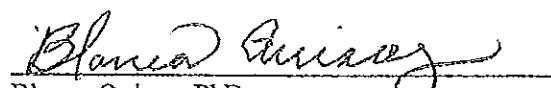
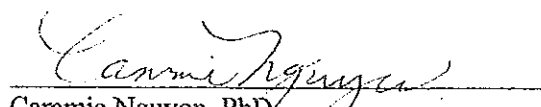


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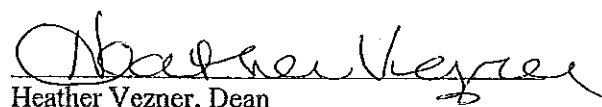
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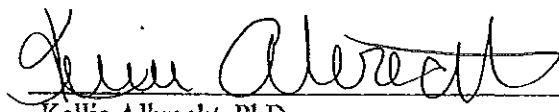

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HOW DOES EARLY ACADEMIC INTERVENTION WITH LOW-SOCIOECONOMIC
MINORITY STUDENTS AFFECT THE SPECIAL NEEDS CLASSIFICATION?

by

Andrea Hyatt-Copeland

A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of
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ABSTRACT

Early academic intervention programs are designed to support struggling students to assist in overcoming their challenges and having a greater chance of maintaining success throughout school. Studies reveal that children exhibiting weaknesses in emerging skills that lead to reading failure, is most prevalent in low-income communities of color (Ramey & Ramey, 2004). This study investigated the impact of early academic intervention services or response to intervention (RtI) with low socioeconomic minority students and teachers' perceptions and expectations on the special education classification process.

The research was conducted using a mixed-method approach with surveys and interviews. The first method used a snowball sampling technique, with 79 participants. The second method was five structured interviews with two reading specialists and three classroom teachers. The methodological data collection was conducted using a 5-point Likert scale, four open-ended questions, and five interview questions to understand the effect of early academic interventions when implemented with fidelity to low socioeconomic minority students. The quantitative data were analyzed using Microsoft Excel sheet and StatPlus for descriptive results. The qualitative data were analyzed using MAXQDA and REV recording and transcription software to identify similarities, patterns and themes. The findings provided insightful recommendations for teachers when implementing academic intervention services and the impact of teachers' perceptions and expectations on at-promise student performances. There were significant positive association between implementing the academic interventions with fidelity and using highly effective programs, $r(77) = 0.67, p < 0.001$ with low SES minority students.

Keywords: Response to Intervention, Academic Intervention Services, fidelity, achievement, overrepresentation, minority, special education classification

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Critical race theory addresses the inequalities marginalized children living in poverty experience (Edwards & Schmidt, 2006). These children are susceptible to academic failures from attending low-performing schools with limited resources, poor curricula, and culturally biased teachers with low academic expectations (Mills & Unsworth, 2018). Likewise, critical race theory observes that students in affluent communities are better prepared for higher education than those living in poverty (Edwards & Schmidt, 2006) and emphasizes the need for society to change, to provide students of color equal opportunities to become successful, and for educators to have high expectations for students of color as they would for White students.

There is a relationship between poverty, cognitive development, and academic failures (Campbell & Ramey, 1994). Children of color living in poverty are disproportionately identified as special education students because they enter school unprepared for the challenges in the early grades and do not have the opportunity to participate in early academic intervention programs (Zhang et al., 2014). These students predominantly attend less funded and more segregated schools than White students, so they are more likely to receive instruction from lower-quality teachers, materials, and curricula, which may determine the outcome of their education and result in special education classification. Nonetheless, families are criticized for their children's disabilities without considering the poor services provided by the schools and districts (Talbot et al., 2011); however, academic intervention programs are developed to target economically disadvantaged students to enhance and strengthen their intellectual abilities to function in the general education program (Ramey & Ramey, 2004). Students entering elementary schools with delays in their vocabulary are more at risk for academic failure (Goldstein et al., 2017).

Reading intervention is geared toward preventing academic failures and should be initiated early. It is recommended to start intervention from the preschool years for high-risk students to improve their academic performances since it is a critical time of exponential growth and development (Ramey & Ramey, 2004). Children are expected to enter school ready to learn. However, children of color from low socioeconomic families are more likely to be at a disadvantage which may result in grade retention and placements in special education programs, than their peers from affluent families (Togart, 2011). Students entering elementary school with delays in their vocabulary are at greater risk for academic failures. In addition, children are at greater risk of performing poorly in school and being placed in special education programs whose parents are less educated and have low economic status (Goldstein et al., 2017; Ramey & Ramey, 2004). In addition, children of color from low socioeconomic families are more likely to be at a disadvantage which may result in grade retention and placement in special education programs than their peers from more affluent families (Togart, 2011).

In order to address this, Ramey and Ramey (2004) encouraged teachers not to wait until students fail to provide strategic reading interventions. The Response to Intervention (RtI) model is essential and should be implemented in preschool due to the relationship between learning and brain development. RtI is a tiered data-driven instructional model used for high academic achieving students and tailored to meet the needs of struggling students (Klingner & Edwards, 2006). Academic intervention could positively impact struggling children's educational journey (Ramey & Ramey, 2004). Academic reading intervention services can be implemented using the RtI model, a multi-tiered intervention used nationwide by teachers to provide quality researched-based instruction to students (Allington, 2009). During the implementation stage, teachers or interventionists consistently monitor and assess students by collecting and interpreting data to

determine the program's effectiveness at each tier. Students who are eligible to receive tier III intense and individualized instruction are those who did not respond successfully to tier I and II instruction. Subsequently, these students are referred for special education services. However, it is recommended not to initiate the referral process until all other interventions fail (Allington, 2009; Hoppey, 2013; Kavale & Spaulding, 2008). All children can learn, and if academic intervention or RtI is implemented with fidelity, its effectiveness can be surmountable and reduce the need for students' retention and special education referrals (Allington, 2009; Gorski, 2018; Jenkins et al., 2006; Kavale & Spaulding, 2008).

Statement of the Problem

Students of Color in the U.S. are disproportionately represented with special needs (Hibel et al., 2010). Of the students classified as disabled, 60-80% are from low socioeconomic status (SES) families (Hibel et al., 2010). Some variables contributing to the overrepresentation of children of color in special education are social-demographic, resource inequity, the special education process, and teacher perceptions and expectations of Black-White capabilities (Othman, 2018; Togut, 2011).

Students of color from low SES families are primarily educated in segregated schools associated with academic failures resulting in fewer opportunities to accomplish their educational goals, employment discrimination, and less access to meaningful community engagement (Chittleborough et al., 2014; Gorski, 2018; Zhang et al., 2014). Zhang et al. reported that federal government initiatives require data collection to monitor students' progress and provide interventions to prevent or reduce disproportionality in the school system. In addition, the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) mandates states to have policies and procedures to prevent inappropriate classification based on children's race and ethnicity.

Despite these regulations, the overrepresentation of students of color in special education continues to be prevalent throughout the U.S. (Gardner et al., 2014). When Americans acknowledge the danger inequality creates across schools in U.S. society, they will be capable of addressing and finding solutions to these issues (Gorski, 2018).

Lemmer and Wagner (2015) stated that teachers' perceptions and expectations of students of color play a significant role in maintaining the achievement gap between White and Black children. These negative perceptions of individuals from different ethnic groups continue to be evident in the education system. Meaningful interaction should be established within the communities to minimize tension and attitudes and increase expectations, which allows for open discussion to understand other ethnic groups' norms. Gorski (2018) indicated that children of color residing in low socio-economic communities deserve equal opportunities to succeed, and teachers should educate them without any drawbacks, stereotypes, or biases.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological theory research was to examine the lived experience of participants providing services to students of color from low SES communities. At this stage of the study, understanding how early academic intervention can be implemented with fidelity will be generally defined as the strategy to educate at-risk students from low socio-economic families enabling them to reach their education milestones and closing the ever-widening academic gap. Students from low socio-economic disadvantaged families are more likely to enter school with less academic skills than their high or middle-income peers (Gardner et al., 2014). To address this, researchers initiated the shift toward implementing the multitiered model RtI for at-risk students starting in preschool as a preventative measure for reading problems that could lead to special education classification (Gettinger & Stoiber, 2007).

Furthermore, early academic intervention results in fewer high school dropouts, a reduction in grade retention and special education referrals, being employed, and fewer incarceration (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Zhang et al., 2014).

Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed to determine how early reading intervention with low-socioeconomic status students of color affect the special needs classification.

1. How does early academic intervention services with low socio-economic minority students affect the special needs classification?
2. How do teachers' perceptions and expectations impact the special education classification process of low socio-economic minority students?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework used to analyze the relationship between poverty and the overrepresentation of students of color in special education programs is critical race theory. Critical race theory was launched in the U.S. in the 1980s by a minority group of students and others in legal studies after the war on the civil rights movement to investigate and modify racial disparities in the education system. This shift eliminated segregation in public places and the school system. People of color were allowed to participate in activities like White people. However, discrimination continues to plague the U.S. and the education system (Mills & Unsworth, 2018).

Critical race theory is based upon four principles. Its first principle is to identify and analyze the damaging effect racism has on people of color while providing opportunities for the dominant group. The second principle is to promote the voices and historical experiences of

people of color through storytelling. Students are encouraged to discuss their history and heritage to develop knowledge and understanding. The third principle investigates the concept that significant change can transpire without changing the current social system. However, to initiate change, educators and program directors must work together to include different ethnic groups in their curricula to alleviate racism. The fourth principle is to examine the effectiveness of the civil rights movement in the U.S. and whether it was impactful since minorities continue to experience racism (Edwards & Schmidt, 2006; Mills & Unsworth, 2018).

Critical race theory evaluates the damaging impact racism has on people of color, highlighting the stark contrast that shows how being White was associated with privileges and successes (Mills & Unsworth, 2018). Brown vs. Board of Education 1954, the Supreme Court reversed the ruling of 1896 that stated all are equal but could not share the same space and declared segregating students by race null and void in the education arena. Nonetheless, segregation in schools continues to be prevalent, resulting in suburban schools with higher-income families receiving substantially more resources and given choices to attempt higher educational approaches, including honors classes, while the less fortunate living in the urban ghettos get little to no help (Hibel et al., 2010; Watts & Erevelles, 2004).

Critical race theory acknowledges the continued racial disparity that results in an overrepresented number of students of color classified as special needs. This framework discusses how teachers should engage in relevant conversations regarding race in classroom communities. However, many teachers are uncomfortable engaging in those imperative discussions, which could open the pathway to changing negative behaviors and beliefs and accepting each other for who they are (Edward & Schmidt, 2006). Being a part of a positive classroom atmosphere could incorporate oneness into our seemingly colorblind world (Edwards

& Schmidt, 2006; Mills & Unsworth, 2018; Shanahan, 2006). According to Mills and Unsworth, social justice is not playing its role in the education system but is more of an interruption. Every student deserves the right to be educated. Nonetheless, students of color continue to experience racism on all levels due to racial discrimination among teachers who fail to acknowledge that race and culture perpetuate persistent disparities (Gorski, 2018).

Edwards and Schmidt (2006) encouraged teachers to actively communicate with families and community members from different cultural backgrounds to be familiar with their norms and alleviate stigmas. Teachers can re-examine themselves, their perceptions, and expectations and change their approach toward impoverished students of color so they can impart substantial academic support that will produce lasting effects. Critical race theory demands that teachers change their classroom expectations and work with students to improve their skills and performances. Instead, students who speak their native dialect are seen as having literacy deficiency, ultimately being referred to the special education team for evaluation due to teachers' perceptions (Edwards & Schmidt, 2006; Gardner et al., 2014; Sherwin & Schmidt, 2003). In addition to speech and language concerns, students of color, especially males, are referred for special education evaluation due to culturally accepted behavior patterns that their teachers misconstrued as inappropriate. Most children living in poverty exhibit behavior patterns not seen in their middle-class or more affluent peers, which could be classified as insubordination, ultimately leading to special education referral, suspension, and other disciplinary actions (Anderson-Irish, 2013; Gardner et al., 2014; Watts & Erevelles, 2004). It can further lead to school dropout resulting in a long duration of adverse outcomes (Hibel et al., 2010).

In addition, when teachers are culturally responsive, they are equipped with the relevant tools to identify education bias in literature and behaviors and are therefore able to provide for

the whole child. These trained teachers will modify texts to include different cultures, so everyone feels comfortable while learning (Berhanu, 2008; Gardner et al., 2014; Gorski, 2018; Sherwin & Schmidt, 2003). Teachers who are culturally connected with children, parents, and communities promote positive relationships, thus contributing to academic success for all (Othman, 2018). Without these attributes, teachers' propensity will show neglect towards those groups of students. Teachers' low expectations and negative attitudes towards students of color suggest they are incapable and lack the abilities necessary to succeed academically (Klingner & Edwards, 2006; Shahan, 2006).

Inequality within the educational system poses a severe problem for students of color in the general education gifted programs. Students of Color living in poverty mostly attend schools that are less funded by the government, ultimately receiving fewer resources, high-quality teacher turnover, poor curriculum, low academic standards, and inadequate academic engagement, resulting in little or no opportunity to participate in gifted and talented programs challenging them to thrive for a better future (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Gorski, 2018). Low SES students continue to fall behind their peers from affluent families due to a lack of opportunities to excel academically, not by choice but because of circumstances surrounding them and beyond their control (Gorski, 2018; Wright et al., 2017), which is considered segregation on many levels (Windsor et al., 2011).

As a result of slavery, segregation in schools and neighborhoods had a devastating impact on people of color who were not allowed to live or attend schools in areas deemed White, wealthy communities. Such disparities continue today: the neighborhood in which people live determines the education services delivered to them. As such, gifted program opportunities are limited for students of color living in poverty and attending poorly funded schools (Wright et al.,

2017). The researchers further stated that people of color should reside and attend schools wherever they choose to, so everyone could be treated equally, based on their academic needs, and receive a high-quality education that does not depend on their skin color or SES.

However, according to Wright et al. (2017), quality and gifted programs are overrepresented by White students, guarded by their parents, and taught by the dominant group of teachers, leaving little or no access for students of color to participate in enriched and accelerated programs to make continued progress as their White counterparts. Critical race theory examines and explains the rationale for the overrepresentation of low SES minorities in special education, teachers' perception and expectations of students of color living in poverty, and the overall racial disparity within the education system in America (Edward & Schmidt, 2003; Togut, 2011).

Significance of the Study

The researcher will study the effectiveness of RtI when implemented with fidelity to students of color from low SES families. In addition, this research study will impart beneficial insight into teachers' perceptions and expectations and show how the over-identification of low socio-economic students of color in special education results in the loss of opportunities for many students to explore and become successful as their non-minority peers. Critical race theory discusses the adverse effects of racism, bias, and stereotypes against low SES children of color in the education system. These effects prevent them from receiving high-quality instruction, resulting in low academic performances, school dropouts which sometimes lead to incarceration, and no vision created for the future (Edwards & Schmidt, 2006; Watts & Erevelles, 2004). Critical race theory emphasizes that there must be a change in the social structure. Teachers should have high expectations for all students by requiring quality work and effort to promote

academic achievements for a bright future (Edwards & Schmidt, 2006).

This study will communicate why children of color living in poverty are underserved in the education system and deprived of equal opportunities. It will discuss the lack of resources and teachers' low expectations that are driving forces that influence how they deliver instruction to these students (Fitts, 2007). This study will expose the disparity between low SES children of color attending racially segregated schools that put them at risk for academic failure, resulting in special education referral and classification (Talbot et al., 2011) and their White counterparts. There is a demand for social action to level the playing field so that all students will have an equal opportunity to be educated by highly qualified teachers who will empower them to become successful citizens (Gorski, 2018).

Definition of Terms

To avoid confusion, key terms and concepts are defined as follows:

Academic failure: This is a lack of success in education, leading to the loss of higher education costs and social economy losses (Mills & Unsworth, 2018).

Academic intervention services (AIS): A mandated program designed to help struggling students and those with learning disabilities and should be implemented in pre-K due to the relationship between learning and brain development. Early academic intervention could positively impact struggling children's educational journey (Ramey & Ramey, 2004).

At-risk (at-promise): Significant literacy and language deficiencies that continue through elementary schools and beyond. These students continue to fall behind their prepared peers when entering schools, widening the education gap and increasing the number of special education classifications and school dropouts (Gettinger & Stoiber, 2007).

Discrimination: The unjust or disadvantageous treatment of different groups of people,

especially on the grounds of race, age, or sex (Gorski, 2018).

Disproportionate representation: The representation of a group in a category that exceeds expectations for that group or differs substantially from the representation of others in that category (Wright et al., 2014).

Early Intervention: Identifying and providing educational support to children at risk of poor academic performance in schools. Early intervention is an opportunity for at-risk students to be engaged in programs that will prepare them for school readiness, healthy development, academic achievement, reduced retention rate, and special education services (Reynolds et al., 2001).

Equity: The quality of being fair and impartial Gorski (2018).

Fidelity: Faithfulness to a person, cause, or belief, demonstrated by continued loyalty and support.

General education teacher: A professional who provides differentiated instruction to students at all levels, including students with special needs.

Highly qualified teacher: A public school educator who meets the definition created under the federal education law known as No Child Left Behind (2002).

Low socio-economic status (SES): The social standing of a particular individual or group: measured by education, finances, and occupation (Hibel et al., 2010; Togut, 2011).

Overrepresentation: Having representatives in a portion higher than the average (Vaughn et al., 2010).

People of color: Those who do not belong to the regions or nation's majority racial or ethnic group and may be subject to discrimination that can affect their educational achievement (Gettlinger & Stoiber, 2007).

Poverty: The state of being without the needed amount of money or material possessions

Racial disparity: A noticeable and usually significant difference or dissimilarity between economic, income, housing, and societal treatment status (Vaughn et al., 2010).

Racism: The beliefs, practices, or structural systems – such as education, that function to oppress racial groups (Edwards & Schmidt, 2006; Mills & Unsworth, 2018).

Reading specialists: Professionals who aim to improve reading achievement in their district or school by serving as teachers, coaches, or leaders of school reading programs.

Response to Intervention (RtI): A 3 Tier educational strategy used in schools to provide effective and high-quality instruction. It is designed to provide instruction to struggling individuals regardless of their limitations, knowing that all children can learn and reduce the possibility of being classified as special needs (Hernández Finch, 2012).

Segregation: The enforced separation of different racial groups in a country, community, or establishment (Gorski, 2018; Wright et al., 2017).

Small group instruction: A teaching strategy practiced with small groups of four to six students for higher achievement (Benegy et al., 2009; Wanzek & Vaughn, 2010).

Special education: Educating students using accommodations and differentiations to address their differences, disabilities, and special needs (Darling-Hammond, 2013).

Special need: A child determined to require special attention and specific necessities that other children do not (Darling-Hammond, 2013).

Stereotype: A common view or idea predetermined about a particular type of person or group (Mills & Unsworth, 2018).

Underserved students: Children who do not receive equitable education as their more privileged or middle-class peers. Usually, these groups of students are from low-income,

underrepresented, and racial/ethnic minority families (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Gorski, 2018).

Summary

Children of color from low-socioeconomic communities are at risk of beginning kindergarten with significant literacy and language deficiencies, continuing through elementary schools and beyond. These students continue to fall behind their prepared peers when entering schools, widening the education gap and increasing the number of school drop-outs (Gettinger & Stoiber, 2007). The deficiencies in students of color may result from parents not having enough time to spend with their children at home because of the dire need to work more than one job to provide for their families (Gorski, 2018). Nonetheless, if academic intervention is implemented with fidelity to at-risk students at an early age, it would improve their cognitive skills and academic achievements, reducing the number of referrals for special education services (Ramey & Ramey, 2004).

The lack of adequate resources for urban schools to educate students of color living in poverty results in the U.S. being the number one nation of education inequity (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Between 1987 and 2007, the U.S. increased prison funding by 125%, yet only 21% was allocated to educating children (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Schools providing education to students of color are less funded, resulting in low education standards, rapid staff turnover, and unqualified teachers. These negative contributing factors deny students of color the opportunity to achieve academically and reach their fullest potential, putting them at risk for special education classification and adverse outcomes (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Gorski, 2018).

Critical race theory exposes the disparities children of color living in poverty experienced in American schools. Opportunities to become successful are not equally distributed, causing havoc in the U.S. education system (Edwards & Schmidt, 2006). There is an overrepresentation

of students of color in special education due to racism, bias, inequity, stereotype, teachers' perceptions and expectations, and a lack of educational resources (Darling-Hammond, 2013; Gorski, 2018; Mills & Unsworth, 2018). Schools that are not adequately funded to provide academic intervention to at-risk students will continuously see a rise in the overrepresentation of students of color classified as special needs in the U.S. society, including teachers, must acknowledge how racism affects children of color living in poverty across the nation's schools and be willing to allow change to transpire (Darling-Hammond, 2013; Gorski, 2018).

