great authors defining it in different ways and calling it
different things. In the end, most of these folks have been talking about the same things. And that is the simple truth that leadership and life are about people and relationships. (p. 17)

Hunter believes that without positive relationships, a leader will not maximize the potential of his or her organization. In his book *Drive*, Daniel Pink agrees with James C. Hunter.

According to Pink (2009), intrinsic motivation is fueled when people have autonomy over their *task*, their *time*, their *technique*, and their *team*. Pink continues to say that there is never a one-size-fits-all answer, so the best strategy for an employer would be to figure out what’s important to each individual employee. While this approach to leadership is time consuming, Pink believes it will yield the best results.

**Relevance of Research Data**

High School “A” Assistant Principal noted that their leadership team wanted its staff to know that RtI is not just a fad so it was mandated by the district to be included in the School Improvement Plan. He stated that “having it in the School Improvement Plan gave it a little more weight, that this is something that people really need to pay attention to, to get a better understanding of what it is and how the departments fit into that framework.” High School “A” Assistant Principal also emphasized the importance of not having a “top-down” approach to problem solving. He stated that High School “A” wanted to “decentralize the power… I want a lot of people part of the decision making process because that creates buy-in from the staff and again, that takes away that this is another thing that’s imposed upon us. So decentralizing that power, what does that look
like specifically? This year we’ve really worked on developing PLCs within individual departments in linking departments together in support.”

When attempting to get the right people involved, High School “B” Associate Principal stressed the importance of identifying the “strongest people” and requesting their support first. She continued by saying, “we asked them, we didn’t make them, we just asked them if they would be a part of it. We didn’t get a single “no.” She mentioned that it was important for these individuals to know what their involvement would include before they commit. She stated, “we want people who are going to come to those monthly meetings or go to that week-long summer institute and come to my monthly meetings, so we’re real sensitive to people’s time.”

These data identify several key components that are required in order for a school to successfully motivate their RtI leadership teams to develop RtI processes: accountability, ownership, relentless/collective focus and creating positive relationships. High School “A” chose to hold itself accountable for developing an RtI plan, so they included this initiative in their School Improvement Plan. High School “A” Assistant Principal stated that this accountability lead its staff members to take ownership in this initiative and understand that this would not be something that would go away.

In both high schools, participants share that their leaders participate as learners. Participants from each high school identify this factor as vital to its success. Their leaders practice what they preach and model for their staff just what is expected of them.

Finally, getting the right individuals involved is the beginning to starting off on the right track. High School “B” began their steps toward developing and implementing
RtI by inviting individuals they believed would work collaboratively toward a common goal. High School “B” Associate Principal was boastful of the fact that not one staff member turned down their “invite” to be a part of the RtI leadership team. These individuals take pride in their work and that of their colleagues and feel a strong sense of affinity with the district as a whole. Also starting with what they thought was the “right” group of people, High School “A” Assistant Principal mentioned that now others who were initially wary of this initiative have since joined the wave.

Analysis of the school goal documents concur with these findings. As reported earlier, each school works toward three goals. These goals allow for relentless/collective focus. Additional goals may disrupt this focus and cause the school to become disengaged in the task at hand. In regards to leadership, High School “A” has a goal specifically directed toward helping students who are identified as “at-risk” as cited on their website. The development of staff and the sharing of effective practices assists teachers in focusing on teaching strategies that make a difference to high and low-performing students. Finally, High School “A” has a school goal of engaging students in school and creating an overall climate of respect within the school. The combination of a relentless/collective focus, the development of staff and creating a climate of respect lead to a sense of identity and community. Stronger performance will be the outcome as collaborative competition pushes each individual to reach his or her full potential.

Therefore, in order for a leadership team to successfully motivate their RtI leadership teams to develop RtI processes, educational leaders must establish a system of
accountability which will lead to ownership, and they must share the relentless/collective focus and create positive relationships.

Research Question 4: What are the implications for educational leaders to successfully motivate their RtI leadership teams to implement these RtI processes with fidelity?

Relevance of Research Data to Literature

As stated previously in this chapter, Michael Fullan (2010) identified eight characteristics of an effective school. He states that only a small minority of districts evidences these characteristics, but when they do they generate widespread and potentially sustainable capacity to raise the bar and close the gap of student achievement. The characteristics of an effective school district, according to Fullan, are: Focus, Data, Leadership, Resources, Reduce Distractors, Community, Communication and Esprit de Corps.

Frederick Taylor’s principles of scientific management (1911) may be a bit archaic, but there are three components of his theory that suggest implications for educational leaders to successfully motivate their teams to carry out tasks with fidelity:

1. Select the best person to perform the job thus designed.
2. Train the worker to do the work efficiently.
3. Monitor worker performance to ensure that appropriate work procedures are followed and that appropriate results are achieved.

Daniel Pink (2009) believes that when employees are engaged in their work, they are ultimately driven toward mastery. Pink (2009) offered the following: the task should
not be too easy or too difficult; it should be a notch or two beyond his current abilities, which stretch the body and mind in a way that made the effort itself the most delicious reward; the balance will produce a degree of focus and satisfaction that easily surpasses other, more quotidian, experiences. Taking Pink’s concept of mastery, proper engagement would drive employees toward completion of tasks in a faithful and loyal manner.

Israel and Kasper (2004) declare that an educational leader’s ability to stimulate positive will and positive capacity within staff promotes active use. They identify several ways in which this can be accomplished: providing access to resources, communicating effectively and efficiently, offering a forum for concerns to be addressed/voices to be heard, providing appropriate professional development opportunities, maintaining a consistent mission, vision and policy, and ensuring a solid evaluation process. They continue by stating, “stimulating positive will and positive capacity will ultimately lead to retention of solid employees who are intrinsically motivated to become life long learners” (Israel, 1994; & Israel & Kasper, 2004).

