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P-12 School Administrators' Experiences, Opinions, and Perceptions of Speech-Language Pathologists in Written Language Instruction and the Response to Intervention

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P-12 SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS' EXPERIENCES, OPINIONS, AND PERCEPTIONS OF SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGISTS IN WRITTEN LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION AND THE RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION

by

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ABSTRACT

Many speech-language pathologists (SLPs) are employed in public school systems as part of the special education department to work with students with deficits in oral and written language skills. The literature shows a direct relationship between oral language development and early literacy skills. SLPs can provide a preventative role through the multitiered systems of support (MTSS) or response to intervention (RTI) programs. However, many SLPs report barriers to accessing students in the general education setting. One of these reported barriers is a lack of administrative support. Therefore, this research explored factors that impact a P-12 school administrator's experiences, opinions, and perceptions of SLPs in written language instruction. These administrators include P-12 principals, P-12 assistant principals, and special education directors.

A questionnaire was developed from two validated instruments. The researcher collected data from 285 P-12 administrators from across the United States. The analysis revealed that administrative roles can significantly impact the combined views (experiences, opinions, and perceptions) of an SLP's ability to help students develop specific skills needed for reading. However, there was no noteworthy difference between the three individual constructs. The results of the factorial ANOVA indicated that school type and gender do not predict the perceived training of an SLP. A two-way MANOVA found the interaction effect between the participation in the Child Find process and geographical region on the combined dependent variables of the view of RTI was not statistically significant, nor were the main effects. A one-way ANOVA determined that the perceptions of the SLP's qualifications to help children develop specific skills

important for reading ability by P-12 school administrators for different school types were not statistically significant. The mean scores of the perceptions of an SLP's qualifications to help children develop specific skills important for reading were explored. High school administrators had the highest positive perception of SLPs, followed closely by administrators of junior high and other settings. Surprisingly, administrators in the elementary setting ranked the lowest.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to my family, whose support, encouragement, and love have been instrumental in completing this journey. To my husband, Adam, and our three children, thank you for enduring many days of me hiding away in my office to work. I know you have made sacrifices on my behalf. They have not gone unnoticed. Clark, Eaven, and Mary Kathryn, never lose sight of your dreams and follow Him in all you do. To my parents, Linwood and Regina Eavenson, thank you for always providing and teaching me the value of education and the pride of a good work ethic. To my sister and brother-in-law, Amy and Dalton Trigg, thank you for your support.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASHA	American Speech-Language-Hearing Association
AYP	Adequate yearly progress
CCSS	Common Core State Standards
EIS	Early intervening services
ELL	English language learners
ESSA	Every Student Succeeds Act
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IDEIA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act
IEP	Individualized Educational Plan
IRB	Institutional Review Board
LEA	Local educational agencies
MTSS	Multitiered systems of support
NCLB	No Child Left Behind
PBIS	Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports
RTI	Response to Intervention
SISP	Specialized Instructional Support Staff
SLP	Speech-language pathologist

CHAPTER I – INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 2016, I moved from the comfort of a special-purpose public school where I had served as a classroom speech-language pathologist (SLP) for nine years to a traditional public school. In this new environment, I served as an SLP to over 75 fifth- through eighth-graders on two campuses. The number of students in my caseload and the severity of some were overwhelming. Many needed academic support, but I was not part of general education. I was part of a pullout service for special education that only worked on the goals set in the Individualized Educational Program (IEP). As much as I hoped, I did not seem to be received in the general education classroom. Crowded schedules, large caseloads, missing collaborations, and my coworkers' lack of comprehension of my role kept me in my little corner of the campus. My passion for teaching reading was stifled. During a district SLP meeting, I conveyed my frustration with being unable to engage with students to support their academics, particularly the literacy components. A senior SLP quickly told me, "Do not let the administration know we know anything about reading!"

For all of these years, I have not forgotten this remark. How much knowledge does a school administrator have about our literacy instruction and prevention role? Do they understand the impact a well-trained SLP could have on students' academic progress if given time and resources? Do other public schools function differently? Do SLPs play a role in the Response to Intervention (RTI)? This comment motivated me to conduct this study.