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter familiarizes the reader with the rationale for researching the implementation of academic intervention services for at-risk students, investigates the concerns about the overrepresentation of students of color from low SES families in special education, and explicates the effect of teachers' perceptions and expectations on the classification process. The researcher focuses on the socioeconomic disadvantage between people of color and White people that has led to a widening achievement gap in U.S. Schools attended by low SES students of color are underserved due to a lack of educational resources and opportunities, minimal government funding, frequent teacher rollover, and teachers' perceptions and expectations (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Gorski, 2018). The following review of literature is addressed as it relates to this research: (a) preschool intervention programs, (b) at-risk students, (c) teachers' perceptions and expectations, (d) poverty, (e) contrast between poor and middle-class children, (f) challenges in early interventions, (g) response to intervention, (h) program evaluation, and (i) summary.

Preschool Intervention Programs

According to Campbell and Ramey (1994), there is a relationship between poverty, the level of cognitive development, and academic failures. Therefore, early intervention programs have been developed to target economically challenged students to enhance and strengthen their intellectual abilities to function in general education classrooms. Early intervention is an opportunity for at-risk students to be engaged in programs to prepare them for school readiness, healthy development, academic achievement, reduced retention rate, and special education services (Reynolds et al., 2001).

Early intervention programs support young children's development across different domains such as psychology, health, early childhood education, and special education across the country (Bruder, 2010). Early academic intervention effectively prevents learning difficulties, provides children with a wealth of knowledge to enter school, and has a greater chance of maintaining success throughout school (Campbell & Ramey, 1994). Infants and young children exposed to early academic programs can be engaged in the active learning process developing interaction and communication, social-emotional, cognitive skills, and motor development needed to progress in general education classes (Bruder, 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2010). Children's experiences impact early development in their environment and the people they encounter. It is essential to understand that young children are examples of their environment: they emulate the behaviors they see around them daily and identify with the people who may be their caretakers or teachers (Bruder, 2010).

As the need for higher education increases, early childhood programs, models, and services become mandatory for families and at-risk children. Additionally, all children should be enrolled in early academic programs to promote early exposure to literacy acquisition and reduce the chance of academic failure (Bruder, 2010). Head Start provides the most comprehensive set of services for vulnerable young children and is in accord with IDEA (Fantuzzo et al., 1999). It provides mandatory early intervention services for all children to prepare them for the demands of their academic experiences. In addition, in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002, Congress stated that all students should have access to highly qualified educators in all U.S. states. Nonetheless, children from poor nonliterate families are at significant risk for academic failure due to a lack of knowledge, skills, quality instruction, and effective teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Ramey & Ramey, 2004). Gettinger and Stoiber noted:

Home literacy practices heavily influence the development of children's language and literacy. Compared to middle-income families, children from economically disadvantaged families experience significant difficulties learning to read and write because they enter school with lower knowledge of letters and less familiarity with words. (2007, p. 199)

As noted, emphasis is placed on the importance of knowledge and communication at home with parents and caregivers and the impact on literacy acquisition of young children. According to Darling-Hammond (2010), the working vocabulary of 4-year-olds from low SES families measures one-third of those from middle-class families. Additionally, only half of the first-grade students from low SES families are capable of understanding language and the essential math skills to perform at grade level.

At-Promise Students

Learning and brain development are intertwined; therefore, early development has lasting and paramount consequences on young children's education (Ramey & Ramey, 2004). Children's experiences are crucial to guarantee normal brain development and school readiness. It is encouraged for parents and caregivers to be involved in constant interaction with babies and toddlers, so they can acquire early vocabulary skills before entering school. Young children's exposure to literature includes but is not limited to print, and television learning programs, smart electronics, songs, and nursery rhymes (Goldstein et al., 2017; Terrell & Watson, 2018).

Literature in homes provides young children with emergent literacy before entering school. These higher socioeconomic homes are equipped with materials to enhance the learning experiences. However, the largest group of children functioning below grade level are those living in poverty. They have limited exposure to literature at an early age because parents lack

education or literacy skills, book supplies, and quality time interacting with parents, resulting in a deficit in acquiring reading readiness skills (Gorski, 2018; Terrell & Watson, 2018).

Children of color are at higher risk of entering early elementary school with minimal academic skills due to minimal resources and opportunities, resulting in special education placements without strategic interventions. Learning skills developed before kindergarten afford children the foundational skills needed for long-term academic success. These acquired skills ensure progress for emergent readers and continue throughout their preschool years. In addition, they are predictors of students becoming successful readers beyond kindergarten (Gettinger & Stoiber, 2007).

Children entering kindergarten with reading deficits are indicators of future struggle, which causes the education gap to widen (Goldstein et al., 2017). Teachers must address the difficulties children experience as early as kindergarten to allow them to perform at or above grade level (Graves & McConnell, 2014). As children move from grade to grade without their deficits addressed and resolved, they risk dropping further behind their peers who were better prepared for school. Teachers are encouraged to carefully monitor children's progress to recognize their deficits and provide interventions that align with the areas of concern (Gettinger & Stoiber, 2007; Hatcher et al., 2006; Klingner & Edwards, 2006; Wanzek et al., 2018).

Progress will be inevitable when struggling children are identified early and evidenced-based instructions are implemented with fidelity. Early identification and appropriate interventions are necessary to close the education gap before it becomes disabled and eliminate inappropriate placement of students in special education programs (Anderson, 2019).

Conclusively, teachers' effectiveness in the classroom significantly impacts students' learning. Darling-Hammond (2020), Fien et al. (2018), and Glover (2017) agreed that all teachers and

interventionists should be adequately trained to identify struggling students and effectively deliver intense instruction.

Teachers' Perceptions and Expectations

Upon entering school, teachers significantly impact how much their students learn. Meaningful teacher-student interactions allow teachers to provide direct, explicit instruction to their students, with the flexibility to accommodate struggling learners (Stichter et al., 2009). The amount of engaged academic time spent with students is crucial to their learning. According to Rupley et al. (2009), learning is unavoidable when students actively engage in meaningful hands-on activities. However, studies found that students living in minority communities are exposed to racial segregation in underperforming schools. These schools lack excellent teachers resulting in less exposure to quality education. Unqualified teachers are not prepared to provide quality instruction to meet the needs of at-risk students. Moreover, curriculums are modified or watered down so they can be easily managed and delivered to at-risk students of color (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

Professional development is highly recommended to successfully help teachers navigate their way in providing instruction effectively (Bratsch-Hines et al., 2017; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Gorski, 2018). Another suggestion is for teachers to change their mindset about students living in poverty by familiarizing themselves with their students' culture to understand them better and avoid bias and stereotypes (Berhanu, 2008; Bratsch-Hines et al., 2017; Gorski, 2018; Morgan, 2020). Schools providing education to students of color living in poverty should be equipped with sufficient African American teachers who are familiar with that culture and can identify with some behaviors that are culturally accepted and not observed as insubordination or defiance (Morgan, 2020; Sherwin & Schmidt, 2003).

According to Morgan (2020), students taught by teachers from similar ethnic groups are more likely to become successful and less prone to drop out of high school or be classified as having special needs. Teachers' perceptions and expectations play a significant role in the lives of students of colors and their non-minority peers. In addition, all students should be held accountable with the same standards to produce quality assignments to help close the achievement gap between Black and White students (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

Poverty

A significant number of people in the U.S. are living in poverty. After the poverty guidelines were established in 1964 by legislators and the media, a fight against poverty was initiated (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Fisher, 1992; Huston, 1994), resulting in an overall decrease in the number of children living in poverty from 27% to 14%. However, after a decade of fighting, the poverty rate in the U.S. has increased to its highest point, outperforming other developed countries substantially (Darling-Hammond, 2010). For children, poverty begins before they are born due to their mothers' lack of access to proper healthcare during pregnancy which may have a negative lifetime effect (Gorski, 2018). The U.S. Census Bureau (2022) reported a 46% decline in the child poverty rate in 2021 due to the distribution of Social Security checks, refundable tax credits, and stimulus payments. Ultimately taking the U.S. to its lowest poverty rate in history. However, it was further noted that the decrease in the poverty rate is temporary.

Gorski (2018) stated that a disproportionate number of African American and Latino children living in the U.S. encounter ongoing poverty, leading to academic and social challenges. Hudson et al. (1994) discussed three reasons children's poverty is prevalent in the U.S. They are economic changes such as well-paid jobs eliminated, 80s recession, and the inequality of pay scale amongst groups. If breadwinners' salaries are eliminated, it is inevitable for families to

experience hardship. The 80s recession drastically increased the unemployment rate forcing many families into poverty. Secondly, the continuously growing percentage rate of children living in single-family households and the increasing number of teenage mothers contribute to the rise of poverty. Many single mothers have limited education, resulting in mediocre jobs with insufficient salaries to provide for their families. Thirdly, the decrease in government aid to the poor has a negative impact on disadvantaged families. A significant number of household families cannot provide food and shelter for their families without exclusively depending on the government for assistance. Therefore, decreasing government aid puts families in a predicament that may affect the whole individual for a lifetime (Gorski, 2018; Hudson et al., 1994).

Children living in poverty experience slovenly living situations, poor brain development, health, medical, nutrition, and behavioral problems, stress, violence, misuse, and abuse (Gorski, 2018; Huston, 1994; Morgan, 2020; Windsor et al., 2010), resulting in a deficit in language development, poor school attendance, behavior problems, and at risk of breaking the law (Morgan, 2020). These students attend racially isolated and poorly funded schools with minimal resources, which affects their educational outcomes (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Togut, 2011). Gorski explained that poor people want to be successful educationally, but receiving exceptional education depends on the opportunity. Children from affluent families are more likely to be placed in gifted and talented programs and advanced placement classes (Wright et al., 2014).

Gorski (2018) emphasized that educators can help students living in poverty rise above the odds. These children are faced with a wide variety of challenges. Still, if educators look beyond what is visible, see the potential in all students, and deliver instruction to their ability levels, their success would be more likely equivalent to their affluent peers. The color of one's skin should not determine how successful an individual will be. It should be contingent on the

quality of education they are exposed to and their determination. All children deserve to be equally educated based on their academic needs, regardless of their zip codes (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Gorski, 2018). Unfortunately, poverty is a significant factor in the overrepresentation of classified students of color, and teachers should be conscious of their biases when making referrals and decision-making (Togut, 2011).

According to Gorski (2018), teachers should prioritize equity when teaching poor students. Teachers should execute all options to improve the curriculum to become inclusive. They must view all students through the same lens and hold them accountable for quality work. Poor students are just as important as their wealthier peers and must be challenged to reach their highest potential. Teachers' stereotypical behaviors about poor students of color must be eradicated so equity will prevail (Gorski, 2018). It is a challenge to teach students of color with behavior and social problems. Still, if teachers learn more about their students' needs and situations, they will be able to show empathy and respond differently. Unwanted behaviors usually attract teachers' attention, and as a result, students miss instruction frequently because they are more than likely misunderstood and are removed from classes. Understanding your audience is indispensable when educating low SES students of color for success to be evident. Therefore, establishing positive relationships with students of color living in poverty and having open cultural discussions will help eliminate stereotypes and customary biases. Moreover, teachers familiarizing themselves with parents and community members could significantly impact the success of at-risk students (Stitcher et al., 2009).

The Contrast Between Poor and Middle-Class Children

Gettinger and Stoiber (2007) noted that weaknesses in academic skills resulting in reading failures are prevalent in children from low-income, non-White, and limited English

proficient families. The home is the first place where vocabulary is developed. Therefore, if young children have no or limited interactions with parents and or caregivers, they will be denied the opportunities to be exposed to the needed vocabulary before entering school. The most vulnerable students are from low socio-economic families, and not having access to an equitable early academic start puts them at a disadvantage compared to their more affluent peers, where learning is initiated at home (Goldstein et al., 2017). Results are consistent as children who enter school with less exposure to rich language experience considerable delays in reading, writing, and letter recognition (Gettinger & Stoiber, 2007).

Higher socioeconomic families' homes readily provide reading and writing materials for their children to interact and get experience with print. Moreover, the family's attitude toward literacy will propel them to engage in reading activities with their children, which will help mold their reading abilities. In contrast, children living in poverty are the largest group experiencing literacy delays and in danger of not receiving early academic interventions. They have minimal exposure to books in their homes, rich vocabulary, and libraries (Terrell & Watson, 2018). Additionally, children who experience occasional or persistent poverty are likely to have lower IQs than those who never lived in poverty (Huston, 1994).

Children living in affluent communities with highly interactive individuals at home obtain a wealth of vocabulary skills allowing them to communicate effectively with others using specific languages. These children produce a wealth of advanced vocabulary that increases their abilities to perform on or above grade level before entering school (Ramsey & Ramsey, 2004). Children living in middle-income family households may enter school already exposed to having over 6,000 books read to them, compared with those from low-income families who were never exposed to book reading. These students enter schools without foundational academic skills and

require the implementation of research-based programs by trained teachers to improve reading skills and reduce or prevent special education classification (Gorski, 2018; Gettlinger & Stoiber, 2007; Terrell & Watson, 2018). Children of color living in poverty are susceptible to being classified as special needs considering their living environment. Exposure to challenging living conditions could result in poor academic performance, health issues, high school dropouts, and later economic hardship. This is prevalent in low SES communities, while children from affluent homes experience much success due to more advantages and better living methods (Gorski, 2018; Morgan, 2020).

Challenges in Early Academic Intervention

Providing mandatory early academic intervention services for all children will prepare them to take on the demands of their educational experiences. Students entering kindergarten with a deficiency in reading skills may continue to struggle throughout elementary school, widening the education gap. These students seldomly catch up to their peers and risk being classified as special needs. Many children of color from low-socioeconomic families experience reading deficits through fourth grade and continue to have reading problems through high school and beyond (Gettlinger & Stoiber, 2007). The conundrum with servicing children living in poverty and maintaining positive, sustainable results are the low frequency and duration of services, the onset of intervention, inadequate delivery of explicit instructions, unsuccessfully planned curriculum, not matching instruction to children's areas of deficits, and not providing adequate resources for children and families (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Ramey & Ramey, 2004; Fien et al., 2018). If children living in poverty receive the quality education they deserve, their chances of overcoming their adversaries and becoming successful individuals are boosted (Campbell & Ramey, 1994).

It is important to emphasize that one's beliefs and culture often play a role in the classification process of children living in poverty. Some cultures are reluctant to have their children classified as special needs students due to the stigma and possibility of their children continuing in special education throughout high school and beyond. In addition, some cultures do not associate some behaviors with any form of disability. Some behaviors are accepted as standard, while it is considered a behavioral concern in other cultures which could lead to special education classification (Morgan et al., 2012). Educating impoverished children can be a challenge for parents. These parents want to be economically independent as well. However, they also need affordable, high-quality educational services for their children. If parents have no access to those services, they have no choice but to seek out friends and families for support. Ultimately, these children enter pre-kindergarten unprepared due to a lack of parental and academic support (Campbell & Ramey, 1994; Morgan et al., 2012).

Response to Interventions (RtI)

According to Kavale and Spaulding (2008), RtI is used for students who have not been identified to receive special education services but are struggling to keep up with their peers to succeed in the general education classroom. It is designed to provide instruction to struggling individuals regardless of their limitations, knowing that all children can learn and reduce the possibility of being classified as special needs (Hernández Finch, 2012). Emphasis is placed on how well students respond to quality intervention and its effectiveness in identifying and promoting strategies to help close the achievement gap (Graves & McConnell, 2014).

The multitiered model of RtI, provides quality instruction to struggling students if implemented rigorously and with fidelity (Allington, 2009; Kavale & Spaulding, 2008). Some essential components of RtI are using scientific research-based intervention within the general

education classrooms, measuring students' progress in the program, and modifying instruction and its frequency to meet students' needs. The RtI three-tiered model is used with students functioning at different levels in general education classrooms. Tier 1 is where high-quality instruction is provided for all students; Tier 2 offers small-group intervention to three to six students who continue to function below grade level. Tier 3 intense instruction is provided for students eligible for special education services. It is recommended that Tiers 2 and 3 be implemented for struggling students before special education determination.

Kavale and Spaulding (2008) stated that RtI requires authenticated treatment for all children with similar deficits. Hoppey (2013) confirmed that it is essential to address students' academic weaknesses and develop a plan of action to meet targeted students' educational needs by constructing specific goals, timelines, and percentage rates for each student. Interventions for goal achievement should be implemented in small groups with evidence-based practices that identify with the groups' needs (Hoppey, 2013; Kamps et al., 2008). According to this research, teachers should ensure their plans are specific and concrete, and address students' deficits for academic growth. Teachers and interventionists should consistently monitor their student's progress and be able to adjust interventions to align with their needs for significant academic outcomes. At-risk students receiving RtI-tiered intervention programs may still experience reading difficulties after entering third grade. However, if students are screened early and placed into high-quality early intervention programs, the number of special education referrals could be reduced. (Terrell & Watson, 2018).

Early screening and participation in preschool programs are significantly connected to higher cognitive skills, academic achievement, and a reduction in grade retention and special education referrals (Reynolds et al., 2001). Effective programs play an integral part in preparing

students for the future. For example, Milwaukee Head Start used the program “Exemplary Model of Early Reading Growth and Excellence” (EMERGE), similar to RtI, to help students from low-income families to gain literacy skills they are lacking, ultimately preventing or reducing special education classification (Gettinger & Stoiber, 2007). Teachers followed their students for a specific time and administered the same skills to ensure mastery. The students were placed into groups accordingly and were closely monitored monthly to identify those who needed extensive instruction to increase their literacy abilities.

For the program and results to be effective, the Milwaukee teachers adhered to the same schedule or letters and themes across each group of targeted students. The design of classrooms and the structured environment helped promote literacy and language development. It was concluded that children’s literacy skills and behaviors are affected by their environment, including learning centers, reading and writing materials, print-rich classrooms, organized spaces, and relevant literacy activities. Moreover, the teachers of Milwaukee build nourishing, caring, and positive relationships with their students to promote a positive learning environment (Gettinger & Stoiber, 2007).

Additionally, Benegy et al. (2009) studied the effect of small-group interventions on reading fluency and comprehension. This strategy also follows the RtI guidelines. Students were selected based on the difficulties they experienced in reading. They were taught in small groups, and significant gains were evident in reading readiness and fluency after receiving intervention with fidelity. Students who practice Repeated Reading, Listening Passage Preview, and Listening Only with their interventionist benefit from these strategies resulting in improvement in different areas of reading. This strategy is practiced with small groups of four to six students or one-to-one for higher achievement (Benegy et al., 2009; Wanzek & Vaughn, 2010). Early intervention is of

paramount importance to underprivileged children. However, when struggling students are engaged in complex tasks that limit or prevent academic success, they are less likely to show academic growth (Rupley et al., 2009).

Response to Intervention-Behavior RtI

Berharu (2008) and Gorski (2018) noted that teachers of low SES students of color face many behavioral challenges within the classroom, resulting in academic failures. Anderson-Irish (2013) emphasized that children living in poverty exhibit behaviors that are deemed disrespectful but are culturally accepted, which usually leads to special education referrals. On the other hand, when their middle-class or affluent peers exhibit similar behaviors, harsh punishment is not equally distributed. Challenging behaviors can disrupt teachers' planned activities within classrooms. These inappropriate behaviors may result in a loss of instruction, impacting students' progress. Therefore, all teachers should be prepared to start the first days of school with established classroom management protocols since those days may predict the expected classroom climate (Wong & Wong 2005).

Like RtI, Behavioral RtI is a multi-tiered process to assist students with early intervention in the general education setting to support positive behaviors and reduce challenging behaviors (Abou-Rjaily & Stoddard, 2017). Behavior RtI and the research model, Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS), reduce unwanted behaviors within the classroom by reducing challenging behaviors that interrupt students' learning abilities by developing and reinforcing positive behaviors (Ryoo et al., 2017). The implementation of PBIS in the school system promotes learning by increasing instructional time and academic achievement, improving social behaviors and relationships with peers, and simultaneously reducing the number of office disciplines, referrals, suspension rate, absenteeism, retention, and school dropouts (Colvin, 2007;

Ryoo et al., 2017). The ultimate goals of Behavioral RtI and PBIS are the implementation of the models with fidelity, which will reduce inappropriate behaviors that inhibit academic success while promoting positive behaviors in the school system, resulting in academic gains (Ryoo et al., 2017; Smith & Finney, 2017).

Program Evaluation

Early intervention programs could be a significant positive feature in changing the developmental course of high-risk students. However, not all programs show positive results. Some reasons why well-intended established government programs are not effective are: they are unable to deliver qualifying benefits, programs lack qualified, experienced teachers who can ensure students are receiving a high-quality education, programs are not intense because they are not offered for extended hours during the days or operated year-round and focus primarily on remediation and not preventing failures. The programs support families but offer insufficient support for children to gain cognitive and language skills (Gettinger & Stoiber, 2007; Ramey & Ramey, 2004). In addition, there is evidence that what happens before and after school, on the weekends, and during breaks from school can make a difference in children's academic achievement throughout their school years (Ramey & Ramey, 2017).