Relevance of Research Data

Much like the research data provided under Research Question 3, High School “A” Assistant Principal emphasized that a clear direction and the development of teachers are essential for educational leaders to successfully motivate their teams to implement processes with fidelity. As stated previously in this chapter, High School “A” Assistant Principal noted that their leadership team wanted its staff to know that RtI is not just a fad so it was mandated by the district to be included in the School Improvement Plan. He
stated that “having it in the School Improvement Plan gave it a little more weight, that this is something that people really need to pay attention to, to get a better understanding of what it is and how the departments fit into that framework.” High School “A” Assistant Principal also emphasized the importance of not having a “top-down” approach to problem solving. He stated that High School “A” wanted to “decentralize the power… I want a lot of people part of the decision making process because that creates buy-in from the staff and again, that takes away that this is another thing that’s imposed upon us. So decentralizing that power, what does that look like specifically? This year we’ve really worked on developing PLCs within individual departments in linking departments together in support.”

High School “A” Assistant Principal also stressed the importance of training the staff. He noted that staff had been exposed to many training opportunities: “through state conferences, through iASPIRE or VanGuard. Our teams would meet at their administrative buildings once a month and it really started with our psych/social workers and counselors. The training through iAspire, through state conferences and also the national conferences like NASP (National Association for School Psychs), they’ll do a lot of work with RtI. They always have. I think in years past I’ve brought them to presentations by George Batsch, Kevin Feldman from Oregon.” Providing key team members with the right tools allows these tasks to be completed with fidelity which is a necessary function of will and capacity.
High School “A” Special Education Director stated that she supports the RtI initiative within her building by “making sure that the tools that [they] use to base [their] decisions on are used with fidelity.”

Much like the research data provided under Research Question 3, High School “B” Assistant Principal emphasized that it is important to involve the “strongest people” and help them to develop and share effective practices. As stated previously, when attempting to get the right people involved, High School “B” Associate Principal stressed the importance of identifying the “strongest people” and requesting their support first. She continued by saying, “we asked them, we didn’t make them, we just asked them if they would be a part of it. We didn’t get a single “no.” She mentioned that it was important for these individuals to know what their involvement would include before they commit. She stated, “we want people who are going to come to those monthly meetings or go to that week-long summer institute and come to my monthly meetings, so we’re real sensitive to people’s time.”

In regards to document analysis, the school goals for High School “A” address building a culture of literacy and improving academic achievement for students identified as “at-risk.” These two topics are addressed through the development of teachers and administrators and utilizing available resources or as High School “A” Special Education Director stated, providing her staff members with the “right tools.” Also, accountability is created and monitored through each school’s goals.

The conclusions above suggest that in high schools it is very much possible for building leadership teams to build capacity and motivate their staff to implement
educational initiatives that align with their school and/or district goals. High Schools “A” and “B” have demonstrated (some characteristics more than others) Fullan’s (2010) eight characteristics of an effective school district. Therefore, the overall conclusion is as follows: Schools who build capacity and motivate their staff will find success developing and implementing educational initiatives with fidelity that align with their school and/or district goals leadership teams.

Figure 103. Sequence for Successful Implementation

What makes this different than what has been said before is that this conclusion suggests a necessary, explicit sequence for which successful development and implementation of educational initiatives requires. Also, while the principal must support the efforts of the leadership team, it is not necessary that s/he is the head of the initiative. This research has identified that a central and singular focus must be communicated
before initiating the remaining characteristics of capacity building. Once these steps have been followed, the outcome is that of a product developed and implemented with fidelity.

**Recommendations for Educational Leaders**

Based on the current literature and this research study, educational leaders who want to implement educational initiatives, with fidelity, that align with their school and/or district goals should consider the following recommendations. Such recommendations originated from data gathered through this research’s Qualitative Questionnaires, Individualized Interviews and Document Analysis.

1. Communicate a central and singular focus to all stakeholders. Michael Fullan (2010) suggests that the school leadership convey a clear direction and relentless focus on student achievement through instructional improvement in the classroom. High School “A” Assistant Principal spoke of “building consensus.” Through “building consensus,” High School “A” was able to create their 5-year plan. This 5-year plan became the central and singular focus for High School “A.”

In *All Systems Go*, Michael Fullan (2010) shares the story of Jamie McCracken, the director (CEO) of Ottawa Catholic District, who has been successful in his attempt at whole-district reform. Jamie’s predecessor created 13 themes each year that were presented to the staff as something they needed to work towards. Jamie believed this was too much and cited a lack of follow-through as an additional problem.

*Jamie started with some large-scale meetings that he called “reimaging days.” For the first time in the history of the system, he included nonprofessionals – support staff, custodians, technicians, and*
bus drivers. Knowing something about our emphasis on a small number of goals and staying the course, he selected three core priorities: success for students (e.g., ensuring high levels of critical literacy), success for staff (e.g., building Catholic collaborative learning communities through shared leadership), and stewardship of resources (e.g., aligning human and operational resources to support and close gaps in student achievement). These have been the same three priorities every year for the past seven years. They replaced the 13 or so annual random thrusts of the previous regime.

This research suggests that 13 “themes” or goals are too much. Luckily Jamie recognized this as a problem and with the help of his team; they created three priorities that have remained the same for the past seven years. What Jamie and his team have accomplished is to communicate a central and singular focus to all stakeholders. Now, all stakeholders know exactly what their focus is and will be until the team feels as though the priorities have been met.

2. Build capacity among staff. As stated previously in this dissertation, Michael Fullan (2010) offers eight characteristics of an effective school district: focus, data, leadership, resources, reduce distracters community, communication and esprit de corps. Fullan (2010) admits that only a small minority of districts evidences these characteristics, but when they do they generate widespread and potentially sustainable capacity to raise the bar and close the gap of student achievement.

