

ABSTRACT

DISSERTATION: Response to intervention: A mixed-methods longitudinal study of the differences in reading achievement within a school district

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Reading is essential to success in our society and closing the achievement gap is of critical concern. Although research is ample on the components of Response to Intervention (RTI), minimal research is available on actual implementation. For these reasons, this mixed-methods longitudinal study examined the implications of RTI on student outcomes based on pre/post-tests analysis, identification for a specific learning disability, and educator perception. A nonequivalent group design was used to examine the differences on reading achievement for students who participated in intervention in kindergarten or first grade as compared to students who scored slightly above them and did not receive intervention. Cohorts of students from three elementary schools ($n = 639$) were measured through third grade. In addition, differences by gender, socio-economic status, and program structures were analyzed. To deepen the understanding of the results, data were triangulated through educator focus group interviews. The findings from this study showed that students who received intervention substantially closed the gap between themselves and non-intervention students. With regards to poverty and gender, this study illustrates that these social injustices can be ameliorated. Evidence from this

study, while not extensive, suggests that RTI contributed to a reduction in special education placement. These outcomes support the converging evidence endorsing the RTI framework.

Given these results, further field studies need to be undertaken to allow for additional generalization. In times of increased academic demands from society, improved student achievement through program effectiveness is more critical than ever.