The outcomes of RtI differ across grade levels depending on the individuals (Kavale & Spaulding, 2008). RtI is critical for at-risk students' success and, when implemented with fidelity, has an impact on the number of referrals for special education services. In addition, group size, the onset, duration, and frequency of intervention play an essential role in students' academic growth (Allington, 2009; Lovett et al., 2017; Vaughn et al., 2010). Pull-out groups may be too large for interventionists to provide adequate services to struggling students and the group size should be four to six students or one-to-one for noticeable results (Allington, 2009).

Struggling readers face significant issues when instructional materials are above their level of competency (Allington, 2009). Students who participate in 30-50 minutes of appropriate interventions daily return to their classrooms and revert to materials they cannot read or comprehend. It is emphasized that interventions should be provided with appropriate materials for each group of students (Allington, 2009). However, according to Gersten and Domino (2006), as children get older and texts become more complex, there may be a rise in special education referrals for those groups of students. Nonetheless, there is a high probability that students may be non-responders due to teachers' lack of evidence-based instructional materials, inadequate interventions, and lack of training resulting in weak academic instruction.

Summary

Living in poverty may negatively impact brain development, resulting in cognitive developmental delays, academic failures, and socioemotional problems (De Los Reyes-Aragon et al., 2016). Therefore, early intervention services are critical for impoverished children (Bruder, 2010). Intervention programs reduce academic failure in at-risk children from low-socioeconomic families, resulting in fewer special education placements and grade retention (Campbell & Ramey, 1994). It is important to initiate academic intervention in the pre-school years when it is more beneficial in improving cognitive and social development, because it is a critical time for brain development (Ramey & Ramey, 2004).

Most students classified as special needs are minorities from impoverished families living in taxing environments (Fantuzzo et al., 1999). These students enter school unprepared for their academic challenges. Children of color living in low SES communities are less likely to be exposed to rich vocabulary, books in their homes, reading, and access to libraries than their peers from middle and high-income families (Terrell & Watson, 2018). However, as Allington (2009)

and Gorski (2018) reported, these students could overcome their adversities with strategic interventions from teachers and specialists. Nonetheless, due to racial disparities in the education system, teachers' perceptions, and expectations, children of color living in poverty are at a disadvantage in reaching their full potential because they are denied equal opportunities as their non-minority peers, resulting in special education classification.

Moreover, racial inequality affected students of color, resulting in harsh discipline, isolation, suspensions, poor performance in school, and school dropouts (Berhanu, 2008; Gorski, 2018). Whenever the U.S. recognizes the problems that plague the education system, they will be competent to find a resolution to flatten the playing field so all students can receive a quality education from trained teachers with the expectations of similar outcome from everyone regardless of their zip code (Gorski, 2018). As previously mentioned, schools serving students of color living in poverty should recruit teachers from similar cultural backgrounds who are familiar with norms and behaviors and accept students for who they are without preconceived notions (Hammond, 2010). If teachers develop and exhibit consistent positive relationships, flexibility, student academic engagement, high expectations, and deliver high-quality instructions to all students, academic improvement will be inevitable (Rupley et al., 2009; Stichter et al., 2008; Watts & Erevelles, 2004; Wright et al., 2014).

According to Wright et al. (2014), students of color living in poverty are disproportionately represented in special education and underrepresented in the gifted and talented programs. Critical race theory suggests the U.S. education system's disparities has a negative long-term effect on students of color who are living in poverty. Critical race theory emphasizes the importance of positive teacher engagement when educating students of color and the adjustment that should be implemented to bring about change. Educators should make race

visible by familiarizing themselves with families and the community they are a part of. Also, educators should initiate frequent open classroom discussions about race, so everyone can feel comfortable and appreciate each other's differences (Edwards & Schmidt, 2006).

To raise academic performances in at-risk students, RtI is a tiered academic intervention program designed to provide high-quality instruction and interventions to match students' needs. Using the program allows specialists and teachers to monitor progress by collecting and analyzing data, aligning instruction to each student's abilities, and making necessary adjustments to ensure children achieve their academic goals (Glover, 2017). Teachers and specialists must be cognizant of students' deficits, group size, frequency of intervention, and the alignment of interventions to students' deficits when delivering academic interventions services for academic improvement to be evident (Allington, 2009; Campbell & Ramey, 1994; Glover, 2017; Gorski, 2018).

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Rationale

This phenomenological mixed-method theory research examined the lived experience of participants who implemented academic intervention services to students of color from low SES communities based on three criteria, implementing research-based instruction, following state-mandated policies, and district-mandated policies. Also, the relationship between the levels of fidelity on implementation, teachers' perceptions and expectations, and the outcomes of students with low SES. According to Gardner et al. (2014), children from racial/ethnic minority families are disproportionately represented in special education. Understanding that implementing early academic intervention with fidelity is the strategy to educate at-promise students from low socio-economic families enabling them to reach their educational milestones.

Teachers and reading specialists who served low SES students of color were recruited to participate in this study to gather information on the effectiveness of early academic intervention services when implemented with fidelity. Also, the impact of teachers' perceptions and expectations when instructing at-promise students of color from low SES backgrounds. The study was conducted using surveys, open-ended questions, and structured face-to-face and virtual interviews to gather data from across states and provide statistical results. This chapter focused on methods used to collect and analyze data. It is organized into nine categories: (a) setting and participants, (b) sampling procedures, (c) instruments and measures, (d) reliability, (e) validity, (f) data collection, (g) data analysis, (h) ethical issues, and (i) summary.

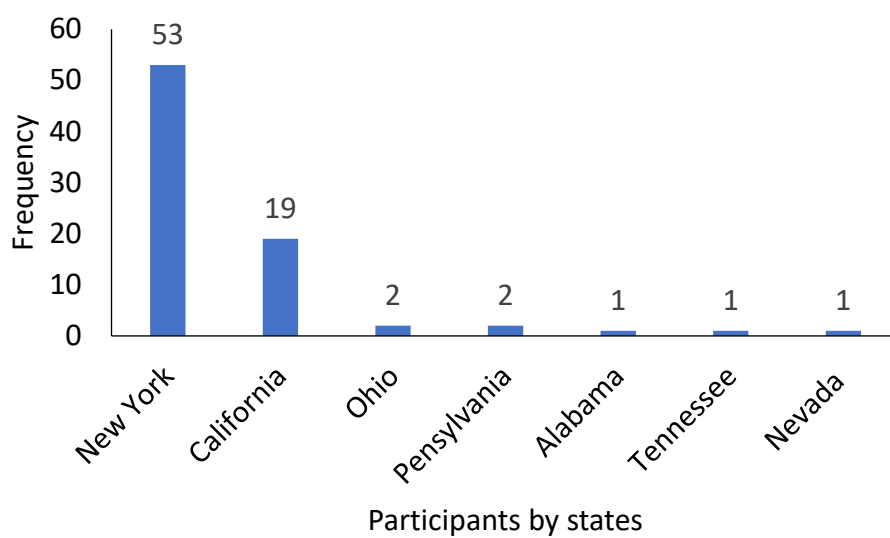
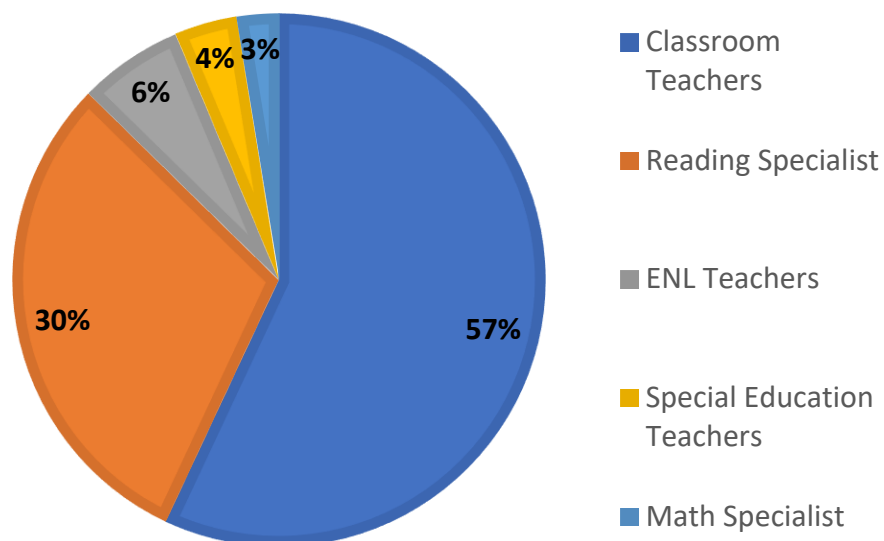
Setting and Participants

The participants for this study were teachers and reading specialists who provided academic intervention services to students of color from low SES families. Participating schools

are located across the U.S. I invited administrators and teachers I knew in New York and California and they invited their friends and associates who participated in the online survey. These two states were conveniently selected because I work in New York and attend graduate school in California. Seventy-nine teachers and reading specialists participated in the online survey and five educators agreed to participate in personal interviews.

This study investigated the fidelity of implementing academic intervention services with low SES students of color based on three criteria: research-based instruction, following state mandate policies, and district-mandated policies. In addition, I looked at the relationship between levels of fidelity of academic intervention services implementation, teachers' perceptions and expectations, and the classification process of students with low SES. All surveyed participants were teachers and reading specialists of low SES students of color across the U.S. To extend an invitation to teachers and reading specialists across states, I recruited participants from school districts who could relate to this research study via email or telephone. The survey was sent to participating individuals who invited their contacts who held similar positions in other schools within or out of the state they work or live in.

Figure 1.1 shows the number of participants by state. As shown in Figure 1.1, Seventy-nine educators from seven states participated in the survey. The total number of participants were from New York 67% ($n = 53$), California 24% ($n = 19$), Ohio 3% ($n = 2$), Pennsylvania 3% ($n = 2$), Alabama 1% ($n = 1$), Tennessee 1% ($n = 1$), and Nevada 1% ($n = 1$). Figure 2.1 shows participants' positions in their schools. As shown in Figure 2.1, of the 79 participants, 57% ($n = 45$) were classroom teachers, 30% ($n = 24$) were reading specialists, 6% ($n = 5$) were ENL teachers, 4% ($n = 3$) were special education teachers, and 3% ($n = 2$) were math specialist. See Table 1.1 for the number of participants who answered each survey question.

Figure 1.1*Participants by States***Figure 2.1***Participants' Positions in Schools*

As seen in Table 1.1, the majority of educators responded to most of the questions. The least number of participants answered the open-ended questions. Question 31 ($n = 64$), “What are your expectations when implementing the Academic Intervention Program to the Response to Intervention (RtI) model to minority at-promise students from low SES families?” Question 32 ($n = 62$), “What are your perceptions of the academic intervention program and its implementation to minority low SES students?” Question 33 ($n = 71$), “How do you plan meaningful and engaging learning activities for your struggling students?” and Question 34 ($n = 62$), “What is one thing you would change about implementing the Academic Intervention Program?” Qualitative data from interviews and short responses were used to support quantitative findings.

Table 1.1

The Number of Participants Who Responded to Survey Questions

Questions	Number of Participants' Responded
Questions 1-14, 16, 20, 27-30	79
Questions 15, 23, 24, 25	78
Questions 17, 18	74
Question 19	75
Question 21	76
Question 22	73
Question 26	71
Question 31	64
Question 32	62
Question 33	71
Question 34	62

Sampling Procedures

The mixed-method study included teachers and reading specialists in New York, California, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Alabama, Nevada, and Tennessee. Administrators and teachers recruited participants via electronics and social media to participate in the mixed-methods study

that required them to answer a survey that included open-ended questions provided online. This snowball sampling method recruited individuals who worked with a population that fits the study. A Google Form survey link was sent to interested participants who invited their friends and acquaintances who are teachers and reading specialists to participate in the survey for data collection. At the end of the survey, participants responded to a question that would inform me of their desire to participate in a virtual interview for follow-up questions. An invitation email was sent with Form G, Photograph/Video/Audio Use Consent to all who indicated they would like to participate in the interview process.

The survey had a short description explaining the purpose of the study, informed consent to participate, and a raffle entry explanation, followed by 34 survey questions and open-ended questions that were purposefully prepared for teachers and reading specialists. The questions investigated the effect of early academic interventions on students of color from low SES families when implemented with fidelity. In addition to the impact of teachers' expectations and perceptions on students of color from low SES communities. The informed consent explained that there were no obligations to participate in the study, and participants may discontinue the survey at any time if they so desire. Four \$25 Amazon gift cards were randomly awarded to participants from a pool of emails for interested participants. A Google computer-designed "Wheel of Names" spinner was used to randomly select emails to determine the winners. A "thank you" email was sent to all participants who included their email addresses in the survey.

Instrumentation and Measures

This study used survey questions to identify how early intervention was imparted to struggling students. For survey questions 1 through 11, Quantitative data were collected using a five-point Google Likert scale, and responses were measured using codes (1) strongly disagree,

(2) disagree, (3) neutral, (4) agree, and (5) strongly agree. Question 12 quantitative data codes were (1) extremely ineffective, (2) ineffective, (3) neutral, (4) effective, and (5) extremely effective. For question 13, responses were coded as (1) never, (2) rarely, (3) neutral, (4) frequently, and (5) very frequently. Multiple-choice and checkboxes were also used. Qualitative data were collected using four open-ended questions, and virtual and face-to-face interviews. The survey was completed anonymously and contained 34 questions focused on implementing academic intervention services (Response to Intervention, RtI) to students of color from low SES families, in addition to the impact of teachers' expectations and perceptions. There were five personal questions about the participant's place of employment, with the option to participate in a virtual interview and a raffle to win a \$25 Amazon gift card. Five personal face-to-face and virtual interviews were conducted to gather data from reading specialists and classroom teachers.

I obtained and analyzed qualitative data from four open-ended questions in the online survey and five personal interviews, along with reported quantitative data, to investigate the impact of early academic intervention on low SES students of color when implemented with fidelity. The results were scrutinized several times to ensure validity. Systematic sampling was used to report responses for Questions 31-34. Participants' numbers were alternated for each question to accommodate a variety of responses. Every third response was chosen as a sample to represent the total number of participants. For Question 31, teachers reported their expectations when implementing the academic intervention program or RtI model to at-risk students of color from low SES families. Sixty-four participants responded to the question. Hence, 35% ($n = 22$) of the responses were reported as a sample.

For question 32, teachers responded to their perceptions of the academic intervention program and its implementation to low SES students of color. Sixty-two participants responded

to the question, and 32% ($n = 20$) of the responses were utilized for this study. For question 33, teachers responded to how they plan meaningful and engaging learning activities for their struggling students. Seventy-one participants answered the question. Of the 71 responses, 34% ($n = 24$) were strategically chosen as a sample to represent all participants. For question 34, teachers responded to one thing they would change about the academic intervention program. Sixty-two participants responded, and 37% ($n = 23$) sample responses were used.

Reliability

According to Gibbs (2012), qualitative research must be consistent with reliability, validity, generalization, and credibility. Gibbs emphasized that researchers should not coerce their participants to respond to questions to support their beliefs. Therefore, I refrained from misleading participants to respond to questions that would jeopardize the survey results. It is to be noted that research could be reliable but not valid. While conducting the research, I ensured that participants were teachers and reading specialists serving low SES students of color and was cognizant that volunteers can be biased. Credibility was of uttermost importance in this research study. I am aware that another population may not represent the same result as this group (Maxwell, 2012).

I already had views on the topic and was mindful of personal bias, in addition to being conscious not to mix personal feelings with responses from participants (Gibbs, 2012; Maxwell, 2012). I did not presume that an answer is right or wrong because of prior knowledge or beliefs but waited for the data to be analyzed and ensured the results were conclusive (Maxwell, 2012). The interview questions remained the same for all participants to create clarity and not mislead anyone. Thought-provoking questions were developed and asked so teachers could thoroughly express themselves on the topic.

Authentic records were maintained using multiple instruments scrutinized by experts in the field of study to ensure appropriateness. All personal information was kept on a password-protected device that was known only to me. When not in use, devices were locked away to maintain confidentiality. The REV transcription was used to record and transcribed all interview sessions.

Validity

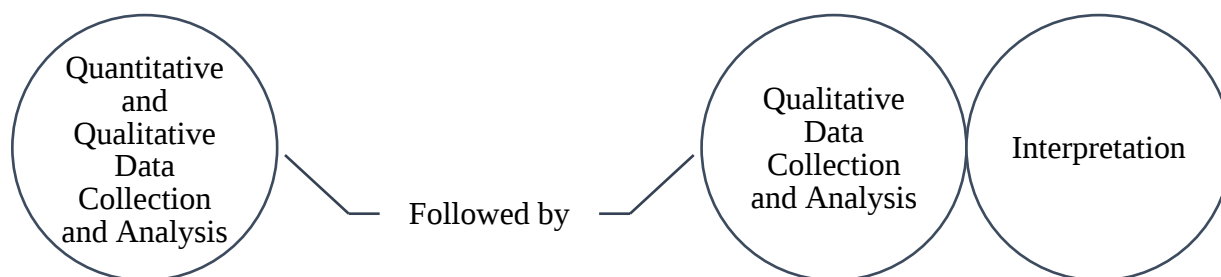
To avoid bias, I followed guidelines to ensure that reliability, validity, generalizability, and credibility guided this research study (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Gibbs, 2012). Of the nine validation strategies, which are categorized into three groups of lenses (researcher's, participant's, and reader's lens), researchers are urged to participate in at least two. Therefore, I participated in the reader's or review lens and the researcher's lens for validation purposes (Creswell & Poth, 2016). According to Maxwell (2012), "Validity is generally acknowledged to be a key issue in research design, and I think it is important to be explicitly addressed" (p. 121). Hence, I had experts in the fields of research who were familiar with the topic, examined, reexamined, and reflected on the data collection, analysis, findings, and interpretation for validation. In addition, the interview questions, surveys, and results were reviewed by Concordia University's specialized committee members and colleagues who critiqued and gave feedback to ensure validity. Moreover, six experts in the field of education reviewed the survey questions, which resulted in further modifications to reflect their recommendations (Maxwell, 2012).

Threats to validity will accommodate questions such as: did we do the right thing? Are the findings reliable? Will it give the same result if repeated? To avoid these doubts and questions, which could lead to invalid conclusions, I narrowed the question, was precise about the topic of interest, and provided supporting data (Gibbs, 2012; Maxwell, 2012; Thomas, 2011).

Therefore, I triangulated the data using survey questions, open-ended questions, and interviews for valid and reliable results for this study (Maxwell, 2012). The qualitative and quantitative data were collected using a five-point Likert scale: (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) neutral, (4) agree, and (5) strongly agree; (1) highly ineffective, (2) ineffective, (3) neutral, (4) effective, and (5) highly effective; (1) never, (2) rarely, (3) neutral, (4) frequently, and (5) very frequently, short response questions, and one-to-one interviews. I used Rev Transcription and MAXQDA software to analyze data to ensure valid results and imported the data into Microsoft Excel software for interpretation.

Data Collection

For this research, I ensured that the data collected reflected the purpose of the study. I emailed surveys to teachers and reading specialists with a link to Google Forms to view and answer questions. The Snowball Design survey began with a question that described the population the participants worked with. Other questions focused on the implementation of AIS or RtI, teachers expectations and perceptions, their role in teaching, years of service, and the state they work in. No individual students' achievement data were collected. Hence, participating teachers and reading specialists self-reported their students' progress. All participants answered the same questions to understand their view on providing interventions to students of color from low SES families. Multiple sources were used to collect data as evidence for this study. Data were collected from an online survey and personal interviews (Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1*Mixed-methods Descriptive Research Design*

All questions were developed based on the many years of experience I have in general and special education. Experts in education, including professors of educational doctoral studies and doctoral students from Concordia University Irvine, the superintendent of a New Jersey school district, and an assistant superintendent of the La Habra school district in CA validated the questions and provided feedback. Table 2.1 provides a sample of research questions and how the mixed-methods data will be collected.

Table 2.1*Mixed Methods Research Design (Creswell & Roth, 2018)*

Research Question	Quantitative	Qualitative
- How does early academic intervention services with low socioeconomic minority students affect the special needs classification? - How do teachers' perceptions and expectations impact the classification process of low socioeconomic minority students?	- Teachers 5-point Likert scale - Survey (survey questions and closed-ended questions) - Teachers 5-point Likert scale - Survey (question and close-ended questions)	- Open-ended questions - Individual interview questions - Teachers open-ended questions - Individual interview questions

Table 3.1*Illustration of the Coding Process*

<i>Stages of the Coding Process</i>	
Collecting Data	Data were collected using survey questions, open and closed-ended questions, and individual face to face and zoom interviews. (Creswell & Roth, 2018).
Coding	Frequency in similar responses, interpretation of words, and their relationships, and observation of individual actions or facial expressions during zoom interviews (Creswell & Roth, 2018).
Themes	Codes were developed into six themes for this study's narrative section (Creswell & Roth, 2018).

