

**An Exploration of General Education English language arts: reading Teachers'
Knowledge and Perceptions of Tier II Response to Intervention in a North Louisiana
School District**

Dissertation Manuscript

Submitted to National University

School of Education

In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

by

MARY ANN THOMAS

San Diego, California

April 2026

Abstract

Response to Intervention is an multitiered educational framework intended to support students who are struggling academically. Tier 1 and Tier 2 consist of interventions implemented by the general education teacher in the general education classroom. The problem addressed in this study was the lack of information regarding general education teachers' knowledge and perceptions about the guiding principles of effective implementation of Tier 2 of Response to Intervention and resources necessary for successful student outcomes. The purpose was to explore the knowledge and perceptions of general education reading teachers in one northeast Louisiana school district regarding the effective implementation of Tier 2 of Response to Intervention. Critical theory aided in highlighting the importance of understanding power structures that influence educational teaching and outcomes. A qualitative, collective case study was conducted through interviews and document analysis. Purposive, criterion sampling was used to recruit nine general education reading teachers of first through third grade. Saldaña's two-cycle coding method was applied for data analysis to answer the research questions aimed at gathering information on participant knowledge and perception of Tier 2 of Response to Intervention as well as resources needed to improve student learning outcomes. Five themes were revealed to answer the research questions. Participants shared their knowledge and perceptions of Tier 2 Response to Intervention and what resources they believed necessary for positive student reading outcomes. All nine teachers discussed the importance of research-based, individualized, differentiated interventions to meet each student's specific needs, consistently monitoring progress, and utilizing data to make intervention decisions. The participants' perceptions of Tier 2 Response to Intervention were based on the district-mandated computer program, Lexia[®] Core5[®] Reading (Lexia). They expressed concern that students with difficulty

reading faced an excessive amount of time completing their required assignments in Lexia, which lacked differentiated, individualized instruction, and, therefore, increased their workload. Resources reported by the participants as necessary for positive student reading outcomes required administrative support in the form of time, qualified teaching assistants, and professional learning communities. The findings revealed that teachers have the knowledge to provide instruction and interventions to students and highlighted the need for administrative support and collaboration.

Acknowledgements

Completing this dissertation has been a journey I never could have navigated alone. I am filled with gratitude for the community of colleagues, peers, students, and loved ones who walked alongside me, offering their encouragement at every turn. I want to express my deepest thanks to my Chair, Dr. Manisha Sharma. Your support was invaluable, and your guidance was always paired with kindness. Your insights have not only shaped this research but also my growth as a scholar. To my Subject Matter Expert, Dr. Leslie Loughmiller, thank you for your time and genuine enthusiasm throughout the process. I am also incredibly grateful to the participants who volunteered for this study. Their willingness to share their time and insights was fundamental to the completion of this research. Without their cooperation, this work would not have been possible. Finally, to my family and friends, thank you for your endless patience and encouragement when the finish line felt out of reach. I am so thankful to you all and am grateful to have had you cheering me on.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

With the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004, Response to Intervention (RTI), also referred to as Multitiered Systems of Support (MTSS), was recommended to be utilized as part of the informal assessment process to guide the identification of students with learning disabilities (Whitfield, 2024). A nationwide analysis of RTI/MTSS implementation indicated that all 50 states have adopted an MTSS consisting of universal screening, three tiers of academic or behavioral intervention, progress monitoring, and data-based decision-making (Zhang et al., 2023). The three tiers of academic intervention are as follows: (a) Tier 1 is instruction for all children in the general education classroom; (b) Tier 2 is instruction using differentiated, evidence-based, academic interventions for small groups of students in the general education classroom; and (c) Tier 3 is intensive, individualized, evidence-based instruction in a resource setting (Gartland & Strosnider, 2020). Data acquired during intervention in each of the tiers are utilized to guide instructional decisions and identify students who may require special education or related services. To provide the most appropriate academic support for each student, teachers need adequate knowledge and skill in implementing all aspects of RTI.

Louisiana is one of 14 states that mandates RTI before a student receives the classification of specific learning disability (Zirkel, 2012). According to Louisiana's kindergarten through third grade literacy report, 41% of third grade students were below benchmark following the 2024–2025 school year (Louisiana Department of Education, 2026). However, the Pupil Appraisal Handbook, Bulletin 1508, does not provide teachers with the guidance necessary for effective RTI implementation (Louisiana Department of Education, 2023). There are no specific criteria for placement in Tier 2 or Tier 3 of RTI or criteria for

determining appropriate progress. Therefore, general education teachers depend on their professional judgment or criteria set by their specific school, suggesting that students at risk of academic failure are not receiving the individualized instruction necessary for success in the general education curriculum or receiving a referral for a special education evaluation. In one northeast Louisiana school district, schools determine how and when to implement each tier of RTI as well as which criteria are used to determine progress or lack thereof.

According to Lopuch (2018), the three-tiered framework is difficult to implement, and it is not feasible for school-based personnel to implement it with fidelity due to a lack of practical professional development and resources necessary for its effective implementation. Due to its complexity, many of the essential components of RTI are avoided or are poorly implemented, and student learning outcomes are negatively impacted. RTI does not effectively consider unexpected learning failure or cognitive ability needed to succeed in meeting grade-level expectations, which can lead to the under identification of students with learning disabilities (Raben et al., 2019). The ineffective implementation of the current RTI framework is attributed to limited guidance and support from the state and local education agencies (LEA) and inconsistent policies and procedures guiding the use of RTI. According to Raben et al. (2019), teachers have reported having a broad understanding of RTI. However, they have also reported limited knowledge of specific interventions within each tier and how to interpret progress-monitoring data to make instructional and/or intervention decisions. Teacher knowledge of RTI implementation using evidence-based practices, progress monitoring, and data-based decision-making is essential for a successful RTI model (Oslund et al., 2021). Therefore, states must develop specific procedures and guidelines for each aspect of RTI to support teachers in its effective implementation.

An RTI model can only be effective when response is meaningfully defined (Hendricks & Fuchs, 2020). A consensus regarding which evidence-based measures and methods should be used to define response must be established for RTI to be used for the identification of a disability. Oslund et al. (2021) explored the factors critical for RTI success. They revealed how the correct identification of students who need intervention through screening, multilevel evidence-based instruction that directly addresses the learning problem, progress monitoring to ensure appropriate interventions, and data-based decision-making to determine the need for further intervention, was successful. Successful implementation of RTI is primarily based on data-based decision-making. School districts in northeast Louisiana continually struggle with the successful implementation of RTI and while Louisiana's Department of Education has developed necessary processes and procedural safeguards, this vital practice has been ignored (Louisiana Department of Education, 2023).

Thomas et al. (2020) reported that teacher perception and confidence in the implementation of the core elements of RTI, such as data-based decision-making, are a challenge to effective RTI implementation. Teachers' knowledge, perceived ability, and confidence in data-based decision-making are critical to implementing RTI with fidelity (Oslund et al., 2021). Data-based individualization (DBI) is a systematic process based on the consistent and accurate collection and analysis of data to guide student-specific instructional decisions (Bruhn et al., 2023). When educators are not sufficiently trained in consistent, ongoing data collection and analysis, they can view it as complex and labor intensive, which may prevent their use of data-based decision-making required for DBI. In order to become independent in using data to develop or make intervention changes, teachers require training and practice in data-based

decision-making to build a sense of self-efficacy and, in turn, improve student outcomes (Bruhn et al., 2023)

The reported ineffective implementation of the current RTI framework is attributed to limited guidance and support from the state and LEA and inconsistent policies and procedures guiding the use of RTI (Hunter et al., 2023). Specifically, there is limited guidance from federal, state, and local education agencies regarding the use of RTI data for specific learning disability (SLD) special education eligibility determination. Miesner et al. (2023) reported that the education departments of all 50 states have used RTI as a means of reducing special education referrals since 2016. According to Oslund et al. (2021), states and schools in the 50 states still demonstrate inconsistent RTI policies and procedures and do not implement RTI with fidelity. General education teachers' knowledge of RTI and their perceived confidence in its effective implementation are related to the guidance and support from the education agencies that mandate its use as a component of assessment for students struggling academically. Therefore, more research is required to understand the implications of RTI implementation as it pertains to the identification of SLD.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of this study was the lack of knowledge regarding the knowledge and perceptions of general education English language arts: reading teachers in elementary schools located in one northeast Louisiana school district about effective implementation of Tier 2 of RTI, use of progress monitoring data to determine instructional decisions, and resources used for positive student outcomes (Sande, 2022). In Louisiana, Louisiana Administrative Code, Bulletin 1508, the Pupil Appraisal Handbook, RTI is discussed as a screening and an intervention (Louisiana Department of Education, 2023). In Bulletin 1508, information guiding the RTI

process was amended and updated in July 2023. The new definition states that the essential components are three tiers of instruction, standard protocols and problem-solving methods, and data collection and assessment. It also vaguely describes expected outcomes in each tier and states that the outcome data can be used when making instructional decisions in general or special education. However, there are no specific criteria for placement in Tier 1, Tier 2, or Tier 3 of RTI, nor are there criteria for determining appropriate progress.

As of June 2012, Louisiana is one of 14 states that completely and exclusively mandates RTI for the classification of specific learning disability (Zirkel, 2012). However, Berkeley et al. (2020) conducted a systematic review of RTI-related information on the websites of all 50 states' departments of education. They found that Louisiana did not have enough information accessible on its website to determine if it had adopted an RTI model. The general problem of my study was that state departments are responsible for providing information and guidance on best practices for RTI implementation to educational stakeholders (Berkeley et al., 2020). Louisiana has adopted the RTI model to reduce the number of students from diverse populations in special education. However, the Louisiana Department of Education website and Bulletin 1508 do not provide educational stakeholders with the information and resources necessary to implement RTI with fidelity, indicating students at risk of academic failure are not receiving the intensive, individualized instruction necessary for success in the general education curriculum.

Researchers in a prior study identified that 62% of interventionists believed that RTI was responsible for positive changes in reading achievement, but only 41% believed RTI had been correctly implemented in their schools (Savitz et al., 2022). As it was concluded that variations exist in RTI implementation, they recommended that future research include a focus on how student learning outcomes are impacted by various RTI models of implementation. Evidence of

the problem was also found by Braun et al. (2020), as findings from their qualitative research included two themes: educators considered RTI to be effective for students requiring little assistance, but schools struggle when students require more intensive interventions, and stronger communication was necessary as the frequent changes in the RTI process resulted in educator confusion. When the findings and discussion by Braun et al. (2020) and Savitz et al. (2022) are considered, the majority of teachers in their studies believed that RTI could be beneficial for students requiring minimal support in Tier 2. However, due to the frequent changes in various models of RTI implementation, teachers reported feeling uninformed, indicating that communication remains a critical centerpiece of the problem of the study. Truckenmiller and Brehmer (2021) conducted a systematic literature synthesis to collect data regarding Tier 2 RTI implementation decisions at the school level. They discovered that teachers' decision-making regarding student progress during Tier 2 RTI intervention was most frequently determined by professional judgment rather than precise, pre-specified progress monitoring rules. Responding to the problem of the study was critical, as not responding to the study could have resulted in a continuation of the difficulties experienced in the implementation and communication surrounding the structure and collaboration in RTI implementation.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative, collective case study was to explore the knowledge and perceptions of general education English language arts: reading teachers regarding the effective implementation of Tier 2 of RTI, use of progress-monitoring data to determine instructional decisions, and resources used for positive student outcomes (Sande, 2022). Thus, this purpose addressed the problem of how general education English language arts: reading teachers effectively implement Tier 2 of RTI, use progress-monitoring data to determine instructional

decisions, and make recommendations for more intensive intervention and positive student outcomes in elementary schools located in one northeast Louisiana school district. Data collection included semi-structured interviews and document analysis. I recruited potential participants by contacting administrators of nine elementary schools with first through third grades located in northeast Louisiana. I applied a purposive sampling strategy to reduce the sample to only individuals who fit the inclusion criteria for the study. Therefore, the participants were general education reading teachers. In addition, participants were limited to those from elementary schools with first through third grades located in northeast Louisiana. The sample size for interviews was limited to nine participants. However, data collection continued until the point of saturation was achieved. Data analysis included Saldaña's (2021) two-cycle method for qualitative data analysis.

Introduction to Theoretical Framework

The framework applied for this study was rooted in critical theory (Horkheimer, 1972). Critical theory is a framework that emphasizes the exploration of power dynamics, inequalities, and the role of social structures as factors that shape individual and collective experiences (Horkheimer, 1972). Critical theory is a lens through the systemic factors that influence educational practices and outcomes, particularly in the context of RTI implementation (Creswell & Poth, 2025). Key concepts, such as power, communication, and collaboration, are interlinked organizational characteristics that may impact the efficacy of educational interventions and the achievement of equitable educational outcomes (Charlton et al., 2021). In the context of critical theory, power relations within educational institutions can be influential toward the structure and collaborative practices among educators. These interactions may be integral to the processes involved with the implementation of RTI programs as they engage research participants as active

collaborators to encourage discussion to facilitate change in existing structures and processes (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019).

The application of the critical theory (Horkheimer, 1972) framework to this research necessitated a focus on how structural and collaborative aspects within educational settings contribute to or hinder the successful implementation of RTI. Thorius et al. (2014) conducted a qualitative case study focused on factors involved in the implementation of RTI in one urban school. Utilizing critical theory allowed them to explore special education policy development and the inequities that continue to occur for specific student populations. Their study findings provided justification for critical inquiry that researches contextual factors involved when developing, introducing, and implementing special education policy. Critical theory guided the formulation of research questions aimed at uncovering the complexities of RTI implementation by highlighting the importance of understanding the underlying social and power structures that influence educator collaboration and communication. Thus, the theoretical foundation informed on the knowledge and perceptions of general education English language arts: reading teachers to effectively implement Tier 2 of RTI and the resources available for positive student outcomes. It also aided in steering the research towards a qualitative inquiry that sought to illuminate the intricacies of educator experiences, the challenges of implementing structured interventions, and the critical role of effective communication in achieving successful educational outcomes.

Introduction to the Research Methodology and Design (Nature of the Study)

The study applied a qualitative research methodology. A qualitative research methodology was selected to support the exploration of the intricacies of RTI implementation among English language arts: reading teachers in elementary schools located in an urban school district. Qualitative research methodology is delineated from quantitative research as qualitative

researchers can provide depth and detail through several diverse types of data collection strategies, including semi-structured interviews and document analysis (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Qualitative methodological research is also invaluable, as researchers can uncover complex dynamics, understand the perspectives of participants, and interpret social phenomena within their natural settings (Creswell & Poth, 2025). The study employed a case study design to conduct an in-depth investigation into cases involving the implementation of Tier 2 RTI among English language arts: reading teachers in an urban elementary school setting. Case study research is particularly suited for exploring contemporary events within their real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not evident (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Qualitative case study research enabled a detailed and comprehensive examination of the processes and outcomes of RTI implementation. A qualitative case study allowed for the collection of data using multiple methods in a natural setting to develop a thorough account of teachers' knowledge and perceptions regarding Tier 2 RTI implementation through description of the research participants and their experiences as well as school context (Creswell & Poth, 2025). Thus, I was able to build rich, contextual, and holistic insights.

Based on the exploratory nature of the research questions, a qualitative research method was the most appropriate choice for this study. Qualitative methods allow for the flexibility and depth needed to uncover the subtleties of the characteristics and the perceptions of the participants (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Thus, a qualitative research method supported a nuanced understanding of the phenomenon under study. A case study design was appropriate for this research due to its focus on a specific instance of Tier 2 RTI implementation within a unique urban elementary school context. A case study design provided a detailed picture of the structural, collaborative, and organizational aspects of RTI implementation. I aimed to achieve a

deep, contextualized understanding of how Tier 2 RTI was implemented, supported, and experienced by nine first through third grade English language arts: reading general education teachers in northeast Louisiana.

Research Questions

I sought to answer the following research questions.

RQ1

What knowledge do general education English language arts: reading teachers describe regarding the effective implementation of Tier 2 RTI?

RQ2

What perceptions do general education English language arts: reading teachers report regarding their ability to effectively implement Tier 2 RTI?

RQ3

What resources do general education English language arts: reading teachers describe as helping to improve student learning outcomes?

Significance of the Study

The study proved significant in several ways. Specifically, the study added to knowledge and understanding important for improved Tier 2 RTI implementation, professional development and support, and policy and organizational changes for schools. The study added understanding concerning teachers' knowledge of RTI as well as their perceived ability to implement Tier 2 of RTI with fidelity. In addition, it shed light on teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of Tier 2 RTI intervention on student learning outcomes and what resources are used to improve student learning outcomes. Understanding concerning teachers' knowledge and perception of Tier 2 RTI implementation potentially led to more effective and efficient methods of support for students struggling with reading. Schools can enhance the effectiveness of RTI programs by identifying best practices and potential areas of improvement. Doing so can then directly contribute to better

educational outcomes for students. Greater understanding of professional development and support was also highlighted through the findings of the study.

Research concerning teachers' knowledge and perception of the implementation of Tier 2 of RTI filled gaps in scholastic knowledge, such as those identified by Braun et al. (2020), Savitz et al. (2022), and Truckenmiller and Brehmer (2021) in the problem statement. Practical knowledge concerning skills or resources that, once addressed, would potentially improve support provided to teachers, is another potential benefit. The study highlighted the need for targeted professional development opportunities, resources necessary for effective Tier 2 RTI implementation, and a more supportive environment for teachers to grow and improve their instructional strategies. Knowledge concerning policy and organizational change can also be possible through the study. Insights from the research can be used to inform policymakers and educational leaders concerning strengths and weaknesses of current organizational structures, resources, and communication in education that support Tier 2 RTI implementation. The findings from the study can lead to informed decisions about policy changes or organizational restructuring that better support teachers and students and potentially impact a wide range of educational outcomes in the local school district.

Definitions of Key Terms

Data-Based Individualization (DBI)

Data-based individualization (DBI) refers to a systematic process based on the consistent and accurate collection and analysis of data to guide student-specific instructional decisions (Bruhn et al., 2023).

English language arts: reading

English language arts: reading is a student learning standard that focuses on developing proficiency in reading, including foundational skills for learning to read as well as skills required to read to learn various types of academic texts (Louisiana Department of Education, 2019)

Louisiana Administrative Code Bulletin 1508

Louisiana's Pupil Appraisal Handbook is used as a reference for special education eligibility determinations and to guide in the assessment of students in need of special education or related services (Louisiana Department of Education, 2023).

Multitiered Systems of Support (MTSS)

Multitiered Systems of Support (MTS) is a framework, consisting of multiple tiers, that is used for early identification of students with behavioral or learning challenges that includes screenings, providing tiered intervention support, and progress monitoring (Schiller et al., 2020).

Response to Intervention (RTI)

Response to Intervention (RTI) is a strategy applied in education that is focused on early identification and support for students who are at risk for poor academic outcomes (Schiller et al., 2020).

Tier 2 of the RTI Process

Tier 2 is a tier of more focused RTI interventions and supports for students who have not made adequate progress in the general education classroom under Tier 1 (Truckenmiller & Brehmer, 2021).