This study aimed to investigate P-12 school administrators' experiences, opinions, and perceptions of SLPs in written language instruction and multitiered systems of

support (MTSS), particularly in Response to Intervention (RTI). P-12 school administrators are principals, assistant principals, special education directors, and assistant special education directors. Speech-language pathologists (SLPs) have demonstrated competence in their efforts to help children with early language problems. Still, several factors, such as large caseloads, lack of administrative support, unfavorable school cultures, a lack of teamwork, and excessive paperwork (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2020; Brandel, 2020; Sylvan, 2018) have impacted their ability to work more effectively in the general education setting. MTSS and RTI are designed to keep more students in general education and reduce the number of referrals for special education evaluations (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2020). These practices may also have the additional benefit of breaking down silos between special and general education in schools (Stolz, 2021). Researchers have examined special educators' attitudes (Bineham et al., 2014), general educators (Al Otaiba et al., 2019; Bineham et al., 2014; Castro-Villarreal et al., 2014), SLPs (McKenna et al., 2021), and special education administrators (Wiener & Soodak, 2008) concerning MTSS or RTI practices. However, none have focused on P-12 school administrators' beliefs and views of an SLP in written language instruction and RTI.

Background

A speech-language pathologist (SLP) is a master's level or beyond trained professional who is an expert in speech, hearing, language, fluency, and physical and cognitive disorders that influence communication. Most SLPs are nationally certified by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA). Their scope of practice includes voice disorders, resonance, hearing impairments, speech fluency, language,

speech production, swallowing, and cognition. SLPs have received extensive training in the acquisition of both typical and atypical oral and written language. Reading, writing, and spelling are components of written language. They provide services to individuals throughout the lifespan in hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, clinics, and schools. Collaboration, prevention, and screening are three of an SLP's eight service delivery domains (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2016b).

Response to Intervention (RTI) and Multitiered Systems of Support (MTSS) are rooted in educational law. RTI was written under US education law with the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004 (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012). Even though the name RTI is not stated in the statute, its elements are included in The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) to improve academic achievement for all students, increase accountability, and provide scientifically based instruction. IDEA (2004) used the "wait to fail" model of education and the discrepancy formula to determine the presence of a learning disability.

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (2001) describes RTI as a framework for addressing the learning needs of all students, preventing academic failure, and as an alternative to the discrepancy model. RTI is less comprehensive than MTSS and sometimes falls within the MTSS framework of schools. MTSS provides individualized academic instruction to students through RTI and supports individual behavioral needs. MTSS is a problem-solving system that provides a continuum of services to prevent academic failure and behavioral problems in early elementary schools (Pullen et al., 2018).

Schools have implemented MTSS or RTI to help reduce the number of referrals for special education evaluations and placements. These referrals were common among students from diverse backgrounds. Additionally, MTSS or RTI helped identify and intervene early for students with academic challenges, especially in written language (Bineham et al., 2014). Thus, some research has suggested that applying MTSS and RTI systems more widely can improve school academic achievement. These findings have led to another reason for implementing MTSS and RTI. "Schools are using RTI as a vehicle for school improvement, providing a high-quality core program that addresses the needs of all students, and then developing or selecting robust, research-based approaches that meet the needs of students needing more targeted or intensive instruction" (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012, p. 92). SLPs are well-positioned to help prevent, identify, evaluate, and treat literacy issues because of their extensive knowledge base and expertise in spoken language (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2001; Catts & Kamhi, 2004; McCardle & Chhabra, 2004). Since the inception of MTSS and RTI, speech-language pathologists have recognized the contributions that their profession can make to these movements.