Phase 1: Quantitative

The first stage of the data collection was initiated by sending letters to known educators via email asking them to participate in a voluntary survey. The snowball collection continued as each interested invitee invited others via email, telephone, and social media to participate in this study. This recruitment continued until the desired number of 79 was executed. The Google-generated five-point Likert scale survey was sent out via email to educators who agreed to participate. These participants recruited other educators by forwarding the link to them. Participants were informed that participation was voluntary and that they had three weeks to complete the survey. After two weeks, a follow-up email reminder was sent to everyone to encourage participation and thank those who participated. In addition, participants were given a chance to communicate their interest in participating in a virtual interview and a chance to win a \$25 Amazon gift card raffle.

Phase 2: Qualitative

The second data collection stage was contingent on the transcripts acquired from open-ended questions and virtual and face-to-face interviews. Four open-ended questions on the

survey empowered participants to share their thoughts, perceptions, expectations, and experiences. They expressed themselves subjectively and professionally about educating at-promised students of color from low SES families (Creswell & Roth, 2018). Five face-to-face and virtual interviews were conducted with four questions to help validate survey responses. At the start of the interviews, the purpose of the study, the interview's duration, and the right to withdraw from the study at any time were discussed. In addition, during the interviews, follow-up questions were asked for clarification purposes to gain additional information from participants (Maxwell, 2012). All interview responses were recorded and transcribed using REV software. During the interviews, I was cognizant of observed body language and included them in the coding process (Creswell & Roth, 2018). All data were triangulated to develop comprehensive validity and reliability for this research study.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data were collected through Likert scale survey questions, while the qualitative data were acquired through open-ended questions and personal interviews. Body language was observed, recorded, and interpreted during the interviews as part of the data collection and analysis. Coded data for this mixed-method research were generated using MAXQDA and REV transcription software. Descriptive and thematic coding was used to develop codes and common themes to effectively analyze the data collected from open-ended questions and during interviews (Creswell & Roth, 2018). Both quantitative and qualitative findings were significant based on the purpose of the study.

This phenomenological mixed-method study methodologically collected and analyzed data to ensure validity and reliability. In addition, Pearson correlations were conducted, and results showed significant positive association between several variables. The ANOVA results

showed significant differences for the comparisons of several between and within groups samples from collected data.

Quantitative

The five-point Likert scale survey results were quantified using various data analyses. Questions 1- 13 on the five-point Likert scale were coded as (1) for strongly disagree to (5) for strongly agree; (1) extremely ineffective to (5) highly effective; (1) never to (5) very frequently which investigated the relationship between the implementation process of early AIS to low SES students of color and the special education classification. The survey questions measured participants' involvement and dedication in providing early AIS or RtI with fidelity to students of color from low SES families.

A series of Pearson Correlations were conducted to seek relationships among the survey concept from the Likert scale questions. The responses provided supporting data that helped to answer the two research questions. "How does early academic intervention services with low socioeconomic minority students affect the special needs classification?" and "How do teachers' perceptions and expectations impact the classification process of low socioeconomic minority students?"

The open-ended questions allowed participants to objectively share their thoughts and experiences teaching the population that is being studied. The personal interviews with participants were essential for this mixed-method research and provided substantial evidence that supported the quantitative data. Interview questions stemmed from the research and open-ended questions. During the interviews, follow-up questions were generated for clarification, and specific quotes were incorporated into the findings (Maxwell, 2012).

Table 4.1*Coding for Responses for Question 15*

Number of Students on Grade Level	Coding
1-10	1
11-20	2
21-30	3
31 or above	4

Table 5.1*Coding for Answers to Question 14*

Number of Grade Level Servicing	Coding
1-2	1
3-4	2
5 or above	3

Table 6.1*Coding for Responses for Question 16*

Number of Years Teaching	Coding
1-2	1
3-4	2
Five or above	3

Table 7.1*Coding for Responses to Questions 17, 18, and 19*

Students' Academic Growth by Percentage	Coding
1-10%	1
11-20%	2
21-30%	3
31-40%	4
41% or above	5

I used teachers' expectations, perceptions and reported student data to analyze students' progress.

- Question 20 was coded using numbers 1 through 5
- Question 21 was coded using numbers 1 through 3
- Questions 25 and 27 responses were coded using numbers (1) yes, (2) no, and (3) not sure
- Questions 23 and 26 responses were coded using numbers 1 through 4
- Questions 22, 28-30 responses were coded using numbers 1 through 6.

Qualitative

Questions 31-34 and interview questions informed me of teachers' perceptions, planning, and the implementation process of AIS or RtI to low SES students of color. MAXQDA and descriptive coding helped to classify the data and identify similarities, themes, patterns and observed body language during zoom interviews.

The qualitative data were collected using four open-ended questions on the survey, three face-to-face and two virtual interviews. Participants responses from the Likert scale survey validated the interviewees' responses. Before the interviews, a brief discussion with participants was initiated to reiterate the study's procedures, protocols, and purpose. In addition, participants were informed that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time. The interviews were recorded and transcribed using REV recording and transcription software. The open-ended questions empowered participants to share their experiences and express themselves subjectively and professionally (Creswell & Roth, 2018). During the interviews, I observed and recorded body language to include in the coding process (Creswell & Roth, 2018).

Ethical Issues

Before collecting data, approval was obtained from the Concordia Irvine IRB. After permission was granted, letters to interested individuals were sent to their email addresses confirming their voluntary participation in the study. The snowball collection continued as each

participant invited others via email, phone, and social media. Participants' identities were not necessary for this study. All collected data were secured on a password-locked device. I ensured all results were disclosed, whether positive or negative (Creswell & Roth, 2018). Collecting and measuring the data helped me understand students' progress while receiving services and if intervention impacted the progress. To ensure ethical standards were maintained to avoid bias, I did not coerce participants to give responses that would jeopardize the study, I maintained respect for participants, and I reported both positive and negative results (Maxwell, 2012).

Summary

This phenomenological theory research examined the lived experience of participants implementing early academic intervention services with fidelity to educate at-risk students from low socio-economic families, enabling them to reach their academic milestones. This chapter explained the steps used to ensure that reliability and validity were inevitable in the mixed-method research study. Data were collected using survey questions, open-ended questions, virtual, and face-to-face interviews. I utilized MAXQDA software and REV recording and transcription to code and analyze data. The coding process followed these steps simultaneously. I collected data and identified codes using the frequency of similarities and patterns in responses and observed body language during virtual and in-person interviews. I narrowed these codes down into six themes and used those themes to build the narrative of this study.

The next chapter includes quantitative and qualitative analytical reports from surveys, short responses, virtual and in-person interviews.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

This phenomenological mixed-method theory research examined the lived experience of participants implementing early academic intervention services with fidelity to students of color from low SES communities. The study is based on three criteria: researched-based instruction, following state and district mandate policies, and the impact on the special education classification process. In addition, the collected data were used to evaluate reading specialists' and classroom teachers' perceptions and expectations for their at-promise students. The survey reached 79 participants from six states across the U.S. The participants responded to 30 Likert scale and checkbox survey questions, four short responses, and five personal questions, including the state they work in and an opportunity to participate in a \$25 Amazon gift card raffle.

The quantitative data were obtained using a 5-point Likert scale. The individual interviews were conducted to empower participants to share their thoughts, perceptions, expectations, and experiences and to express themselves subjectively and professionally about educating at-promise students of color from low SES families. Five participants were interviewed, and all responses were used exclusively for validating qualitative results. Face-to-face interviews are an effective method to gather data than self-administered questionnaires (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Additionally, four short-response questions were asked to gather teachers' personal views about their experiences working with students of color from low SES families for this study. All participants completed the first section of the survey. However, some individuals left a few questions unanswered in the short responses. This chapter presents the data analysis of the answers to the research questions:

1. How does early academic intervention services with low socio-economic minority students affect the special needs classification?

2. How do teachers' perceptions and expectations impact the special education classification process of low socio-economic minority students?

Quantitative Data Analysis

The snowball design utilized a Google survey sent to school administrators and teachers in New York and California, who snowballed it to other states. All participants completed the 5-point Likert scale survey. The survey focused on teachers' responses to providing early academic interventions with fidelity to at-risk students. Table 8.1 revealed how the participants responded to the survey. Seventy-nine participants responded to statements 1-13. Questions were coded as follows: (1) Strongly Disagree to (5) Strongly Agree; (1) Extremely Ineffective to (5) Highly Effective. Responses provided quantitative data to answer Research Question 1, "How does early academic intervention with low-socioeconomic minority students affect the special needs classification?"

As shown in Table 8.1, the data from the survey reveal varied responses to delivering early academic intervention services with fidelity to at-risk students. Most educators strongly agreed that they used students' data to plan and drive instruction 63% ($n = 50$), 27% ($n = 21$) agreed, and 10% ($n = 8$) strongly disagreed. Thirty-two percent of educators ($n = 25$) strongly agreed that they adhered to the RtI intervention block with fidelity, 35% ($n = 28$) agreed, 23% ($n = 18$) remained neutral, 5% ($n = 4$) disagreed, and 5% ($n = 4$) strongly disagreed to that statement.

Table 8.1

Teacher Survey Data for Research Question 1: How Does Early Academic Intervention with Low-Socioeconomic Minority Students Affect the Special Needs Classification?

Statements From Teacher Survey	Response Codes
1. I use students' data to plan and drive instruction for students who are struggling.	1=8, 4=21, 5=50
2. I adhere to the Response to Intervention block with fidelity.	1=4, 2=4, 3=18, 4=28, 5=25
3. I comply with state and district policies for struggling students.	1=4, 2=1, 3=4, 4=25, 5=45
4. I differentiate assessments, assignments, and projects so my students can feel successful.	1=3, 2=1, 3=1, 4=24, 5=40
5. The curriculum is engaging and culturally relevant.	1=1, 2=4, 3=30, 4=28, 5=16
6. I receive support for managing challenging behaviors.	1=3, 2=16, 3=23, 4=26, 5=11
7. Collaborating and planning are consistent between classroom teachers and reading specialists/interventionists.	1=5, 2=15, 3=14, 4=32, 5=13
8. My small group instruction matches students' performance levels.	1=3, 2=1, 3=3, 4=33, 5=39
9. I receive ongoing Professional Development for the Academic Intervention Program (academic reading program) I use with my students.	1=2, 2=29, 3=25, 4=16, 5=7
10. I implement the academic intervention program with fidelity (faithful and exact).	1=1, 2=4, 3=20, 4=40, 5=14
11. The academic intervention program is highly effective.	1=2, 2=7, 3=33, 4=32, 5=6

There were significant differences between how participants responded to adhering to the RtI block with fidelity and using students' data to plan and drive instruction (Figure 4.1). As seen in Figure 4.1, the results of the one-way analysis of variance were significant for the difference

between using students' data to drive instruction and adhered to the academic intervention block with fidelity, $F(2, 76) = 7.15, p = 0.01$.

Figure 4.1

ANOVA Between Adhering to the RtI Intervention Block with Fidelity and Using Students' Data to Plan and Drive Instruction

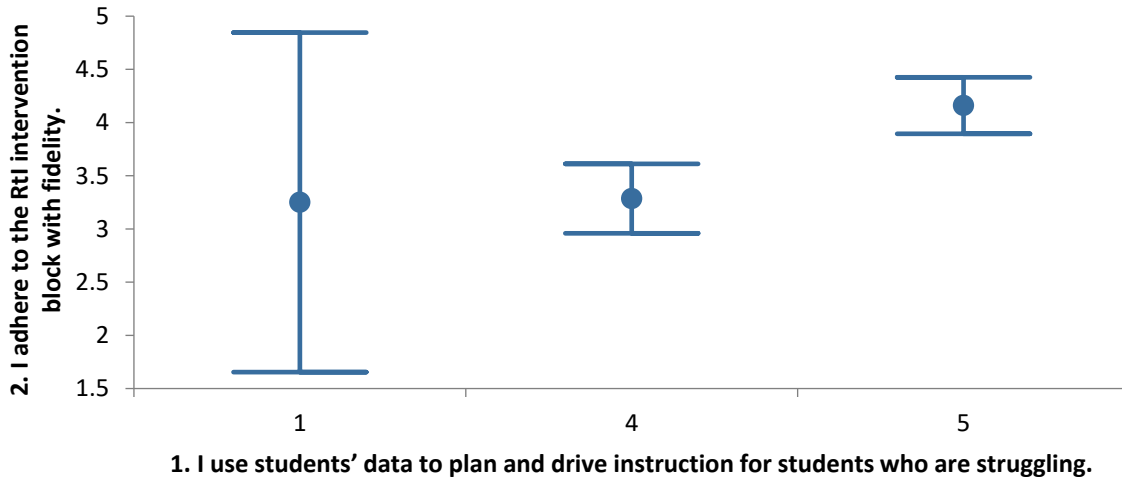


Table 9.1

ANOVA Between Using Student's Data to Drive Instruction and Adhere to the Intervention Block with Fidelity

Source of Variation	Df	SS	MS	F	p-value	F crit	Omega Sqr.
Between Groups	2	14.8633	7.4317	7.1486	0.0014	3.1186	0.1362
Within Groups	76	77.9700	1.0396				
Total	78	92.8333					

Note. ** $p < 0.01$

Fisher LSD for multiple comparisons found that the mean value of adhering to the intervention block with fidelity was significantly different between 1 and 5, ($p = 0.02$).

Additionally, Fisher LSD for multiple comparisons found that the mean value of adhered to the intervention block with fidelity was significantly different between 4 and 5 ($p = 0.001$).

Furthermore, the Likert scale data revealed that 57% ($n = 45$) of educators strongly agreed that

they complied with state and district-mandated policies, 43% ($n = 34$) agreed, 1% ($n = 1$) stayed neutral, 1% disagreed, and 4% ($n = 3$) strongly disagreed to those statements. Also, data showed that 51% ($n = 40$) of educators strongly agreed to differentiated instruction for at-risk students, 43% ($n = 34$) agreed, 1% ($n = 1$) remained neutral, and 1% ($n = 1$) disagreed. The results of Pearson correlation indicated that there was a significant positive association between complied with states and district policies and differentiating instruction $r(77) = 0.62, p < 0.001$.

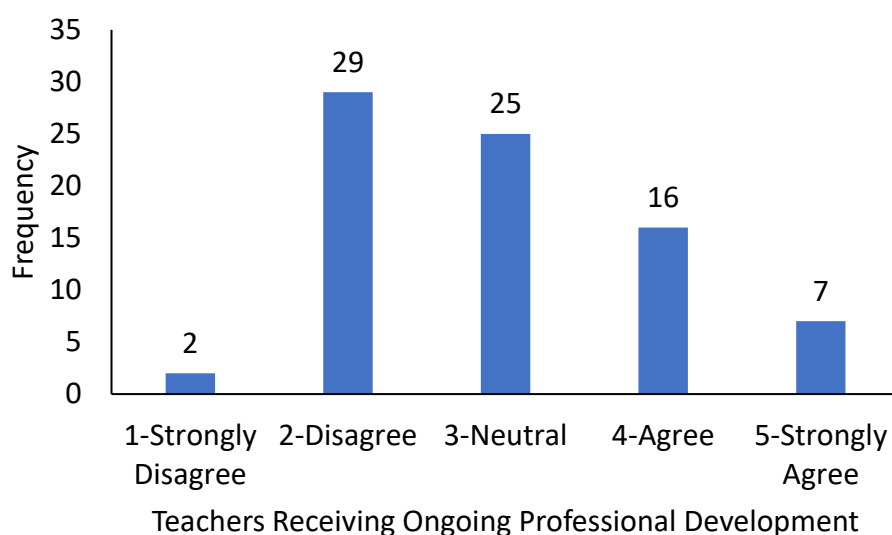
Twenty percent of educators ($n = 16$) strongly agreed that the curriculum is engaging and culturally relevant, 35% ($n = 28$) agreed, 38% ($n = 30$) were neutral, 5% ($n = 4$) disagreed, and 1% ($n = 1$) strongly disagreed. Thirteen percent ($n = 11$) of participants strongly agreed they received support for managing challenging behaviors. Thirty-three percent ($n = 26$) agreed, 29% ($n = 23$) remained neutral, 20% ($n = 16$) disagreed, and 4% ($n = 3$) strongly disagreed. The result of Pearson correlation revealed that there was a significant positive association between using engaging curriculum and receiving support for challenging behaviors, $r(77) = 0.48, p < 0.001$.

The data demonstrated that 17% ($n = 13$) of participants strongly agreed that collaboration and planning are consistent between classroom teachers and reading specialists. Forty-one percent ($n = 34$) agreed, 18% ($n = 14$) remained neutral, 19% ($n = 15$) disagreed, and 6% ($n = 5$) strongly agreed. Forty-nine percent ($n = 39$) of educators strongly agreed that their small group instruction matches students' performance levels, 42% ($n = 33$) agreed, 4% ($n = 3$) remained neutral, 1% ($n = 1$) disagreed, and 4% ($n = 3$) strongly disagreed. The result of Pearson correlation showed that there was a significant positive association between students' performances and consistent planning and collaboration between classroom teachers and reading specialists, $r(77) = 0.27, p = 0.02$.

The data revealed that most teachers disagreed with the statement that they received ongoing professional development (Figure 5.1). As seen in Figure 5.1, 79 participants answered Question 9. The data revealed that most teachers across the states do not participate in ongoing professional development. Nine percent ($n = 7$) of teachers strongly agreed that they received ongoing professional development, 20% ($n = 16$) agreed, 32% ($n = 25$) remained neutral, 37% ($n = 29$) disagreed, and 2% ($n = 2$) strongly disagreed with that statement.

Figure 5.1

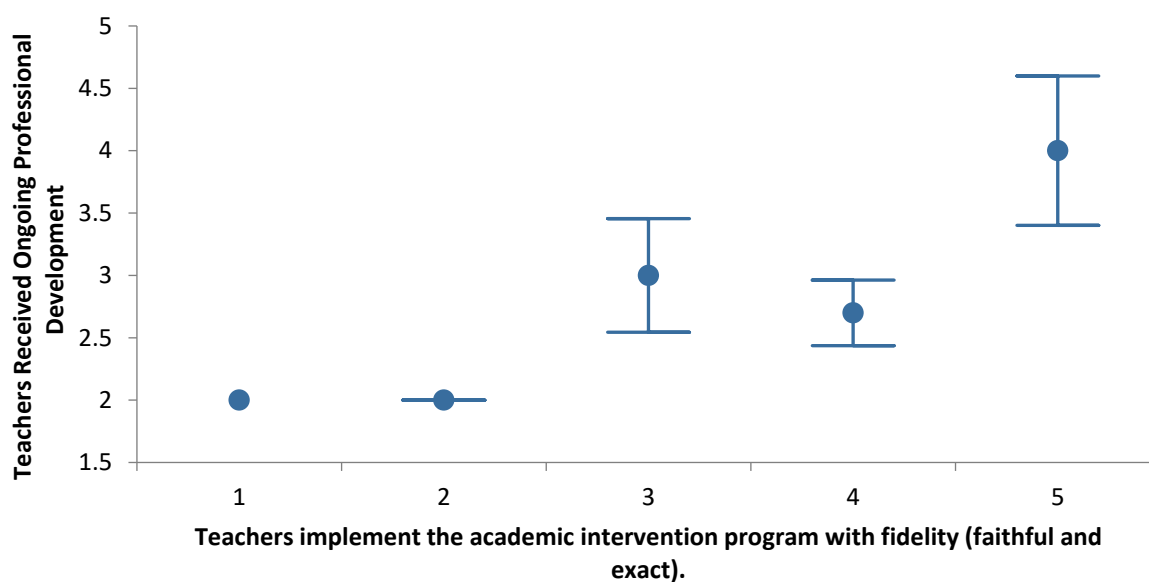
Teachers Received Ongoing Professional Development



As seen in Figure 6.1, Fisher LSD for multiple comparisons found that the mean value of professional development and implementing the academic program with fidelity was significantly different between 2 and 5 ($p = 0.00016$). Also, there was a significant difference between 3 and 5 ($p = 0.00183$) and a significant difference between 4 and 5 ($p = 0.0001$).

Figure 6.1

Analysis of Variance Between Teachers Receiving Ongoing Professional Development and Implementing the Academic Intervention Program with Fidelity



As seen in Table 10.1 the one-way analysis of variance was significant for the difference between implementing the academic intervention program with fidelity and professional development $F(4, 74) = 7.12, p = < 0.001$.