Summary

The focus of this dissertation was on the implementation of RTI among English language arts: reading teachers in northeast Louisiana, emphasizing the importance of teachers' knowledge

and perceived ability and effectiveness of Tier 2 RTI in enhancing reading achievement. It highlighted previous research findings indicating improvements in reading achievement through RTI; however, concerns about its consistent and correct application remain. Louisiana currently mandates RTI practices as assessment and intervention before a student is referred for a special education evaluation (Zirkel, 2012). However, Berkeley et al. (2020) conducted a systematic review of each state's websites for RTI-related information and found that Louisiana did not have accessible information related to its RTI practices. Louisiana's Pupil Appraisal Handbook, Bulletin 1508, was updated in July 2023 to provide more explanation and guidance regarding RTI, but the information is still vague and does not provide tier specific criteria for data-based individualization (Louisiana Department of Education, 2023). Braun et al. (2020), Savitz et al. (2022), and Truckenmiller and Brehmer (2021) found that teachers reported that RTI can be beneficial; however, they reported feeling uninformed of specific policies and procedures to determine student progress during Tier 2 RTI implementation. The aim of this qualitative case study was to explore the dynamics of Tier 2 RTI implementation in northeast Louisiana, focusing on teachers' knowledge and perception and the organizational structures supporting RTI. The study's significance lay in its potential to inform improvements in Tier 2 RTI practices, professional development, and policy, thereby contributing to better educational outcomes in a northeast Louisiana school district.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the knowledge and perceptions of general education English language arts: reading teachers regarding the effective implementation of Tier 2 of Response to Intervention (RTI), use of progress-monitoring data to determine instructional decisions, and resources used for positive student outcomes (Sande, 2022). The problem addressed in this study was the lack of information regarding the knowledge and perceptions of general education English language arts: reading teachers about effective implementation of Tier 2 of RTI, use of progress monitoring data to determine instructional decisions, and resources used for positive student outcomes in elementary schools located in one northeast Louisiana school district (Sande, 2022). Thus, through exploration, the purpose addressed the problem of how English language arts: reading general education teachers effectively implement Tier 2 of RTI and use data-based decision-making (DBDM) to recommend more intensive intervention for positive student outcomes in one northeast Louisiana school district.

The need for interdisciplinary, more effective support for students with learning difficulties across today's public and private education institutions continues (Al Otaiba et al., 2019; Grigorenko et al., 2020; Gomez-Najarro, 2019). Students identified with specific learning disability (SLD) are those who are at risk of or do not meet grade-appropriate academic standards in receptive and expressive language, including reading and writing (Grigorenko et al., 2020). Response to Intervention is an educational approach designed to identify and provide early intervention and support to students with learning difficulties (Hurlbut et al., 2023). Evidence suggests RTI may be effective in providing needed support to students with SLD across different educational contexts (Berkeley et al., 2020; Da Haan, 2021). Specifically, Da

Haan (2021) indicated that the approaches outlined through Tier 1 and Tier 2 of the RTI process go beyond standard classroom models to better adapt to the needs of students with SLD. In order to prevent delays in intervention, assessments should occur in a timely manner and include consideration of progress-monitoring data and contextual factors (Grigorenko et al., 2020). Therefore, it is essential to understand teachers' perceptions of their knowledge and ability regarding effective RTI implementation.

Some research points to methodological and theoretical gaps that exist concerning the exploration of the efficacy of RTI and the specific experiences of teachers regarding RTI approaches across different classroom and student population contexts (Hurlbut et al., 2023). For instance, a methodological gap exists such that researchers recommend targeting populations from urban, suburban, and rural areas in the research sample, since the diversified inclusion of teaching faculty in research concerning Tier 2 of the RTI process supports participant diversification (Aini et al., 2020). Such diversification improves the trustworthiness and transferability of research findings (Hurlbut et al., 2023). Theoretically, using critical analysis to examine education contexts, including teacher perspectives of expectations and demands, in which special education policy, such as RTI, is implemented, can help close the research to practice gap while supporting teachers tasked with meeting the diverse learning needs of students in an ever evolving educational system (Thorius & Maxcy, 2015; Lemons & Toste, 2019).

This literature review includes existing empirical research on the topic of the study. The literature review provides a basis within which to contextualize the findings of this study and evidences the gap in empirical knowledge concerning the lived experiences of elementary school teachers using RTI, thus supporting the need for the study. First, chapter two includes a description of the search strategy used to collect publications for review in this case. Second,

chapter two contains information on the critical theory (Horkheimer, 1972), which guided the study's data interpretation of findings. The bulk of the literature review is divided into three primary sections, which include (a) foundations and principles of RTI; (b) theoretical perspectives on RTI and teacher preparedness; and (c) challenges and successes in implementing Tier 2 of RTI. Chapter two concludes by describing a synthesis of the literature as it supported the need for future research, before summarizing the chapter.

Literature Search Strategy

A Boolean search of literature was used with databases, including Google Scholar, Jstor, and university databases, such as APA PsycInfo, SAGE, and ERIC. Only literature published between 2019 and 2024 was selected for inclusion in the literature review, except for seminal work pertaining to RTI and relating to and describing the guiding theoretical framework, critical theory (Horkheimer, 1972). Additionally, only peer-reviewed literature, including academic journals, and books, was included, except for government publications. The first number following each Boolean search phrase below indicates the total number of search results that populated the search phrase for all times when search results were averaged across databases. The second number indicates the total number of search results populating each search phrase when results were constrained to literature published after 2019.

1. "Critical Theory" 1M; 32,000
2. "Response to Intervention" 13,580; 3,028
3. "Theoretical perspectives" + "Response to Intervention" + "teacher experiences" 61;
22
4. "Challenges" + "Successes" + "Implementing" + Tier 2 RTI" 131; 33

Based on the search results listed above, it was evident that most literature was found concerning critical theory (Horkheimer, 1972). The least amount of literature was found concerning theoretical perspectives and Response to Intervention, and especially, concerning teachers' experiences with RTI. The lack of literature concerning these searches, across databases, was evidence of the gap in existing empirical knowledge the study contributed to filling. Peng (2022) discussed findings indicating that RTI may have significant implications for improving reading and literacy comprehension for students with learning difficulties. However, a gap in the literature existed concerning teachers' perceptions and experiences with navigating challenges and success related to Tier 2 of the RTI implementation.

Theoretical Framework

Qualitative research originates with a theoretical perspective that guides research studies focused on the meaning individuals attribute to social concerns (Creswell & Poth, 2025). Critical theory (Horkheimer, 1972) provides a lens for the researcher to understand, and possibly, transform systemic and social relationships in society. The ontological assumption of critical theory is that social or cultural structures are influenced by reality (Paradis et al, 2020). In critical theory, the epistemological position is that knowledge is formed from a specific position that is determined by the interaction of structures in a society. A distinctive characteristic of critical theory is that reality is acknowledged and examined by language. The critical theory was chosen as the theoretical framework most appropriate in guiding the contextualization and interpretation of results for the study. Critical theory is a framework emphasizing the need for a more critical exploration and evaluation of power structures in society and culture to contribute to social justice and change (Thorius & Maxcy, 2015). Primary assumptions of the critical theory include a critique of culture, the assumption of power and social structure existence, the need for an

untrue disciplinary approach to evaluating social structures, and an emphasis on the need for social transformation. Therefore, the critical theory was used as a framework within which to examine current social structures concerning areas in need of change and improvement.

Through an analysis of society, culture, and the power structures that compose societal frameworks, an application of the critical theory (Horkheimer, 1972) is used to better explain and understand the challenges inherent within various social structures, and the consequences of those challenges, power dynamics, and resulting in inequities (Bosseau & Bunyard, 2022; Ladson-Billings, 2021; Paradis et al., 2020). For instance, the critical theory is used to evaluate power dynamics in organizations and cultures to better understand equal versus unequal distribution of power, parties that benefit from or are oppressed by the unequal distribution, and impacts on marginalized groups or populations. By examining such power structures, an application of critical theory requires an interdisciplinary approach, drawing insights from philosophy, psychology, sociology, and even cultural studies. Similarly, scholars who apply the critical theory often leverage a diverse array of methodological approaches to analyze social phenomena and the implications of such phenomena (Bosseau & Bunyard, 2022; Paradis et al., 2020). The critical theory is based on the assumption that current social structures and dynamics cannot be fully or completely comprehended without an in-depth understanding of the historical roots of such structures (Horkheimer, 1972). Scholars applying the critical theory often leverage this theory as a framework for understanding what initiatives or implementations may yield the most effective social transformation and change, based on the underlying roots and structural inequities facing a culture or society (Paradis et al., 2020). In relation to the context of the study, scholars have applied critical theory to explore power structures in society by evaluating the

power structures and dynamics inherent in education systems, and educational approaches used and perpetuated by authority structures in society (Bosseau & Bunyard, 2022).

Critical theory (Horkheimer, 1972) has been applied by various scholars in education to better understand systemic inequities in education, such as learning and achievement gaps, racially-correlated achievement gaps, and academic disparities facing students with learning difficulties or disabilities, such as disparities in support, access to education, and educational outcomes (Kaplan & Owings, 2022; Maddock, 2021). Kaplan and Owings (2022) leveraged the framework of the critical resource theory, derived from the critical theory, to better understand education funding inequities and potential solutions. Despite the wide applicability of the critical theory across education contexts, Maddock (2021) cautioned scholars against oversimplifying cultural, societal, and educational problems and inequities and highlights that just as the critical theory framework provides a basis with which scholars seek to dismantle stereotypes and inequities, overemphasis on or over-application of critical framework approaches can lead to generalizations, stereotypes, and an ignoring of the nuances and complexities inherent in any system. Hence, with a reflexive approach in mind, the framework of the critical theory can be useful for exploring systemic inequities and power structures in today's education systems and designing solutions that may be customized for specific contexts or scenarios, not ignoring nuances and the complex, interdisciplinary dynamics influencing any given situation.

The applicability of critical theory (Horkheimer, 1972) to the study may best be described by Sande (2022), who concluded that the application of critical theory in the framework of qualitative research on RTI would be crucial because researchers and their participants are provided the opportunity to reflect on contextualized circumstances through the use of dialogue. In the context of RTI research, an application of critical theory may involve the adoption of

perspectives that reach beyond a simple understanding of existing educational practices, and instead, may involve exploring assumptions underlying power structures and societal norms that influence educational inequities (Maddock, 2021). In this way, the critical theory can be a guide for the practice of reflexivity and the critical examination of interdisciplinary factors influencing educational inequities, such as a lack of support for students with learning difficulties, and the challenges elementary school teachers may face when seeking to address these students using the RTI framework (López-Meneses et al., 2020).

For example, critical theory (Horkheimer, 1972) is useful for applying to gain a better understanding of teachers' lived experiences with RTI, because the theory offers a framework within which to contextualize and understand the potential power dynamics inherent in today's education systems that may present challenges to teachers leveraging the RTI framework to support students with learning difficulties. The framework provides for the interdisciplinary drawing of knowledge to understand how factors, such as issues in funding and/or a lack of teacher knowledge, preparedness, or cultural competence training may converge to create both challenges and support networks that either facilitate or create barriers to effectively implement RTI to support students with learning disabilities or difficulties (Maddock, 2021). In this way, the application of the critical theory framework allows for the questioning of power dynamics in today's elementary education systems that may shape the efficacy of interventions, rather than assuming that challenges are inherent to the design or components within an intervention itself.

By allowing for an inquiry of power dynamics, the critical theory (Horkheimer, 1972) framework also includes tenets that challenge researchers to question the status quo, through which potential solutions can be developed (Maddock, 2021). Solutions may include re-examining traditional intervention methods as they serve disadvantaged versus advantaged

students, and, based on evaluation, developing RTI interventions by more appropriately considering both the needs of disadvantaged students and the cultural or systemic challenges educational stakeholders face by implementing support for diverse students (Ladson-Billings, 2021). Through this approach, critical theory is a framework through which researchers and practitioners emphasize the importance of reflecting on personal biases or assumptions to limit their influence on interventions and understandings of culture and society (Thorius & Maxcy, 2015). This framework can also be thought of as a model that allows researchers and practitioners to participate in open dialogue and reflection by engaging conversations with education administrators and teachers. Therefore, the critical theory was aligned with the study's approach because this study collected data through interviews with elementary teacher participants concerning their lived experiences with and perspectives towards Tier 2 RTI framework implementation, and the challenges associated therein. The application of the critical theory was also appropriate for the study because the theory highlights the importance of examining social justice implications of the data uncovered.

Response to Intervention: Tier 2

As today's classrooms change and have more diverse student populations, a need exists to continue to identify ways of better supporting these students through better understanding the challenges teachers face and the potential solutions that can be effectively implemented (Grigorenko et al., 2020; Hurlbut et al., 2023). Research indicates promising results of RTI in providing early intervention and support to students with learning difficulties (Berkeley et al., 2020; Da Haan, 2021; Hurlbut et al., 2023), by going beyond standard classroom models to better target the needs and improve literacy learning for students needing additional academic support (DaHaan, 2021; Peng, 2022). However, teachers still seem to face challenges

implementing Tier 2 of the RTI framework, and a lack of empirical understanding exists regarding teachers' perspectives and experiences with Tier 2 RTI challenges (Hurlbut et al., 2023). To address this gap in research, the study sought to answer the following three research questions: RQ1. What knowledge do general education English language arts: reading teachers describe regarding the effective implementation of Tier 2 RTI? RQ2. What perceptions do general education English language arts: reading teachers describe regarding their ability to effectively implement Tier 2 RTI? RQ3. What resources do general education English language arts: reading teachers describe as helping to improve student learning outcomes?

This section of chapter two explores a synthesis of literature aligning with the study's topic. The literature explored herein served as a basis within which to contextualize the study's findings, informing the three research questions. The first section of the literature discusses theoretical perspectives on RTI and teacher experiences, according to the themes of foundational principles of RTI and teacher perceptions and experiences with RTI. The second section includes literature related to cultural and socioeconomic influences on teaching and learning. Finally, the third section of the literature includes research that cohesively describes the challenges and successes in implementing Tier 2 of RTI. This final section is informed by the two subsection themes that include barriers to effective implementation of Tier 2 interventions and best practices and success stories in Tier 2 implementation.

Theoretical Perspectives on RTI and Teacher Experiences

This first section of the literature reviewed includes description and synthesis of existing empirical research concerning theoretical perspectives towards RTI as well as research exploring teacher perspectives and experiences using RTI. As was evident based on the search results on keywords and phrases pertaining to theory versus teacher perceptions and experiences regarding

RTI, less research was found specifically describing teacher experiences. The lack of research in this area highlights the need for further study by exposing a gap in empirical knowledge that this study addressed. However, a synthesis of the literature explored revealed several high-level themes concerning teacher perspectives towards RTI, and the theoretical lenses through which teachers' approaches and perspectives were oriented (March et al., 2019; Petricone, 2020; Robinson et al., 2019). The critical theory (Horkheimer, 1972) specifically provided a context within which to take a more modern, interdisciplinary approach to understanding societal factors that may present challenges in RTI implementation. Additionally, less was known about the application of critical theory and the perspectives of teachers through the lens of critical theory concerning RTI implementation and efficacy. The first subsection herein describes the foundations and principles of RTI while the second subsection describes teacher perceptions and experiences with RTI.

The Foundations and Principles of RTI. In the early 2000s, George W. Bush promoted Response to Intervention (RTI) as a more legitimate process of disability identification (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2017). In 2004, as part of the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), RTI was hurriedly implemented in schools in America due to the disproportionate representation of students from culturally and linguistically diverse populations classified with specific learning disability (Alahmari, 2019; Kressler & Cavendish, 2020). It was believed that RTI would prevent low-achieving students from being classified as having a disability based on the implementation of universal screening, progress monitoring, and data-based decision-making (DBDM) regarding instructional programming before a referral for a special education evaluation (Al Otaiba., et al., 2019; Gomez-Najarro, 2019). The IDEA allowed states and local education agencies to determine a child's response to intervention before referral

based on a learning disability, which, in turn, significantly changed how children with learning difficulties were identified and provided individualized instruction (Raben et al., 2019). The Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 stressed that states and local education agencies develop their models of RTI; however, the act provided little clarification and guidance regarding RTI implementation (Al Otaiba et al., 2019). Hunter et al. (2023) reported that continued use of RTI for determining SLD eligibility requires improved regulations and more specific guidelines.

Response to Intervention describes an educational framework that is intended to facilitate the provision of systematic support to students struggling with learning difficulties or disabilities, either academically or behaviorally, beginning at an early age (Raben et al., 2019). The RTI process was designed to work by providing early support for these students through a two- to three-tiered framework (Tzouriadou & Tzivinikou, 2021; Whitten et al., 2020). Key foundational principles govern all tiers of the RTI approach and framework. These principles include (a) the assumption of the importance of early intervention, (b) the use of a multi-tiered support system, (c) decision-making based on data, (d) the use of universal screening, (e) the need for formal collaboration with professional learning communities, (f) the implementation of evidence-based practice, (g) use of continual monitoring, (h) parental involvement, and (i) cultural responsiveness.

The concept of early intervention is based on the assumption that the earlier students who are struggling behaviorally or academically are identified, and thus the earlier support is provided to these students, the more likely they are to succeed later in life, socially, behaviorally, and epidemically (Whitten et al., 2020). Furthermore, the RTI framework leverages a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) to facilitate early intervention. The multi-tiered system is divided into three separate tiers. Tier 1 includes universal interventions for all students who may

be struggling academically or behaviorally, while Tier 2 seeks to provide more pinpointed, targeted support for students at risk. Finally, Tier 3 includes interventions that are designed specifically for students with significant behavioral or learning challenges and are intensively delivered (Tzouriadou & Tzivinikou, 2021). There are two primary approaches to RTI implementation: the problem-solving approach and the standard protocol approach (Zhang et al., 2023). The problem-solving approach is a team-based approach for the identification of students struggling academically, selection of appropriate interventions, and evaluation of instruction, whereas, the standard protocol approach is used for implementation of a pre-planned evidence-based intervention for all students in need of academic intervention. This study focused specifically on teachers' experiences concerning Tier 2, the provision of targeted support for students with learning difficulties or disabilities who are at risk of academic adverse outcomes.

The one specific tenet of RTI is that data is useful for decision-making (Al Otaiba et al., 2019). The use of data in RTI typically occurs in the following stages: universal screening, progress monitoring, and data-based decision-making (Keunig et al., 2019). All tiers of RTI use assessments and other tools for progress monitoring to evaluate student progress, and data is used to determine placement in specific tiers and adjust and adapt interventions accordingly (Whitten et al., 2020). In this way, not all interventions are designed equally, but rather, the RTI framework is based specifically on the assumption that interventions are most appropriate and effective when they consider and specifically respond to the data indicating success or failure of previous interventions. Researchers and practitioners leveraging Tier 2 of the RTI framework incorporate educational data to inform instructional designs and decisions (Hurlbut et al., 2023). In addition, data collected is used to determine if further intervention is needed or if a referral for a special education evaluation is warranted (Gartland & Strosnider, 2020).

To ensure students are receiving appropriate, individualized instruction, general educators must have an understanding of what defines response, which includes dynamic progress monitoring and using data to determine individual student progress as well as progress in comparison to the class (Hendricks & Fuchs, 2020; Hunter et al., 2023). In addition, criteria used to define response should be established adequately for each student to reduce unnecessary resource expenditures (Hendricks & Fuchs, 2020). Therefore, DBDM should include setting goals that are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time-bound (SMART) as well as challenging (Keunig et al., 2019). Following goal setting, strategies should be selected and implemented in order to achieve the goals. In order for student outcomes to improve using RTI, DBDM should not only include SMART goals and strategies for intervention to achieve the goals, it should take place at the class/teacher level. In addition, general educators must possess the ability to read and interpret data accurately to ensure that students at risk of academic failure receive individualized, evidence-based intervention that is explicit and skill-based and is provided at the appropriate intensity (Oslund et al., 2021).