As the research data from this study within the Standardized Test Results section in chapter four details, High School “A” has closed the achievement gap for seven subgroups from 2010 to 2012 in reading and for three subgroups in mathematics. High School “B” has closed the achievement gap for three subgroups from 2010 to 2012 in
reading and for four subgroups in mathematics. Conversely, the State of Illinois as a whole has widened the achievement gap for six subgroups from 2010 to 2012 in reading and for two subgroups in mathematics. Therefore, when a school builds capacity among staff, it can begin to raise the bar and close the gap of student achievement.

3. Use data to inform decision-making. While data is one of the eight characteristics of an effective school district identified by Michael Fullan (2010), this researcher felt it necessary to reinforce this characteristic. Eighty percent of the Qualitative Questionnaire participants from High School “A” and 94% from High School “B” identify data as a component that is currently embedded in their development and implementation of RtI. When asked “What drives decision-making?, High School “A” Assistant Principal responded, “basically, data has been everything that has been driving all of our goals and decisions.” When asked the same question, High School “B” Associate Principal had a similar answer: “our decision making is always data driven. It’s always based on PLT discussions and looking at grades and looking at trends.” These statements make a profound case for using data to inform decision-making.

It is important to note that the use of data based decisions must maintain a central and singular focus. Without a central and singular focus, practitioners could find themselves immersed in data without a clear direction of where to go. A central and singular focus allows data based decisions to be made that will align with the school and/or district goal(s).
Limitations

This research study is subject to a number of limitations imposed by the research design and time constraints. First, this qualitative case study involved two high schools located in the northwest suburbs of Chicago, Illinois. A larger and more diverse (e.g., the inclusion or elementary and/or middle schools) sample size of schools who have been successful in their development and implementation of RtI may have yielded more data and altered the findings.

Secondly, the Qualitative Questionnaire did not request identifying information from each participant, such as years of experience, position, credentials, etc. Additional identifying information may have provided insight as to why/how participants answered the questions and provided a rating. Identifying information would have also provided the researcher with an accurate account of exactly who is a member of each high school’s RtI leadership team.

Another limitation is that access to the Special Education Director was denied by High School “B” for the purpose of the individualized interview. However, High School “B” Associate Principal stated that her experiences and familiarity with the role of the Special Education Director as it relates to their RtI process would allow her to elaborate on the Special Education Directors behalf if need be. Even so, this limited the data findings of the research study.

An additional limitation is that this is High School “A” Special Education Director’s first year at this high school. The interview with High School “A” Special Education Director took place on Thursday, November 8, 2012, only four months after
starting her job at High School “A.” Several Individualized Interview questions directed to High School “A” Special Education Director were answered “I don’t know.” This limited the data findings of the research study.

It should be noted that the researcher’s own personal biases could be seen as a limitation to this study. However, a research journal was kept in an attempt to assist the researcher in his bias control and recognition. The paper notebook journal included dates and times of relevant research events as well as field notes and self-reflections. These notes were reflections on what worked (or not) in gaining access, entry, maintaining access, ethics and gathering data. Thus emotions, passions and biases were turned into research tools.

While there were potential limitations to this study, a major strength is the depth in which the researcher went into this study. This study involved two high schools in which interviews were conducted, questionnaires were completed and document analysis was completed. With this manageable sample size, the researcher was allowed to dive deeply into each high school and discover intimate details that have been identified as high levels of success in regards to RtI.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

Response to Intervention (RtI) was the vehicle utilized for the scope of this research study. The researcher chose to keep his original language (Response to Intervention) rather than switch and use Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports (MTSS) for several reasons: the researcher found an absence of MTSS facts, materials and testimony in regards to its current use in public schools in Illinois. Additionally, both High Schools
“A” and “B” use *RtI* when communicating with staff, and according to the State of Florida’s Department of Education, there is a difference between RtI and MTSS:

> Many existing terms and initiatives share the common elements of data-based problem-solving to inform instruction and intervention (e.g., *Response to Intervention [RtI]*). Although several initiatives share this core characteristic of data-based problem-solving, the differences in the use of terms (i.e., the labels used to describe them), who has responsibility for implementing data-based problem-solving (e.g., general education, special education, student services), and the language used to describe the initiatives have often resulted in high levels of variability in the implementation of the model at state, district and school levels. These differences serve to potentially limit the impact of this model on both the integrity of implementation and on student growth.

However, because it appears as though Illinois is joining forces in the MTSS movement, further research on the impact of MTSS could yield fascinating results.

This research was conducted with participants within the high school setting. Barbara Ehren (2009) acknowledged that high schools face challenges that elementary schools and middle schools may not. Her sentiment may indicate that elementary and middle schools have had a better success with their development and implementation of RtI. Research that expanded this design to include elementary and middle schools would be a welcome addition.

While this research study focuses greatly on Michael Fullan’s (2010) eight characteristics of an effective high school, he does not suggest that these must occur in a certain sequence. Additional research, specifically on each characteristic and the order in which it must occur to achieve success would contribute a great deal.
Summary

This research study explored how building leadership teams build capacity and motivate their staff to implement educational initiatives that align with their school and/or district goals. There is an abundance of research that has addressed leadership and motivation, but few studies have focused on building capacity as an essential component to finding success in the implementation of educational initiatives.

The central research questions of this study are:

1) In two Illinois public high schools with positive statewide reputations, according to the perspectives of each RtI leadership team, how has a central and singular focus been evidenced in the development and implementation of their RtI model in each high school?

2) In two Illinois public high schools with positive statewide reputations, according to the perspectives of each RtI leadership team, how has capacity building been evidenced in the development and implementation of their RtI model in each high school?