Table 10.1

ANOVA on Teachers Receiving Ongoing Professional Development and Implementing the Academic Intervention Programs with Fidelity

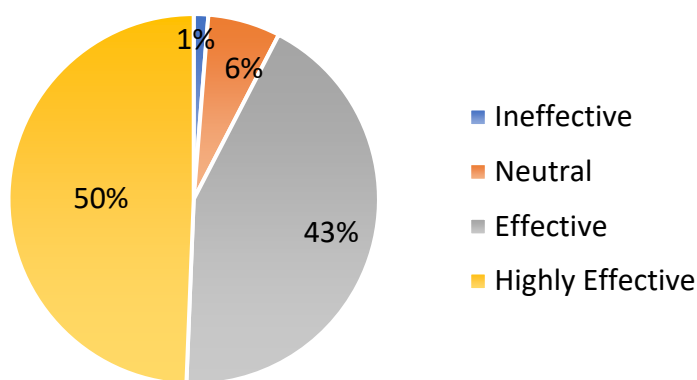
Source of Variation	df	SS	MS	F	p-value	F crit	Omega Sqr.
Between Groups	4	22.4861	5.6215	7.1232	0.00007	2.4954	0.2367
Within Groups	74	58.4000	0.7892				
Total	78	80.8861					

Additionally, the data revealed that 6% ($n = 5$) of participants strongly agreed that the academic intervention program is highly effective, 41% ($n = 32$) agreed, 42% ($n = 33$) remained neutral, 9% ($n = 7$) disagreed, and 3% ($n = 2$) strongly disagreed with that statement.

Question 12 asked, “How effective is your classroom management style?” Most educators 50% ($n = 39$), reported that their classroom management skills are highly effective, 43% ($n = 34$) effective, 6% ($n = 5$) neutral, 1% ($n = 1$) reported that their management skills are ineffective (Figure 7.1). No one reported being highly ineffective in managing their classrooms.

Figure 7.1

How Teachers Evaluate Their Classroom Management Style



The results of the one-way analysis of variance (Table 11.1) were insignificant for the difference between effective classroom management style and highly effective intervention program, $F(3, 75) = 0.78, p = 0.51$.

Table 11.1

ANOVA between Effective Classroom Management Style and using Highly Effective Intervention Program

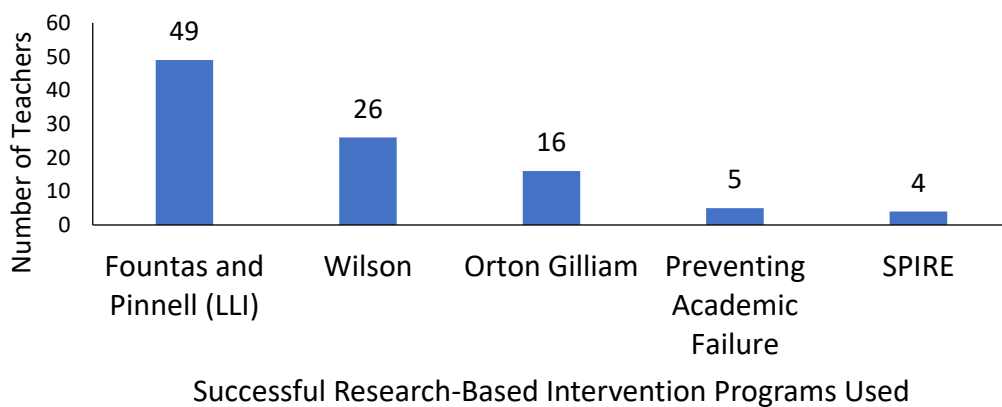
Source of Variation	df	SS	MS	F	p-value	F crit	Omega Sqr.
Between Groups	3	1.66878	0.55626	0.78469	0.50619	2.72659	-0.00824
Within Groups	75	53.16667	0.70889				
Total	78	54.83544					

As displayed in Figure 8.1, 73 participants responded to question 22. Sixty-seven percent ($n = 49$) favored Fountas and Pinnell as the most effective program for educating at-promise

students of color, 36% ($n = 26$) of teachers favored Wilson, 22% ($n = 16$) favored Orton Gillingham, 7% ($n = 5$) favored Preventing Academic Failure, and 6% ($n = 4$) favored SPIRE.

Figure 8.1

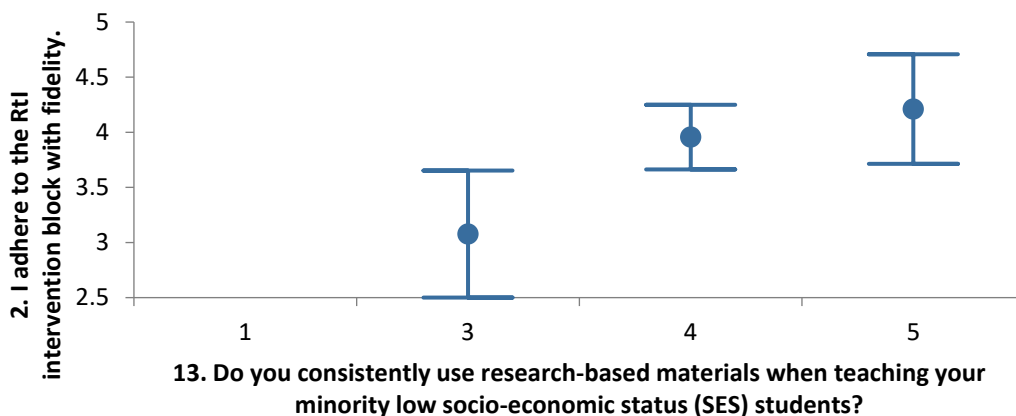
Researched-Based Intervention Programs Used That Have Been Proven Successful



As seen in Figure 9.1, the Fisher LSD for multiple comparisons found that the mean value of consistently using research-based materials was significantly different between 3 and 4 ($p = 0.006$), 3 and 5 ($p = 0.002$), 1 and 4 ($p = 0.004$), and between 1 and 5 ($p = 0.002$).

Figure 9.1

ANOVA Between Adhering to the RtI Block with Fidelity and Consistently Use Research-Based Materials



The results of one-way ANOVA (Table 12.1) were significant for the difference between the consistent use of research-based materials and adhering to the academic intervention block with fidelity, $F(3, 74) = 6.28, p < 0.001$.

Table 12.1

ANOVA on Using Research-Based Materials with Low SES Students of Color and Adhere to Academic Intervention Block with Fidelity

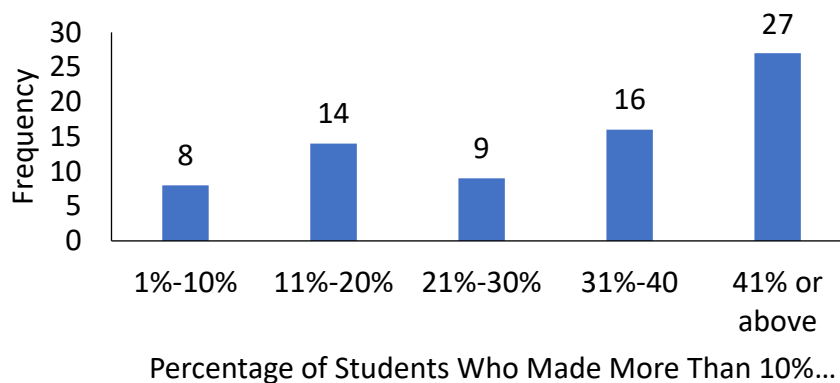
<i>Source of Variation</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>F crit</i>	<i>Omega Sqr.</i>
Between Groups	3	18.8413	6.2804	6.2811	0.0007	2.7283	0.1688
Within Groups	74	73.9921	0.9999				
Total	77	92.8333					

Note. *** $p < 0.001$.

As seen in Figure 10.1, 74 participants answered the question, “What percentage of your students made more than 10% academic growth as measured by your district’s diagnostic tools?” Eight teachers reported that between 1-10% of their students made more than 10% academic growth annually, 14 teachers revealed that 11-20% of their students made more than 10% growth, nine teachers disclosed that 21-30% of their students made more than 10% growth, 16 teachers disclosed that 31-40% of their students made more than 10% growth, and 27 teachers disclosed that 41% or more of their students made 10% growth.

Figure 10.1

Percentage of Students Who Made More Than 10% Academic Growth



Eighty-seven percent of participants ($n = 66$) answered that they waited for six weeks of intense intervention before referring a child for special education evaluation. Fifty-eight percent ($n = 44$) stated that they refer students when behaviors impede academics, and the Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) did not work. Participants were allowed to choose more than one answer. Seven-six participants responded to the question. The results of one-way analysis of variance were insignificant for the difference between what point do you refer a student and implementing the academic intervention service with fidelity, $F(14, 61) = 1.07, p = 0.40$.

Table 13.1

At What Point do You Determine You Should Refer Students to be Evaluated for Special Education Services?

Participants	n	Participants' Responses
Teachers and Reading Specialists	66	After six weeks of intense interventions with minimal or no progress.
Teachers and Reading Specialists	44	If behavior impedes academics

Most participants served students for 1-2 years (83%, $n = 66$), 3% ($n = 2$) served their students for 3-4 years, and 14% ($n = 11$) served students for 5+ years. The ANOVA results were insignificant for the difference between years serving students and implementing the academic intervention service with fidelity, $F(2, 76) = 0.50, p = 0.61$ (Table 14.1).

Table 14.1

Number of Years Teachers Served Students

Number of Years	Number of Participants	Percentage
1-2	66	83
3-4	2	3
5 or above	11	14

As seen below, 33% of teachers who responded have over 21 years of experience. Most respondents (61%) had 6 to 20 years of teaching experience. The ANOVA results were insignificant for the difference between the years teaching and implementing the academic intervention with fidelity, $F(4, 74) = 1.45, p = 0.23$ (Table 15.1).

Table 15.1

Number of Years Teaching

Number of Years Teaching	Number of Participants	Percentage
0-5	5	6.3
6-10	14	17.7
11-15	13	16.5
16-20	21	26.6
21 or above	26	33

The results of one-way analysis of variance (Table 16.1) were insignificant for the difference between years of teaching and implementing academic intervention with fidelity $F(4, 74) = 1.45, p = 0.23$.

Table 16.1

ANOVA on the Years of Teaching and Implementing Academic Intervention with Fidelity

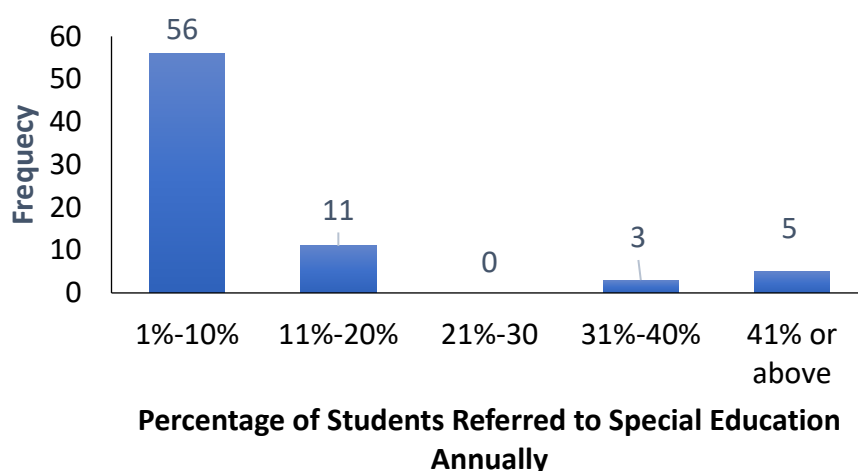
Source of Variation	df	SS	MS	F	p-value	F crit	Omega Sqr.
Between Groups	4	4.01027	1.00257	1.44531	0.22763	2.49539	0.02205
Within Groups	74	51.33150	0.69367				
Total	78	55.34177					

As seen in Table 17.1, the majority of teachers served one to two grade levels. Fifty-nine percent ($n = 47$) of participants served one to two grade levels. Twenty-three percent ($n = 18$) served 3-4 grade levels, and 18% ($n = 14$) served five or more grade levels.

Table 17.1*Grade Levels Served by Teachers*

Grade Level	Number of Participants	Percentage
1-2	47	59
3-4	18	23
5 or above	14	18

Seventy-four participants answered the question asking what percentage of students are referred to the special education committee annually (Figure 11.1). Fifty-six teachers reported that they referred 1-10% of their students to the special education committee, 11 teachers referred 11-20%, three teachers indicated that they referred 31-40% of their students, and five teachers referred 41% or more of their students.

Figure 11.1*Percentage of Students Referred to Special Education Annually*

The results of one-way ANOVA (Table 18.1) were insignificant for the difference between groups of students who have been referred to the special education committee for evaluation annually and adhered to the RtI block with fidelity, $F(3, 70) = 1.14, p = 0.33$.

Table 18.1

ANOVA on the Percentage of Students Referred to the Special Education Committee for Evaluation Annually and Adhering to the RtI Block with Fidelity

<i>Source of Variation</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>F crit</i>	<i>Omega Sqr.</i>
Between Groups	3	4.1147	1.3716	1.1438	0.3375	2.7355	0.0058
Within Groups	70	83.9394	1.1991				
Total	73	88.0541					

The Pearson results of one-way analysis of variance (Table 19.1) were insignificant for the difference between groups of students who have been referred to the special education committee for evaluation annually and implementing academic intervention with fidelity, $F(3, 71) = 1.88, p = 0.14$.

Table 19.1

ANOVA on Percentage of Students Referred to the Special Education Committee for Evaluation Annually and Implementing Academic Intervention with Fidelity

<i>Source of Variation</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>F crit</i>	<i>Omega Sqr.</i>
Between Groups	3	3.73006	1.24335	1.88401	0.14007	2.73365	0.03415
Within Groups	71	48.85660	0.65995				
Total	74	50.58667					

As seen in Figure 12.1, 51% ($n = 40$) of teachers strongly agreed they differentiate instructions so their students can feel successful, 43% ($n = 34$) agreed, 1% ($n = 1$) stayed neutral, 1% ($n = 1$) disagreed, and 4% ($n = 3$) strongly disagreed. There was a significant association between implementing academic interventions with fidelity and differentiating instructions, $p < 0.05$. The results of one-way analysis of variance were significant for the difference between implementing academic intervention services with fidelity and differentiating instructions, $F(4, 74) = 6.54, p < 0.001$. In addition, there is a strong correlation between implementing the academic intervention with fidelity and students' performances, $p < 0.001$.

Figure 12.1

Teachers Differentiate Assessments, Assignments, and Projects for Students to Feel Successful

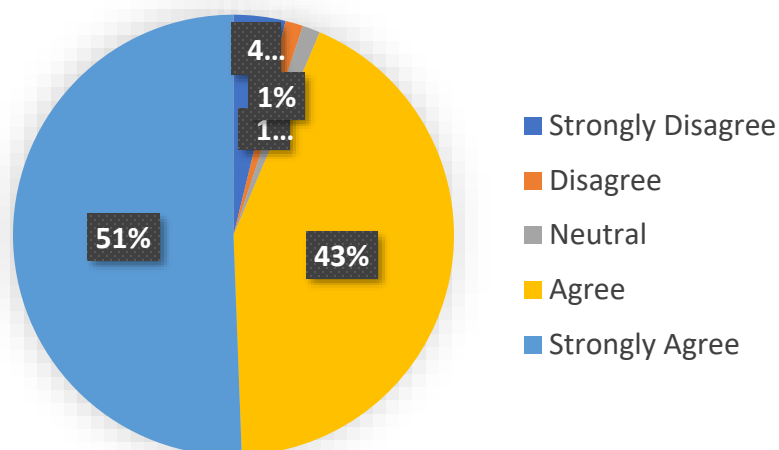
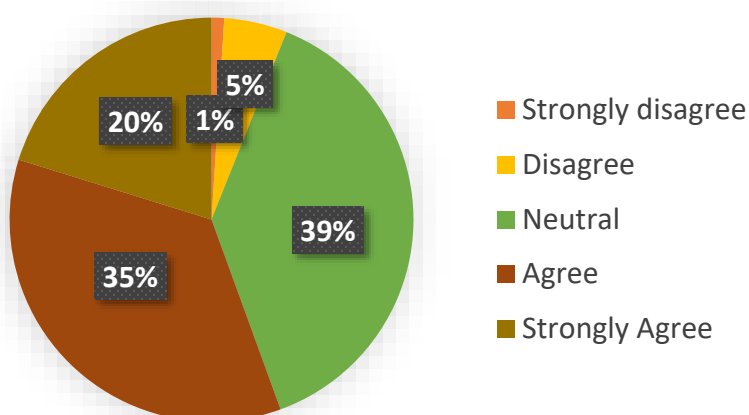


Figure 13.1 showcased that 55% of participants strongly agreed and agreed that they were using culturally relevant and engaging curriculum in their classrooms, whereas 39% of the respondents stayed neutral. The Pearson correlation results indicated a significant positive association between the students' performances and using an engaging and culturally relevant curriculum $r(79) = 0.27, p = 0.01$.

Figure 13.1

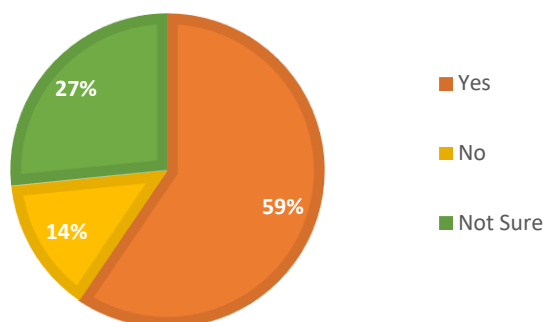
Educators Using Culturally Relevant and Engaging Curriculum



As seen in Figure 14.1, 59% ($n = 47$) of teachers reported that their school population included 60% or more low SES students of color. Fourteen percent ($n = 11$) of teachers replied no, and 27% ($n = 21$) of teachers indicated that they were not sure.

Figure 14.1

Percentage of Teachers Whose School Population Includes 60% or more Low SES Students of Color



The results of one-way analysis of variance (Figure 15.1) were insignificant for the difference between the school population included more than 60% that identified as low SES minorities and implementing the academic program with fidelity, $F(2,76) = 0.33$, $p = 0.72$ (Table 20.1).

Figure 15.1

ANOVA on Implementing Academic Intervention with Fidelity and School Population More than 60% Low SES Students of Color

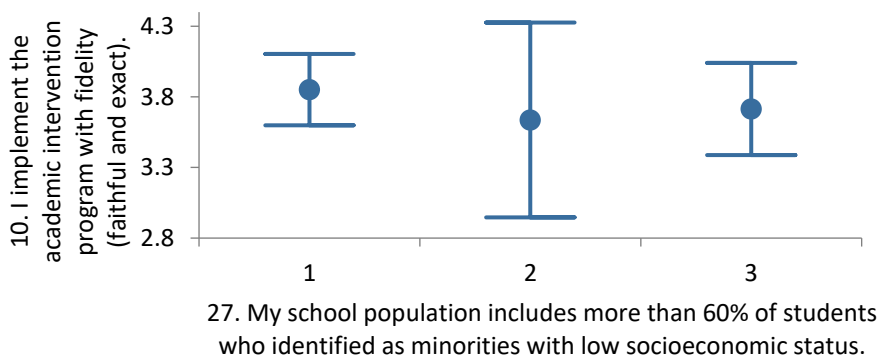


Table 20.1

ANOVA on the School Population, Including More Than 60% of Students Identified as Low SES Students of Color and Implementing the Academic Program with Fidelity

<i>Source of Variation</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>F crit</i>	<i>Omega Sqr.</i>
Between Groups	2	0.53634	0.26817	0.32582	0.72294	3.11698	-0.01736
Within Groups	76	62.55227	0.82306				
Total	78	63.08861					

The results of one-way ANOVA (Table 21.1) were insignificant for the difference between whether the school population included more than 60% that identified as low SES students of color and adhered to the intervention block with fidelity, $F(2, 75) = 1.88, p = 0.15$.

Table 21.1

ANOVA on the School Population, Including More Than 60% of Students Identified as Low SES Students of Color and Adhered to the Intervention Block with Fidelity

<i>Source of Variation</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>F crit</i>	<i>Omega Sqr.</i>
Between Groups	2	4.4352	2.2176	1.8815	0.1595	3.1186	0.0221
Within Groups	75	88.3982	1.1786				
Total	77	92.8333					

The ANOVA (Table 22.1) results were significant for the difference between whether the students were self-aware of deficits and adhere to the intervention block with fidelity, $F(2, 74) = 3.96, p = 0.02$. The Fisher LSD for multiple comparisons found that the mean value of adhered to intervention block with fidelity was significantly different between 1 and 3 ($p = 0.006$).

Table 22.1

ANOVA on Students' Self-Awareness of Deficits and Adhered to the Intervention Block with Fidelity

<i>Source of Variation</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>F crit</i>	<i>Omega Sqr.</i>
Between Groups	2	8.8610	4.4305	3.9695	0.0230	3.1203	0.0716
Within Groups	74	82.5936	1.1161				
Total	76	91.4545					

Note. $**p < 0.05$

As seen in Figure 16.1, the results of the Pearson correlation indicated that there was a significant positive effect between the implementation of the academic intervention program with fidelity and the program effectiveness, $r(77) = 0.67, p < 0.001$.