The concept of universal screening refers to the use of assessments to screen students so that students who need further, more targeted support for learning challenges or difficulties may be identified and provided with the earliest intervention possible (Whitten et al., 2020). Universal screening assessments used within the RTI framework are generally brief and provided to students suspected to be at risk (Epler, 2019; Tzouriadou & Tzivinikou, 2021; Whitten et al., 2020). Additionally, the RTI framework emphasizes the importance of collaboration among a variety of educational stakeholders, including students, teachers, parents and families, third-party tutors, administrators, and educational counselors (Hurlbut et al., 2023). Through the interdisciplinary and holistic sharing of information concerning student needs, progress, and

success, interventions can be continually adapted to meet the needs of students, beyond simple classroom needs, and incorporating potential emotional, social, and behavioral support systems (Epler, 2019). Collaboration with key stakeholders includes the incorporation of parental involvement to recognize the role that parents or legal guardians play in supporting children's academic, social, and behavioral advancement and outcomes. Involvement of parents in the learning process and educational interventions may include meetings between educators and parents, the collection of data from parents, and the designing of targeted interventions leveraging that data and incorporating the culturally responsive feedback or support of the parents (Tzouriadou & Tzivinikou, 2021; Whitten et al., 2020).

The RTI framework also calls for the use of evidence-based practices, such that the interventions used to support students with learning difficulties are based on research demonstrating the efficacy and applicability of such interventions in addressing specific populations with corresponding behavioral, learning, or social difficulties or disabilities (Tzouriadou & Tzivinikou, 2021; Whitten et al., 2020). Interventions implemented in Tier 2 RTI should be evidence-based, individualized, differentiated and comprehensive, and provided at appropriate intensities (Grigorenko et al., 2020). Hence, as a means of ensuring the continued efficacy of interventions and continuing to contribute to existing growing bodies of evidence-based research, the RTI framework is based on the assumption that continuous monitoring of student progress and the efficacy of interventions is critical. As such, flexible implementation is critical to the success of interventions designed within the RTI approach (Hurlbut et al., 2023). The use of flexible implementation implies that interventions designed to support students with learning difficulties are based on individualized student needs, local contexts, and cultural considerations. Designing interventions based on such specifications is thought to support the

relevance, sustainability, and efficacy of interventions across increasingly diverse schools and student body contexts (Ladson-Billings, 2021; Whitten et al., 2020).

Cultural responsiveness refers to a fundamental principle guiding the RTI framework, which recognizes the increasingly inherent cultural diversity across classroom contexts and educational institutions (Willis, 2019). Cultural responsiveness acknowledges the unique backgrounds of diverse students, including linguistic diversities, beliefs and behaviors, specific learning style needs, learning levels, and other accommodations that may be required for an RTI-guided intervention to be successful (Ladson-Billings, 2021; Tzouriadou & Tzivinikou, 2021; Whitten et al., 2020). Because today's classrooms are becoming increasingly diverse as racial minority populations increase in the United States and other developed countries, the RTI framework is a useful lens through which to consider more sustainable educational approaches for diverse classrooms, including students with multiple and varying types of learning difficulties (Tzouriadou & Tzivinikou, 2021). In contrast to simple traditional learning frameworks, such as constructivism and social learning theories, critical theory (Horkheimer, 1972) in combination with the RTI framework, contextualizes social learning in the broader arena of cultural diversity and systemic inequities many students face in receiving support due to cultural and societal power structures (Hurlbut et al., 2023; Ladson-Billings, 2021).

Response to Intervention and Reading. With the 2004 reauthorization of the IDEA, states were permitted to provide early intervention to students at risk of reading failure using a portion of federal special education funds (Balu et al., 2015). Response to Intervention implementation was based on research from this early reading intervention process; therefore, RTI is associated with reading intervention. Tier 2 RTI implementation increased in 2015 with a focus on literacy (Truckenmiller & Brehmer, 2020). The 2022 National Assessment of

Educational Progress (NAEP) indicated that 39% of fourth grade students in the United States scored below ‘basic’ in reading (National Center of Education Statistics, 2022). The 2022 NAEP report of fourth grade students indicated that 43% of students in Louisiana scored below ‘basic’ in reading. It was also reported that in Louisiana in 2022, students of color had an average score approximately 23 points lower than that of white students, and students enrolled in the National School Lunch Program had an average score that was 30 points lower than those students not enrolled. Louisiana schools were performing well below average in nationwide reading performance, indicating students were not receiving adequate literacy instruction prior to fourth grade. In the United States, it is well established that poor literacy skills increase the likelihood of poor lifelong outcomes (Oslund et al., 2021).

Tier 2 RTI is used to provide supplemental, individualized, reading instruction with frequent progress-monitoring to decrease the chance of academic failure, thereby, preventing school dropout and poor academic and professional outcomes (Whitfield, 2024). However, without extensive knowledge of literacy development and best practices in instruction, teachers will likely struggle implementing effective Tier 2 literacy interventions (Hudson et al., 2021). Neitzel et al. (2021) found that students with reading difficulties made progress when evidence-based interventions were implemented. However, general educators required explicit guidance in selecting and implementing interventions proven to lead to successful student outcomes (Neitzel et al., 2021; Stuckey et al., 2021). In addition, general educators should be provided a variety of evidence-based literacy interventions to ensure all students receive the necessary intervention if there are limited resources (Stuckey et al., 2021). For effective implementation of Tier 2 of RTI for literacy, general educators need a detailed description of the current practices and successful implementation of RTI for literacy intervention as well as explicit instruction during hands-on

instructional opportunities to learn effective implementation of literacy instruction (Hindman et al., 2020). Using RTI for reading intervention by rejecting the wait-to-fail model, preventing reading failure, and decreasing the reading achievement gap can decrease the percentage of students classified as SLD (Willis, 2019).

Teacher Perceptions and Experiences with RTI

While the previous section described the foundational principles of the RTI framework, this section specifically delves into teacher perceptions and experiences with the RTI framework. Among the literature relating to teacher experiences and perceptions, key themes described and highlighted ways in which teacher perceptions and experiences with RTI were characterized. Some research indicated teacher experiences and perceptions of the RTI framework in the context of resource constraints, such as a lack of financial resources and human capital support needed to implement the resources and instructional capacity to support students with learning difficulties or special needs (Bester & Conway, 2021). These included time, knowledge, alignment with teaching philosophy, and professional development needed for effective implementation (Bester & Conway, 2021; Charlton et al., 2021; Riley-Tillman et al., 2020). In addition, teachers reported the need for professional development to better support student with learning difficulties that aligns with the curriculum and current teaching philosophies (Hudson et al., 2021).

Response to Intervention is a general education initiative, and it has been shown that general education teachers have limited knowledge regarding the effective implementation of all of its components, and teacher knowledge of RTI greatly determines the successful implementation of all of its components (Sande, 2022; Al Otaiba et al., 2019). Although RTI has existed since the 2004 IDEA reauthorization, there are no clear implementation guidelines

(Gomez-Najarro, 2019). However, research supports the effectiveness of any RTI model and its use to promote positive student outcomes, and (Vollmer et al., 2019). For RTI to be considered a more equitable method of special education referral for classification of a specific learning disability, general education teachers must be prepared to meet the instructional needs of students needing additional academic interventions (Gomez-Najarro, 2019). Not only are teachers required to have philosophical and academic content knowledge for teaching the general education curriculum, they must also understand the implementation of an equity-focused policy, such as RTI (Mosley-Wetzel et al., 2020; Kressler & Cavendish, 2020). As such, when teachers are required to ensure their students achieve benchmarks or the highest scores on assessments, considerations of equity, which was the impetus of RTI, are not practical (Kressler & Cavendish, 2020). Through navigating such institutional pressures and the power structures described by critical theory (Horkheimer, 1972), teachers may find it difficult to successfully address students' needs while adhering to policy, compliance, or personal responsibilities and demands (Charlton et al., 2021). It is essential that local education agencies ensure teachers are provided professional development and authentic opportunities to engage in culturally relevant practices regarding the implementation of RTI.

Elementary school teachers must have knowledge and understanding of many academic content areas, child development, social emotional development and learning, and the cultural differences of their students (Hudson et al., 2021). All teachers are expected to be responsible for their philosophical approaches to instruction and are expected to teach a comprehensive curriculum designed for academic success to all students in the general education classroom (Gomez-Najarro, 2019; Al Otaiba et al., 2019). Teachers are also required to know how to identify students at risk of academic difficulties, how to help the students, and how to access the

necessary resources (Al Otaiba et al., 2019). In addition, they must be knowledgeable regarding assessment, using data to assess student learning, selecting, developing, and modifying the educational curriculum to accommodate varying levels of student learning, and developing individualized instruction plans for students struggling academically. In the development of academic assessments and interventions, it is crucial to acknowledge that the social identities of students are complex and should be considered when attempting to create equitable learning opportunities (Gomez-Najarro, 2019).

Recognizing the complex social identities of students is especially important when making high-stakes decisions, such as referral for a special education evaluation and possible classification of specific learning disability. A central component of RTI is data-based decision-making (Oslund et al., 2021). Teachers who are adept at adequately reading and interpreting progress-monitoring data effectively provided supplemental instruction to meet individual student needs. Some research suggests that teachers' pre-existing teaching philosophies influenced their perceptions towards new and emerging frameworks or interventions, such as those guided by RTI, that seek to address students' specific learning needs in a culturally responsive environment (Bester & Conway, 2021; Charlton et al., 2021; Ladson-Billings, 2021; Riley-Tillman et al., 2020). Therefore, teachers who adopt and maintain more traditional approaches to instruction may experience resistance to implementing RTI-based interventions (Riley-Tillman et al., 2020). Kressler & Cavendish (2020) reported that teachers' understanding and use of DBDM for their students from culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds was based on their normative beliefs which appeared to arise from government mandates for the use of test scores to indicate academic success. Therefore, for CLD students to

receive equity-focused DBDM and appropriate, individualized intervention through Tier 2 of RTI, teachers require explicit guidance in equity-focused DBDM (Kressler & Cavendish, 2020).

Research suggests that not only are teacher perceptions formed by lacking support and resources, but some teachers may hold negative perceptions towards RTI and its implications due to a lack of full understanding of the practices and foundational principles guiding RTI frameworks (Alahmari, 2019; Castro-Villareal et al., 2019; Shavers, 2022). For example, Castro-Villareal et al. (2019) reported evidence showing that most teachers involved in their study cited a lack of support and training as the primary impediments to effective RTI practices. Bester & Conway (2021) found many teachers face challenges due to the lack of resources needed to implement RTI interventions effectively in elementary schools. Most teachers interviewed expressed the belief that a lack of time, qualified supportive staff, such as special education teachers, and supportive administrative resources contributed to their inability to effectively implement RTI in their respective schools. However, despite these challenges, most participants interviewed believed that, given appropriate resources, RTI could result in improvements in both educational and behavioral outcomes for students with learning difficulties. The challenge of lacking collaborative support, whether from professional development and training programs, administrators, colleagues, or school board members seems to be a prominent theme describing teacher perceptions toward RTI implementation (Alahmari, 2019; Shavers, 2022).

Research findings, including evidence of positive teacher perceptions towards RTI interventions, cite positive perceptions characterized by an increase in student engagement and progress, a recognition that RTI progress monitoring aids teachers in continually adapting lesson plans, and improved teacher confidence in effective RTI implementation addressing culturally diverse classrooms (Alahmari, 2019). Negative perceptions of the RTI process were found to be

characterized by lesson planning challenges and descriptions of the RTI process as complex, confusing, and excessively theoretical, which were believed to delay the identification of students in classrooms needing supplemental instruction and the implementation of rapid interventions. This finding concerning some teachers' perceptions that the use of the RTI process delays early identification of student needs is important considering that RTI is specifically designed to facilitate early identification. Therefore, this research finding indicates inconsistency between the theoretical assumptions of the RTI process and practice-based experiences of teachers.

The research findings described and synthesized here highlight research showing various theoretical perspectives toward RTI and teacher experiences of RTI, beginning with the discussion of the foundation principles of RTI (Hurlbut et al., 2023; Ladson-Billings, 2021). The RTI framework aligns with the tenants and assumptions of the critical theory (Horkheimer, 1972), such that both frameworks emphasize the need for inclusive, interdisciplinary, and culturally responsive approaches to education in today's modern contexts (Horkheimer, 1972; Hurlbut et al., 2023; Ladson-Billings, 2021). Moreover, the RTI framework includes the assumption that early identification and intervention of students with learning disabilities and difficulties is essential for most optimally supporting these students. Among the research reviewed, findings indicated negative perceptions towards RTI made most commonly are characterized by a lack of resources such as finances, human capital, administrative support, or training and competency resources (Castro-Villarreal et al., 2019; Alahmari, 2019; Bester & Conway, 2021; Shavers, 2022). Positive perceptions towards RTI were most commonly characterized by the provision of effective support for students and improved learning outcomes (Alahmari, 2019).

Cultural and Socioeconomic Influences on Teaching and Learning

A synthesis of the literature reviewed revealed several prominent themes describing differences in cultural and socioeconomic influences on teaching and learning, between urban, suburban, and rural school districts. Many of these differences overlap with and are similar to the resource-based, financial, socioeconomic, geographic, infrastructure-related, and sociocultural differences concerning structural and resource disparities among school settings (Ada, 2019; Anlimachie & Avoada, 2020; Gerra et al., 2020; Tlepbergenova et al., 2023; Vu, 2021). Socioeconomic factors that may influence students' receptivity to teaching as well as teachers' ability to effectively deliver content include access to resources, parental involvement, health and well-being, and technology access (Ada, 2019; Tlepbergenova et al., 2023; Vu, 2021). Some students from marginalized backgrounds, who thus lack socioeconomic resources, may also lack access to adequate health care and other resources outside of school, which can impact their health and well-being, and therefore, to ability to succeed in school (Tlepbergenova et al., 2023; Vu, 2021). Additionally, socioeconomically underprivileged students whose parents may be working multiple jobs and unable to attend parent-teacher conferences and other school activities may face compromised educational outcomes as a result of lacking parental involvement (Vu, 2021).

Socioeconomic disparities can mean that a single classroom encompasses students of different learning levels, abilities, and varying levels of supportive resources in the classroom and at home (Anlimachie & Avoada, 2020; Tlepbergenova et al., 2023; Vu, 2021). For example, socioeconomically privileged students may have the financial resources to access after-school tutors, whereas socioeconomically disadvantaged students may not. Similarly, socioeconomically disadvantaged students may lack digital technology resources that would

otherwise facilitate the completion of homework or communication with teachers and other students after hours, in comparison to socioeconomically advantaged students (Anlimachie & Avoada, 2020). These disparities in resource access, as a result of socioeconomic differences, can dramatically influence student learning, progress, and consequently, teachers' abilities to appropriately address students using RTI frameworks (Tlepbergenova et al., 2023; Vu, 2021). However, the RTI framework is intended to facilitate the pinpointing of students facing difficulties and aid in the development of interventions targeting those difficulties (Tlepbergenova et al., 2023). However, due to the multiple and sometimes conflicting pressures teachers face from parents, students, administrators, and workload, teachers may lack the competency, skills, or resources to successfully leverage RTI interventions to address a variety of different student needs in a single, time-limited classroom setting (Vu, 2021). While some scholars suggest diversity in student bodies to be a strength if properly leveraged, without proper resources and competency such diversity can become a detriment and roadblock to effective teaching and learning (Gerra et al., 2020).

Furthermore, cultural influences on teaching and learning commonly referenced throughout the literature reviewed included the influence of diverse learning styles arising from varied cultural backgrounds; therefore, different students may respond differently to various styles of classroom management, assessment, and instructional methods (Anlimachie & Avoada, 2020; Gerra et al., 2020). Also, the cultural context of curricular or intervention content can influence how students from diverse backgrounds are likely to connect with the material being taught (Ada, 2019). Teachers' communication styles and cultural sensitivity, which can be influenced by cultural competence training, can also affect the receptivity of students to learning. School districts that lack funding may include teachers who lack cultural competence

qualifications and training, which can further strain student learning in multicultural contexts (Ada, 2019; Anlimachie & Avoada, 2020; Gerra et al., 2020).

The literature reviewed in this section highlighted the significance of cultural and socioeconomic differences as it influences teaching and learning (Tlepbergenova et al., 2023). Teachers' access to resources necessary for adequate instruction of students from various cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds can directly affect their ability to appropriately address individual student needs using RTI. Students who are culturally diverse have diverse learning styles that typically are addressed in a time-limited general education classroom setting. Therefore, various types of assessment and interventions need to be implemented (Anlimachie & Avoada, 2020; Gerra et al., 2020). This diversity, amidst lacking resources, can create pressures and challenges for teachers to adequately address diverse student needs (Gerra et al., 2020; Tlepbergenova et al., 2023).

Challenges and Successes in Implementing Tier 2 of RTI

This final section of the literature review describes and synthesizes the findings and conclusions of research concerning challenges and successes in implementing Tier 2 of the RTI framework. Similar to the paucity of research existing concerning the perspectives of teachers concerning the RTI framework, a lack of research also exists specifically addressing challenges and successes in implementing Tier 2 of the RTI framework teachers face today. This gap in research supported the need for the study's purpose. However, of the research identified, themes arose concerning potential barriers to effective Tier 2 intervention implementation and potential best practices for Tier 2 implementation success. Barriers and supports often overlapped with the factors discussed in previous sections of this literature review concerning resources, cultural

competency training, and access to technology and other support (Bruhn, 2020; McDaniel et al., 2021; Thomas et al., 2020).

Barriers to Effective Implementation of Tier 2 Interventions. In addition to teaching the general education curriculum, general education teachers are responsible for implementing Tier 2 RTI intervention to students at risk of academic failure (Alahmari, 2019). However, in order to actively participate and effectively implement Tier 2 of RTI, general education teachers require training, support, and resources (Vollmer et al., 2019). Of the existing research found concerning the implementation of Tier 2 RTI interventions and potential barriers instructors face effectively implementing the RTI framework, barriers most commonly described were related to limited understanding of the components of RTI and resource access and allocation (Alahmari, 2019; Bester & Conway, 2021; Braun et al., 2020; Sande, 2022; Savitz et al., 2022). In a study conducted by Alahmari (2019), it was discovered that the majority of general education teachers demonstrated limited knowledge and confusion of Tier 2 RTI implementation procedures and reported a lack of training and resources necessary for effective implementation. Results revealed the necessity for clear descriptions of implementation of Tier 2 RTI instruction and interventions, specifically related to decision-making when students are nonresponsive in Tier 2.