3) What are the implications for educational leaders to successfully motivate their RtI leadership teams to develop RtI processes?

4) What are the implications for educational leaders to successfully motivate their RtI leadership teams to implement these RtI processes with fidelity?

This study concluded two major high school points: a) while the principal must support the efforts of the leadership team, it is not necessary that s/he is the head of the initiative and b) The following list is intended to be followed explicitly and sequentially.
Building leadership teams in high schools who wish to implement educational initiatives that align with their school and/or district goals must: (1) create a central and singular focus; (2) build consensus among staff; (3) share the plan that is created; (4) define roles and responsibilities; (5) build capacity among staff; (6) obtain “buy-in” from staff; (7) decentralize power; (8) involve various staff members/groups in decision-making; (9) inform/communicate/empower all stakeholders; and (10) develop and provide staff members with necessary tools.

Michael Fullan (2010) acknowledges that as true as his research findings are in regards to the success school districts have when utilizing his concept of capacity building, he is not seeing widespread implementation of these features. This researcher would like for educational leaders to evaluate their approach to school reform and identify where they may be unsuccessful.

This researcher hopes that when people read this work they will reflect upon their own leadership and identify areas of need within their schools. The demands on educational leaders are ever-increasing and evolve regularly. With that in mind, this researcher believes that this study deconstructs what appears to be a daunting task, such as implementing a new educational initiative, and it provides the reader with ten objectives that are easily put into practice. The result of successful development and implementation of educational initiatives hits at the heart of what we are here for: increasing the academic achievement of all students.
APPENDIX A

SUPERINTENDENT’S LETTER OF COOPERATION
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH  
(Superintendent)

**Project Title:** Utilizing Response to Intervention (RtI) as a means of studying the motivation and capacity building of staff by school leadership teams.  
**Researcher:** Brian J. Mahoney  
**Faculty Sponsor:** Dr. Marla Israel

**Introduction:**
Members of your school district are being asked to take part in a research study being conducted by Brian J. Mahoney for a dissertation under the supervision of Dr. Marla Israel in the Department of Education at Loyola University of Chicago.

Members of your school district are being asked to participate because they are part of the successful development and implementation of the Response to Intervention initiative. I will be seeking participation from members of the Response to Intervention team as well as the administrator in charge of RtI and director of special education services.

Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before deciding whether to participate in the study.

**Purpose:**
The purpose of this study is to utilize Response to Intervention (RtI) as a means of studying how building leadership teams build capacity and motivate their staff to implement educational initiatives that align with their school and/or district goal.

**Procedures:**
If you grant permission for members of your school district to be in the study, they will be asked to review and respond to the following:

- A Qualitative Questionnaire will be distributed to all members of the RtI team, including, but not limited to the following individuals: the RtI coordinator, general education teacher, special education teacher and special services member (i.e. school psychology, counselor, social worker). The questionnaire will provide the researcher with a view of how members of the Response to Intervention team at each school perceives different aspect of its road through development and implementation of RtI. The Qualitative Questionnaire is made-up of four main categories: comprehensive commitment and support, data collection and team structure, three-tiered intervention system and problem-solving process and monitoring and action planning. Within each category, participants will be asked to rank statements using the following scale: N – Not Started, I – In Progress, A – Achieved or M – Maintaining. A percentage has also been created to accompany the rank to provide the participant with a more tangible measure. Finally, participants will have the opportunity to submit comments/evidence
with each rank. This questionnaire will be completed individually and may be submitted via e-mail or through United States Postal Service.

- The researcher will conduct semistructured interviews with two administrators: administrator in charge of RtI and director of special education services. Individual Interviews serve as an opportunity for the researcher to gain further insight from the educational administrators in charge of facilitating the development and implementation of RtI. The individualized interview protocol includes open-ended questions, allowing the administrator to elaborate on his or her unique experiences. The questions relate to building capacity as well as maintaining a singular focus throughout the development and implementation of the school’s Response to Intervention plan. The researcher will ask follow-up questions if he identifies a need for clarification or further explanation. The interview should last no longer than one hour in length and will be held at the convenience of the interviewee. The interview will be recorded and transcribed. A word-processed transcription will be provided to the interview for accuracy checks and approval.

- Submit relevant documents. Documents will be used as a data source to supplement the Qualitative Questionnaire and Individual Interviews. Documents will be asked for within the individual interview portion of this qualitative case study research. Procurement of all documents will be strictly voluntary.

**Risks/Benefits:**

There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life.

There are no direct benefits to you from participation, but other high school districts may benefit from the findings of this study.

**Confidentiality:**

- Names will not be gathered on the Qualitative Questionnaire.
- Names of staff members interviewed will not be used. If/when there is a need to mention the individuals specifically, the researcher will use “Principal X” and “Principal Y.” The recordings of interviews will be deleted upon completed transcription. The Word-processed transcription will be stored with additional data on the researcher’s personal computer.
- Documents collected will be stored with additional paperwork collected in this study.

**Voluntary Participation:**

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you do not want to be in this study, you do not have to participate. Even if you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any question or to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.
Contacts and Questions:
If you have questions about this research project, feel free to contact Brian J. Mahoney at bmahoney@luc.edu or the faculty sponsor, Dr. Marla Israel at misrael@luc.edu.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Loyola University Office of Research Services at (773) 508-2689.

Statement of Consent:
Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above, have had an opportunity to ask questions, and agree to participate in this research study. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

____________________________________________  ___________________
Participant’s Signature                      Date

____________________________________________  ___________________
Researcher’s Signature                      Date
APPENDIX B

BUILDING PRINCIPAL’S LETTER OF COOPERATION
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH
(Building Principal)

Project Title: Utilizing Response to Intervention (RtI) as a means of studying the motivation and capacity building of staff by school leadership teams.