Figure 16.1

Comparisons Between Implementation of AIS/RtI with Fidelity and the Program Effectiveness

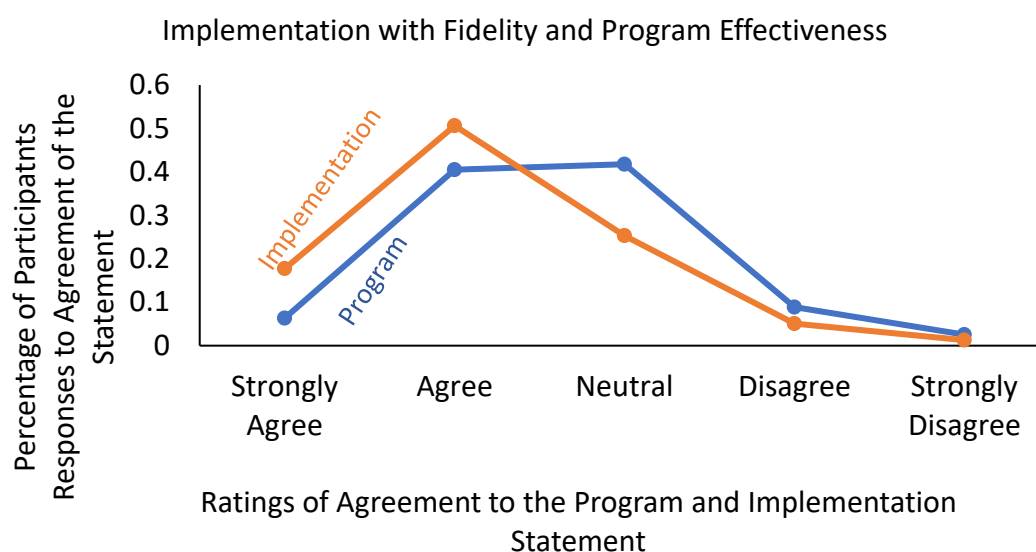


Table 23.1

Survey Questions and Their Corresponding Codes Used in Correlations (n = 10)

Code	Survey Question
RTI BLOCK	I adhere to the RtI intervention block with fidelity
COMPLY	I comply with state and district policies for struggling students.
DIFFERENTIATE	I differentiate assessments, assignments, and projects so my students can feel successful.
CURRICULUM	The curriculum is engaging and culturally relevant.
SUPPORT	I receive support for managing challenging behaviors.
PERFORMANCE	My small group instruction matches students' performance levels.
IMPLEMENTATION	I implement the academic intervention program with fidelity (faithful and exact).
PROGRAM	The academic intervention program is 5.
MANAGEMENT	How would you evaluate the effectiveness of your classroom management style?

As seen in Table 24.1 there are several strong correlations between adhering to the RtI block with fidelity and implementing the academic intervention with fidelity.

Table 24.1

Fidelity Variable and Correlation to the Survey Questions (n = 79)

Codes	Fidelity Variable	
	RTI BLOCK	IMPLEMENTATION
COMPLY	0.64***	0.45***
DIFFERENTIATE	0.55***	0.56*
PROGRAM	0.42***	0.64***
SUPPORT	0.34**	0.41***
PERFORMANCE	0.27*	0.47***
CONSISTENT	0.2	0.26*
CURRICULUM	0.18	0.38***
MANAGEMENT	0.17	0.11

*Note: *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$*

Findings of Qualitative Research

I obtained and analyzed qualitative data from four short response questions in the online survey and five personal interviews to investigate how early academic interventions impacted students of color from low SES communities when implemented with fidelity. The results were scrutinized several times to ensure validity. In this chapter I included sample responses and verbatim responses are in Appendix C.

According to the short responses from the qualitative data, I observed the frequency of words and phrases used by participants to develop several codes that were minimized to six specific themes using MAXQDA software. The themes showed academic growth, students' deficits and strengths, using data to drive instruction, limited research-based instruction, challenging schedules, and implementing the program/model with fidelity. The qualitative data showed that the majority of the participants' goal for the AIS/RtI model was to show academic

growth. For Question 31, “What are your expectations when implementing the academic intervention program or response to the intervention model to minority at-risk students from low SES families?” Responses to the question help to answer Research Question 2, “How do teachers’ perceptions and expectations impact the classification process of low-socioeconomic minority students?” Forty-eight responses fit into the theme of academic growth for teachers’ expectations. Examples of responses included the following:

1. “I expect all of my students to show growth, and if not, I will do my best to find another intervention that may help them to show improvement, to make slow and steady progress, to help my students make gains to bridge the academic gap.”
2. “My expectations are that we have programs and materials that we can use with fidelity. That we are tasked with matching the interventions to specific needs and have the flexibility to utilize those interventions as needed.”
3. “I find it hard to find all the needed time to do small/individual group work with students that need the specific intervention programs when you have a class full of other students.”
4. “The materials/curriculum provided sometimes miss their mark with students. These skills are often underdeveloped in minority low SES students.”
5. “Subbing pulls the staff that instructs with these programs ruining the fidelity and consistency all students should receive, but in particular for the minority at-risk students from low SES families.”

Responses to open-ended question 32, “What is your perceptions of the academic intervention program and its implementation to minority low SES students?” helped to answer Research Question 1. Examples of responses included the following:

1. "This is a whole team approach. I expect the school team, parents, and students to have a responsibility in implementing the AIS or RtI model."
2. "Many teachers will simply classify the students in their minds, and therefore feel that they are not able to support those children's learning. But rethinking that mindset is needed to support our most vulnerable."
3. "My perception is that sometimes the programs that we use do not account for cultural differences, vocabulary awareness, and different levels of experience that students should have."
4. "Over the many years that I have been employed, the program has not been successful for many students because they are not modified to meet the needs of the students."
5. "I feel that the intent is there, the desire to help support is present. Using tools with fidelity is challenging and helping each student who needs the support can be challenging as well, especially when you have attendance rate issues that are problematic and in no way can support consistency."
6. "I believe that our most struggling students should receive small group instruction, either 1-1 or 3-1. However, students are being served 6-1 or 8-1."
7. "Implementation needs to be consistent and done with fidelity from all stakeholders (i.e classroom teachers and reading/learning specialist)."
8. "I think it is a great program, however, we need more AIS teachers to serve our students."

Responses to open-ended question 33, "How do you plan meaningful and engaging learning activities for your struggling students?" help to answer Research Questions 1 and 2. "How does early academic intervention services with low socio-economic minority students

affect the special needs classification?” and “How do teachers’ perceptions and expectations impact the classification process of low socio-economic status minority students?” In addition, the results of the quantitative findings revealed a significant correlation between the effectiveness of the RtI program and differentiating assignments for students to feel successful, $r(77) = 0.61, p < 0.001$. The qualitative data showed that teachers differentiate instruction when teaching students of color from low SES. Examples of verbatim responses included:

1. “I know my students. I use examples and storylines that are relevant to their interest and culture.”
2. “I build on students’ background, incorporate lessons that include hands-on learning and use of different modalities (video clips and music).”
3. “Students’ interest, scaffolding material and differentiation based on student’s abilities and interests.” Also, “Collaborating with teachers.” There is a significant correlation between matching instruction to student performance and consistent collaboration among teachers and reading specialists, $r(77) = 0.27, p < 0.05$.
4. “I think first about the what, what do I want to teach or what do I want the kids to know and do. Then I think about how, how I can teach this in a fun way or in a way that they don’t even know that they are learning. Then the why has to anchor it all. Why did they struggle, why did they make that mistake, and helping even the students to understand why they struggled and what they did to overcome their struggles.”
5. “As I teach, I watch and listen to see where they are making progress as well as the patterns of errors that they are making so I can adjust instruction accordingly.”
6. “I work all hours, including weekends, to research their needs and plan lessons with fidelity, and modify where necessary.”

Nonetheless, for open-ended survey question 34, “What is one thing you would change about implementing the Academic Intervention Program?” responses varied and highlighted some steps that could be taken to enhance the intervention programs and some challenges that teachers experienced when delivering instruction to at-risk students of color. Examples of responses included the following:

1. “More mental support.”
2. “I would find ways to make sure the interventions are taking place with fidelity in the classroom.”
3. “I would like to have more teachers who can pull small groups of students.
4. I would like a program that builds from the beginning to close the gap.”
5. “AIS teachers need to stop subbing. It ruins our planning, timing... etc. But more importantly, the students aren’t receiving services. Everything needs to be retaught since students have no consistency. Fidelity goes out the window when the program is being taught once/twice a week.”
6. “Smaller group sizes.”

During the process of the study, I conducted three face-to-face and two virtual interviews with three classroom teachers and two reading specialists for additional qualitative data. The intent of the interview was to allow participants to share or expand on their thoughts and perceptions about the implementation of the AIS or the RtI model, and to clarify their role in participating in this research study. The educators seemed very passionate about their student’s education and wanted to see them succeed. Teachers were aware of the range of abilities present in their classrooms and small groups. However, they were pleased with the progress their students were making, even though they were not functioning on grade level. Some teachers

were concerned that the students in their academic intervention or RtI groups were not receiving sufficient services. The four interview questions and teachers' and reading specialists' responses can be seen below.

1. What grade level do you service? How many students are in your intervention groups?
How often do you meet with them? Are they achieving their goals? Why? Or why not?
2. What are your perceptions about the effect of the academic intervention program or the RtI model?
3. What are your thoughts about implementing early academic intervention services or response to intervention to minority low SES students?
4. What results are you anticipating from your students? In what timeframe?

As seen in Table 25.1, teachers' responses were similar to interview question 1, which included three sub-questions. What grade level do you service? How many students are in your intervention groups? How often do you meet with them? Are they achieving their goals? Why? Or why not? Question and responses to interview question 2 can be seen below in Table 26.1.

Table 25.1

Teachers and Reading Specialists Responses to the Grade Level They Served and Their Intervention Groups

Interviewee Code	Interviewee Response
Interview 1	"I'm currently servicing a grade four general education classroom."
Part 1	
Part 2	"Usually, my small group is between four and six students."
Part 3	"Depending on what tier they're in, some I meet with them three times a week and some I meet with them twice a week. So, my higher tier, I meet with them twice. And then the students that are two or more grade levels below, I meet with them three times."
Part 4	"We work on one skill for the month, and in that month, we do a weekly

check-in to see if they are moving or where we need to stay or do some more practice in the session. I think the ones that are two or three grade levels below are meeting some of their goals. I believe that more time with each group would help them to attain proficiency quicker.”

Interview 2	“First-grade general education classroom.”
Part 1	
Part 2	“I have five to six in my small group, no more than six. Some days it’s five, but no more than six, and they’re my tier 1 and tier 2 students.”
Part 3	“I meet with my students daily. With the teacher shortage, we have a lot of kids split and sent to other classes. I have 30 minutes of intervention, so I try to see two groups, 15 minutes each, so that way both groups are served. Some days I do the full 30 minutes, depending on the group. My high group, I can see them for 15 minutes, and then give them independent work to complete.”
Part 4	“My tier 2 students are making progress, it might not be the progress as the benchmark. Some are meeting the benchmark progress, and some are slightly behind. My students used strategies they learned to figure out how to complete their tasks.”
Interview 3	“I currently service K through two as a reading specialist.”
Part 1	
Part 2	“I have between three and six students per group.”
Part 3	“Five days a week, for 30 minutes.”
Part 4	“Yes, my students are achieving their goals. I set very measurable, reasonable goals for them so that they can achieve them. And I change the goal as they meet each one. A middle of the year goal, most students have met, and now I change the goal to the end of the year to see if by June they’ll meet that goal.”
Interview 4	“I currently service grades levels three through six.”
Part 1	
Part 2	“I have six students in each group.”
Part 3	“I see them 30 minutes a day, five days a week.”
Part 4	“Some of my students are not achieving their goals because of the way I had to create the groups, I couldn’t differentiate between a phonic skills needed

	group and a comprehension skills needed group. So I have to bounce between both during the program, so not as much repetition is done for the kids who need phonics where, and they get lost on the comprehension lessons, so it gets a little blurred sometimes. But they have all made growth, but not as much as they should if I were able to group them according to their areas of struggle.”
Interview 5	“I teach a general education third grade class.”
Part 1	
Part 2	“I have three separate groups. One group has six students, one group has three students, and one group has two students.”
Part 3	“I’ll alternate. So, I usually meet with one group each day for 30 minutes. So, if I meet with one group on Monday, I’ll pick another group on Tuesday. This way I get to see each group at least once a week. Then the lowest group, I try to see them twice a week.”
Part 4	“My students are achieving their personal goals. Even though some of them are way below third grade level, they have their own individual goals which may not be on third grade level. Each student has made gains.”

In interview question 2, teachers reported that they believe the AIS or RtI model can possibly prevent or decrease the number of students classified as special needs if the program is implemented with fidelity and consistently (Table 26.1).

Table 26.1

Teachers and Reading Specialists’ Responses to Their Perceptions of the Effectiveness of the Early Academic Intervention Program/Response to Intervention

Interviewee Code	Interviewee Response
Interview 1	“I think that because most of the students I’m now servicing have multiple needs and are on multiple levels. The distribution or how to group them is difficult. So sometimes how to group them will affect how often you see them. I have a grade four class with four grade levels in the classroom. I have some students that have the capability of grade one work, and then I have students that have the capability of grade three work. I think because the range is so wide sometimes RtI is a little bit difficult to pull off. I do not think it is as effective as it could be.”
Interview 2	“We, as coworkers, often talk about early academic intervention services. I think with our demographics, a lot of them do not know about early academic intervention services that their children could receive from they were in kindergarten. A lot of the students that I’ve seen come into my class

and other first-grade classes, they're super low. Some of them fall into the pre-K level, I feel like if they got early academic intervention services, before first grade, maybe it would close some of the academic gap."

Interview 3	"I think that academic intervention or the RTI model can possibly prevent some students from maybe having to receive other services. If you notice a child is struggling, you can kind of nip it before it becomes a bigger issue. At my school, I know that usually you're supposed to work with students for six to eight weeks, but I'm finding that I'm keeping my students longer. Occasionally, some students test out. We're hoping that by intervening and trying to rectify the problem now, maybe they won't need any special need services. Obviously, sometimes that's not the case, but you hope that it would be the case for most kids."
Interview 4	"I think it's well intended. I think it's well meaning. I think for students who struggle with reading and there is no underlying cause, it's great, but when there is a genuine underlying cause or a reason, the process is so long that kids who really do need a more specialized program it takes a long time for them to get classified or to get those services they need."
Interview 5	"After the students take their beginning of the year assessments, we form RtI groups, and we work with those groups. Using RtI in the classroom I feel like it's effective because I know what my students need because I'll use the data from either a teacher created assessments or from the iReady assessments and then I determine what skills to work with those students on. I would say it's effective in most cases. I think that it does help the students because I am able to work with them one-on-one opposed to just like doing a whole group assignment. So, the RTI time allows me to really work independently with them or small group and hone into on what they need."

As seen in Table 27.1, teachers and reading specialists responded to interview question 4. Teachers reported that at-risk students deserve equal opportunity and should receive services if needed. A concern for the teachers was the lack of parental involvement, which they believed impacted students' learning.

Table 27.1

Teachers' Responses to Their Thoughts of Implementing Early Academic Intervention Services or RtI to Low SES Students of Color

Interview Code	Interview Response
Interview 1	“I think that exposure to giving students academic service is good because, when students are of low economic status, they don’t get a lot of things like background knowledge and life experience. If they don’t have those things, they have nothing to relate their learning to. It is better for them to have real-world understanding and life lessons through learning. But if they’re not exposed to that, they have no connection. And students need connection for them to process skills, especially mathematics.”
Interview 2	“As a first-grade teacher, I think children who are not at their benchmark in kindergarten should receive academic intervention services so that when they get to me, they are not struggling so much.”
Interview 3	“I think it’s absolutely necessary for any student at my school or any student anywhere to get academic help. If students need help, nip that before it becomes a bigger problem. Obviously, in the environment that I am in, maybe not as many students are being read to at home or have the help at home that we would desire. So, by intervening early and helping, I hope that it will help and not lead to maybe a bigger learning struggle or something like that.”
Interview 4	“I think if a child needs services, give them. Whatever they need that is necessary for them to learn, give it to them. Fair doesn’t mean equal. Fair means everybody gets the same advantage, abilities, and stuff like that. So, I wonder, in low-income areas, how many parents have the knowledge to fight for their kids? That’s a piece we can’t provide. We need someone to kind of nudge the parents. They need advocates to push them a little more. But that’s my only thing. I think everybody who needs services should get them.”
Interview 5	“Unfortunately, it seems like we have more students in need, and I think it might be because there’s a lack of parent involvement. A lot of the students don’t have access to the same things that may benefit their academics. Some students have parents that are able to work with them at home. So they’ll come into school with more skills. Unfortunately, there are some that don’t have that opportunity. The majority, if not all my students are from low SES families. Most of my kids normally need intervention services.”

As seen in Table 28.1, teachers and reading specialists' responses to interview question 5. All teachers indicated that they are expecting academic growth from all their students. Some teachers said they expected their students to master their academic goals. However, a concern was that teachers were not allowed to group students according to their deficits, which slowed down students' progress.

Table 28.1

Responses to the Results Teachers are Anticipating from Their Students and in What Timeframe

Interviewee Code	Interviewee Responses
Interview 1	So, we try to show growth from one skill to the next. Usually, we are in a skill for four to six weeks. So, I'm hoping that students are either closing gaps, or proficient, or close to being proficient in those six weeks. If not, we would have to repeat the cycle and then maybe we will assess them more like every two weeks or every four weeks. Now we are looking at the same skill for six to eight weeks as opposed to four to six weeks.
Interview 2	So, with my tier 1 and tier 2, sometimes I put like anywhere from 70% to 80% success rates. Sometimes I have kids that I tested, and I am surprised that some of them meet the benchmark. They exceed my expectations. They're learning, they're definitely learning, but maybe not to what the assessment said they should, but they are really learning. Anywhere from four to six weeks I think is when we meet with the RTI committee. Whatever skills I want them to master, once they mastered them, they go to a new skill.
Interview 3	I would say for every group it's different. So, for my kindergarten students, I'm hoping that they all master their sounds and can blend sounds together to make small cvc words and also recognize some sight words by the end of the year. And then my first and second graders, I want them to obtain more sight words, more vocabulary, use decoding strategies, build their comprehension, build their fluency, and be able to write about what they read, by the end of the year, even if it's just a few sentences. Be able to summarize the story verbally and through writing over the course of one year.
Interview 4	My older kids that were struggling with comprehension, half of them have made tremendous growth and are almost out of reading. A couple of them I want to keep, just to make sure that they don't regress because they've gotten used to it. Some of them may regress when they are in a bigger setting with the whole class and not having special support. Some of my other

students are not making much growth. I've seen my third graders used the decoding skills in their reading. I'd like for the end of the year to have all of them meet their goals. I'm not expecting as strong a result as I would anticipate because I have to blend my groups with phonic and comprehension skill needs, as opposed to keeping them separate. So, because I'm only allowed to take the class from the same class at one 30-minute period, every child who needs assistance in reading gets grouped together. It's not based on their skill; it's based on them just being two grades below.

Interview 5 Each student has their own individual goals they have to reach. For example, if there's one student that may have been three grade levels below, to me success would look like maybe they're like one level below now. So, I would look at each case to determine, and I would like by the end of the year each student reach their personal goal and close their gap enough for them to be successful in the next grade.

According to the responses from teachers and reading specialists, early academic intervention services and RtI are effective when implemented with fidelity. Teachers' focus was on students' academic growth to close the education gap. However, teachers reported that they experienced challenges delivering academic services to their students. Some challenges are; not having enough time to implement services, not being able to group their students according to their deficits, the onset of the intervention services, and students functioning two to three grade levels below. According to teachers' reports, these challenges have hindered the delivery of the academic intervention services or RtI model with fidelity to at-risk students.

Summary

In this chapter, I inspected and presented findings and relationships after analyzing quantitative and qualitative data to investigate the effect of early academic intervention services on low SES students of color and the special education classification process. In addition, I evaluated how teachers' perceptions and expectations impacted the special education classification of low SES students of color. Data were collected across six states in the U.S.

According to the analyzed quantitative and qualitative results, including five personal interviews, the effect of early academic intervention on students of color varied across teachers and states. Nonetheless, teachers had similar views and perceptions of implementing the early academic intervention programs or the RtI model to students of color. Some teachers suggested that if the intervention programs were implemented with fidelity, students would have shown more growth to close the academic gap. Additionally, teachers indicated that even though some students' growth may not be significant, they were pleased to know that students were showing some progress.

A significant number of teachers reported that most of their students were functioning multiple grade levels below and are petitioning for additional help to manage the different learning levels in their classrooms. However, they continue to struggle to provide services for all students. Additionally, teachers faced challenges in implementing the program with fidelity due to a lack of professional development, not having access to programs that fit students' needs, not having enough time in the day to service all small groups, not being able to group students according to their deficits, group sizes are too large, attendance issues, and equally important, a lack of parental involvement. Subsequently, students are not achieving their goals as they should. According to the study, implementing early academic intervention to students of color positively impacts the special education classification process.