Statement of the Problem

MTSS and RTI are widely used in public education as potential remediation tools for literacy problems. Literacy prevention and intervention are within the scope of practice for SLPs because of their unique training in language development and disorders (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2001). In 2018, ASHA surveyed school-based SLPs concerning the services provided within the school setting. Of those surveyed, only 27% reported providing general education services (American Speech-

Language-Hearing Association, 2018). In the 2020 survey, 35.8% of SLPs reported serving children with reading and writing difficulties (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2020). This percentage dropped in the 2022 survey to 27.5% (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2022). SLPs serving students within the elementary school setting report spending 1.4 hours in MTSS or RTI each week (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2020). This amount decreased from 2 hours in the previous survey (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2018).

SLPs were also asked about their roles in MTSS or RTI in these surveys. In 2018, 28% of SLPs reported no role in MTSS or RTI (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2018). This percentage significantly increased in 2022 to 45% (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2022). The SLPs surveyed also identified the challenges of working in school settings. The top three difficulties were a lack of time for collaboration, a lack of other people's understanding of the role of the SLP, and a lack of administrative help. These percentages are consistent between 2018 and 2022 (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2018, 2020, 2022).

Many studies have examined the attitudes of special educators, general educators, SLPs, and special education administrators concerning SLPs, written language instruction, and MTSS or RTI programs (Al Otaiba et al., 2019; Bineham et al., 2014; Castro-Villarreal et al., 2014; McKenna et al., 2021; Wiener & Soodak, 2008). Despite these studies, there is a notable gap in research regarding the self-reported experiences, opinions, and perceptions of P-12 school administrators regarding speech-language pathologists regarding written language instruction and RTI.

Theoretical Framework

Contemporary education is based on outcome-based accountability, implying that the school staff are directly accountable for students' academic improvement. A school's principal should be learning-focused and accountable for student achievement (Shaked & Schechter, 2019). Special education often follows traditional medical models. Struggling students are assessed, diagnosed, and prescribed intervention. These interventions are often determined by law and administered outside the general education classroom. Instruction and classroom settings have not been evaluated for changes that could occur (Case, 1992). General education classrooms and special education services often do not intersect, leading to silos in education (Stolz, 2021).

Barry Richmond coined the term systems thinking in 1987 (Arnold & Wade, 2015). Over the years, several definitions have been used in various fields (Nadav et al., 2021). Although there is no well-accepted definition, there are two clear constructs of meaning. The first is seeing the whole beyond its parts. Administrators must be able to see past the individual parts to see the system as a whole. The second construct is the opposite. Administrators must be able to see the parts in the context of the whole. This construct is thinking about the individual components as a part of the entire system while considering the relationships among these components (Shaked & Schechter, 2019). "System thinking is an approach advocating thinking about any given issue as a whole, emphasizing the interrelationships between its components rather than the components themselves" (Shaked & Schechter, 2017, pp. 699–700).

Systems thinking requires a shift in perspectives. Educators must view education not as one teacher providing information to many students but as multiple resources

available to each student. "This shift can accurately be characterized as moving from an emphasis on instruction to an emphasis on learning" (Betts, 1992). This shift in thinking allows educators to concentrate on the components and their interrelationships (Case, 1992). "Systems thinking enables principals to better understand processes that occur and outcomes that manifest in their school settings" (Nadav et al., 2021, p. 581). This study is guided by a systems thinking framework.

Purpose Statement

This study aimed to explore P-12 school administrators' experiences, opinions, and perceptions of SLPs in written language instruction and RTI. SLPs are trained in oral and written language development and disorders but are often not permitted to work with general education students. This study also considers the differences between P-12 school principals, assistant principals, special education directors, and assistant special education directors regarding their years of administration, geographical location, and prior work experience.

Research Questions

The specific research questions addressed in this study were as follows:

1. Is there a significant difference between P-12 school administrators' roles and their experiences with speech-language pathologists' involvement in written language instruction, opinions of factors that influence the SLPs' provision of written language instruction, and their perceptions of SLPs' qualifications to help children develop specific skills important for reading?
2. To what extent do gender and school type predict the perceived training or education of SLPs in RTI?