Researcher: Brian J. Mahoney
Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Marla Israel

Introduction:
Members of your school district are being asked to take part in a research study being conducted by Brian J. Mahoney for a dissertation under the supervision of Dr. Marla Israel in the Department of Education at Loyola University of Chicago.

Members of your school district are being asked to participate because they are part of the successful development and implementation of the Response to Intervention initiative. I will be seeking participation from members of the Response to Intervention team as well as the administrator in charge of RtI and director of special education services.

Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before deciding whether to participate in the study.

Purpose:
The purpose of this study is to utilize Response to Intervention (RtI) as a means of studying how building leadership teams build capacity and motivate their staff to implement educational initiatives that align with their school and/or district goal.

Procedures:
Your superintendent has granted permission for this researcher to move ahead with a qualitative case study in your school district. If you grant permission for members of your school to be in the study, they will be asked to review and respond to the following:

• A Qualitative Questionnaire will be distributed to all members of the RtI team, including, but not limited to the following individuals: the RtI coordinator, general education teacher, special education teacher and special services member (i.e. school psychology, counselor, social worker). The questionnaire will provide the researcher with a view of how members of the Response to Intervention team at each school perceives different aspect of its road through development and implementation of RtI. The Qualitative Questionnaire is made-up of four main categories: comprehensive commitment and support, data collection and team structure, three-tiered intervention system and problem-solving process and monitoring and action planning. Within each category, participants will be asked to rank statements using the following scale: N – Not Started, I – In Progress, A – Achieved or M – Maintaining. A percentage has also been created to accompany the rank to provide the participant with a more tangible
measure. Finally, participants will have the opportunity to submit comments/evidence with each rank. This questionnaire will be completed individually and may be submitted via e-mail or through United States Postal Service.

- The researcher will conduct semistructured interviews with two administrators: administrator in charge of RtI and director of special education services. Individual Interviews serve as an opportunity for the researcher to gain further insight from the educational administrators in charge of facilitating the development and implementation of RtI. The individualized interview protocol includes open-ended questions, allowing the administrator to elaborate on his or her unique experiences. The questions relate to building capacity as well as maintaining a singular focus throughout the development and implementation of the school’s Response to Intervention plan. The researcher will ask follow-up questions if he identifies a need for clarification or further explanation. The interview should last no longer than one hour in length and will be held at the convenience of the interviewee. The interview will be recorded and transcribed. A Word-processed transcription will be provided to the participant for accuracy checks and approval.

- Submit relevant documents. Documents will be used as a data source to supplement the Qualitative Questionnaire and Individual Interviews. Documents will be asked for within the individual interview portion of this qualitative case study research. Procurement of all documents will be strictly voluntary.

**Risks/Benefits:**
There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life.

There are no direct benefits to you from participation, but other high school districts may benefit from the findings of this study.

**Confidentiality:**
- Names will not be gathered on the Qualitative Questionnaire.
- Names of staff members interviewed will not be used. If/when there is a need to mention the individuals specifically, the researcher will use “Principal X” and “Principal Y.” The recordings of interviews will be deleted upon completed transcription. The word-processed transcription will be stored with additional data on the researcher’s personal computer.
- Documents collected will be stored with additional paperwork collected in this study.

**Voluntary Participation:**
Participation in this study is voluntary. If you do not want to be in this study, you do not have to participate. Even if you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any question or to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.
Contacts and Questions:
If you have questions about this research project, feel free to contact Brian J. Mahoney at bmahoney@luc.edu or the faculty sponsor, Dr. Marla Israel at misrael@luc.edu.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Loyola University Office of Research Services at (773) 508-2689.

Statement of Consent:
Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above, have had an opportunity to ask questions, and agree to participate in this research study. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

____________________________________________ __________________
Participant’s Signature Date

____________________________________________ __________________
Researcher’s Signature Date
APPENDIX C

QUALITATIVE QUESTIONNAIRE LETTER OF PERMISSION
Dear Mr. Mahoney,

You have our permission to use the SAPSI for your dissertation. We adapted our version of the instrument from the Illinois ASPIRE Project's SAPSI. I am not sure if you have already done so or would have any interest, but the individuals who developed it are from Loyola University in case you want to connect with them.

That being said, we just ask that you cite the Florida PS/RtI Project if you use our version and share any results of your research with us so we can learn from it.

Good luck and please let me know if you need anything else.

Sincerely,

Jose Castillo, Ph.D., NCSP
Assistant Professor
Department of Psychological and Social Foundations
University of South Florida
4202 E. Fowler Avenue, EDU 105
Tampa, FL 33620
Phone: 813-974-5507
APPENDIX D

QUALITATIVE QUESTIONNAIRE CONSENT LETTER
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH
(Qualitative Questionnaire)

Project Title: Utilizing Response to Intervention (RtI) as a means of studying the motivation and capacity building of staff by school leadership teams.

Researcher: Brian J. Mahoney

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Marla Israel

Introduction:
You are being asked to take part in a research study being conducted by Brian J. Mahoney for a dissertation under the supervision of Dr. Marla Israel in the Department of Education at Loyola University of Chicago.

You are being asked to participate because you are a member of your school’s Response to Intervention team.

Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before deciding whether to participate in the study.

Purpose:
The purpose of this study is to utilize Response to Intervention (RtI) as a means of studying how building leadership teams build capacity and motivate their staff to implement educational initiatives that align with their school and/or district goal.