Some common attributes to successfully implement early academic intervention services with fidelity are as follows; interventions should be initiated in pre-kindergarten, adhering to the intervention block with fidelity, utilizing effective curriculum/programs, differentiate instruction, complying with state and district policies, and servicing students in intervention groups of 4-6 and 1-1 (Allington, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Gorski, 2018; Ramey & Ramey, 2004).

According to the quantitative and qualitative results, more than 80% of the 79 participants reported that they were expecting academic growth from all their students.

In conclusion, the quantitative and qualitative data results revealed findings that complemented each other, while there were some discrepancies among other findings. For example, quantitative data showed that 29% ($n = 23$) of teachers received ongoing professional development. The qualitative data indicated that teachers requested more professional development to enhance their skills and learning opportunities to educate their students effectively. On the contrary, the quantitative data results showed that 73% ($n = 58$) of teachers reported that the curriculum was engaging and culturally relevant. Yet, the qualitative data revealed that teachers needed to utilize more relevant curricula for the population they served. Hence, Darling-Hammond (2010) emphasized that teachers must receive ongoing professional development to increase their knowledge and provide effective strategies to deliver instruction to improve student outcomes. Moreover, teachers are urged to employ research-based intervention programs when instructing struggling students for academic growth to be inevitable (Hibel et al., 2010).

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Chapter 4 presented the analysis of all collected data. This chapter comprises a summary of the study, implications for practice, recommendations for further research, limitations, delimitations, conclusions, and a summary. This segment will focus on the triangulation of findings from the survey, open-ended responses, and personal interviews as they are associated with the effect of early academic intervention services on students of color from low SES communities.

Summary of the Study

Chapter 5 summarizes the research findings. It begins with a summary of the purpose, implications for practice, recommendations for further research, limitations, delimitations, and conclusions.

This phenomenological theory research examined the lived experience of participants servicing students of color from low SES communities. According to Gardner et al. (2014), children from racial/ethnic minority families are disproportionately represented in special education. Understanding that implementing early academic intervention with fidelity is the strategy to educate at-promise students from low socio-economic families enabling them to reach their education milestones by closing the educational gap. The research findings allowed me to describe teachers' procedures and actions to educate at-promise students successfully and the challenges they encountered.

Data from multiple sources were used to study early academic intervention's effect on low SES students of color when implemented with fidelity. The quantitative data obtained from a 5-point Likert scale survey and qualitative data from four open-ended questions and five personal interviews were analyzed and used to answer the two research questions.

1. How does early academic intervention services with low socio-economic minority students affect the special needs classification?
2. How do teachers' perceptions and expectations impact the special education classification process of low socio-economic minority students?

The following section analyzed and discussed quantitative and qualitative responses to the research questions.

Implication for Practice

As stated in Chapter 4, this snowball design research was done by contacting a known Superintendent of a school and other educators in New York who recruited teachers and reading specialists to participate in an online survey. Multiple instruments were used to collect and analyze data. Seventy-nine educators participated in the online Likert survey, including multiple-choice and open-ended questions. In addition, three face-to-face and two virtual interviews were conducted to acquire more information from educators about the implementation process of AIS/RtI to low SES students of color and its impact.

As defined in Chapter 1, academic intervention programs are developed to target economically challenged students to enhance and strengthen their intellectual abilities to function in the general education program. However, children from economically challenged and uneducated families are at greater risk of performing poorly in school and being placed in special education programs (Ramey & Ramey, 2004). According to Hibel et al. (2010), students of color have been disproportionately represented as children with special needs in the U.S.: 60 to 80% of students were classified as special needs before effective research-based academic intervention programs were implemented with fidelity. Thus, reading intervention is geared toward preventing academic failures and should be initiated early (Ramey & Ramey, 2004).

Based on the data analysis, early intervention is critical for struggling students of color and should be implemented with fidelity to improve students' performances. Teachers reported that interventions are not implemented with fidelity, and the programs and curriculum used for instruction are not always geared to the needs of the students. Findings are aligned with previous research discussed in Chapter 2, indicating that teachers should implement instruction with fidelity using research-based programs and curricula that are aligned with students' needs (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Gorski, 2018; Hibel et al., 2010; Ramey & Ramey, 2004). In addition, teachers noted that there were not enough specialists to provide intervention to those who needed services. Moreover, students were not grouped according to their deficits. Allington (2009) stated that for interventions to be effective, teachers must group students based on their deficits and follow state and district-mandated policies.

As evidenced by the study analysis, professional development has a significant impact on the delivery of academic intervention services with fidelity. However, most teachers reported needing ongoing professional development to enhance their teaching skills. It is highly recommended that teachers receive ongoing professional development to provide effective intervention services to their at-risk students to improve their academic performances (Bratsch-Hines et al., 2017; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Gorski, 2018). This research identified and discussed best practices and the challenges teachers encountered while delivering academic intervention services to students. State and district leaders must collaborate and utilize research to reevaluate the programs and curricula used for interventions, incorporate changes to policies where necessary, and ensure academic intervention services to students of color from low SES families are implemented with fidelity, enabling them to reach their full potential and reduce the need for special education services (Edwards & Schmidt, 2006; Mills & Unsworth, 2018).

The findings revealed a need for a shift in the U.S. education system and how academic intervention service is implemented to students of color living in poverty. Implementing academic intervention services with fidelity is essential to impart substantial academic support to students that will produce lasting effects (Edwards & Schmidt, 2006).

Survey

The snowball design survey started when I contacted an acquainted superintendent of a New York School District and an Assistant Superintendent in California and asked if they could invite their classroom teachers and reading specialists to participate in an online survey. Seventy-nine educators from six states in the U.S. participated in taking the survey. Multiple instruments were used to collect and analyze data. The Likert scale survey consisted of 30 multiple-choice questions and four open-ended questions. Of the 79 participants, I recruited two reading specialists and three classroom teachers to participate in the interview process.

Interviews

A total of five interviews were conducted with two reading specialists; one reading specialist served kindergarten through second grade, and the other served third through sixth grade. The three classroom teachers interviewed taught first, third, and fourth grades. There were five interview questions. Question 1 had four parts.

During the interviews, I noticed that some classroom teachers exhibited unusual body language. One teacher looked away and scratched her head before answering the question about her perception of the program. The body language was interpreted as being uncomfortable in the setting. In addition, other teachers were observed fidgeting while responding to some of the questions, which was also interpreted as being uncomfortable answering the questions. Nonetheless, all participants responded to all the questions and elaborated on their expectations

and perceptions of the academic intervention program, its success, and its challenges. Probing questions were asked for clarification purposes and to provide additional information. The REV software was used to record and transcribe interview questions. Responses were similar for all questions, revealing that even though the academic intervention program is working for some students, there are areas that need improvement for academic growth to be evident in all students to help close the education gap. Results from the interview transcriptions and short responses were analyzed, coded, and merged with the quantitative findings to ensure validity.

The interview responses helped to answer research questions 1 and 2. Participants revealed that their students were showing progress. However, they needed more support to fully implement the program with fidelity so the majority of their students could achieve their individual academic goals. Teachers also indicated that the programs need to be culturally relevant and that many of their students were functioning more than one grade level below. Teachers agreed that early intervention is essential for struggling students and should be implemented consistently with fidelity. Consequently, reducing or avoiding special education classification for at-risk students of color.

During the interviews, teachers reported needing more support to serve their students effectively. One reading specialist indicated that her group sizes were too large. Moreover, she needed to group her students according to their specific needs. She stated that it is difficult for all her students to achieve their academic goals when they are functioning on different reading levels in the same intervention groups. As noted in Chapter 2, not matching instruction to children's areas of deficits results in them experiencing reading problems through high school and beyond (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Gettinger & Stoiber, 2007; Ramey & Ramey, 2004).

The quantitative data showed that 75% ($n = 58$) of participants agreed that their students

are aware of their deficits. However, during the interviews one reading specialist reported that she could not group students based on their deficits. They were grouped by classes if they were functioning two or more grade levels below. From the results of the open-ended questions and interview responses, it can be assumed that the intervention services are not adequately meeting the needs of at-risk students. Nonetheless, students benefit from small group instruction, where interventions are tailored to their specific needs (Allington, 2009).

Research Question 1

Question 1 “How does early academic intervention with low-socioeconomic minority students affect the special needs classification?” Both quantitative and qualitative results from this study showed strong correlations between program effectiveness and the implementation of academic intervention programs with fidelity. The majority of teachers reported that they wanted to see academic growth evident in all their struggling students. The open-ended responses from the 62 participants who responded to survey question 31, “What are your expectations when implementing the academic intervention program or response to intervention (RtI) model to minority at-risk students from low SES families?” helped to answer Research Question 1.

These responses supported Hibell et al.’s (2010) statements that effective research-based programs implemented early with fidelity could reduce the special education classification of students of color. The results revealed that teachers believe that early academic intervention services implemented with fidelity could prevent students from being classified as special needs. Teachers reported that fidelity goes through the window without consistently implementing the intervention services. Additionally, many participants indicated that the program used for AIS or RtI was not always effective and that they expect to utilize effective research-based programs when implementing academic intervention services. However, they lack the necessary resources.

Several teachers indicated that they do not have the flexibility to assist all their students due to insufficient intervention specialists to pull struggling students. One participant mentioned that if teachers observe their students struggling academically, they should immediately address the deficiencies before it becomes a more significant issue. Furthermore, teachers revealed they need professional development training to enhance their teaching skills and effectively support their students. Emphasis is placed on teachers receiving rigorous professional development to enhance teachers' capabilities to provide adequate instruction to struggling students of color from low SES communities (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Edward & Schmidt, 2003; Hibel et al., 2010).

Quantitative and qualitative data results revealed that most teachers do not consistently use research-based material when implementing academic intervention services to struggling students. Nonetheless, there was a strong correlation between professional development and implementing academic intervention services with fidelity. Thus, professional development positively impacts the implementation of academic intervention services to at-risk students.

Teachers responded to survey question 31, "What are your expectations when implementing the academic intervention program or the response to intervention (RtI) model to minority at-risk students from low SES families?" Research-based materials should be utilized when implementing academic intervention services for students to become successful as their non-minority peers (Hibel et al., 2010). Additionally, Graves and McConnell (2014) stressed the need for teachers to address the difficulties children experience as early as kindergarten to allow them to perform at or above grade level. Therefore, teachers are encouraged to carefully monitor students' progress to recognize their deficits and provide academic intervention services that align with the areas of concern to avoid or minimize the risk of dropping further behind their

peers who were better prepared for school (Gettinger & Stoiber, 2007; Hatcher et al., 2006; Klingner & Edwards, 2006; Wanzek et al., 2018). An interviewee indicated that if her first graders received academic intervention services in kindergarten, it would have helped to close the academic gap they were experiencing. It should be noted that at-promise students may still experience reading difficulties after entering third grade. However, special education referrals could be reduced if students are screened early and placed into high-quality early academic intervention groups (Terrell & Watson, 2018).

Progress will be inevitable when struggling children are identified early and evidence-based instruction that is culturally relevant is implemented with fidelity. Furthermore, early identification and appropriate interventions are necessary to close the education gap before it becomes disabled and eliminate inappropriate placement of students in special education programs (Anderson, 2019). There was a strong correlation between small group performances and using engaging, culturally relevant curriculum with students of color living in poverty. It can be concluded that teachers' effectiveness in the classroom significantly impacts students' learning.

Research Question 2

Sixty-two participants responded to open-ended survey questions 31 and 32, "What are your expectations when implementing the academic intervention program or response to intervention (RtI) model to minority at-promise students from low SES families?" and "What are your perceptions of the academic intervention program and its implementation to minority low SES students?" These responses help to answer Research Question 2, "How do teachers' perceptions and expectations impact the classification process of low socio-economic minority students?"

According to the research data, most teachers reported that the programs used for intervention were not fit for the population of students they serve, the academic intervention services were delivered inconsistently, teachers needed more support in learning different research-based strategies when instructing students, and group sizes were too large. Moreover, teachers reported that providing intervention services to their students was overwhelming due to time constraints.

Based on data analysis, unsuccessful implementation of the academic intervention service continues to occur, resulting in most students failing to achieve their individual academic goals set for them. Due to the inconsistent delivery of instruction with fidelity, more students are being referred to the special education committee and are classified as having special needs. One teacher indicated that 75% of her school population needed extra help, and another reported that the entire population she worked with was at academic risk. However, one teacher indicated that the educational programs she implemented worked for her students. According to the data, many teachers reported that they were expecting academic growth from all their students. However, as noted earlier, some teachers already have preconceived thoughts about their students and do not think they can meet students' individual needs. Although there were no significant correlations or differences between the students' population being more than 60% minority and the number of annual referrals, teachers indicated that there needs to be more accountability on all stakeholders, including parents, for the academic growth of students of color living in poverty.

Poor children of color are susceptible to academic failure since they attend low-performing schools with limited resources, inadequate curricula, and culturally biased teachers with low academic expectations (Mills & Unsworth, 2018). However, improved students' performance will be unavoidable when all stakeholders implement the following actions:

1. State and school district leaders recognize the need to provide equity for all students and not equality, regardless of their SES.
2. Teachers have the same expectations for students of color as their peers living and attending schools in affluent communities.
3. Adequate research-based learning materials and culturally relevant programs are provided and utilized effectively.
4. Provide ongoing professional development training.
5. Ensure interventions are implemented with fidelity.
6. Teachers adhere to state and district policies with fidelity when serving students of color from low SES communities.
7. Parental involvement

Incorporating these initiatives into schools that serve low SES students of color will provide them with an education that will assist in closing the academic gap between Black and White students (Edwards & Schmidt, 2006; Gorski, 2018; Zang et al., 2014). According to Darling-Hammond (2010), school districts must provide teachers with professional development and effective programs that can be used to meet the specific educational needs of at-risk students of color so they can be as successful as their affluent peers.

Recommendations for Further Research

This snowball-designed research was done by collecting data from six states across the U.S., and I am aware that another population may represent a different result than this group. Kamp et al. (2003) reported that children experiencing difficulties in reading acquisition in first grade continue to struggle in other grades. Therefore, according to Ramey and Ramey (2004), implementing academic interventions in kindergarten is paramount in minimizing special

education classification. Qualitative data results supported the recommendation that the onset of early academic intervention services should be initiated in kindergarten. Gorski (2008) suggested that school districts should bring about changes to provide quality early childhood programs in high-poverty communities. That initiative could be a life-changing event for at-risk students. In addition, it is suggested that school districts invest in providing ongoing rigorous professional development to enhance teachers' capabilities to teach struggling students, especially those who teach reading (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Gorski, 2018).

Further studies should be done in other states to ensure all students of color living in poverty are receiving quality education based on their individual needs. Equity over equality! Accordingly, all schools should have access to research-based materials and implement them with fidelity to all students (Darling-Hammond, 2010). As mentioned in Chapter 1, children of color living in poverty are vulnerable to academic failures from attending low-performing schools with limited resources, poor curricula, and culturally biased teachers with low academic expectations (Mills & Unsworth, 2018).

Both quantitative and qualitative data confirmed Darling-Hammond's statement regarding instructing students using research-based materials. Consequently, significant correlations existed between adhering to the RtI block with fidelity and using research-based materials. Also, there were strong correlations between adhering to the RtI block with fidelity and using highly effective academic intervention programs.

In addition, further research should be done to evaluate the effect of teachers' mindsets when educating students of color from low SES families. All teachers should have a growth mindset and be willing to accommodate all learners, despite their living circumstances. Also, further studies should investigate the lack of parental involvement in the success of students of

color and what can be implemented to remove the stigma. The qualitative data indicated that parental support was a factor in the lack of students' academic achievement.

Additionally, research should be done on teachers' mental health and the effect on the success of students of color. If teachers suffer mentally, the consequences will negatively impact students' achievement (Armstrong, 2019). According to open-ended responses, some teachers reported needing mental health support. Further qualitative research should be done on teachers' perceptions of the academic programs that educate students of color. Results from the open-ended questions and interviews revealed that the programs teachers used with minority at-promise students were not conducive to the populations' needs.

Further research could aid in changing state and district policies, allowing teachers to educate at-promise students using appropriate programs to meet each struggling child's needs. This could reduce the chances of special education classifications and close the academic gap between impoverished children and their affluent peers. Ultimately, these findings could inspire other researchers to replicate this study and compare its findings.

Limitations

A limitation of the research is that most teachers were from New York, followed by California. A more comprehensive range of teachers could strengthen the results of the study. Another limitation was that all interviewees were from New York, which limited the bulk of the research to one state. Collecting quantitative and qualitative data from a wider variety of populations could have changed the trajectory of the results. Also, during the virtual interviews, one participant turned off her camera, which affected the interviewer's ability to observe eye contact and body language. In addition, the data needed to evaluate students' academic growth was limited as it was solely based on the reports from the teachers during the interviews, not the

district's data tracker. The data tracker would have provided comprehensive details of students' growth over a period while receiving academic intervention services. Thus, teachers' self-reported data could not be verified.

Delimitations

I wanted to conduct a district-wide survey to access three years of the students' data to observe their growth while receiving the academic intervention or RtI services. Still, I had some challenges in collecting students' data. Therefore, I decided to use the snowball design to recruit educators nationwide to participate in this study. I purposely elected to interview general education teachers and reading specialists because they are the ones who generally service the students in small groups and individually. Additionally, I reported every third participant's responses from the four open-ended questions in my qualitative findings.

Conclusions

According to the collected data, it can be concluded that early academic intervention services can be effective when implemented with fidelity. According to Edwards and Schmidt, (2006), students of color living in poverty are at greater risk of being classified as special needs. Quantitative and qualitative data revealed that teachers conclusively want to provide effective intervention services to their low-performing students. However, they encountered several challenges that hindered them from implementing the academic intervention services or the RtI model with fidelity. Some critical factors, as indicated by teachers, are as follows:

1. There is insufficient time to provide services for all children who require support.
2. The need for more teachers to provide services to these students.
3. The group sizes are too large.
4. The need for research-based curricula in schools that fit the demands of the

population they serve

5. The need for ongoing professional development
6. The intervention services are not implemented with fidelity
7. Having the option to group students according to their deficits.
8. Teachers fixed mindset
9. A lack of parental involvement

Many parents of low SES students of color work more than one job and do not have enough time to support their children academically (Gorski, 2018). Hence, teachers are held responsible for students' learning. Several teachers reported they were very concerned that most of their students did not have committed parents who read to them at home and supported their learning. However, if academic intervention services are provided with fidelity at an early age, it could make a difference in poor academic outcome for students of color (Ramey & Ramey, 2004). To close the educational gap, academic intervention services must be implemented with fidelity to all students using engaging and relevant curricula, trained teachers, positive teacher attitude, high teacher expectations, and a growth mindset (Bratsch-Hines et al., 2017; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Morgan, 2020; Ramey & Ramey, 2004). In addition, Benegy et al. (2009) reported that effective small-group interventions result in significant gains in reading fluency and comprehension skills.

Summary

Collecting, analyzing, and triangulating teachers' data showed a need for a shift in the implementation process of academic intervention services or the RtI model to students of color from low SES communities to demonstrate significant academic growth. Critical race theory identifies disparities in children of color living in poverty classified as special needs because of a

lack of opportunities in U.S. schools (Edwards & Schmidt, 2006). In addition, schools that are not sufficiently funded to provide academic interventions to at-risk students will continue to see a rise in the special need classification of students of color (Darling-Hammond, 2013; Gorski, 2018). Hence, school districts and other policymakers must provide opportunities for all children to access quality education based on their needs.

Gorski (2018) stated that even though economically challenged students arrive at school unprepared, it does not indicate they are less capable than their wealthier peers. Still, due to unavailable opportunities, they fail to become successful individuals. Teachers are encouraged to have a growth mindset when educating low SES students of color because teachers' perceptions and expectations impact student achievement (Berhanu, 2008; Lemmer & Wagner, 2015). As revealed in the qualitative reports, several teachers have high expectations for their students, while others have already prejudged them due to their lack of acquired knowledge or motivation.

In addition, several participants reported needing access to engaging and culturally relevant curriculums. Data showed strong correlations between engaging and culturally relevant curricula and students' performance levels, agreeing with Gorski's statement that teachers should modify texts to include different cultures. In addition, data showed a significant association between using engaging curricula and implementing academic intervention services with fidelity. According to Darling-Hammond (2010), school districts must provide teachers with effective programs that meet the individualized needs of poor students of color so they can be educated as their affluent peers to achieve their academic goals. Additionally, ongoing professional development should be provided to all teachers to enhance their teaching skills.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Institutional Review Board (IRB) Decision Form

Review Date December 19, 2022

Reviewer ID# 151036

Category ☒ Expedited Review 45 CF46.110

☐ Full Board Review 45 CFR 46

IRB Application #	13441
Title of Project	How Does Early Academic Intervention With Low-Socioeconomic Minority Students Affect The Special Needs Classification
Principal Investigator Name (PI)	Andrea Hyatt-Copeland
PI Email (use CUI email, if applicable)	andrea.hyatt-copeland@eagles.cui.edu

DECISION

☒ ☐ **Approved Effective duration of the IRB Approval:**

For Expedited and Full Board Approved, Please Note:

- a. *The IRB's approval is only for the project protocol named above. Any changes are subject to review and approval by the IRB.*
- b. *Any adverse events must be reported to the IRB.*

An annual report or report upon completion is required for each project. If the project is to continue beyond the twelve month period, a request for continuation of approval should be made in writing. Any deviations from the approved protocol should be noted.