3. Is there a significant difference between the administrators participating in Child Find, their geographical region, and their view of RTI as preventative or as instruction, intervention, or implementation?
4. Is there a significant predictive relationship between the grade level of P-12 school administrators and their perceptions of SLPs' qualifications to help children develop specific skills important for reading?

Justification

Since 2010, ASHA has supported the role of SLPs in early literacy instruction in general education. Early literacy skills are directly tied to oral language skills (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2001; Catts, 1993; Lyon, 1998; Roth et al., 2002). Unfortunately, SLPs report many factors that affect their ability to work in this preventive role in the general education environment. These factors include large caseloads, lack of administrative support, adverse school culture, absence of collaboration, and large amounts of paperwork (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2020; Brandel, 2020; Sylvan, 2018).

Many authors have emphasized the importance of collaboration between SLPs and general educators (Gomez-Najarro, 2020; Pfeiffer et al., 2019; Watson & Bellon-Harn, 2014; Watson et al., 2020; Young & Bowers, 2018). However, no articles have identified educational administrators' views of an SLP in the role of general education written language instruction and the prevention of literacy deficits in the RTI process. Because of educational administrators' leadership within the school setting, exploring their reported experiences, opinions, and perceptions of P-12 school administrators with SLPs in written language instruction and the RTI process would be helpful. Schools and

districts could benefit from understanding how an SLP can impact or potentially prevent special education referrals. Students who struggle to grasp language-learning concepts within the general education setting would benefit from early intervention and potentially do not need further remediation.

School administrators are tasked with increasing adequate yearly progress (AYP). They must look for unique ways to grow underperforming students who struggle with literacy skills. Addressing a student's needs before a more significant literacy disorder develops can significantly improve their potential for success throughout their academic career.

Definitions

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA): The national professional and credentialing organization for audiologists, speech-language pathologists, scientists of speech, language, and hearing, support personnel, and students (*About the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA)*, n.d.).

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA): This federal legislation replaced the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in 2015. This legislation allowed for flexibility for states to create their own academic goals, ways of reporting, accountability systems, and other obligations (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2016b).

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA): Federal legislation that provided funding for early intervention services removed the need for the discrepancy model to determine special education eligibility for learning disabilities and prevent unnecessary and costly special education (Yell, 2018).

Individualized Education Program (IEP): This team of professionals was established through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004. This team determines whether a child has a specific learning disability and plans appropriate interventions and academic goals for the student (Bradley et al., 2005).

Multitiered Systems of Support (MTSS): A problem-solving system providing a continuum of services to prevent academic failure and behavioral problems in the school environment (Pullen et al., 2018).

No Child Left Behind (NCLB): A federal bipartisan-supported act that significantly changed public schools in the United States. These changes included the curriculum, federal regulations, and yearly standardized tests (Jorgensen & Hoffman, 2003).

Oral language: Foundation for learning to read and write; the words we use and how we use them to share ideas and get what we want (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2001).

Response to Intervention (RTI): This is an alternate process for identifying students with learning disabilities established through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (Berkeley et al., 2020).

Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP): Master's level or beyond trained professional who is an expert in speech, hearing, language, fluency, and physical and cognitive disorders that influence communication (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2016b).

Written language: reading, writing, and the related processes (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2001).

Delimitations of the Study

The following delimitations restrict the scope of this study:

- The study participants were limited to P-12 school administrators in public schools in the United States. School administrators include principals, assistant principals, special education directors, and assistant special education directors identified as having a role in the administration of P-12 schools.
- The study participants were limited to P-12 school administrators who belonged to national school administration organizations or were listed on each state Department of Education's public website. These organizations include the Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE), National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), AASA, School Superintendents Association, National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), American Federation of School Administrators (AFSA), and Council for Exceptional Children (CEC).

Assumptions of the Study

The following assumptions were made in this study.

- While the number of special education referrals and preventative services provided are not observed or measured in this study, it is assumed that the information assessed is vital to decreasing special education referrals through the prevention and the RTI process.
- Although participation in this study was voluntary, it was assumed that the sample obtained was representative of the population of P-12 principals,

assistant principals, special education directors, and assistant special education directors serving students in public P-12 schools.