Savitz et al. (2022) reported in their study that teachers implementing RTI in the general education classroom must be provided adequate resources and professional development. They also found that teachers needed support and guidance on other Tier 2 RTI research-based recommendations, such as frequency of interventions and progress monitoring and limiting group sizes. Braun et al. (2020) reported similar findings, such as confusion of the RTI process, lack of resources, and lack of adequate training. In addition, general education teachers reported that frequent changes in RTI implementation at a school-wide level and lack of sufficient

communication with administrators led to frustration and lack of confidence in effective RTI implementation (Braun et al., 2020). Regarding Tier 2 RTI implementation, teachers reported that once a student entered Tier 2 of RTI, they may or may not receive the necessary interventions for positive student outcomes. They further reported that, regardless of receiving the appropriate interventions, students remain in Tier 2 for months or an entire school year. The teachers also expressed limited knowledge of how to intensify interventions for struggling students and how to determine if the intervention was appropriate. Bester and Conway (2021) found that general education teachers reported limited understanding of how differentiated instruction was developed and implemented effectively. General education teachers in another study provided variations in the descriptions of the RTI process and its goals; however, they did not discuss evidence-based interventions as part of the process (Sande, 2022). Barriers to effective implementation reported were large class sizes, limited time, lack of personnel, scheduling, and funding. Effective implementation of Tier 2 can be challenging and is dependent on the coordination between factors necessary for implementation and schoolwide priorities (Miesner et al., 2023).

Best Practices and Success Stories in Tier 2 Implementation. This final subsection contains a description and synthesis of the findings of research highlighting potential best practices, as well as success stories, relating to Tier 2 implementation of the RTI framework. Through the literature reviewed, best practices were related to two categories. The first category included theoretically-based best practices while the second category included best practices based on experience and data collected following interventions (Arrimada, 2023; Camden et al., 2020; Kovaleski et al., 2022; Nilvius et al., 2020; Svetkovich, 2020). In some cases, these best practices overlapped. However, a significant amount of research conclusions pointed to nuanced

differences between theoretical recommendations and practice-based recommendations for RTI intervention practices (Alahmari, 2019). For instance, RTI best practice recommendations, in theory, call for a universal assessment as a means to identify students in need of assistance, who may face learning difficulties or challenges (Hurlbut et al., 2023). However, while in theory, such recommendations are plausible, universal screening approaches may not be practically appropriate or effective among diverse student populations (Arrimada, 2023). Likewise, foundational principles of the RTI framework include the recommendation that decision-making be based on the collection and evaluation of data (Hurlbut et al., 2023). Although this recommendation is well-founded and even useful, this recommendation ignores the reality that most teachers lack the resources or skills to collect and analyze data that can be used to rapidly inform instructional changes in order to address large, diversified student classrooms (Arrimada, 2023).

Principal assumptions of the RTI framework also included the assumption that collaboration with professional learning communities is critical for RTI implementation success (Hurlbut et al., 2023). This assumption also represents a best practice recommendation concerning RTI implementation, which can be considered both a theoretical recommendation and a practice-based recommendation. However, a review of the findings of literature led to the recognition that, although best practice recommendations, in theory, encourage the development of collaborative relationships, many parents, students, and teachers may lack time and access to foster these collaborative partnerships (Arrimada, 2023; Camden et al., 2020; Kovaleski et al., 2022; Nilvius et al., 2020; Svetkovich, 2020). Many teachers encouraged to communicate with parents about student achievement may face logistical barriers in doing so. As mentioned previously, parents of socioeconomically compromised students may not be able to attend

parent-teacher conference meetings due to the obligation of working multiple jobs (Camden et al., 2020). Additionally, teachers may lack the skills or resources with which to motivate or invite parents to participate in communication remotely or virtually (Camden et al., 2020).

Another primary best practice recommendation found throughout literature concerning RTI related to the use of tiered instruction and differentiation (Hurlbut et al., 2023). The use of tiered instruction is evident through the three tiers inherent in the RTI framework. These tiers relate to the level of specialization and intensive, individualized instruction provided to diverse students. In theory, the use of these tiers specifies the need to universally screen students, target instructional strategies based on pre-identified and differentiated student needs, and intensify the level of instruction delivered to students with more severe learning challenges and disabilities (Camden et al., 2020). A more appropriate and critical consideration of the way in which each tier of the RTI framework is used may contribute to the development of more successful evidence-based interventions (Arrimada, 2023). The theoretical foundations of RTI call for the use of evidence-based interventions, grounded in research, to address both behavioral and academic challenges (Hurlbut et al., 2023). However, a need exists to align evidence-based interventions with practice-based barriers, such as those discussed in the previous subsection. This alignment may be found through a critical evaluation of the perspectives and experiences of teachers in classrooms concerning the challenges they face in implementing RTI framework suggestions. By evaluating the perspectives of teachers, adaptations to the RTI framework can be made that are not only based in theory but are based on the practical, recent experiences of teachers (Aini et al., 2020).

Thomas et al. (2020) found that general education teachers in one school district differed in their perception of successful RTI implementation and further discovered that their

perceptions of the RTI process were key to its successful implementation. Miesner et al. (2023) found that contexts within a school can have a positive effect on planning and implementing Tier 2 instructional interventions by improving ways in which students are grouped, students have access to evidence-based interventions, and teachers engage in DBDM. Implementation success occurred when students were grouped for intervention based on academic skill and instructional needs and including teachers in discussions for DBDM. Teachers in another study reported that RTI was most effective when students needed small group instruction or only required minimal extra time to target a specific learning objective (Braun et al., 2020). It was also reported that professional development, teacher buy-in, and administrative support improved effective Tier 2 RTI implementation (Sande, 2022). In addition, cultural factors, such as community and parental involvement, collaboration, and child-centered instruction, and resources, such as time and finances, were reported as crucial to RTI implementation (Sande, 2022; Bester & Conway, 2021).

Nilvius et al. (2020) conducted a systematic review and meta-analysis of research concerning student literacy outcomes as a result of Tier 2 RTI interventions. The majority of studies reviewed demonstrated statistically significant positive correlations between RTI interventions and minimizations and students' risk of continuing reading and literacy comprehension difficulties after Tier 2 intervention. Schiller (2020) described that the multi-tiered system used within the RTI framework may present challenges, but among RTI interventions evaluated across 21 states, most interventions evaluated were associated with statistically significant, positive changes in student assessment scores, post-Tier 2 RTI intervention. Mallory et al.'s (2021) research findings indicated that students may exhibit greater engagement through the learning process when interventions are designed according to Tier 2

adaptations and student needs, which benefitted students' learning outcomes. Sutherland et al.'s (2022) conclusions indicated positive improvements in teachers' abilities to more effectively address large class sizes, assist students with mathematic achievement gains, and provide more individualized, tailored instructional support to students with disabilities and learning difficulties, as a result of RTI interventions across the United States.

This final section of the literature describes researchers' findings, conclusions drawn from, and implications concerning the challenges and successes of implementing Tier 2 of the RTI framework. The first subsection described barriers to effective implementation of Tier 2 interventions, while the second subsection described literature informing best practices and success stories into Tier 2 implementations. The findings of the literature revealed several prominent themes describing barriers to the implementation. These themes included challenges in resource provision, access to support, digital literacy, and the ability to form effective collaborations and communication with key stakeholders such as parents, teachers, students, and other colleagues, using strong communication skills (Alahmari, 2019; Bester & Conway, 2021; Braun et al., 2020; Sande, 2022; Savitz et al., 2022). Discrepancies were found between theoretically-based best practice recommendations for implementing Tier 2 of the RTI framework and practice-based recommendations. Theoretical recommendations tended to be more streamlined and homogenized, while practice-based recommendations considered the intersectional nuances of cultural, socioeconomic, and resource disparities. Despite these challenges, success stories concerning RTI implementation indicated significant positive outcomes resulting from the RTI framework approach, which were associated with student learning, improvements in teachers' instructional capacities, the fostering of more inclusive

classrooms, and community collaboration (Braun et al., 2020; Mallory et al., 2021; Sutherland et al., 2022).

Need for Further Research

The literature reviewed and described in this chapter show evidence of the problem addressed by the study, which is a lack of research concerning the lived experiences and perspectives of teachers in elementary schools across the United States, and whether these experiences are congruent or incongruent with the tenants of the Tier 2 aspect of the RTI process. Specifically, the least amount of literature was found concerning the lived experiences and perceptions of teachers relating to the RTI process. The study's guiding theoretical framework, the critical theory (Horkheimer, 1972), contextualized and explained the need to evaluate existing systemic structures and societal frameworks as a foundation within which to more effectively advance institutional progress toward equity. Applied to the context of this study, the critical theory pointed to the usefulness of gathering and evaluating teacher perspectives toward the use of the RTI framework so that barriers and challenges related to effective RTI practices and interventions were successfully identified and addressed. Teacher perspectives provided the insight needed to more critically evaluate school contexts that contribute to inequities and present barriers and challenges to successful RTI implementation.

The need for further research in the implementation of Tier 2 of RTI was supported by several studies. Alahmari (2019) reported that future research should explore teacher knowledge and perceptions of current RTI implementation practices including concerns, such as support and time. Raben et al. (2019) stated a need for RTI implementation research with a more diverse student population in a school district that may have limited resources. Other studies discussed the importance of gathering information from teachers regarding Tier 2 implementation practices

that are successful and unsuccessful and suggested changes for a more efficient Tier 2 model (Bester & Conway, 2021; Sande, 2022). School level contextual factors directly influenced successful implementation of Tier 2 of RTI (Miesner et al., 2023). Therefore, future research was recommended to explore teachers' perceptions of the feasibility of RTI within their specific school and what contexts and variables aided or impeded its effective implementation (Bester & Conway, 2021; Stuckey et al., 2021). Exploring teachers' knowledge and perceptions of components and variables associated with Tier 2 RTI implementation potentially provided local education agencies, school administrators, and educators support to make informed instructional decisions; thereby, ensuring all students have access to appropriate, individualized, evidence-based literacy interventions (Stuckey et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2023).

Applied to the context of this study, the critical theory (Horkheimer, 1972) pointed to the usefulness of gathering and evaluating teacher perspectives toward the use of the RTI framework so that barriers and challenges related to effective RTI practices and interventions were successfully identified and addressed. Teacher perspectives provided the insight needed to more critically evaluate power structures inherent in today's education system, which contribute to inequities and present barriers and challenges to successful RTI implementation. Moreover, the need for such future research was supported by Hurlbut et al.'s (2023) assertions that theoretical and methodological gaps exist through the exploration of RTI. These gaps were seen through how theoretical best practice recommendations for RTI implementation differed from both practice-based observations and recommendations, and methodological applications of the RTI, as seen through the literature reviewed in the previous sections. For example, while best practice recommendations of RTI highlighted the importance of collecting feedback and evaluation, research indicated that in many instances, initial screenings were used, but ongoing feedback

collection remained minimal (Silva et al., 2020). Hence, the study contributed to filling this gap in research and practice concerning the practice-based experiences and perspectives of teachers using the RTI framework.

Summary

Chapter 2, the Literature Review, began by describing the literature search strategy employed to collect empirical research for evaluation and inclusion in this literature review. A Boolean search of literature was performed using various search terms and phrases applicable to the study's purpose and research questions. The search results evidenced a lack of literature concerning teacher experiences and perceptions, in contrast to literature relating to critical theory (Horkheimer, 1972) and the RTI process and framework in general. Next, the study's guiding theoretical framework, critical theory was described. Critical theory was used to contextualize and explain the need to evaluate institutional power structures and their influence on educational teaching, learning, and outcomes.

Following, the bulk of chapter two included a description and synthesis of the research findings and conclusions concerning the topic of the study according to three primary sections. The first section contained theoretical perspectives on RTI as well as teacher experiences (March et al., 2019; Petricone, 2020; Robinson et al., 2019). The findings of the literature included descriptions of foundational concepts and principles guiding the RTI process, such as universal screening, continual monitoring and evaluation, and cultural responsiveness. Previous researchers' findings also indicated that teacher perceptions toward experiences with the RTI process were significantly shaped by the multifaceted and complex institutional pressures and resource constraints teachers face. The second section included discussion of cultural and socioeconomic disparities and influences on teaching and learning (Ada, 2019; Gerra et al.,

2020; Vu, 2021). Most literature related to and discussed within this section indicated inequities and poor resource distributions. The final section of the literature reviewed included a discussion of research surrounding barriers to effective Tier 2 RTI implementation and interventions of the RTI process as well as best practices and success stories concerning Tier 2 implementation (Bruhn, 2020; McDaniel et al., 2021; Thomas et al., 2020). Predominant challenges uncovered through the literature reviewed included challenges relating to cultural barriers, resource disparities, and institutional pressures.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the knowledge and perceptions of general education English language arts: reading teachers regarding the effective implementation of Tier 2 of RTI, use of progress-monitoring data to determine instructional decisions, and resources used for positive student outcomes (Sande, 2022). The purpose of the study was a research response to the problem and research questions regarding general education reading teachers' knowledge and perception of the effective implementation of the essential components of Tier 2 RTI and resources used for positive student outcomes. It addressed the problem of the structure of Tier 2 RTI implementation for first through third grade general education English language arts: reading teachers in an urban school district through qualitative exploration. Therefore, data was collected consistent with the research questions for the study. The qualitative exploration for this study began following two events. First, the dissertation committee accepted the dissertation proposal, and second, the university's institutional review board (IRB) approved the research involving human subjects. I recruited potential participants by contacting the administration of nine elementary schools with first through third grades located in one northeast Louisiana to seek participation in the study. I applied purposive sampling to reduce the sample to only individuals that fit the inclusion criteria for the study. General education English language arts: reading teachers were recruited for the study and delineated by the school in the district. Participants were delimited to general education English language arts: reading teachers in first through third grades located in northeast Louisiana. Data collection included semi-structured interviews and document analysis. The sample size for interviews was five – eight participants. However, data collection continued until the point of saturation was

achieved. Data was analyzed using Saldaña's (2021) two-cycle method of data analysis, including in vivo and pattern coding.

Research Methodology and Design

The present study utilized a qualitative approach to research. A qualitative research method was preferred for the study as it supported the exploration of the complexities of RTI implementation in primary education among general education English language arts: reading teachers in urban elementary schools. Qualitative research approaches allow the researcher to describe and give meaning to a particular phenomenon in reference to the context in which it occurs, whereas, quantitative research approaches are theory driven and based on a controlled design to determine cause and effect (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Gelo et al., 2008). In addition, qualitative research is used to explore and describe social thinking and behavior (Saldaña, 2021). In qualitative research, the researcher is the data collection instrument with an interest in understanding how their participants interpret and give meaning to their experiences as well as the contextual factors that influence the participants' experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2025). While quantitative research requires a large sample to determine relationships, qualitative researchers use purposive sampling and select smaller samples and collect more data in order to perform an in-depth exploration of the phenomenon (Coy, 2019; Gelo et al., 2008). Qualitative researchers aim to explore and describe the interactions of the participants and the contextual factors; they are not constrained by cause and effect relationships; therefore, qualitative research designs are adaptable and responsive throughout the research process (Creswell & Poth, 2025; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Quantitative data collection occurs in a controlled environment or through the distribution of data collection instruments (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). However, qualitative

researchers gather information through direct communication and interaction with the participants in their natural context. Unlike quantitative research, qualitative methods support exploration through several data collection techniques (Creswell & Poth, 2025). Data collection strategies include activities such as semi-structured interviews and document review (Gelo et al., 2008). A qualitative research approach allows the researcher to perform an in-depth exploration of the phenomenon by collecting data from multiple sources to provide a rich description of the phenomenon in action, the participants, and the contextual factors and the interactions among them (Creswell & Poth, 2025). While quantitative research is concerned with generalizability and reliability, qualitative research is interested in credibility and transferability (Coy, 2019).

For the study, qualitative research was crucial for understanding the subtleties in how teachers organize, collaborate, and communicate within the RTI model. A case study research design was adopted to support a thorough investigation of Tier 2 RTI in elementary schools. Case studies are particularly effective for examining current phenomena in contexts, especially when the distinction between the phenomenon and its context is blurred (Gelo et al., 2008). A descriptive, collective case study design was used to describe Tier 2 RTI from multiple general education reading teachers. (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019; Creswell & Poth, 2025). Saldaña's (2021) analytic memoing and pattern coding were also used to analyze and synthesize teacher perspectives of Tier 2 RTI. The study included a deep, comprehensive analysis of Tier 2 RTI implementation processes and outcomes; this allowed for the development of detailed, contextualized, and comprehensive insights. Given the exploratory nature of the research questions, a qualitative research approach was most suitable for the study. The research questions were designed to support probing into the organizational structure, teacher perceptions, and support mechanisms of Tier 2 RTI deployment in elementary education. These elements

required the appreciation of complex social interactions, interpersonal dynamics, and the influence of context. Qualitative research methods provided the necessary depth and flexibility to reveal the intricacies of these elements and the perceptions of those involved. Consequently, a qualitative approach enhanced the understanding of the researched phenomenon (Saldaña, 2021). Ethnography is a methodology used to discover and describe a culture through the perspectives of the members of that culture. However, due to limited time and resources, immersion in the field was not feasible (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Another methodology considered was phenomenology since it allows for investigation of the meaning of a specific phenomenon from the research participants' descriptions. This methodology was not selected since phenomenologists seek to find commonality in human experiences. A case study framework was especially relevant for this investigation due to its emphasis on a particular example of RTI implementation within a distinct urban primary school setting.

Population and Sample

The population for the study was primary school teachers. Specifically, the population was delimited to school teachers that work for a school system located in northeast Louisiana. The school district setting for the study was an urban school district setting. The total number of teachers in the district was 671.78 full-time equivalent (FTE); there were 315.85 teachers in elementary education in the district (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). The study included teaching faculty from elementary schools located in northeast Louisiana. There were 253 certified teachers in the district's elementary schools. Ninety-two percent were female, 8% were male, 50% were white, 49% were black, and 1% was Asian. The population for the study was consistent with the problem, purpose, and research questions for the study, as the problem of the study involved how school teachers perceive their knowledge and skills in RTI

implementation and describe available resources for positive student outcomes. The sample size for participants included five to eight interview participants. While a sample size was used to guide recruiting, data collection continued until the point of data saturation was achieved. Data saturation is the point where further collection of data would result in redundant data collection (Creswell & Poth, 2025). I used analytic memoing during data collection to document information gathered from participants until there was a high level of redundancy and no new codes emerged (Saldaña, 2021).

Sampling Strategy

A purposive sampling strategy was applied in the study (Gelo et al., 2008; Creswell & Poth, 2025). Purposive sampling for qualitative research is used to select research sites and participants because they will provide information regarding the researched phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2025). School sites and research participants in the study were recruited based on the ability to provide information regarding implementation of Tier 2 RTI. Criterion sampling was used to recruit general education teachers of English language arts: reading implementing Tier 2 RTI with students in the first through third grades.

Following approval of the study by the institutional review board at the university, I obtained site authorization. Site authorization was obtained from an administrator at each of the schools that were included in the study. Site authorization was obtained by contacting administrators at each school, sending administrators documents describing the study and evidence that the study would be overseen by the dissertation committee chair, and through either phone or face-to-face discussion concerning the study. Once site authorization was obtained, I began to advertise the study for the purpose of recruiting. I used email to describe the purpose of the study, details on the rights and responsibilities of participants, and the inclusion

and exclusion criteria for the study. The email also contained my contact information (phone number and email address). When contacted by potential recruits, I asked for confirmation of the potential recruit meeting the inclusion and exclusion criteria for the study. If the potential recruit did not meet the inclusion and exclusion criteria for the study, I informed them that the study proceeded without their inclusion. Individuals meeting inclusion and exclusion criteria received an informed consent form (Appendix C) for review. I also scheduled the potential participant for a semi-structured interview.