Procedures:
If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to:

- Complete a Qualitative Questionnaire. The questionnaire will provide the researcher with a view of how members of the Response to Intervention team at each school perceives different aspect of its road through development and implementation of RtI. The Qualitative Questionnaire is made-up of four main categories: comprehensive commitment and support, data collection and team structure, three-tiered intervention system and problem-solving process and monitoring and action planning. Within each category, participants will be asked to rank statements using the following scale: N – Not Started, I – In Progress, A – Achieved or M – Maintaining. A percentage has also been created to accompany the rank to provide the participant with a more tangible measure. Finally, participants will have the opportunity to submit comments/evidence with each rank. This questionnaire will be completed individually and may be submitted via e-mail or through United States Postal Service. The questionnaire will be distributed to all members of the RtI team, including, but not limited to the following individuals: the RtI coordinator, general education teacher, special education teacher and special services member (i.e. school psychology, counselor, social worker).
Risks/Benefits:
There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life.

There are no direct benefits to you from participation, but other high school districts may benefit from the findings of this study.

Confidentiality:
• Names will not be gathered on the Qualitative Questionnaire. The researcher will not share participant information with anyone, including the building principal and/or other staff members.

Voluntary Participation:
Participation in this study is voluntary. If you do not want to be in this study, you do not have to participate. Even if you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any question or to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.

Contacts and Questions:
If you have questions about this research project, feel free to contact Brian J. Mahoney at bmahoney@luc.edu or the faculty sponsor, Marla Israel at misrael@luc.edu.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Loyola University Office of Research Services at (773) 508-2689.

Statement of Consent:
Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above, have had an opportunity to ask questions, and agree to participate in this research study. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

____________________________________________  _____________________
Participant’s Signature                          Date

____________________________________________  _____________________
Researcher’s Signature                          Date
APPENDIX E

QUALITATIVE QUESTIONNAIRE
**PS/RtI Implementation Assessment**

**Directions:**
In responding to each item below, please use the following response scale:

- **Not Started (N)** — (The activity occurs less than 24% of the time)
- **In Progress (I)** — (The activity occurs approximately 25% to 74% of the time)
- **Achieved (A)** — (The activity occurs approximately 75% to 100% of the time)
- **Maintaining (M)** — (The activity was rated as achieved last time and continues to occur approximately 75% to 100% of the time)

For each item below, please write the letter of the option (N, I, A, M) that best represents your School-Based Leadership Team’s response in the column labeled “Status”. In the column labeled “Comments/Evidence”, please write any comments, explanations and/or evidence that are relevant to your team’s response. When completing the items on the SAPSI, the team should base its responses on the grade levels being targeted for implementation by the school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Consensus: Comprehensive Commitment and Support</strong></th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Comments/Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. District level leadership provides active commitment and support (e.g., meets to review data and issues at least twice each year).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The school leadership provides training, support and active involvement (e.g., principal is actively involved in School-Based Leadership Team meetings).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Faculty/staff support and are actively involved with problem solving/RtI (e.g., one of top 3 goals of the School Improvement Plan, 80% of faculty document support, 3-year timeline for implementation available).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. A School-Based Leadership Team is established and represents the roles of an administrator, facilitator, data mentor, content specialist, parent, and teachers from representative areas (e.g., general ed., special ed.).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Data are collected (e.g., belief’s survey, satisfaction survey) to assess level of commitment and impact of PS/RtI on faculty/staff.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Additional Comments/Evidence:**

* Adapted from the IL-ASPIRE SAPSI v. 1.6*

Center for School Evaluation, Intervention and Training (CSEIT)

Loyola University Chicago

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### PS/ RtI Implementation Assessment (Cont’d)

**Scale:**
- **Not Started (N)** — (The activity occurs less than 24% of the time)
- **In Progress (I)** — (The activity occurs approximately 25% to 74% of the time)
- **Achieved (A)** — (The activity occurs approximately 75% to 100% of the time)
- **Maintaining (M)** — (The activity was rated as achieved last time and continues to occur approximately 75% to 100% of the time)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Infrastructure Development:</strong> Data Collection and Team Structure</th>
<th><strong>Status</strong></th>
<th><strong>Comments/Evidence</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6. School-wide data (e.g., DIBELS, Curriculum-Based Measures, Office Discipline Referrals) are collected through an efficient and effective systematic process.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Statewide and other databases (e.g., Progress Monitoring and Reporting Network [PMRN], School-Wide Information System [SWIS]) are used to make data-based decisions.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. School-wide data are presented to staff after each benchmarking session (e.g., staff meetings, team meetings, grade-level meetings).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. School-wide data are used to evaluate the effectiveness of core academic programs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. School-wide data are used to evaluate the effectiveness of core behavior programs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Curriculum-Based Measurement (e.g., DIBELS) data are used in conjunction with other data sources to identify students needing targeted group interventions and individualized interventions for academics.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Office Disciplinary Referral data are used in conjunction with other data sources to identify students needing targeted group interventions and individualized interventions for behavior.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Data are used to evaluate the effectiveness (RI) of Tier 2 intervention programs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Individual student data are utilized to determine response to Tier 3 interventions.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Special Education Eligibility determination is made using the RI model for the following ESE programs:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Emotional/Behavioral Disabilities (EBD)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Adapted from the IL-ASPIRE SAPSI v. 1.6
  Center for School Evaluation, Intervention and Training (CSEIT)
  Loyola University Chicago

---

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### PS/RtI Implementation Assessment (Cont’d)

**Scale:**
- **Not Started (N)** — (The activity occurs less than 24% of the time)
- **In Progress (I)** — (The activity occurs approximately 25% to 74% of the time)
- **Achieved (A)** — (The activity occurs approximately 75% to 100% of the time)
- **Maintaining (M)** — (The activity was rated as achieved last time and continues to occur approximately 75% to 100% of the time)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infrastructure Development: Data Collection and Team Structure (Cont’d)</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Comments/Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16. The school staff has a process to select evidence-based practices.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Tier 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Tier 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Tier 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. The School-Based Leadership Team has a regular meeting schedule for problem-solving activities.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. The School-Based Leadership Team evaluates target student’s/students’ RtI at regular meetings.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. The School-Based Leadership Team involves parents.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. The School-Based Leadership Team has regularly scheduled data day meetings to evaluate Tier 1 and Tier 2 data.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Additional Comments/Evidence:**

