

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION PROBLEM-
SOLVING MODEL IN A RURAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL:
A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY

A Dissertation
By

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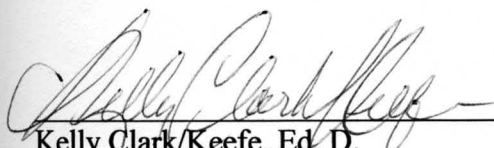
Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership
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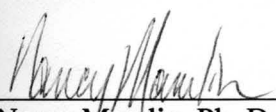
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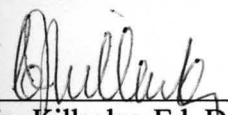
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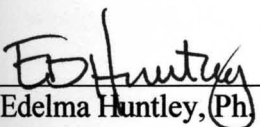
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ABSTRACT

IMPLEMENTING A RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION PROBLEM-SOLVING MODEL IN A RURAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY

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Response to Intervention (RTI) is a comprehensive educational initiative designed to assist teachers in providing effective instruction for all struggling learners in a school. RTI has two major points of origin. First, practitioners became frustrated with an IQ/Achievement discrepancy model used to identify children with specific learning disabilities. Second, there was equal frustration with the poor academic performance of all low functioning students, whether they were found eligible for special education or not. A dual system of special and general education was failing students with and without disabilities. RTI has sought to help all children succeed through early identification of difficulties; and a problem-solving model that provides effective early intervention and ongoing effective instruction for all students.

Several factors make RTI a comprehensive initiative and a unique phenomenon worthy of study. RTI is comprehensive in that it cuts across all populations, programs, and specialty areas in a school, requiring one unified continuum of instruction for students. Such a significant shift requires massive changes in philosophical, political,

budgetary, and instructional systems, thus altering school culture. Since each school culture is unique, a qualitative case study was conducted of one rural elementary school's efforts to implement RTI. Two primary research questions guided the study:

1. What does the implementation of a Response to Intervention Problem-Solving Model look like at Northwest Elementary, as defined by the beliefs and practices of the school's stakeholders?
2. How has the original intent of RTI manifested itself at Northwest?

This qualitative case study involved individual and group interviews, classroom and team observations, and document analysis. Several themes emerged from the study regarding issues of leadership, and decision-making, which were key to the implementation of RTI at this school. The findings suggest that the establishment of a shared vision of RTI, along with shared leadership, data based decision making, and collaborative problem-solving systems was critical to this school for a successful beginning to their RTI initiative. Continued growth and success for RTI at Northwest may hinge on effective management of human resources, examination of the core instructional program, and developing a more comprehensive cadre of research-based interventions that are implemented with fidelity. A periodic system of self-assessment in relation to RTI was not found to be in place at the conclusion of year three of implementation.

Implications of the study were outlined for Northwest Elementary, State policy makers, staff developers, and teacher and administrator preparation programs in institutions of higher education.