Instrumentation

Data forms in qualitative research include interviews, observations, documents, and audiovisual and social media materials (Creswell & Poth, 2025). In order to provide in-depth descriptions of the studied cases, case study research involves a variety of data collection procedures. Interviews and document review and analysis were used in the study. Semi-structured interviews were used as they provided a balance between the structured and unstructured formats, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the participant's perspectives on the topic. Documents for review and analysis included organizational documents regarding Tier 2 RTI implementation, the Louisiana Tiered Pathways for Literacy Support Framework document, and information about Lexia[®] Core5[®] Reading (Lexia), the program used in the district for Tier 2 RTI intervention for reading.

Semi-Structured Interviews

A semi-structured interview protocol involves a mix of predefined questions and the flexibility to explore topics in more depth based on the respondent's answers, allowing the interviewer to gather detailed insights while maintaining a certain level of consistency across interviews (Creswell & Poth, 2025). Following Creswell and Poth (2025) guidelines, an

interview protocol was developed consisting of 6 open-ended questions to guide the interaction. It contained questions to collect detailed information to answer the research questions (Creswell & Poth, 2025). The interview protocol contained prompts for the introduction of the participant to the interview, interview questions, and potential probing or follow-up questions. I developed an interview protocol (See Appendix A) consisting of 6 open-ended questions that aided in exploring teachers' knowledge and perspectives of Tier 2 RTI and answering the research questions of this study. Following the development of the protocol, I considered all probable answers to the prompts and amended the questions to elicit more aligned responses. Before conducting interviews, the interview protocol was reviewed by a panel of experts who provided feedback which was utilized to further revise the interview questions. The interview protocol was field tested with two educational practitioners with knowledge of Tier 2 RTI and elementary education in northeast Louisiana. Based on responses during field testing, I amended and revised the questions in order to better answer my research questions and improve the information obtained from participants. Following field testing, I had to reconsider all questions since the state recently developed a specific procedure/protocol for Tier 2 RTI implementation for reading. I deleted questions pertaining to knowledge of specific Tier 2 RTI implementation practices in their school, such as progress monitoring and use of evidence-based practices. I amended questions to explore their knowledge and perception of the current implementation of Tier 2 RTI for reading, including challenges to effective implementation and recommendations for successful implementation and reading outcomes for all students.

Document Analysis

In addition to data collection procedures including human subjects, data collection included the collection of documents. I researched Louisiana's documentation regarding Tier 2

RTI implementation for literacy. I requested relevant organizational RTI implementation documents provided by the school district to collect data regarding guidance from the state or local education agency. In addition, I requested any specific forms or documents used in the schools to document Tier 2 RTI implementation. Following field testing, I gathered documents related to Lexia, the program used by the district for Tier 2 RTI implementation for reading. Documents were reviewed for author, purpose, and context (Creswell & Poth, 2025). They were analyzed based on content, credibility and reliability, ethical considerations, and relevance to the research topic. I developed a document analysis protocol (See Appendix B) to document content and completed the document analysis.

Study Procedures

The procedures for the study included those for each of the individual strategies for data collection and the execution of the plans for data collection at the primary schools that were included in the study. I conducted interviews in a face-to-face format. As I live in the local vicinity of the district, I performed the interviews live. I performed two interviews with the selected participants. I transcribed the participant responses, analyzed the data, and assigned preliminary codes which were initially explored to determine whether there was redundancy to the codes or patterns within the codes. When redundancy appeared in the data, I ceased collecting data. I used Atlas.ti to organize and analyze the data while simultaneously memoing. I analyzed the data using procedures outlined by Saldaña (2021): assigning codes to the words and phrases of the participants, refining codes, and creating categories, and synthesizing and organizing categories to develop themes.

In addition to data collection procedures including human subjects, data collection included the collection of documents. I researched Louisiana's Department of Education website

to determine if there was updated information related to Tier 2 RTI implementation.

Additionally, I explored information related to Lexia, the program used by the district for Tier 2 RTI implementation for reading. I also requested documents concerning the organization and implementation of Tier 2 RTI for reading. I took notes and completed document analysis summary forms for the purpose of exploring all documentation.

In order to assess the trustworthiness of the study, credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability were achieved (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). To achieve credibility, I presented and thoroughly described all data and data sources, reflected on the realism of the interactions, and triangulated the data using different methods. Dependability was achieved through thorough description of the research process and ensuring data was explained, logical, and available for review by other researchers. I achieved confirmability by demonstrating that the study findings are representative of the data without researcher bias and related to the theoretical framework, critical theory (Horkheimer, 1972). Transferability was established by using an interview protocol and document analysis protocol to enhance quality and consistency in the data collection process. I also maintained field notes and recorded and transcribed the interviews and used member checking with the research participants. In addition, I provided a thorough description of the documents and of the study contexts, research participants, participants' related experiences, and data analysis procedures.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in the study entailed the use of procedures for qualitative data analysis outlined by Saldaña (2021). The speech to print transcription software, Rev, was used to transcribe the interview data. I also transcribed the data independently to determine accuracy. Following transcription, I used Atlas.ti to organize and analyze the data. Initially, I analyzed and

organized the participant responses in relation to the research questions. Simultaneously, I memoed and created data summary tables to organize participant responses. Using in vivo coding, I highlighted quotes in participant responses that were significant. I further used ATLAS.ti to organize and analyze the data in order to apply Saldaña's (2021) two-cycle coding method for data analysis. During the first cycle of coding, I consolidated and refined data based on salient features of participant responses (Saldaña, 2021). During the second cycle of coding, I used pattern coding and synthesized and consolidated the codes to construct themes.

Transferability is a criterion of trustworthiness, and indicates the findings of qualitative research can be applied to other contexts (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Transferability was established by using an interview protocol and document review protocol to enhance quality and consistency in the data collection process. I maintained field notes and used member checking with the research participants. I also provided a thorough description of the documents as well as the study contexts, research participants, participants' related experiences, and data analysis procedures. Providing a detailed description of the contextual elements of the study will allow future researchers to transfer aspects of the study design and findings.

Assumptions

Several assumptions existed for the study. One assumption was that participants would respond truthfully and honestly, ensuring credibility. The assumption of truth and honesty was supported as the data was kept private and confidential, meaning that if the findings could possibly lead to a reader holding interest in recourse, they would not be able to identify participants. Another assumption was that the use of purposive, criterion sampling would result in the sample not being representative of the population. Another assumption was that the

number of participants would be sufficient. The possibility existed that further data could be necessary and the findings from five to eight participants would be inconclusive.

Limitations

Multiple limitations existed for the study. One key limitation to the study was that the population for the study included teaching faculty and no other members of administration or consulting individuals. The inclusion of only teaching faculty resulted in the perspectives of participants only coming from individuals who work in faculty positions and who are not responsible for administering activities such as RTI. There was also the possibility that the population for the study would be a barrier to achieving data saturation. Another limitation to the study was that only documents available to the public were obtained from administrators at the school. I may not have access to private-use documents.

Delimitations

The study was delimited by many factors. The research was delimited to the collection of data in an urban school district. The selection of an urban school district was influenced, in part, by the call for research on this topic in urban settings. Another delimiting factor was that the population for the study was individuals teaching reading that work in general education teaching positions. The recruitment of teaching faculty was in response to teachers being responsible for educating students and providing Tier 2 RTI in a setting where RTI exists. Another delimiting factor for the study was the inclusion of five to eight cases in the study. The inclusion of more than one case can support the external validity of the study vis-à-vis the potential transferability of the findings of the study.

Ethical Assurances

Several ethical assurances were crucial to acknowledge for the study. Specifically, ethical assurances concerning the protection of human subjects, informed consent, and the privacy and confidentiality of data were ethical assurances to note in the study. Following the acceptance of the dissertation proposal by the dissertation committee, the dissertation proposal was presented to the institutional review board (IRB) for the university for review to ensure that the project would not present harm or risk to human subjects. I also used informed consent to communicate to participants their rights and responsibilities as a participant in the study. The informed consent form (Appendix C) included a description of the purpose of the study, a description of procedures, the characteristics of the study that may pose risk or discomfort, a description of the plan for maintaining confidentiality, and an explanation of the right of the participant to withdraw. In addition, the form included my contact information, a statement of consent, and a space for a signature (Taylor et al., 2015). Participants were required to sign a copy of the informed consent form. The data collected from participants was kept private and confidential. I maintained participant privacy, and all personally identifiable information from the study was removed following data collection. Confidentiality was maintained in the study as collected data was stored on an encrypted USB drive. The encrypted USB drive was stored in a file cabinet in my home for a period of five years.

In qualitative research, the primary objectives are description, interpretation, and communication; therefore, the researcher is the primary instrument and greatly influences the research process (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). The researcher must approach the research process with criticality, collaboration, and rigor to ensure accurate representation of the participants' experiences, thoughtful, deliberate engagement and communication, understanding

and representation of the complex, contextualized information, and transparency of limitations of the study. In addition, I engaged in reflective practice to actively and continuously create awareness of personal biases and how they affected the research process. I utilized journaling to document thoughts and ideas to monitor and address how my beliefs and assumptions impacted the research process, specifically interpretation and representation of the study findings. Using reflective practice throughout the research process aided in indicating trustworthiness of the study to support credibility, dependability, and transferability of the research and findings.

Summary

The qualitative case study focused on the exploration of the implementation of Tier 2 RTI in English language arts: reading within urban elementary schools, focusing on how teachers described their knowledge, ability, and available resources. I employed purposive, criterion sampling to select participants from primary schools in northeast Louisiana, and used semi-structured interviews and document analysis for data collection, aiming for saturation. A qualitative methodology, specifically a case study design, was chosen to deeply understand the complexities of RTI implementation and capture the interplay of organizational structure, collaboration, and communication. I anticipated ethical considerations regarding human subjects, ensuring confidentiality and informed consent, and acknowledged limitations including its focus on teaching faculty and potential challenges in achieving data saturation. Analysis followed Creswell and Poth's (2025) and Saldaña's (2021) steps for case study research, and was utilized to offer detailed insights into the Tier 2 RTI process and outcomes, contributing to a richer understanding of its application in an urban educational setting. Following acceptance of this dissertation by the dissertation committee, human subjects' approval, data collection, and analysis, I presented the findings from the study. The findings from the analysis are in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Findings

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) reauthorization of 2004 included the recommendation that Response to Intervention (RTI) become part of the assessment process for the identification of students with specific learning disabilities (Zhang et al., 2023), and Louisiana is one of fourteen states that mandates its use for the classification. The problem addressed in this study was the lack of knowledge regarding the knowledge and perceptions of general education English Language Arts (ELA): Reading teachers in elementary schools located in one northeast Louisiana school district about effective implementation of Tier 2 of RTI, use of progress-monitoring data to determine instructional decisions, and resources used for positive student outcomes (Sande, 2022). Louisiana Administrative Code Bulletin 1508, RTI is discussed as a screening and an intervention (Louisiana Department of Education, 2023). Updated in July 2023, Bulletin 1508 specifies that the essential components of RTI are three tiers of instruction, standard procedures and analytical methods, and data collection; however, there are no criteria for placement or sufficient progress within each of the tiers of RTI.

The purpose of this qualitative, collective case study was to explore the knowledge and perceptions of general education ELA: Reading teachers regarding the effective implementation of Tier 2 of RTI, use of progress-monitoring data to determine instructional decisions, and resources used for positive student outcomes (Sande, 2022). First through third grade general education reading teachers who implemented Tier 2 RTI for reading were the target population. Data collection consisted of semi-structured interviews and document analysis. The individual interviews included six open-ended questions, and the interviewees participated in an interview summary review via phone call and provided any clarifying information. The document analysis consisted of documents used at each school for Tier 2 RTI implementation for reading and

documents pertaining to Louisiana's mandated program for Tier 2 RTI for reading. This chapter includes discussion of the trustworthiness of the data, results from data analysis organized by the research questions, evaluation of findings, and a summary of the chapter.

Trustworthiness of the Data

Trustworthiness in qualitative research indicates that a study is significant and has value (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). It signifies that there is evidence that descriptions and data analysis are representative of the phenomena being studied. Trustworthiness is achieved based on four criteria: credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. Throughout the research process, I used procedures to ensure accuracy of the findings and validate my study. I recorded all interviews, logged field notes, and used member checking to ensure I accurately represented the participants' thoughts and ideas. I also used reflective practice and documented detailed descriptions of my assumptions and interpretations throughout the research process.

Credibility

Credibility refers to the ability of the researcher to acknowledge and explain the intricacies that appear in the study and address patterns and themes that may be unclear (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Strategies that can be employed to support credibility include self-reflection, repeated engagement at the site with participants, thick description, triangulation of data, and presenting discrepant findings. In this study, I used member checking to establish credibility of the data by sharing the transcribed data with each participant to confirm accuracy of the data. I conducted semi-structured interviews with nine first through third grade general education ELA: Reading teachers in person. After obtaining consent from each participant, I recorded each interview. Following transcription of each interview, I conducted a phone interview to review the transcription data for accuracy. Each participant confirmed accuracy and

provided additional relevant information for clarification. In addition, following each interview, I reviewed the field notes, and through self-reflection, noted any potential biases I had regarding the subject matter.

I also ensured credibility through a review and field test of the interview protocol by three experts with knowledge of the subject matter. The review involved assessment of the interview questions, and each reviewer concluded that the questions were appropriate and would elicit valuable data from the perspective participants. The field test was conducted with two educational practitioners and was very informative. Information gathered revealed the need to amend and revise the questions to improve information gathered from participants and better answer my research questions. I reconsidered all questions because the state of Louisiana recently adopted a specific program for Tier 2 RTI implementation for reading and the schools in the study school district were mandated to implement the program. In addition to semi-structured interviews, I requested documents used by each school for Tier 2 RTI implementation for reading. Only two schools had the requested documentation. I also located documents pertaining to Louisiana's mandated program for Tier 2 RTI for reading. Using member checking, self-reflection, and triangulation of data from multiple participants in different school contexts and documentation related to the district's implementation of Tier 2 RTI, I was able to consider and describe the intricacies of the study to explore the knowledge and perceptions of general education ELA: Reading teachers regarding the effective implementation of Tier 2 of RTI.

Dependability

Dependability involves logical, clear, and identifiable documentation (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2019). It indicates that the data will be consistent and stable over time, so others can follow the procedures and processes used for data collection and analysis. Dependability can be

achieved in several ways, including peer review of transcripts, providing an audit trail of data, data collection, and data analysis procedures, and triangulation and sequencing of research methods. I established dependability in this study through accurate reporting of all study procedures. The application for the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval consisted of all documents (Appendices A-C) that were used to recruit participants and procedures used to collect and analyze data. To ensure dependability, I provided an audit trail by maintaining field notes, interview transcripts, and documents and through a thorough, detailed account of the process used for data collection and analysis.

I began collecting data by recruiting participants for interviews. I interviewed participants in a face-to-face format at either their school or another location selected by the participant. After receiving consent, I audio recorded each interview and wrote field notes of responses, transcribed the recorded information using Rev, and checked the data for accuracy with personal transcription and member checking. I analyzed the data using procedures outlined by Saldaña (2021): assigning codes to the words and phrases of the participants, refining codes, and creating categories, and synthesizing and organizing categories to develop themes. In addition, I used ATLAS.ti to organize and analyze the data based on codes and categories. Throughout the analysis process, I used analytic memoing to document thoughts, findings, and interpretations. Using a systematic process enhanced dependability since the research process was well documented, methodical, and provided a clear audit trail.

Confirmability

Confirmability is established through confirmation that a study's findings are derived from the data as opposed to the subjectivity or biases of the researcher (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2019). The primary purpose of confirmability is to recognize and examine how the researcher's

biases might affect interpretation of the data; therefore, the researcher needs to establish and demonstrate the decision-making process. Methods to ensure confirmability include illustration of reasoning for all theoretical and methodological decisions and critical self-reflection.

Confirmability can also be demonstrated through triangulation and an audit trail. I established confirmability in this study by ensuring I only focused on the data gathered from the semi-structured interview and documents. I used member checking to confirm accurate reporting of participants' responses. I created a well-documented, systematic, and clear audit trail outlining the research procedures used throughout the study. Following each interview and throughout the research process, I engaged in self-reflection and memoing to ensure objectivity of all findings. In this study, confirmability was achieved through member checking, continuous self-reflection, and creating a well-documented, systematic audit trail.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the applicability of the research context to other similar contexts (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). The primary goal of transferability is the development and maintenance of descriptive, context-relevant findings that can be applied to other broader contexts. Transferability is achieved by describing the strategy for purposeful sampling and thick description of the settings, participants, participant's experiences, and study contexts. In this study, I used a purposive sampling strategy to select research sites and participants because they would be able to provide information on the implementation of Tier 2 RTI for reading. In addition, criterion sampling was used to select only general education teachers of ELA: Reading in first through third grades since those are pivotal grades for learning to read, and general education teachers are responsible for implementing Tier 1 and Tier 2 interventions within the RTI model (Shingles et al., 2024). I also established transferability by using an interview

protocol and document review protocol to enhance quality and consistency in the data collection process until I achieved saturation. I also maintained field notes and recorded and transcribed the interviews followed by member checking with the research participants. Transferability was enhanced by providing a thorough description of the documents and of the study contexts, research participants, and participants' related experiences. Providing a detailed description of the contextual elements of the study will allow future researchers to transfer aspects of the study design and findings.

Results

Data was collected from document analysis used in relation to Tier 2 RTI for reading and nine general education ELA: Reading teachers in first through third grade in a school district in northeast Louisiana. Documents gathered from two of the schools included two parent letters, a Reading/ELA Intervention Plan, and an Intervention Log. The other schools did not have specific documentation for Tier 2 RTI because they strictly used data and documentation generated by Lexia®Core5®Reading (Lexia), a computerized program that records student data and tracks progress of each student, for data-based decision-making for Tier 2 RTI. I gathered additional documents about the Louisiana Tiered Pathways for Literacy Support Framework (Louisiana Department of Education, 2025). Following field testing, I gathered additional documentation about the reading program, Lexia. Utilizing a document review protocol, I reviewed each document for its purpose, authorship, context, content analysis, credibility and reliability, relevance, and any ethical considerations.

There are 11 elementary schools in the school district with first through third grades, and a total of 221 general education teachers. I selected the school district in northeast Louisiana based on my belief that I would be able to recruit members of the target population. I selected a

purposive sampling technique to recruit participants for the study based on available resources and the study's purpose (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019; Creswell & Poth, 2025). Purposive sampling was also appropriate for the recruitment of participants, who would provide understanding and different perspectives of Tier 2 RTI for reading. Therefore, I used purposive non-random sampling to recruit general education ELA: Reading teachers implementing Tier 2 RTI. In addition, I used a criterion sampling strategy to recruit participants in first through third grades because these are considered foundational grades for the development of reading skills (Shingles et al., 2024). I sent recruitment emails to the principals at all the elementary schools except one because there was no acting principal. Five principals responded and agreed to forward a teacher recruitment email to their first through third grade ELA: Reading teachers. I recruited a sample of nine general education ELA: Reading teachers from the five schools in the school district. Each school was structured differently in terms of grades offered and academic curriculum delivery. One school included only PreK through second grades and one school offered only third through sixth grades; the remaining three schools offered PreK through sixth grade. In two of the schools, second grade curriculum was taught in blocks so those teachers only taught ELA: Reading; whereas the other second grade teachers taught all subjects of the curriculum. In addition, the school sites differed in terms of leadership and student demographics. The nine participants were female. Additional information obtained from each participant included their years of experience, the grade they currently teach, and if ELA: Reading is the only subject taught; the information is displayed in Table 1.