Overview of Methodology

Survey research was used to gather data on school administrators' views and beliefs about SLPs in the MTSS or RTI process. Data about the knowledge of P-12 principals and special education directors concerning MTSS and RTI were collected. Following approval of this project by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at The University of Southern Mississippi, questionnaires were emailed to national school administrator organizations with requests to forward the questionnaire to their members and posted on the social media sites of school administrators. The author had no direct contact with P-12 principals or special education directors; however, the survey distribution by national organizations implies permission to complete the survey. Although demographic data were gathered, all participants remained anonymous. This information included geographical locations and was used to look for regional trends. Following data collection, the relationship between the number of years working as a school administrator, previous employment in the field of education, and the grade level of the P-12 school administrator was studied to determine the experiences, opinions, and perceptions of SLPs in written language instruction and RTI.

CHAPTER II – LITERATURE REVIEW

History of Multitiered Systems of Support and Response to Intervention

Federal Legislation

In January 2002, President George W. Bush enacted the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). This bipartisan-supported act significantly changed public schools in the United States. Some changes included the curriculum, federal regulations, and yearly standardized tests. To implement these modifications, local educational agencies (LEAs) received flexibility and control over federal funding (Jorgensen & Hoffman, 2003). NCLB's goal was to have all students scoring "proficient" in reading and math by 2014 (Montgomery, 2008). Schools that consistently failed to meet adequate yearly progress (AYP) received more regulations and lost some autonomy (Lozo, 2004). Funds were also available for teachers to receive training in scientifically based instructional practices. Supporters held that these practices would strengthen teachers' instructional techniques and help students succeed in end-of-year standardized assessments (Jorgensen & Hoffman, 2003). NCLB of 2001 mandated that all students be proficient in core subject areas by 2014. Four subgroups were designated for targeted monitoring: special education students, students from impoverished backgrounds, English language learners (ELL), and students from diverse backgrounds. Special education had the most subjective enrollment criteria, making it the subgroup with the most adverse effects on schools. The school would benefit if many of these students could learn in a general education classroom with support and avoid special education. This concept caught the attention of many school administrators because the enrollment criteria for these special services could be considered subjective (Montgomery, 2008).

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was reauthorized in 2004 as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA). IDEIA provided funding for early intervention services, removed the need for the discrepancy model to determine special education eligibility for learning disabilities, defined Child Find, and prevented unnecessary and costly special education (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2001; Ennis et al., 2017; Montgomery, 2008; Yell, 2018). It allotted up to 15% of special education funds to provide Tier 1 and Tier 2 services in Response to Intervention (RTI) for students with academic differences, behavioral difficulties, or both (Johnston, 2011; Sylvan, 2018). The RTI process provides an alternative to the discrepancy model for determining learning disabilities (Bineham et al., 2014; Hudson & McKenzie, 2016; Lembke et al., 2010). IDEIA is a special education law, whereas RTI is a general education practice. Child Find activities include public awareness, identification of students with disabilities, eligibility determination, and enrollment in special education services (Ennis et al., 2017). Early detection of inadequate speech and language development using RTI was intended to keep more students in general education and minimize caseloads for special educators in the hope that special education would not be required (Montgomery, 2008). IDEIA provides general education students with targeted intervention services and consistent progress monitoring in a general education setting. These services determined whether a student could succeed academically following scientifically based interventions. If the students were successful, they would not need special education services (Montgomery, 2008).

Although funding through IDEIA is available, states and local educational agencies (LEAs) use a limited amount of this funding to assist children who have difficulty in general education classes (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2016b). IDEA reauthorization allowed LEAs to spend some of their funds on early intervention services (EIS). These funds can be used for professional development, evaluation, and intervention. LEAs who use these funds for EIS must report to state educational agencies (SEAs) about the services provided and report the number of students who received these services compared to the number of students who eventually qualified for special education services (Yell, 2018).