---

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Center for School Evaluation, Intervention and Training (CSEIT)  
Loyola University Chicago

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PS/RtI Implementation Assessment (Cont’d)

**Scale:**
- **Not Started (N)** — (The activity occurs less than 24% of the time)
- **In Progress (I)** — (The activity occurs approximately 25% to 74% of the time)
- **Achieved (A)** — (The activity occurs approximately 75% to 100% of the time)
- **Maintaining (M)** — (The activity was rated as achieved last time and continues to occur approximately 75% to 100% of the time)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Implementation: Three-Tiered Intervention System and Problem-Solving Process</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Comments/Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21. The school has established a three-tiered system of service delivery.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Tier 1 Academic Core Instruction clearly identified.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Tier 1 Behavioral Core Instruction clearly identified.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Tier 2 Academic Supplemental Instruction/Programs clearly identified.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Tier 2 Behavioral Supplemental Instruction/Programs clearly identified.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Tier 3 Academic Intensive Strategies/Programs are evidence-based.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Tier 3 Behavioral Intensive Strategies/Programs are evidence-based.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Teams (e.g., School-Based Leadership Team, Problem-Solving Team, Intervention Assistance Team) implement effective problem solving procedures including:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Problem is defined as a data-based discrepancy (GAP Analysis) between what is expected and what is occurring (includes peer and benchmark data).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Replacement behaviors (e.g., reading performance targets, homework completion targets) are clearly defined.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Problem analysis is conducted using available data and evidence-based hypotheses.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Intervention plans include evidence-based (e.g., research-based, data-based) strategies.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Intervention support personnel are identified and scheduled for all interventions.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Center for School Evaluation, Intervention and Training (CSEIT)
Loyola University Chicago

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**PS/RtI Implementation Assessment (Cont’d)**

**Scale:**  
- Not Started (N) — (The activity occurs less than 24% of the time)  
- In Progress (I) — (The activity occurs approximately 25% to 74% of the time)  
- Achieved (A) — (The activity occurs approximately 75% to 100% of the time)  
- Maintaining (M) — (The activity was rated as achieved last time and continues to occur approximately 75% to 100% of the time)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Comments/Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>f. Intervention integrity is documented.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Response to intervention is evaluated through systematic data collection.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. Changes are made to intervention based on student response.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Parents are routinely involved in implementation of interventions.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Additional Comments/Evidence:**

---

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  Center for School Evaluation, Intervention and Training (CSEIT)  
  Loyola University Chicago

---

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Florida Problem Solving/Response to Intervention Project

### PS/RtI Implementation Assessment (Cont’d)

**Scale:**
- **Not Started (N)** — (The activity occurs less than 24% of the time)
- **In Progress (I)** — (The activity occurs approximately 25% to 74% of the time)
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- **Maintaining (M)** — (The activity was rated as achieved last time and continues to occur approximately 75% to 100% of the time)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Implementation: Monitoring and Action Planning</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Comments/Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23. A strategic plan (implementation plan) exists and is used by the School-Based Leadership Team to guide implementation of PS/RtI.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. The School-Based Leadership Team meets at least twice each year to review data and implementation issues.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. The School-Based Leadership Team meets at least twice each year with the District Leadership Team to review data and implementation issues.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Changes are made to the implementation plan as a result of school and district leadership team data-based decisions.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Feedback on the outcomes of the PS/RtI Project is provided to school-based faculty and staff at least yearly.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Additional Comments/Evidence:**

---

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Loyola University Chicago

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APPENDIX F

INDIVIDUALIZED INTERVIEW CONSENT LETTER
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH  
(Individualized Interview)

Project Title: Utilizing Response to Intervention (RtI) as a means of studying the motivation and capacity building of staff by school leadership teams.

Researcher: Brian J. Mahoney

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Marla Israel

Introduction:
You are being asked to take part in a research study being conducted by Brian J. Mahoney for a dissertation under the supervision of Dr. Marla Israel in the Department of Education at Loyola University of Chicago.

You are being asked to participate because you are an administrator in charge of facilitating the development and implementation of RtI.

Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before deciding whether to participate in the study.

Purpose:
The purpose of this study is to utilize Response to Intervention (RtI) as a means of studying how building leadership teams build capacity and motivate their staff to implement educational initiatives that align with their school and/or district goal.

Procedures:
If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to:

- Take part in a semistructured interview. The individualized interview protocol includes open-ended questions, allowing the administrator to elaborate on his or her unique experiences. The questions relate to building capacity as well as maintaining a singular focus throughout the development and implementation of the school’s Response to Intervention plan. The researcher will ask follow-up questions if he identifies a need for clarification or further explanation. The interview should last no longer than one hour in length and will be held at the convenience of the interviewee. The interview will be recorded and transcribed. A Word-processed transcription will be provided to the interview for accuracy checks and approval. The researcher will conduct interviews with two administrators: administrator in charge of RtI and director of special education services.

- Submit relevant documents. Documents will be used as a data source to supplement the Qualitative Questionnaire and Individual Interviews. Documents will be asked for within the individual interview portion of this qualitative case study research. Procurement of all documents will be strictly voluntary.
Risks/Benefits:
There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life.

There are no direct benefits to you from participation, but other high school districts may benefit from the findings of this study.