Table 1*Demographics of Participants (General Education ELA Reading Teachers)*

Participant ID	Years of experience	Grade taught	Only reading
P1	10	2 nd	Yes
P2	2	3 rd	Yes
P3	6	1 st	No
P4	16	2 nd	No
P5	6	3 rd	Yes
P6	4	2 nd	Yes
P7	24	1 st	No
P8	22	3 rd	Yes
P9	5	2 nd	No

I gathered data from the participants through semi-structured interviews conducted in person. Following transcription of the interviews, phone calls were conducted to confirm accuracy of the data and provide the participants the opportunity to clarify their responses. I also collected pertinent documents from the district and individual schools. Using Atlas.ti, I analyzed the qualitative data using Saldaña's (2021) two cycle coding method.

Saldaña's (2021) approach to qualitative analysis is a methodological framework that is a systematic, but flexible, two-cycle process used to identify analytical yet meaningful, unique characteristic findings through the transformation of raw data. The first cycle of coding involves a line-by-line or segment-by-segment analysis and systematic coding to identify significant patterns within the data that align with the research questions (Saldaña, 2021). First cycle coding approaches consist of descriptive coding, in vivo coding, process coding, emotion coding, or value coding. Saldaña's second cycle coding includes reorganization, synthesis, and consolidation of the first cycle codes to allow for more analysis and interpretation to identify and develop themes. Pattern coding, focused coding, axial coding, and theoretical coding are methods used for Saldaña's second cycle of coding.

During the first cycle of coding, I developed the initial codes, Knowledge, Perception, Necessary Resources and Other Findings, based on the research questions. I used in vivo coding on a line-by-line basis to preserve the participants' actual language and terminology (Saldaña, 2021). During this initial phase, I assigned 86 codes for research question one (RQ1), 76 codes for research question 2 (RQ2), 52 codes for research question three (RQ3), and 62 codes for Other Findings. I conducted a second phase of first cycle coding to refine the data to salient features of participant responses related to the initial codes. During this second phase of first cycle coding, I assigned 54 codes: nine for RQ1, 23 for RQ2, 11 for RQ3, and 11 for Other Findings.

During the second cycle of coding, I examined the data from the first cycle coding using pattern coding to synthesize and consolidate the data (Saldaña, 2021). During a first phase of second cycle coding, I synthesized the codes for each research question as follows: seven codes for RQ1, seven codes for RQ2, and five codes for RQ3. Following the synthesis of the first cycle codes, I consolidated the codes during a second phase of second cycle coding to construct themes. The codes for each research question for each phase of second cycle coding are presented in Table 2.

Table 2*Second Cycle Research Question Codes*

Second cycle coding phrases	RQ1	RQ2	RQ3
First Cycle	Data-Based Decision-Making Evidence-Based Practice Individualized Instruction Multi-Level Intervention Progress Monitoring Differentiated Instruction Targeted Interventions	Lack of Individualization Increased Time Requirement Lack of Alignment with the Curriculum Too Much Screen Time Increased Pressure on Teachers Lack of Student Engagement Regular Progress Monitoring	Administrative Support Collaboration Improved Curriculum Improved Intervention Qualified Teaching Assistants
Second Cycle	Individualized, Evidence-Based Instruction Progress Monitoring and Data-Based Decision-Making	Lack of Individualized Instruction Excessive Focus on Technology Increased Burden on Teachers	Administrative Support and Collaboration Improved Curriculum

Research Question 1

The first research question presented was: What knowledge do general education English-Language Arts: Reading teachers describe regarding the effective implementation of Tier 2 RTI? Only one of the 9 participants' preservice training provided limited information related to RTI. However, regardless of years of teaching experience, when responding to the first research question, all participants responded similarly. Two themes emerged to answer this research question. These themes were individualized, evidence-based instruction, and progress monitoring and data-based decision-making. During the first cycle of coding, I identified nine preliminary codes for this research question using in vivo coding. Following pattern coding

during the second cycle, I identified seven emerging themes. Emerging themes identified included data-based decision-making, evidence-based practice, individualized instruction, multilevel early intervention, progress monitoring, differentiated instruction, and targeted interventions. I then organized and synthesized the codes to develop two themes.

Theme 1: Individualized, Evidence-Based Instruction. Tier 2 RTI occurs in the general education classroom and consists of differentiated instruction with small groups of students using evidence-based academic interventions (Miesner et al., 2023). Tier 2 RTI interventions should be evidence-based, differentiated, and comprehensive (Zhang et al., 2023). Participants stressed that effective Tier 2 RTI implementation must be student-specific.

Participant 1 described Tier 2 RTI as early intervention for students struggling academically in the regular curriculum. She added that the interventions are “differentiated on their levels to hit more of whatever they are struggling with in that area.” Participant 2 described Tier 2 RTI as providing “targeted, individualized support to students.” She added that identifying specific academic needs of students is important for providing intensive reading support. She further stated that “providing individualized support can improve the impact of interventions.”

Participant 3 reported that Tier 2 RTI is effective when instruction is individualized based on the severity of the academic need, and Participant 4 reported that effective implementation of Tier 2 RTI is “targeted towards student-specific deficits.” She explained that “it’s child-specific” for students who are struggling academically before they “fall further behind.” She further stated that an essential component of Tier 2 RTI is “student-specific, intentional interventions.” She explained, “finding what skills are lacking is essential” for effective Tier 2 RTI implementation.

All participants also identified that using one-on-one or small group intervention is important and necessary for the effective implementation of Tier 2 RTI. Participant 2 stated “I

think having more teacher one-on-one time with those kids” or instruction in small groups was important for effective implementation of Tier 2 RTI for reading. Participant 4 stated that Tier 2 RTI for reading is “done in small groups or one-on-one with a teacher or literacy coach.”

Participant 8 stated that effective Tier 2 RTI is “time to work with a student more one-on-one addressing skills that are necessary to help the child enhance their learning” She also stressed the importance of enhancing student learning by addressing student-specific skills by implementing flexible small groups.

Five of the participants responded that interventions during Tier 2 RTI implementation should be based on current research. Participant 1 described Tier 2 RTI as providing students more specific help implementing research-based interventions. Participant 2 stated that “research-based programs help students’ reading skills tremendously.” Participants 5 and 9 discussed the importance of research-based materials that provide effective intervention for each student’s specific academic area of weakness.

Theme 2: Progress Monitoring and Data-Based Decision-Making. Key principles in all tiers of RTI include continuous progress monitoring and data-based decision-making (Zhang et al., 2023). All participants reported the importance of monitoring student progress regularly and using the data to make individualized intervention decisions. However, when reporting on progress monitoring and data-based decision-making, six of 9 participants responded by identifying them as key components of effective Tier 2 RTI; Participant 2 reported solely on her experiences, and Participants 3 and 8 responded with information about their experiences and perceptions.

Progress monitoring allows teachers to evaluate the effectiveness of the interventions that are implemented during Tier 2 RTI. Participant 1 reported on the importance of “progress

monitoring to see growth or how to adjust lessons and small groups to see improvements.”

Participant 2 stated that “another key component of RTI is progress monitoring.” She reported that closely monitoring student progress and using the data is crucial to ensure students are benefiting from the targeted interventions. She emphasized that it is important to “progress monitor them frequently” to determine which skills to continue targeting in Tier 2 RTI. She stated that at her school they conduct “progress monitoring every nine weeks, and it enables us to see the effectiveness of the interventions and make adjustments where needed.” Participant 3 reported that she “loves the data” provided by the reading program because it guides her in selecting interventions that can specifically help a student. The teachers use progress monitoring data to make the necessary decisions regarding the effectiveness of the intervention, and the data gathered is instrumental in determining student-specific interventions. Participant 4 stated that “Tier 2 students are tracked through progress monitoring” and intervention decisions are “data driven.” She stressed the importance of studying the data from progress monitoring to provide adequate Tier 2 RTI intervention. Participant 7 discussed progress monitoring and data-based decision-making by reporting that each student’s progress monitoring data is recorded in the reading program, and individualized intervention decision-making is based on that data. Participant 8 stated that “data driven information” is a key component of Tier 2 RTI.

Research Question 2

The second research question presented was: What perceptions do general education English language arts: reading teachers report regarding their ability to effectively implement Tier 2 RTI? When asked about their schools’ implementation of Tier 2 RTI for reading, the majority of participants reported that they implemented it during their instructional minutes when possible in small groups. However, all participants reported that Lexia was mandated for Tier 2

RTI implementation by the district, and at each school, the only time allotted for Tier 2 RTI was for the reading program. The participants also commented that it was referred to as high dosage tutoring at their school due to the district adopting that title. Responses from seven of the nine participants are based on their perception of Lexia. Two participants, Participants 5 and 6, also provide Tier 2 RTI intervention with other materials during the allotted RTI minutes. Three themes emerged to answer this research question. These themes were lack of individualized instruction, excessive focus on technology, and increased burden on teachers. During the first cycle of coding, I identified 23 preliminary codes for this research question using structural and in vivo coding. Following second cycle pattern coding, I identified seven emerging themes, including lack of individualization, increased time requirement, lack of alignment with the curriculum, too much screen time, increased pressure on teachers, lack of student engagement, and regular progress monitoring. I then organized and synthesized the codes to develop three themes.

Theme 1: Lack of Individualized Instruction. A primary best practice recommendation for the effective implementation of RTI relates to the use of individualized instruction (Hurlbut et al., 2023). Lexia is described as a program designed to help students in grades Pre-K through grade 5 develop fundamental reading skills through personalized explicit, systematic instruction (Lexia, 2025). The participants' responses varied slightly depending on whether they taught all subjects or were only teachers of English language arts: reading; however, most agreed that the reading program lacked the individualization necessary to improve the skills of the students who struggle reading. Participants who were only teachers of ELA reported that the time allotted for Tier 2 RTI for reading using Lexia did not allow them to help all their students. These teachers reported that because it is only during one class period, they are unable to provide instructional

support and progress monitor all their other students to determine individualized instructional methods for the students requiring support. Participant 1 stated that they are required to provide all students with Tier 2 RTI for reading for thirty minutes two mornings a week using the reading program, but individualized instruction can also be used during that time. She stated that since she only has that time allotted during her homeroom time, she is not able to provide any additional help to her other students that need it. She further discussed that the students who struggle reading get the “most time and units on Lexia” so “they’re spending hours” during the school week to achieve their reading goals, which limits the amount of time teachers can provide individualized instruction. She explained that the more time these students are required to achieve their reading goals means less time for her to work with them individually to target specific areas of weakness when they are in her class. Participant 2 stated that she had 45 minutes at the beginning of each school day with her homeroom class for her Tier 2 intervention, and Lexia is used two days a week for Tier 2 RTI for reading. She reported that she thinks Lexia is beneficial to students, but students need more one on one individualized instruction.

The participants who taught all subjects and had the same students throughout the school day also had time allotted during the day for Tier 2 RTI using Lexia. Participant 3 stated that she is provided 25 minutes during each class period to provide Tier 2 RTI intervention for reading. She explained that many of her students have severe deficits in reading and need one on one individualized instruction. Participant 5 reported that she teaches at a school that mandates the use of Lexia for 30 minutes each day, but she stated she also implements other interventions provided by the reading specialist at her school. She reported that although the interventions are evidence-based, they are not individualized. She explained that the Tier 2 RTI intervention materials are based on a third grade reading skill, such as reading fluency, but she required

differentiated instruction for many students who are struggling readers. Participant 6 reported implementation of Lexia and other Tier 2 RTI interventions for reading at the end of the school day but is only allotted 25 minutes. She stated that at her school, in addition to the reading program, the administration provides them with “big thick packets” of reading intervention activities to use for Tier 2 RTI implementation; however, she stated that “they are not appropriate for every single” student. She further stated that the activities were not individualized, so some students were completing activities for skills already mastered while some students could not complete the activities presented for a particular skill. Participant 9 explained that her students have a lot of “skills gaps,” and she needs individualized instruction and intervention to help students' progress to be successful in the curriculum. Participants 4 and 8 discussed the importance of interventions using hands-on and project-based learning in small groups and one on one to provide individualized instruction.

Theme 2: Excessive Focus on Technology. Lexia is an electronic program that is implemented in the school system using tablets. Participants reported that the program increases screen time for students and decreases the time students receive classroom instruction. Participant 1 stated that Tier 2 RTI for reading is completely computer focused. She reported that students who need the most intervention are spending hours during the week on Lexia, which increases their time on the computer rather than participating in teacher-led instruction. She stated, “I think having more teacher one on one time with those kids instead of sticking them in front of a computer” is important, and “I think they could benefit more from one-on-one instruction with me that I could deliver rather than the computer delivers.” Participant 3 stated that “there’s so many things you could do instead of having them look at a screen.” She reported that she believes in one-on-one enrichment and hands-on activities rather than increased “screen

time.” Participant 4 confirmed that Tier 2 RTI is now all “computer based”, which only increases the amount of “screen time” the students have throughout the day and stated, “that’s a lot of time on the computer.” Participant 8 reported that the students “just sit at a computer screen”, and she believes hands-on learning would be more beneficial. Participant 9 stated that using Lexia for Tier 2 RTI intervention is not useful because they are just doing something on the computer and the “computer is really not teaching them.” Participant 7 reported the belief that the intervention method of the program does not teach skills, so the “low students stay low” even if they are progressing in the program itself.

Another perception of Tier 2 RTI implementation in this school district the participants reported was the misalignment of the reading program and the state-selected curriculum. Participant 1 explained that the program is not related to the curriculum adopted by the state and is, therefore, not contextualized. She stated that the Tier 2 RTI interventions should “focus on the curriculum and do it in context as opposed to just putting them on a computer.” Participant 9 reported that the program is not aligned with the school curriculum, so students may not have been “introduced” to some units in Lexia and, therefore, are unable to achieve some of the units.

Because the program is computerized and all the students are working at the same time, the students wear headphones which keep the teachers from hearing or knowing if the students are completing the units and which units the students are working on and having difficulty with. Participant 3 explained that Lexia does not provide instruction; it repeats the units until the student achieves the goal. Participant 4 further explained that many of her students who struggle with reading are not engaged when completing the program units, so she is unable to gauge if it is lack of knowledge or lack of attention. Participant 5 agreed that it is difficult to keep many of her students engaged when they are completing Lexia units, and it is difficult to know what they

are working on. She explained that she does not like that Lexia teaches skills repetitively until a student achieves the goal, because it is difficult to track each student's progress in the program.

Since their students are all at different learning levels, some participants like that the program has the students working at their level. They reported that it is beneficial because the program has a placement test that assigns units sequentially based on each individual student's reading level and the program automatically provides progress monitoring data for each student. Participants 6 and 7 reported that Lexia is individualized based on the program's placement test and internal progress monitoring. Participant 9 explained that Lexia keeps data and makes intervention recommendations for each student which she reported as beneficial. Unlike the other participants, Participant 4 reported that she thinks that the repetition of the reading skills in the program is beneficial for the students. She did, however, state that students need "more one on one" instruction using hands-on activities to engage the students in the learning process. Participant 6 believes students "need more hands-on activities."

Theme 3: Increased Burden on Teachers. Teachers in the school district have class sizes of more than 20 students. The students in their classes are from various demographic backgrounds and have different levels of academic knowledge and learning styles. Every participant reported that having students with varying levels of academic performance requires more work on them in several ways. First, they reported that they are required to create extra academic learning opportunities for students with more advanced reading skills. They reported that since the reading program is individualized, students reading at a grade-appropriate or advanced level are assigned fewer units and minutes by the program, whereas students reading at a lower level are assigned more units and minutes in the program. It was explained that if students complete their units and minutes quickly, the teacher feels compelled to create extra

work for them to complete during the time allotted for RTI interventions. Conversely, if students do not complete their units and minutes during the allotted time, teachers must find other times during the school day for them to complete them.

Participant 1 explained that the use of Lexia creates more work for her. She stated that she “feels like it’s double the work now” because she is obligated to create curriculum-related work for the students who achieve their unit and minutes goals quickly and continue to help the other students meet their unit goals. Participant 3 confirmed that using Lexia creates more work for teachers because she is required to create supplemental educational activities for the students who complete their units while waiting the other students completing their units. She stated that “having to pull extra stuff myself is very challenging.” In addition, she reported that using Lexia requires her to continuously move from student to student to help with the specific lesson in which a student is having difficulty. In addition, if her students have not completed the required units, they must stay in the classroom to complete them during other non-essential classes, so the teachers do not get that time to plan. Participant 5 confirmed that Lexia and the other Tier 2 RTI interventions are inadequate and, therefore, create more work for her because she has to create supplemental interventions to ensure her students can succeed in the classroom curriculum.

Second, the district mandate for each student to complete the required number of units and minutes of their individualized reading intervention plan in the reading program puts extra pressure on teachers, which in turn leads to singling out specific students and increasing pressure on them to complete their interventions. Participant 3 explained that the district mandate creates pressure for the teachers who, in turn, pressure the students which at times “singles out” students who are unable to complete the units required in the allotted time. She confirmed that the Lexia mandate increased pressure on teachers because all students are not completing their units on

time, which leads to the teacher singling out students who have not completed their units in a timely manner. Further, Participants 5 and 7 reported that they have begun creating and using different incentives for the students to motivate them to complete their Lexia units.

Finally, the participants reported that the mandate that the students complete a required number of units and minutes each week “causes distractions and interruptions” during intervention or instructional time. Participant 2 reported that during daily intervention time, using Lexia created distractions during intervention time. She explained that when students are on Lexia and a “red apple” appears on their screen, they are directed to raise their hand to signal they need help from the teacher. When this happens, she has to address all questions from the students. Participant 6 confirmed that Lexia for reading intervention created many interruptions during time allotted for Tier 2 RTI interventions, which in turn increased demands on teachers to provide instruction to the students based on the specific skill in which they were having difficulty. Participant 7 reported that, due to the district mandate of each student completing a set number of minutes and units in Lexia, teachers are spending instructional time helping students complete the units, which creates distractions that interfere with other students' learning. Participant 9 reported that the lower performing students in her class do not meet their assigned units, so she has to take time from other instruction in the classroom to make sure each student meets their goal.

One school provided documentation in the form of a High Dosage Tutoring Initial Parental Notification Letter and a Third Grade Literacy Screener Parental Notification Letter. These two letters inform parents that their child is not performing satisfactorily in reading. The initial parent letter regarding high dosage tutoring informs the parent that their child did not receive a satisfactory score based on their performance on a district-selected assessment. The

letter states that their child will receive high dosage tutoring during the school day to address any deficits and prepare them for grade-level reading content. As additional RTI documentation, one school included extra Tier 2 RTI for reading, which included a Reading Intervention Plan and Reading Intervention Log. For any student that needed additional support in reading beyond the allotted time for Tier 2 RTI using Lexia, teachers had to develop a 12-week intervention plan including the method of instruction, specific skills to be targeted, and frequency of intervention. In addition, for students with an intervention plan, teachers were required to complete the intervention log daily documenting the skills targeted, the activities implemented to target the skills, and time allotted for the intervention. The parent notification letter discussing the third grade literacy screener informs parents that a literacy screener, which screens phonemic awareness, alphabetic principles, reading accuracy and fluency, and reading comprehension will be administered to their child toward the end of third grade. It further states that any student who scores “well below” literacy proficiency standards will not be promoted to fourth grade.