Appendix B: Informed Consent

How Does Early Academic Intervention Services With Low-Socioeconomic Minority Students Affect the Special Needs Classification?

The purpose of this study is to examine the topic of children from racial/ethnic minority families who are disproportionately represented in special education. Understanding how early academic intervention can be implemented with fidelity will be generally defined as the strategy to educate at-risk students from low socio-economic families enabling them to reach their education milestones and closing the ever-widening academic gap. The survey consists of 30 multiple-choice questions, four short responses, and five questions regarding your current teaching position.

INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE SURVEY

PARTICIPATION: Participation is voluntary, and you may refuse to participate or discontinue taking the survey at any time.

RAFFLE: Upon completion of the survey, you could have a chance to win a \$25 Amazon Gift Card. If interested, please enter your email at the end of the survey. Four lucky winners will be randomly selected to win a \$25 Amazon Gift Card.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Your information will be confidential.

DURATION: The survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. You have an open window of three weeks to complete this survey.

RISK: There are no risks in participating in this study.

CONTACT: The study is being conducted by Andrea Hyatt-Copeland under the supervision of Dr. Teresa Egan, Ph.D., Professor of Education Leadership, Concordia University, Irvine. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this research, please contact Dr. Teresa Egan at teresa.egan@cui.edu.

RESULTS: Upon completion of this research study, electronic results of the dissertation can be made accessible via Concordia University Library repository with open access on the internet.

Thank you in advance for your participation in this research study.

Sincerely,

Andrea Hyatt-Copeland

CONFIRMATION STATEMENT: I have read and understand the consent statement and agree to participate in your study. If you agree, please select yes, and continue the survey. If you do not agree, please select no, and you may discontinue at this time. *

☐ ☒ Yes

☐ ☒ No

1. I use students' data to plan and drive instruction for students who are struggling.

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

2. I adhere to the Response to intervention block with fidelity.

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

3. I comply with state and district policies for struggling students.

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

4. I differentiate assessments, assignments, and projects so my students can feel successful.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

5. The curriculum is engaging and culturally relevant.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

6. I receive support for managing challenging behaviors.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Neutral

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

7. Collaborating and planning are consistent between classroom teachers and reading specialists/interventionists.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

8. My small group instruction matches students' performance levels.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

9. I receive ongoing Professional Development for the Academic Intervention Program (academic reading program) I use with my students.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

10. I implement the academic intervention program with fidelity (faithful and exact).

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

11. The academic intervention program is highly effective.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Agree

- ☐ Strongly agree

12. How would you evaluate the effectiveness of your classroom management style?

- ☐ Extremely Ineffective
- ☐ Ineffective
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Effective
- ☐ Highly Effective

13. Do you consistently use research-based materials when teaching your minority low socio-economic status (SES) students?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Frequently
- ☐ Very frequently

14. How many grade levels do you provide services to?

- ☐ 1 - 2

- ☐ 3 - 4
- ☐ Five or above

15. How many students are from each grade level?

- ☐ 1 - 10
- ☐ 11 - 20
- ☐ 21 - 30
- ☐ 31 or above

16. How many years have you served your current students?

- ☐ 1 - 2
- ☐ 3 - 4
- ☐ five or above

17. What percentage of your students made more than 10% academic growth as measured by your district's diagnostic tools?

- ☐ 1% - 10%
- ☐ 11% - 20%
- ☐ 21% - 30%

- ☐ 31% - 40%
- ☐ 41% or above

18. What percentage of your students made less than 10% growth as measured by your district's diagnostic tools?

- ☐ 1% - 10%
- ☐ 11% - 20%
- ☐ 21% - 30%
- ☐ 31% - 40%
- ☐ 41% or above

19. What percentage of your students are referred to the special education committee for evaluation annually?

- ☐ 1% - 10%
- ☐ 11% - 20%
- ☐ 21% - 30%
- ☐ 31% - 40%
- ☐ 41% or above

20. How do you track your students' progress?

Select all that apply

- ☐ Formative Assessment
- ☐ Summative Assessment
- ☐ Observation
- ☐ Using checklist
- ☐ Other: _____

21. At what point do you determine that you should refer a student to be evaluated for special education services?

Select all that apply

- ☐ After six or more weeks of intensive intervention with minimal or no progress.
- ☐ If behavior impedes academics and the Behavior Intervention Plan is not effective.

Other: _____

22. What research-based intervention programs have you used that have been proven successful?

Select all that apply

- ☐ SPIRE
- ☐ Fountas and Pinnell (LLI)
- ☐ Orton Gillingham
- ☐ Preventing Academic Failure
- ☐ Wilson
- ☐ Other: _____

23. How do you address cultural differences in your classroom?

Select all that apply

- ☐ Conduct open classroom cultural discussion
- ☐ Provide a variety of culturally related books in the classroom libraries
- ☐ Provide students the opportunity to openly discuss family customs/beliefs
- ☐ Other: _____

24. How do you communicate with your students about where they are in relation to their academics?

Select all that apply

- ☐ One to one meetings
- ☐ Goal setting and achievements
- ☐ Differentiating instruction
- ☐ Building on what they already know
- ☐ Other: _____

25. Are your students aware of their deficits?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure

26. If so, how do you know?

Select all that apply

- ☐ Have one-to-one conferences with students to set SMART goals and discuss progress.
- ☐ Discuss ongoing Diagnostic Test scores with students
- ☐ Students coded classroom data chart (students' names are coded for privacy)

☐ Other: _____

27. My school population includes more than 60% of students who identified as minorities with low socioeconomic status.

- ☐ ☐ Yes
- ☐ ☐ No
- ☐ ☐ Not sure

28. How do you engage your students during small group instruction?

Select all that apply

- ☐ ☐ Close proximity
- ☐ ☐ Relevant lessons
- ☐ ☐ Work on students' deficits
- ☐ ☐ Scaffolding
- ☐ ☐ Work is attainable
- ☐ ☐ Other: _____

29. What factors do you consider when grouping your minority low SES students?

Select all that apply

- ☐ ☐ Deficits
- ☐ ☐ Number of Students
- ☐ ☐ Behavior
- ☐ ☐ Students' Interest
- ☐ ☐ Performance level
- ☐ Other: _____

30. Considering the effect of COVID-19, what was most challenging for your students?

Select all that apply

- ☐ ☐ Online learning/teaching
- ☐ ☐ Students loss of interest in learning after returning to in-person learning/teaching
- ☐ ☐ Ability to stay focused
- ☐ ☐ Loss of instruction

- ☐ Returning to the structure of the school

☐ Other: _____

31. What are your expectations when implementing the Academic Intervention Program or the Response to Intervention (RtI) model to minority at-risk students from low SES families?

32. What are your perceptions of the academic intervention program and its implementation to minority low SES students?

33. How do you plan meaningful and engaging learning activities for your struggling students?

34. What is one thing you would change about implementing the Academic Intervention Program?

1. My occupation

- ☐ ☐ Classroom Teacher
- ☐ ☐ Reading Specialist/Interventionist
- ☐ Other: _____

2. Which State do I currently work in?

3. Years of teaching

- ☐ ☐ 0 - 5
- ☐ ☐ 6 - 10
- ☐ ☐ 11 -15
- ☐ ☐ 16 - 20
- ☐ ☐ 21 or above

4. If you would like to participate in a short zoom or telephone interview, please enter your email address below.

5. If you wish to participate in a \$25 Amazon Gift Card raffle, please enter your email address below.

Appendix C:

Teachers' Responses to Open-Ended Questions 31-34

Table 29.1

Teachers' Expectations When Implementing the Academic Intervention Program or the Response to Intervention (RtI) Model to Minority at-risk Students from Low SES Status Families

Participant Number	Participant Response
Participant 1	An increase in students learning
Participant 4	Expect students to reach their short-term goals
Participant 7	I often have difficulty contacting families of lower SES students for various reasons. I give the children as much support as possible while they are in school because I know that many of them have difficult lives at home.
Participant 10	My expectations are that the interventions meet the needs of the students and help them see academic growth.
Participant 13	I expect to use different strategies to meet their specific needs.
Participant 16	Students will realize the relevance of learning
Participant 19	This is a whole team approach. I expect the school team, parents, and students to have responsibilities in implementing the RtI model.
Participant 22	My expectation for those students is to make slow and steady progress. With working with these students, they usually don't have support and or reinforcement at home. So what I am using in the classroom is scaffold based on the individual progress they are making and building my small group lessons based on their progress and the skills they still need support with.
Participant 25	As an AIS provider in a Title I school, the majority (if not all) of my students are minority at-risk students from low SES families.
Participant 28	The expectation is to drill down and target specific skill deficit, slowly building upon skills at the student's pace while striving for mastery.
Participant 31	That my students can lessen the gap

Participant 34	Student will participate and grow as learners despite what is happening at home.
Participant 37	Subbing pulls the staff that instructs with these programs ruining the fidelity and consistency all students should receive but in particular for minority at-risk students from low SES families. Expectations are the same as every student. Program levels determine expectations, so if I am instructing with fidelity, I am using those expectations.
Participant 40	My expectation is that we have programs and materials that we can use with fidelity. That we are tasked with matching the interventions to specific needs and have flexibility to utilize those interventions as needed. This should be true for all children in our schools.
Participant 43	Growth on standardized testing
Participant 46	The expectation is always based on growth, no matter how little. I do not seek out perfection or mastery of a skill. I look for any data showing growth and progress.
Participant 49	Academic intervention plus social emotional well-being.
Participant 52	I am expected to implement interventions for 4-6 weeks. Maybe I expect less without realizing it, but I try to hold them to a high standard.
Participant 55	Meeting children where they are to provide the proper support that is needed. I expect children to try their best.
Participant 58	The expectations are that I meet the students where they are... parental involvement.
Participant 61	My expectations are to meet the students where they are and provide quality instruction so they can feel successful.
Participant 64	More resources

Table 30.1*Teachers' Perceptions of the Academic Intervention Program and its Implementation*

Participants Number	Participants' Responses
Participant 3	It should be culturally relevant. This will increase interest in learning versus information they are not able to relate to.
Participant 6	Limited intervention for mental health
Participant 9	The material/curriculum provided sometimes miss their mark with students. New data demonstrate that Teacher's College Readers/Writers workshop depends on students having certain skills to learn effectively. These skills are often underdeveloped in minority low SES students.
Participant 12	It needs to be better adapted
Participant 15	Student engagement
Participant 18	I find it to be overwhelming for all my students, regardless of their economic standing. I find it hard to find all the needed time to do small/individual groups to work with students that need specific intervention programs when you have a classroom full of students.
Participant 21	There are not enough teachers to meet the needs of all students who need intervention.
Participant 24	Academic interventions are more successful when there is family/parent support at home.
Participant 27	There could be more improvement to the process
Participant 30	I meet their needs
Participant 33	It is effective when done with fidelity
Participant 36	The goal is to meet the needs of all students, including the most at-risk students, in a three-tiered intervention system. We have integrated portions of the RtI model but must continue to work toward full implementation. This implementation requires a commitment of time, financial resources, materials, and professional learning opportunities.

Participant 39	Sometimes it's not about the grades and class participation, it is survival mode for many of these families.
Participant 42	To the best of my knowledge, the RtI process does not address the SES of students when attempting to address their academic needs.
Participant 45	I feel that academic intervention can be very effective when done with fidelity. I feel that teachers need more support in learning different research-based strategies. This can be done through Professional Development. I also feel that teachers need to be taken more seriously when we bring a child to RtI team and say the interventions are ineffective and that the child should be evaluated.
Participant 48	My belief is that our low SES students are most at risk, and therefore need to benefit from gains that can be experienced from interventions. Many teachers simple classify the students in their minds, and therefore feel that they are not able to support those children's learning. But rethinking that mindset is needed to support our most vulnerable.
Participant 51	75% of my school needs extra help.
Participant 54	Quality instruction provided by experienced provider.
Participant 57	I feel like teachers need more support for this.
Participant 60	I think it is a great program. However, we need more AIS teachers to service our students.

Table 31.1

Responses to Planning Meaningful and Engaging Learning Activities for Struggling Students.

Participants Number	Participants' Responses
Participant 2	Take into account the student's interests and strengths.
Participant 5	I plan short activities that target a specific skill that will transfer to the larger class.
Participant 8	I use the curriculum and differentiate based on my students' abilities and interests.
Participant 11	Find out what they need support in, academically, and implement engaging small group lessons to review materials and give them guided practice.
Participant 14	Use activities that are relevant and understandable to struggling students.
Participant 17	I use their strength and weaknesses, their data, and their interest.
Participant 20	I work all hours, including weekends, to research their needs and plan lessons with fidelity, and modify where necessary.
Participant 23	Unfortunately, when pulled to sub, no lesson occurs, so all the planning goes to waste, and no AIS students on my roster receive services.
Participant 26	Create lessons that are engaging for students.
Participant 29	Make them have a personal connection to content.
Participant 32	I use high interest text that will engage the students.
Participant 35	I spend time researching, watching videos, and collaborating with other teachers.
Participant 38	Small group instruction at their level, high interest, high scaffolding, high frequency, celebrate success
Participant 41	Use research-based material
Participant 44	I use my data, observation, along with their personality. Remind them of their strengths and build upon them, use a variety of teaching methods (visual, books, read-aloud, discussion).

Participant 47	Integrate authentic materials.
Participant 50	Relate to the things they are interested in.
Participant 53	Build on students background, incorporate lessons that include hands-on learning (video, clips, and music).
Participant 56	Various level, things that provide new experiences, new vocabulary, visuals, hand-on.
Participant 59	I focus in on multiple intelligence to help my students utilize and understand their strength to achieve/feel successful.
Participant 62	I try to have as many 'hands-on activities' as possible for my students in my small group. I feel that giving the students a warm-up with skills they have proven successful it gives them confidence and willingness to work on harder skills.
Participant 65	I create meaningful games for the children that reinforce what we are working on in AIS. I consult with classroom teachers.
Participant 68	I benchmark my students to see where they are currently performing and look at the goals that are set for them for the year. As I teach, I watch and listen to see where they are making progress as well as the patterns of errors that they are making, so that I can adjust instruction accordingly.
Participant 71	Students are like puzzle, each unique. I look to find the missing piece for each puzzle to help move the child forward.

Table 32.1*One Thing You Would Change About Implementing the Academic Intervention Program*

Participants Number	Participants' Responses
Participant 4	A classroom teacher is stretched with paperwork and other tasks implemented by the state education department. It would be helpful to have someone who is able to take more appropriate time with the students. Too often it is stated to provide a 30 minutes a week intervention. This timeframe is pointless in true growth for students.
Participant 7	Not sure
Participant 10	Allow students to move through the Tiers more when needed. This would result in more SPED classifications but would allow individual students the targeted support they need in a smaller student to teacher ratio, with the goal being that they "catch up" and move to a less restrictive setting later in their education career.
Participant 13	I wouldn't change anything
Participant 16	I would like students to receive pull-out learning specialist support in addition to the Tier 2 interventions provided in the classroom.
Participant 19	More support
Participant 22	Setting realistic expectations that a teacher can ensure the goals be met. Working with a teacher to set attainable goals not someone who sits behind a desk.
Participant 25	Have monthly meetings with each child's team of teachers to discuss, adjust, and share student progress and strategies.
Participant 28	Wish there was a time before and after school to help students too. I need to work with so many small groups to help the low and also challenge the high students. It's hard to fit it all in daily.
Participant 31	One thing I would change would be the duration of certain interventions (for specific "red flag" students).
Participant 34	Small class sizes overall. More time to implement and have more bodies to help support
Participant 37	I do not know about a specific change, but I do think it would be extremely valuable to have more professional development for

intervention programs for both general education and special education staff together, so everyone can hopefully be on the same page with processes and expectations.

Participant 40	Curriculum, consistency, frequency, grouping size
Participant 43	More dedicated time for team collaboration involving specialists, classroom teachers, paraprofessionals, and families.
Participant 46	I would have the RtI period be a critical part of creating the master schedule so there are no interruptions or conflicts in supporting our students most in need.
Participant 49	1:1 basis at times
Participant 52	Increase cultural relevance to meet the unique needs of the children at the school.
Participant 55	Having more teachers input for programs and materials since we are the ones implementing with the students.
Participant 58	Students not missing crucial instructional time.
Participant 61	Make the program more engaging.
Participant 64	In a perfect world... smaller class size so there is more ability to get to each small group more frequently.
Participant 67	The lack of consistency
Participant 70	Some students need smaller class size, 1 to 1, and it should be a plan that is understood and implemented (if at all possible) by all their teachers.

Appendix D

Appendix G



APPENDIX G: SAMPLE PHOTOGRAPHY/VIDEO/AUDIO USE - INFORMED CONSENT

PHOTOGRAPHY/VIDEO/AUDIO USE

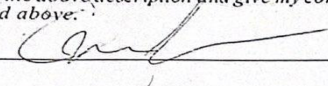
As part of this research project, we will be making a photograph/videotape/audiotape recording of you during your participation in the experiment. Please indicate what uses of this photograph/videotape/audiotape you are willing to consent to by initialing below. You are free to initial any number of spaces from zero to all of the spaces, and your recording will no way affect your credit for participation. We will only use the photograph/videotape/audiotape in way that you agree to. In any use of this photograph/videotape/audiotape, your name would not be identified. If you do not initial any of the spaces below, the photograph/videotape/audiotape will be destroyed.

Please indicate the type of informed consent.

The photograph/videotape/audiotape can be studied by the research team for use in the research project.

A handwritten signature, possibly "EL", written in dark ink.

I have read the above description and give my consent for the use of the photograph/videotape/audiotape as indicated above.

Signature:  Date: 1/29/2023

The extra copy of this consent form is for your record.

Appendix G



APPENDIX G: SAMPLE PHOTOGRAPHY/VIDEO/AUDIO USE - INFORMED CONSENT

PHOTOGRAPHY/VIDEO/AUDIO USE

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Please indicate the type of informed consent.

The photograph/videotape/audiotape can be studied by the research team for use in the research project.

Handwritten initials "90" in black ink.

I have read the above description and give my consent for the use of the photograph/videotape/audiotape as indicated above.

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "C. J. J.".

Date:

1/28/23

The extra copy of this consent form is for your record.

Appendix G

**APPENDIX G: SAMPLE PHOTOGRAPHY/VIDEO/AUDIO USE - INFORMED
CONSENT****PHOTOGRAPHY/VIDEO/AUDIO USE**

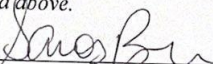
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Please indicate the type of informed consent.

The photograph/videotape/audiotape can be studied by the research team for use in the research project.

A handwritten signature, possibly "SB", written over a horizontal line.

I have read the above description and give my consent for the use of the photograph/videotape/audiotape as indicated above.

Signature:  Date: 2/2/23

The extra copy of this consent form is for your record.

Appendix G



APPENDIX G: SAMPLE PHOTOGRAPHY/VIDEO/AUDIO USE - INFORMED CONSENT

PHOTOGRAPHY/VIDEO/AUDIO USE

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Please indicate the type of informed consent.

The photograph/videotape/audiotape can be studied by the research team for use in the research project.

A handwritten signature, possibly "QW", written over a horizontal line.

I have read the above description and give my consent for the use of the photograph/videotape/audiotape as indicated above.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

1/31/23

The extra copy of this consent form is for your record.

Appendix G



APPENDIX G: SAMPLE PHOTOGRAPHY/VIDEO/AUDIO USE - INFORMED CONSENT

PHOTOGRAPHY/VIDEO/AUDIO USE

As part of this research project, we will be making a photograph/videotape/audiotape recording of you during your participation in the experiment. Please indicate what uses of this photograph/videotape/audiotape you are willing to consent to by initialing below. You are free to initial any number of spaces from zero to all of the spaces, and your recording will no way affect your credit for participation. We will only use the photograph/videotape/audiotape in way that you agree to. In any use of this photograph/videotape/audiotape, your name would not be identified. If you do not initial any of the spaces below, the photograph/videotape/audiotape will be destroyed.

Please indicate the type of informed consent.

The photograph/videotape/audiotape can be studied by the research team for use in the research project.

R7

I have read the above description and give my consent for the use of the photograph/videotape/audiotape as indicated above.

Signature: Randi Finkel Date: 1/31/23

The extra copy of this consent form is for your record.

Appendix E