Confidentiality:
- Names of staff members interviewed will not be used. If/when there is a need to mention the individuals specifically, the researcher will use “Principal X” and “Principal Y.” The recordings of interviews will be deleted upon completed transcription. The Word-processed transcription will be stored with additional data on the researchers personal computer. The researcher will not share participant information with anyone, including the building principal and/or other staff members.

Voluntary Participation:
Participation in this study is voluntary. If you do not want to be in this study, you do not have to participate. Even if you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any question or to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.

Contacts and Questions:
If you have questions about this research project, feel free to contact Brian J. Mahoney at bmahoney@luc.edu or the faculty sponsor, Marla Israel at misrael@luc.edu.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Loyola University Office of Research Services at (773) 508-2689.

Statement of Consent:
Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above, have had an opportunity to ask questions, and agree to participate in this research study. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

____________________________________________ __________________
Participant’s Signature Date

___________________________________________ ___________________
Researcher’s Signature Date
APPENDIX G

INDIVIDUALIZED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

The questions relate to building capacity as well as maintaining a singular focus throughout the development and implementation of the school’s Response to Intervention plan. The researcher will ask follow-up questions if he identifies a need for clarification or further explanation.

Focus:

1. In regards to RtI, describe your school’s “goal(s).”
   a. Describe how a classroom teacher’s knowledge of RtI relates to student achievement.
   b. Who ultimately is responsible for making decisions related to RtI?
      i. What drives the decision-making?
   c. Describe other school goals and/or initiatives.

Data:

2. Describe how your school uses data to improve student achievement.

Leadership:

3. How were members of your school’s RtI team selected?
   a. Did members volunteer?
   b. Were members chosen?
   c. What training have the members of this team received in regards to RtI?

Resources:

4. How do you support this initiative within your school?
   a. Describe the types of staff development opportunities available to staff.
b. Describe any opportunities staff members have to demonstrate their expertise.

c. What do you think is most important in the development of a teacher?

d. What do you think is most important in the development of a leader?

**Reduce Distractors:**

5. What, if anything, got in the way or made it difficult to move forward with your development and implementation of RtI?

**Community:**

6. How has the school-community as a whole supported the development and implementation of RtI?

   a. Describe how you might utilize community resources to benefit your students.

**Communication:**

7. How do you ensure a consistent message is communicated to all stakeholders in regards to RtI?

   a. What mode(s) is/are preferred when communicating goals to staff?

   b. Are all stakeholders familiar with this/these goal(s)? How do you know?

**Esprit de Corps:**

8. Talk about the community you have tried to create among your staff in regards to RtI.

   a. Describe a moment you were most proud of in establishing RtI in your high school and why.
Other:

9. Describe a time in the process of establishing RtI in your high school that was most challenging and how you and your team addressed this challenge.

10. Is there anything else you want to share about your school’s journey in implementing RtI with fidelity?

11. What future goals do you foresee in regards to your implementation of RtI?
APPENDIX H

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT FOR TRANSCRIPTION SERVICES
Confidentiality Agreement
Transcription Services

I, ____________________________, transcriptionist, agree to maintain full confidentiality in regards to any and all audiotapes and documentation received from Brian Mahoney related to his doctoral study: Utilizing Response to Intervention (RtI) as a means of studying the motivation and capacity building of staff by school leadership teams.

Furthermore, I agree:

1. To hold in strictest confidence the identification of any individual that may be inadvertently revealed during the transcription of audiotaped interviews, or in any associated documents.

2. To not make copies of any audiotapes or computerized files of the transcribed interview texts, unless specifically requested to do so by Brian Mahoney.

3. To store all study-related audiotapes and materials in a safe, secure location as long as they are in my possession.

4. To return all audiotapes and study-related documents to Brian Mahoney in a complete and timely manner.

5. To delete all electronic files containing study-related documents from my computer hard drive and any back up devices.

I am aware that I can be held legally liable for any breach of this confidentiality agreement, and for any harm incurred by individuals if I disclose identifiable information contained in the audiotapes and/or files to which I will have access.

Transcriber’s name (printed): _________________________________________

Transcriber’s signature: ______________________________________________

Date: __________________
REFERENCES


Israel, M. S. (1994). *Interpretation, implementation, and compliance – From the state house to the school house: A case study.* A Dissertation submitted to University of Illinois Champaign/Urbana (UMI Microform DAO 72699), Ann Arbor, MI.


U.S. Department of Education. Office of Special Education Programs: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. 34 CFR 300.309(b).


VITA

Brian Mahoney is the son of Christina and Michael Mahoney. He was born in Chicago Heights, Illinois on May 04, 1982. He currently resides in Glen Ellyn, Illinois with his wife, Melissa and son, Finn.

Brian attended public schools in Lansing, Illinois from kindergarten through 12th grade. He graduated from Illinois State University in 2004 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Special Education. In 2007, Brian completed a Type 75 School Administrative Certificate Program at Governors State University.

Brian has worked in the field of education for the past nine years. He began his career as a special education teacher. Brian became an assistant principal in 2008 and then a coordinator of special services and director of pupil personnel services in 2009. He is currently an Assistant Principal at Lyons Township High School in LaGrange, Illinois.

Brian is a member of Alpha Sigma Nu, a Jesuit Honor Society at Loyola University Chicago. Alpha Sigma Nu holds scholarship, loyalty and service as its core principles. Brian also volunteers for the Illinois branch of Make-A-Wish Foundation.
The Dissertation submitted by Brian J. Mahoney has been read and approved by the following committee:

Marla Israel, Ed.D., Director
Associate Professor, School of Education
Loyola University Chicago

Diane Morrison, Ed.D.
Clinical Assistant Professor, School of Education
Loyola University Chicago

Joseph Schumacher, Ed.D.
Principal, Dundee Middle School