Research Question 3

The third research question presented was: What resources do general education English language arts: reading teachers describe as helping to improve student learning outcomes? Two themes emerged to answer this research question. These themes were administrative support and collaboration and improved curriculum. During the first cycle of coding, I identified 11 preliminary codes for this research question using in vivo coding. Following pattern coding in the second cycle of coding, I identified five emerging themes. Emerging themes included improved administrative support, collaboration with colleagues, improved curriculum, improved interventions, and qualified teaching assistants. I then organized and synthesized the codes to develop two themes.

Theme 1: Administrative Support and Collaboration. The participants consistently expressed that using Lexia increased their workload while at the same time decreasing instructional time. A common theme throughout all interviews was the lack of time to teach and complete all other required teaching responsibilities. Participants reported that they need more time for “actual” instruction of the curriculum and to implement individualized interventions to students. Participant 1 reported that administrative support could be improved with planning of the school day and instructional time. She additionally recommended that a limit be placed on Lexia minutes to provide more time for her to teach and provide enrichment activities with her students. Participant 3 further added that there were not enough “hours in the day” to provide the necessary interventions that are required for student success.

Participants discussed resources such as administrative support and qualified teaching assistants that would improve student learning outcomes. Participant 9 explained the need for “support from your administrators” regarding interventions to implement in the classroom. She also explained that administration needs to help teachers “understand the curriculum itself and how it is supposed to be implemented.” Participant 1 reported that “collaboration opportunities with other teachers to discuss specific students” as well as teacher-led professional learning communities would be a valuable resource for improving student learning. She also reported that a resource needed for successful Tier 2 RTI implementation was better “collaboration with colleagues to share ideas on interventions that are beneficial.” Participant 3 reported collaboration among all stakeholders, including the students’ parents, as a necessary resource for student success. Participant 2 also stated that collaboration with parents and parent involvement is imperative for student success.

Participants stressed that district mandates increase pressure on them and their lower performing students. They reported that additional help in the classroom was necessary to ensure all students are receiving the best education and individualized assistance when needed. They further explained that having qualified teaching help would help address students' individual academic needs. Participant 5 also confirmed that qualified teacher aids are necessary for reading success for all students. Participant 6 further stated that qualified teacher aids are beneficial, so all students have access to more individualized instruction. Participant 8 also reported that having "more facilitators or instructors" to help in the classroom were necessary to meet the needs of all the students.

Theme 2: Improved Curriculum. In response to research question 2 regarding perceptions of the participants' ability to effectively implement Tier 2 RTI for reading, many of the participants reported that the current program used was Lexia and stated that it was not aligned with the curriculum. They stated that the reading curriculum did not include phonemic awareness, alphabetic knowledge, or decoding, and those skills are crucial for reading success. Participant 4 reported that a better reading curriculum is necessary for successful reading outcomes for all students. Participants 6 and 7 also mentioned a curriculum based on the "Science of Reading" and "phonemic awareness" would be beneficial because Lexia is designed based on the Science of Reading; therefore, Lexia would be more aligned with the curriculum since it is mandated. Participant 9 responded that more evidence-based reading "materials" are needed for individualized instruction for all students as a necessary resource at her school for her students to have reading success.

Participants also reported that the activities within the curriculum were not appropriate for every student because they were too advanced. Participant 1 discussed that the current

curriculum needs more enrichment activities. She reported that she “didn’t feel like there was a lot of substance to the curriculum,” and she did not believe that worksheets were beneficial. She stated that she has created her own activities using the Student Standards for ELA that she feels are more beneficial to the majority of students in her class. She suggested the “Science of Reading”, “guided reading with differentiation”, and “small group center-based activities” be implemented to improve student learning outcomes. Participant 3 reported that she would like more curriculum relevant “enrichment strategies” and stated there is “nothing like old school centers with manipulatives” for more hands-on learning. Participant 8 responded that a curriculum with more “hands-on” or “more project-based learning” would improve student success with reading.

The Louisiana Tiered Pathways for Literacy Support Framework was developed in 2025 by the Louisiana Department of Education Division of Literacy. The document is aligned with the Science of Reading, a research-based comprehensive approach to reading development. It was created to provide specific guidance, support, and resources for school systems in Louisiana to provide high quality instruction, universal interventions, and targeted interventions (Tier 2) for at-risk students using data-based decision-making (Louisiana Department of Education, 2025). The document identifies key components of RTI implementation for literacy and includes best practices for the implementation of the three tiers of intervention. The framework defines Tier 2 RTI as a level of intervention provided to students who have difficulty with the grade-level curriculum. It describes the intervention as explicit instruction in small groups using flexible grouping strategies during the core literacy block during the school day by a teacher with extensive content knowledge in literacy. It further states that interventions be implemented with

high quality instructional materials and intervention decisions are data-driven based on frequent progress monitoring.

Evaluation of Findings

All nine participants were female and had experience with the implementation of Tier 2 RTI for reading with students in first, second, or third grade. At each school, Lexia was used for Tier 2 RTI for reading, and each school allotted specific days and a set number of minutes during the week for its implementation. The time allotted for Lexia was different for teachers of reading only because it was with their homeroom class only, which limited their ability to monitor all students that struggled with reading. In describing their knowledge and experiences with Tier 2 RTI, the participants responded similarly, establishing consistent themes. Their experiences align with Oslund et al. (2021) in that general education teachers' knowledge and perceived confidence in the ability to effectively implement RTI is directly related to the support and guidance from the education agencies that mandate its use to support students with learning difficulties.

Research Question 1

The first research question presented was: What knowledge do general education English-Language Arts: Reading teachers describe regarding the effective implementation of Tier 2 RTI? The findings from this research question indicated that all participants had knowledge of what constitutes effective implementation of Tier 2 RTI. The participants identified that effective implementation of Tier 2 RTI required interventions that are research-based and student-specific. Participants also reported interventions are most effective when differentiated and individualized and implemented in small groups or one-on-one. Participants stressed the importance of frequent progress monitoring and use of data to determine progress

toward specific skills, determine the effectiveness of the interventions, and determine which skills need more intervention.

According to Tzouriadou & Tzivinikou (2021), key foundational principles of all tiers of RTI include the implementation of evidence-based practice, use of continual progress monitoring, and data-based decision-making. They also reported that interventions should be based on research that ensures efficacy and applicability in addressing specific populations. Whitfield (2024) emphasized the importance of individualized instruction to promote equity and improve educational outcomes of all students. Hurlbut et al. (2023) also reported that interventions for students struggling academically should be designed to address the individualized student needs while also considering culture and context. In addition, teacher knowledge, perceptions, and confidence in using data to make intervention decisions are crucial for the effective implementation of Tier 2 RTI (Oslund et al., 2021). The foundational principles of the RTI framework align with the assumptions of critical theory (Horkheimer, 1972) as both emphasize the need for inclusive, culturally responsive approaches in education. In addition, the use of critical theory allowed the participants to describe the tenets of RTI and discuss the elements that allow for its effective implementation (Sande, 2022).

Research Question 2

The second research question presented was: What perceptions do general education English language arts: reading teachers report regarding their ability to effectively implement Tier 2 RTI? Findings from this research question revealed that the school district mandates the use of the reading program, Lexia, for Tier 2 RTI intervention. All participants reported that Tier 2 RTI via Lexia was implemented for a set number of minutes during the school day. Two

participants reported implementing additional Tier 2 RTI with materials developed by their school's reading specialist in addition to Lexia.

Participants with responses based only on their perceptions of Lexia responded with consideration that all students are assigned a specific number of units and minutes per week based on data from the Lexia program. They further reported that students who read well have the least number of minutes and units, while students who struggle with reading have considerably more that they are required to complete each week. Participants added that the high performing students complete their Lexia assignments quickly, and the lower performing students frequently do not complete their required assignments during the allotted time.

Therefore, findings for this research question based on Lexia revealed the perceptions that Tier 2 RTI was too computer focused and increased pressure and workload for the participants. Documents analyzed consisted of additional documentation that teachers were required to complete based on Lexia data for students who were performing poorly. In addition, the participants reported the necessity to create curriculum-based assignments for students who complete their assignments quickly as well as allot additional time in the school day for students who have not completed their assignments. Participants also reported that distractions and interruptions were common from students needing help with their assignments and students that completed their assignments quickly. They also indicated that many students who struggle reading have difficulty with the technology and typically are not engaged, so even when they progress through the program, they are still behind in grade-level reading skills. Results of a study by Neitzel et al. (2021) found that non-technology interventions and school-level programs, such as tutoring, used for Tier 2 reading interventions were more effective for improving reading.

Hall et al. (2024) found that positive intervention outcomes did not occur from only one type of intervention and were dependent on the school contextual factors. Hurlbut et al. (2023) further reported that flexible implementation of RTI is crucial to the success of any intervention. The majority of participants reported that implementation of Tier 2 RTI was not individualized. Miesner et al. (2023) found that Tier 2 RTI implementation was successful when interventions were based on student-specific instructional needs in addition to academic skill and occurred in flexible small groups. In alignment with critical theory (Horkheimer, 1972) researchers have found that, due to policy and mandated by governing education agencies, teachers have difficulty addressing student-specific needs successfully (Charlton et al., 2021). Using critical theory invited participants to reflect upon and explore their current experiences in order to improve current practices to provide equitable supports to all students (Sande, 2022).

Research Question 3

The third research question presented was: What resources do general education English language arts: reading teachers describe as helping to improve student learning outcomes? A document created in 2025 by the Louisiana Department of Education, Louisiana Tiered Pathways for Literacy Support Framework, was analyzed and revealed that Louisiana is providing guidance, support, and resources for school districts that is aligned with the key principles of Tier 2 RTI. However, the findings of this research question revealed that all participants agreed that they needed resources to help improve student learning outcomes. All participants stated they needed administrative support. They reported the need for qualified teaching help in the classroom and better planning of the school day to help optimize instructional time and Tier 2 RTI intervention. They also stated the Professional Learning Communities and collaboration among all school faculty and staff would be beneficial for

improving instructional strategies and teaching methods to better teach all students. Sande (2022) found that teachers reported necessary resources required for effective instruction and intervention; they identified that time, qualified support staff, and collaboration could result in improved educational outcomes for students with learning difficulties. In a study by Shingles et al. (2024), teacher motivation and effective Tier 2 RTI implementation were improved based on school context. They reported that important school contextual factors for successful implementation included collaboration in professional learning communities, professional development, and information related to resources that improved student reading outcomes.

The participants agreed that the school district needed an improved curriculum that could be used with students with various learning styles. They further added that the curriculum should be evidence-based and have enrichment activities with project-based, hands-on learning. These findings are consistent with research by Shingles et al. (2024). They found that effective implementation of any literacy intervention required detailed descriptions of current practices and explicit instruction with hands-on instructional opportunities. One participant mentioned that an evidence-based curriculum, such as the Science of Reading, would help improve reading outcomes and would also align with Lexia, so Lexia would be more contextualized and reinforced during instructional time. Hall et al. (2024) found that success of any tiered intervention is grounded in the context of classroom instruction. Key aspects of critical theory are communication and collaboration and power relations within educational institutions can influence the structure and collaborative practices among educators (Horkheimer, 1972). Critical theory allowed participants to reveal the interconnection of staff and resource availability and administrative decisions and their influence on the quality of Tier 2 RTI interventions (Meisner et al., 2023).

Summary

This chapter includes the outcomes of the data analysis to gain insight into understanding general education reading teachers' knowledge of Tier 2 RTI and perceptions of their ability to effectively implement Tier 2 RTI for reading as well as resources necessary for successful student learning outcomes. The findings of semi-structured interviews with nine general education reading teachers of first, second, or third-graders and document analysis were presented. Findings included that each participant had knowledge of the key principles of a successful RTI framework. They also had knowledge of what effective Tier 2 RTI implementation required, individualized, evidence-based instruction, progress monitoring, and data-based decision-making. However, when asked about the current implementation of Tier 2 RTI for reading in the school district, the reading program, Lexia, was adopted, so the participants were mandated to use it during the allotted time for Tier 2 RTI during the school week. Their perceptions of Lexia included a lack of individualization, computer focused, and increased pressure on them. The participants reported that the use of Lexia did not allow them time to implement effective Tier 2 RTI for reading and believed it was not an appropriate intervention for the students who were poor readers. They identified resources that would improve student learning outcomes, which included more time for instruction and individualized intervention implementation, qualified teaching help in the classroom, and an improved curriculum to account for the various learning styles of their students. Chapter 5 details the implications, recommendations, and conclusion of this study.

Chapter 5: Implications, Recommendations, and Conclusions

Effective implementation of the RTI framework is difficult and not feasible for general education teachers due to lack of resources and professional development (Shenoy et al., 2024). In addition, limited guidance and support from education agencies frequently lead to its ineffective implementation. Essential components, such as evidence-based practices, progress monitoring, and data-based decision-making, are thus poorly implemented or omitted, causing student learning outcomes to be impacted negatively (Stuckey et al., 2021). The problem addressed in this study was the lack of knowledge regarding the knowledge and perceptions of general education English Language Arts (ELA): Reading teachers in elementary schools located in one northeast Louisiana school district about effective implementation of Tier 2 of RTI, use of progress-monitoring data to determine instructional decisions, and resources used for positive student outcomes (Sande, 2022). Teacher knowledge and perception of the key components of effective RTI implementation are essential for successful student outcomes (Oslund et al., 2021). The purpose of this qualitative, collective case study was to explore the knowledge and perceptions of general education ELA: Reading teachers regarding the effective implementation of Tier 2 of RTI, use of progress-monitoring data to determine instructional decisions, and resources used for positive student outcomes (Sande, 2022).

A qualitative methodology with a collective case study design was the most suited to achieve the purpose of this study. Qualitative research methods allow researchers to provide depth and detail using several types of data collection strategies and can expose complex dynamics, understand participant perspectives, and interpret phenomena within the participants' natural settings (Creswell & Poth, 2025). These characteristics are appropriate for the current study. A purposeful nonrandom sample of nine general education reading teachers in first

through third grade volunteered to participate in the study. Qualitative data was collected using semi-structured interviews and document analysis; data was analyzed following Saldaña's (2021) two-cycle coding methodological framework. In vivo coding and pattern coding were used to organize, refine, and categorize the data to develop themes. The final analysis included 7 themes answering the three research questions. Document analysis data revealed information pertaining to Louisiana's RTI literacy support framework and the reading program, Lexia, mandated by the school district for Tier 2 RTI literacy intervention. The remaining documents were school specific; one school developed a Tier 2 RTI literacy intervention plan and log for additional interventions beyond Lexia, and one school developed two Tier 2 RTI information letters for parents of struggling students.

While employing a qualitative collective case study allowed for description of Tier 2 RTI implementation in context, limitations of the study existed. The focus of the study was knowledge and perspectives of Tier 2 RTI for reading based on general education teachers' individual experiences with its implementation based on the grade level and school context. One limitation was the school district's mandated use of a computer program, Lexia, for all grades at all schools, which caused decreased representation of Tier 2 RTI which limited the trustworthiness of the study. Also, the nine participants that volunteered to participate in the study were only able during their breaks during the school day, which added time constraints to gather information and several had to reschedule due to unexpected school events or activities. The small sample size also presents limitations because the sample may not have been representative of the variability of the entire population. Increased bias that arises due to selection issues with small samples could also weaken the trustworthiness of the findings. In addition, the small non-random samples used in the research create challenges when generalizing

findings to broader contexts; however, qualitative case studies emphasize understanding of participant experiences in specific contexts.

Chapter 5 includes three sections, implications, recommendations for practice, and future research and is concluded with a summary of the present study. The implication section includes an interpretation of findings, the degree that the findings addressed the research problem and purpose of the study, and their contribution to existing theory and literature. Recommendations for practice and future research are presented based on the interpretation of the findings. The chapter concludes with a summary and includes the significance of the current study.

Implications

To achieve the purpose of this qualitative collective case study, three research questions were posed. The data were analyzed resulting in 7 themes answering these research questions. The interpretation of findings was presented based on the three research questions. The interpretation of results from the small sample size likely did not represent the variability within the population, possibly neglecting differences in educational backgrounds and cultural experiences. Also, the use of a district mandated computer program for Tier 2 RTI literacy intervention may have compromised the comprehensiveness of the findings. Although the participants had knowledge of the key components of an effective Tier 2 RTI framework, such as evidence-based practice, progress monitoring, and data-based decision-making, I was unable to determine if their perspectives on their ability to implement it was related to their knowledge due to the mandated use of Lexia. Participants' responses related to resources for successful student learning outcomes were primarily based on the teachers' mandated use of the computer program for literacy intervention.

As a novice researcher, I lacked experience conducting qualitative research. This lack of experience with qualitative research methodology possibly affected the study's comprehensiveness, which likely weakened the research design and the quality of the data. However, I conducted a thorough literature review which helped establish a foundation for research and aided in the interpretation of the results. Selecting suitable research methodologies, data collection techniques, and data analysis methods potentially affected the trustworthiness of the study's results. In addition, I recognized the risk of bias where my personal perspectives might influence the interpretation of findings, which highlighted the importance of member checking and continuous self-reflection through memoing. I also provided a thorough description of the contextual elements of the study and used a systematic process to ensure the research process was methodical, well documented, and provided a clear audit trail.

Research Question 1

The first research question presented was: What knowledge do general education English-Language Arts: Reading teachers describe regarding the effective implementation of Tier 2 RTI? The two themes that emerged were individualized, evidence-based instruction and progress monitoring and data-based decision-making. These themes indicated that although the teachers were mandated to implement a specific program, they had insight into what constitutes effective Tier 2 RTI intervention. All participants described their knowledge of the key principles needed for the effective implementation of Tier 2 RTI. Each participant discussed the importance of intervention either in small groups or one-on-one, depending on a student's specific areas of weakness. They reported that the individualized instruction should be specifically targeted based on student needs, emphasizing that it is child-specific and intentional to keep students from falling further behind in reading. The participants highlighted that

interventions need to be research-based but also differentiated, so each individual student can benefit regardless of learning style and level of academic weakness. They also reported that using the data from frequent progress monitoring is crucial in determining the effectiveness of the intervention.

The participants' responses revealed they had the knowledge and understanding needed to implement Tier 2 RTI for reading with fidelity. Unfortunately, during the time allotted for its implementation, the teachers were mandated to use Lexia for every student. While they reported that Lexia performed regular progress monitoring and used that data to assign student-specific interventions in Lexia, assigned units are repeated without explanation until the student masters the skill. The participants also reported that even though students' progress in Lexia is based on the data, the students that have the most difficulty reading progress more slowly and remain significantly below grade level.

Participant responses regarding the effective implementation of Tier 2 RTI aligned with previous research findings. Responses aligned with findings of Tzouriadou and Tzivinikou (2021) that essential components of successful RTI implementation included implementation of evidence-based practice, continuous progress monitoring, and data-based decision-making. Participants reported that the evidence-based interventions must be based on research indicating the applicability and efficacy of the interventions used with specific populations (Tzouriadou & Tzivinikou, 2021). According to Hurlbut et al. (2023), in order to ensure that Tier 2 RTI interventions are individualized and student-specific, it is crucial that local contexts and cultural considerations are specified when designing interventions. In addition to being evidence-based, participants stated that interventions for Tier 2 RTI intervention should be individualized, differentiated, comprehensive, and provided at student-specific intensities (Zhang et al., 2023).

Therefore, a one size fits all intervention, such as Lexia, during a set amount of time is unlikely to benefit all students. Miesner et al. (2023) found that successful implementation of Tier 2 RTI occurred when students were grouped according to academic skill and specific instructional needs which participants identified. Since all students learn in varying ways at different paces, interventions would be more effective if provided in small groups based on reading level. In summary, based on participant responses, if given the opportunity, general education reading teachers in this school district would effectively implement Tier 2 RTI interventions for reading.

Research Question 2

The second research question presented was: What perceptions do general education English language arts: reading teachers report regarding their ability to effectively implement Tier 2 RTI? The three themes that emerged revealed that participants believed the use of Lexia lacked individualized instruction, was excessively focused on technology, and increased burden on teachers. The participants reported that although Lexia placed students within the program at their individualized level, there was no individualized instruction. They reported that Lexia does not explain or teach the deficit reading skill; it repeats units until the skill is mastered. The repetition of units can be exhaustive for struggling readers, often leading to lack of engagement. In addition, participants highlighted that Lexia does not provide differentiated intervention tasks, so students with various learning styles have difficulty completing the units and progress more slowly.

The participants emphasized the increased pressure and burden on them based on several factors. They reported that due to the fact that students complete their assigned units at varying rates, they are required to create curriculum-related activities for students who complete their units quickly. Conversely, for students who do not complete their units during the allotted time,

they are required to find additional time during the school week for completion of their required units. In relation to the students who have difficulty completing their units in Lexia, teachers are required to ensure they complete them each week, so they feel forced to create incentives for those students.

While the participants have the knowledge and understanding of how to implement Tier 2 RTI for reading with fidelity, due to the district-mandated use of Lexia, they are unable to effectively implement the interventions. They also reported perceptions of an inadequate approach to Tier 2 RTI for reading with the use of Lexia. They reported that Lexia is ineffective for struggling readers because, for them, it is exhaustive and repetitive, often leading to lack of engagement. Further, participants stated that the poor readers improve throughout the year, but they continue to have reading skills below grade level and the curriculum requirements.

Participant responses indicated that the current Tier 2 RTI intervention for reading, Lexia, at their school was not individualized, did not allow for instruction, and increased the amount of work required of them. According to Oslund et al. (2021), effective Tier 2 RTI for reading includes supplemental, individualized instruction and progress-monitoring to decrease the chance of poor academic outcomes. Also, general educators implementing Tier 2 RTI should have access to a variety of evidence-based reading interventions to ensure all students receive the necessary intervention (Stuckey et al., 2021). Therefore, students requiring additional reading instruction are not receiving the individualized interventions necessary for academic success.

Participants reported that the only data collected for Tier 2 RTI for reading was data within the Lexia program. They further reported that they did not have access to the data from Lexia. Oslund et al. (2021) found that in order to ensure struggling readers received individualized, explicit, skill-based interventions at appropriate intensities, it is crucial that

general education teachers have the ability to read and interpret progress-monitoring data. Therefore, teachers in this school district lack crucial information necessary to provide interventions to ensure all students have successful reading outcomes. According to Zhang et al. (2023), the appropriateness and effectiveness of RTI intervention is specifically based on progress monitoring data indicating success or failure of the intervention. In addition, instructional designs and decisions should incorporate other academic data (Hurlbut et al., 2023). Progress monitoring data from a single source, such as a computer program, is not sufficient to determine if an intervention or instructional design is effective. Therefore, students who struggle with reading are likely not provided appropriate interventions for successful reading outcomes.

Responses revealed that participants believed that the use of Lexia was not helpful to students who were poor readers. This was not only due to poor reading ability; it was reported these students also had difficulty using the digital platform, lacked engagement due to increased time on the program and repetition of skills, and did not support diverse learning styles. Diverse learning styles can occur with students from various cultural backgrounds; when encountering various methods of instruction, these students may respond differently (Whitfield, 2024). Therefore, various types of interventions and instructional methods need to be implemented with diverse learners. In addition, cultural context often influences how students from diverse cultural backgrounds connect with materials used for intervention and instruction. To best address the instructional needs of students with diverse learning styles and those from diverse cultural backgrounds, a variety of materials, resources, and interventions presented in various educational contexts would ensure all students have successful academic outcomes.

A fundamental principle guiding successful implementation of RTI is cultural responsiveness, which recognizes diverse backgrounds of students, including specific learning

styles and levels (Ladson-Billings, 2021; Tzouriadou & Tzivinikou, 2021). In addition, as a result of socioeconomic differences, disparities in access to crucial resources can greatly affect student learning and progress (Whitfield, 2024). Critical theory (Horkheimer, 1972) contextualizes social learning through a comprehensive view of cultural diversity and the systemic inequality many students face in receiving support (Hurlbut et al., 2023; Ladson-Billings, 2021). In addition, navigating power structures and institutional pressures described by critical theory, teachers have difficulty addressing students' needs successfully while adhering to policy and fulfilling other responsibilities and demands (Charlton et al., 2021).

Research Question 3

The third research question presented was: What resources do general education English language arts: reading teachers describe as helping to improve student learning outcomes? The two themes that emerged were that participants described administrative support and collaboration and improved curriculum as necessary resources for improved learning outcomes. Participants highlighted the need for administrative support and collaboration when mandating interventions and scheduling the school day, specifically instructional time. They all emphasized that there was a lack of time to teach and complete all other required responsibilities. It was also stated that professional learning communities for collaboration with colleagues would be more beneficial than professional development mandated by the district. All participants emphasized that qualified teaching assistants would allow all students to have access to more individualized instruction.

A common theme from the participants was the need for an improved curriculum for the diverse learning styles of the students. Participants consistently emphasized the need and importance for enrichment activities, such as hands-on or project-based learning. They also

highlighted the need for instruction of basic reading skills and differentiation within the curriculum to allow all students to be successful learners. Participants also reported that a curriculum aligned with Lexia, such as the Science of Reading, would provide context for Lexia skills and curriculum content would reinforce skills targeted in Lexia.

The participants emphasized the need for resources necessary to improve student learning outcomes. Administrative support and collaboration were the common theme because the participants reported that necessary resources are all responsibilities of administrative education agencies. Participants reported that they required more efficient, effective scheduling of the school day to accommodate the instructional needs of all students. They further reported the need for opportunities to have professional learning communities for collaboration with colleagues. The participants all highlighted the need for qualified teaching help in the classroom to meet the needs of all students. Finally, they reported that a new curriculum would better address the diverse learning styles of students, allowing access to learning for all students.

Participants' responses align with past research regarding necessary resources for successful learning outcomes for all students. Findings of Bester and Conway (2021) indicated that teachers commonly reported the need for financial resources, time, and qualified teaching assistants. In addition, their findings revealed that teachers reported that the lack of time and qualified support staff contributed to their inability to implement Tier 2 RTI effectively. If teachers had the time and support during the school day, they would be better equipped to address the academic needs and achieve successful student learning outcomes for all students. Another common theme reported by teachers as a necessary resource was improved professional development with authentic implementation opportunities (Bester & Conway, 2021; Charlton et al., 2021). General educators also reported that a detailed description of the interventions and

successful implementation, in addition to explicit instruction during intervention activities, was necessary for successful implementation of Tier 2 RTI for literacy (Shingles et al., 2024).

Therefore, providing professional development in addition to explicit instruction of successful interventions would help teachers and, in turn, improve student reading outcomes.

Participant responses regarding the importance of administrative support through communication and collaboration also supported previous study findings. Hurlbut et al. (2023) found general educators reported that collaboration within professional learning communities was critical for RTI implementation success. It has also been reported that lack of professional development and administrative collaborative support has been a common theme described by general educators regarding effective Tier 2 RTI implementation (Shavers, 2022). Therefore, collaboration with administrators and other teachers would improve buy-in and consistent support in implementing Tier 2 RTI. Shingles et al. (2024) found that general educators reported that frequent changes in school-wide RTI implementation and insufficient communication from administrators increased frustration and decreased confidence in its implementation; therefore, the development of professional learning communities would all for consistent communication regarding the effective implementation of Tier 2 RTI. Participant responses align with the application of critical theory (Horkheimer, 1972) as it offers a framework to contextualize and understand power dynamics in today's education system that pose challenges to teachers responsible for implementing RTI to support students with learning difficulties (Horkheimer, 1972).

Recommendations for Practice

The findings of this study revealed multiple applications for the effective implementation of Tier 2 RTI for reading. The participants had knowledge of some of the essential components

of a successful Tier 2 RTI framework, such as individualized instruction using evidence-based interventions, continuous progress monitoring, and data-based decision-making. Other foundational principles governing the RTI framework include the use of a multi-tiered support system, cultural responsiveness, formal collaboration within professional learning communities, and parental involvement (Shingles et al., 2024; Whitfield, 2024). While the participants did not include these when describing RTI, they included these principles when describing resources to help improve student learning outcomes.

One recommendation for practice is the implementation of a multi-tiered system of support using a problem-solving approach to Tier 2 RTI. A problem-solving approach is a team-based approach to identifying student needs, selecting appropriate interventions, and using data-based decision-making. Shavers (2022) found that factors crucial to RTI success included the correct identification of students needing intervention and providing multilevel instruction that directly addresses the learning problem. Using a problem-solving approach will more closely align with the essential or key components of a successful RTI framework. In addition, this type of approach is more suited to addressing a student population from diverse cultural backgrounds and those with diverse learning styles.

To directly address the learning problem, provide individualized, differentiated interventions, and use data-based decision-making effectively, SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound) goals should be developed for all students requiring intervention (Whitfield, 2024). Individualized student needs, local contexts, and cultural diversity should be considered when developing SMART goals and selecting interventions (Hurlbut et al., 2023). Consideration of these factors ensures that interventions are relevant, sustainable, and efficacious with diverse student bodies across diverse schools (Shingles et al.,

2024; Whitfield, 2024; Sande, 2022). The SMART goals will allow for more individualized and differentiated intervention. In addition, intervention strategies that are explicit and skill-based should be selected and implemented at the appropriate intensity by the teacher to achieve the individualized goals (Shavers, 2022). Students attend to school to be taught by a teacher, and teachers are trained to instruct explicitly using a variety of modalities when presenting educational materials.

Another recommendation for practice is the development of professional learning communities to improve communication and collaboration among educational stakeholders. Communication and collaboration are key organizational characteristics which likely impact the efficacy of educational interventions and achievement of equitable learning outcomes (Whitfield, 2024; Sande, 2022). In addition, successful implementation of RTI emphasizes the importance of collaboration among educational stakeholders, which includes students, parents, and administrators (Hurlbut et al., 2023). Through sharing information regarding students' needs and progress, interventions can be continually adapted to ensure students are benefiting academically. The development of professional learning communities can provide general education teachers the opportunity to consistently collaborate and communicate about current best practices and interventions with successful outcomes.

Finally, professional development should be provided in the area of Tier 2 RTI for literacy. Researchers have suggested that teacher perceptions towards Tier 2 RTI is due to a lack of full understanding of the foundational principles and practices governing Tier 2 RTI (Shavers, 2022). General education teachers need to be prepared to provide additional academic interventions to meet the educational needs of students with reading difficulties (Gomez-Najaro, 2019). Within professional development opportunities, teachers should be provided opportunities

to improve their knowledge and skills in Tier 2 RTI implementation. Professional development workshops with hands-on training and collaboration can reinforce and strengthen teachers' instructional skills as well as increase confidence. Therefore, it is crucial that education agencies provide professional development and authentic opportunities to engage in Tier 2 RTI implementation.

Recommendations for Future Research

Initial recommendations for future research arise from the study's limitations. The study's delimited focus on general education teachers in one school district does not make the finding generalizable to a broader population of general education teachers in the state. In addition, focusing on one school district with a Tier 2 RTI mandated computer program does not help shed light on teachers' knowledge and perception of their implementation of the key principles of Tier 2 RTI implementation. Future researchers are encouraged to replicate this study using larger samples of 1st – 3rd grade general education reading teachers and samples across a variety of school districts in the state. In order to enhance the applicability of the findings to a broader population of general education teachers, research including larger, more diverse samples across various schools within a variety of school districts is recommended. In addition, future research should examine the methodological challenges surrounding school-level demographics and academic composition and how they relate to Tier 2 RTI implementation. This includes measuring specific features of Tier 2 RTI implementation and exploring how those features interact with broader school-level factors, ultimately clarifying how the components of Tier 2 RTI function across diverse school contexts.

Future research should also explore current Tier 2 RTI interventions and best practices for literacy in the state, leading to successful student learning outcomes contributing to the

research by providing a more comprehensive understanding and informed strategies for the effective implementation of Tier 2 RTI interventions for literacy. It is recommended that research studying the current Tier 2 RTI interventions for literacy occur across schools within various school districts. In addition, future researchers should explore how general education reading teachers make decisions about intervention methods and integrate the interventions class wide, providing early literacy intervention using more equitable teaching practices to achieve the originally intended purpose of the use of a tiered framework. Ultimately, future research should contribute to fostering a more equitable learning environment by offering insight for educational decision makers.

Conclusions

This qualitative, collective case study addressed the problem regarding general education reading teachers' knowledge and perception of the effective implementation of Tier 2 RTI, including the use of progress-monitoring data to determine instructional decisions and resources used for positive student outcomes, in one northeast Louisiana school district. The purpose of the study was to explore the knowledge and perceptions of general education ELA: Reading teachers regarding the effective implementation of Tier 2 of RTI, use of progress-monitoring data to determine instructional decisions, and resources used for positive student outcomes (Sande, 2022). To gain information about the knowledge and perceptions of 1st – 3rd grade general education reading teachers as well as gain insights into the challenges they face in the effective implementation of Tier 2 RTI for reading, a qualitative, collective case study was selected as the most appropriate research method (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). The target population consisted of general education teachers who implemented Tier 2 RTI for reading in kindergarten through third grade. A purposeful, non-random sample of 9 1st – 3rd grade general

education reading teachers implementing Tier 2 RTI for reading. Qualitative data were collected from document analysis and from the 9 participants through semi-structured interviews and were analyzed using Saldaña's (2021) two-cycle methodological framework. In vivo coding was used during the first cycle of coding; pattern coding was used during the second cycle of coding to synthesize and consolidate the data (Saldaña, 2021).

Information gained from the participants revealed they had knowledge of essential components of effective implementation Tier 2 RTI for reading. They identified key principles, such as individualized, evidence-based instruction, continuous progress monitoring, and data-based decision-making, necessary to implement Tier 2 RTI with fidelity. When exploring their perceptions related to Tier implementation for reading, participants provided information related to a district-mandated computer program being implemented to all students as a Tier 2 RTI intervention. They responded that the program was not individualized, too computer focused, and increased pressure and burden on them. They reported that the program was not an appropriate Tier 2 RTI intervention for students with reading difficulties. They identified resources they believed would lead to successful student reading outcomes. All participants identified the need for administrative support. They identified the need for an improved curriculum to address the various learning styles of their students. They also specified that, in addition to needing more time and qualified teaching help to provide whole-class instruction and individualized reading interventions, they would like to collaborate with administration regarding the curriculum and Tier 2 RTI interventions and the development of professional learning communities.

General education teachers are tasked with teaching many students the general education curriculum as well as providing individualized interventions to students at risk of

falling behind or academic failure. Multitiered systems of support, such as RTI, were established and required of school districts in the United States to ensure at-risk students received interventions when warranted. General education teachers are responsible for implementing Tier 1 and Tier 2 of RTI during the school day in addition to teaching the general education curriculum. However, states have autonomy when determining the exact interventions for these students. Therefore, general education teachers are responsible for implementing the state-mandated curriculum and interventions for RTI. It is crucial that the knowledge and perceptions of general education teachers be explored and considered to have a clear understanding of what they believe will best benefit their students to lead to each student's success. A key limitation of this study is the inability to generalize findings to a broader population of general education reading teachers across the state. To address this limitation and further explore the experiences of teachers implementing Tier 2 RTI for reading, further research is necessary to explore the knowledge and perceptions of the implementation of Tier 2 RTI for reading from general education teachers in different schools in various school districts across the state.

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Appendix A
Interview Protocol

Date:

Time:

Location:

Interviewee:

Position of interviewee:

Questions:

1. How would you describe Response to Intervention?

2. What do you consider key components of successful Tier 2 RTI implementation?

3. What is your perception of the current Tier 2 RTI implementation for reading?

4. What do you perceive are challenges for the effective implementation of Tier 2 RTI for reading?

5. What approach to Tier 2 RTI implementation for reading would you recommend so it is beneficial and equitable for all students with reading difficulties?

6. What would you recommend for successful student reading outcomes? (Resources; Autonomy)

Appendix B

Document Review Protocol

Date:

Location:

Name of Document:

1. Purpose of the Document

- a. What is the intended purpose of the document?
 - i. Inform, record, etc.:

2. Authorship

- a. Who created the document?
 - i. Author(s) and their qualifications:

- ii. What biases or perspectives might they hold?

3. Context

- a. In what context was the document created?
 - i. Cultural or social factors:

4. Content Analysis

- a. What are the main themes or patterns?

- b. What significant details are relevant to your research?

5. Credibility and Reliability

- a. Is the document from a reputable source?
i. Source name and credibility:

- b. Is the content supported by evidence?

6. Relevance

- a. How relevant is the document to your research topic?
i. Specific connections to research questions:

7. Ethical Considerations

- a. Are there any ethical issues related to this document?

Appendix C

Informed Consent

My name is Mary Ann Thomas, and I am a doctoral student at National University (NU).

I'm asking you to take part in a research study about knowledge and perceptions of general education reading teachers and resources available for effective implementation of RTI Tier 2 implementation. The name of this research is "An Exploration of General Education English language arts: reading Teachers' Knowledge, Confidence, and Implementation of the Essential Components of Tier II Response to Intervention in a North Louisiana School District."

You may participate in this research if you meet all of the following criteria:

1. You are a general education teacher of students in grades 1-3.
2. You teach English-Language Arts: Reading to students in grades 1-3.
3. You implement RTI Tier 2 for reading with students in grades 1-3.

I hope to include 5-8 people in this research.

Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to take part in the study.

What you will be asked to do: If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following activities:

1. Participate in a face to face interview for 60 minutes
2. Review interview summary via email/phone call for 30 minutes

During these activities, you will be asked questions about:

Components necessary for the effective implementation of RTI, specifically Tier 2, current practices used to implement Tier 2, perceptions of the effectiveness of Tier 2 intervention, including the ability to implement Tier 2 with fidelity, and resources provided to aid in the effective implementation of Tier 2.

Benefits: If you participate, there are no direct benefits to you. This research may increase the body of knowledge in the subject area of this research.

Recording: I would like to audio record your responses with a voice recorder during the interview. You can disable the video function of the online meeting platform at any time.

Mandated Reporting: My professional role outside of NU requires me to report suspicion of child or elderly abuse, suspicion of possible harm to self or others, and committed crimes to the appropriate authorities.

Confidentiality: I will keep the records of this study private and take reasonable measures to protect the security of all your personal information. In any report I make public, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. Data collected from

participants will be kept private and confidential through the use of an encrypted USB drive which will be stored in a locked file cabinet for five years in the researcher's private office. In addition, all personally identifiable information will be removed following data collection.

Taking part is voluntary: Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may quit at any time.

If you have questions: Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact me at mathomas605@gmail.com or at 318-342-1389.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a subject in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) via email at irb@nu.edu

Statement of Consent: I have read the above information and have received answers to any questions I asked. I consent to take part in the study.

Your Signature _____ Date _____

Your Name (printed) _____