President Barack Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) on December 10, 2015. ESSA allowed states and local districts to use Title I and IDEIA funds to develop "innovative, evidence-based approaches" to help struggling students in the general education classroom (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2016a, p. 8). RTI was established in IDEA, whereas MTSS was established in ESSA. It is a more comprehensive system of support that incorporates behavioral and social-emotional learning into academics. However, RTI can fall under the MTSS framework (Al Otaiba et al., 2019). Specialized instructional support personnel (SISPs) can provide these intervention services (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2016a). Literacy Education for All, Results for the Nation (LEARN) is a component of ESSA. It provides grants to schools to increase literacy instruction for students who are at risk of academic failure (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2016a). However, the definition of the risk for reading difficulties is not without some debate (Lembke et al., 2010). This legislation includes funds for supporting the employment of SISPs.

ESSA provides services to struggling students in K-12 grades through coordinated early intervention services (CEIS). A strong emphasis is placed on services for children in K-3rd grades. These prevention services from CEIS may result in students being moved to special education services or not being identified as students with disabilities. It is possible that these students only required extra assistance to strengthen their weaknesses. This specialized instruction ultimately saves the district money, time, and resources, but more importantly, students receive support to succeed in the general education classroom. Even though the IDEA's special education monies permit CEIS, general education students are the ones who receive its benefits (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2016a).

Multitiered Systems of Support (MTSS) and Response to Intervention (RTI) are often considered interchangeable terms to describe schoolwide tiered systems of instructional and behavioral support (Powell, 2018; Yell, 2018). However, Sylvan (2018, 2021) disputes this concept. She believes RTI and MTSS are not synonymous. RTI was developed before MTSS (Sylvan, 2021), is data-driven, and examines how students respond to an intervention (Sylvan, 2018). Data were used to make eligibility and service-delivery decisions to ensure that students were successful, regardless of the intervention tier. MTSS includes RTI and is a larger framework. It also determines services, including positive behavioral interventions and support (PBIS) or other tiered intervention systems (Sylvan, 2018). In her review of MTSS and RTI, Powell (2018) differentiated between the two systems. She described RTI as focusing on instructional levels of support. In contrast, MTSS is a more extensive system that looks at the "effectiveness across all levels of instruction, curriculum, assessment, and agencies of

implementation" (Powell, 2018, p. 142). Federal Special Education Law requires pre-referral interventions before a request for an evaluation to identify a possible disability can take place. This law does not contain the specifics of these interventions. This lack of detail has created a variety of intervention methods across schools, districts, and states (Burns et al., 2017). Although the terms and methods may not be synonymous, their objectives are identical.

> The goals of RTI and MTSS systems are to identify students with learning and behavioral challenges who are not succeeding in the general education setting and move them to a tier in which they are provided the type and degree of support they need to succeed. (Yell, 2018, p. 26)

Intervention, Instruction, or Prevention

The purposes of MTSS and RTI are sometimes as fluid as the usage of the terms. The "I" in RTI can have different meanings to two different groups of professionals. One group considers the "I" to be for intervention (Pullen et al., 2018). This group has also been described as the IDEA group because it is grounded in federal legislation (Fuchs et al., 2010). The focus of RTI for these professionals is on students receiving evidence-based instruction and determining how well they progress with these services. Lack of progress promotes the need for special education (Fuchs et al., 2010; Montgomery, 2008; Pullen et al., 2018).

In the Response to Intervention group, there are three tiers of support. Tier 1 is intended for all students and occurs in general education classrooms. It consists of scientifically based reading instruction in the general education classroom (Lembke et al., 2010). Tier 2 was intended for non-responsive students. Specialty-trained personnel can

easily replicate these scripted or canned programs in small groups of students for specific frequencies and durations (Fuchs et al., 2010; Lembke et al., 2010; Pullen et al., 2018). Specialized employees frequently perform these interventions in special education classrooms or intervention laboratories (Pullen et al., 2018).

These interventions involve gathering data. If the student makes sufficient progress in Tier 2, the student is moved back to Tier 1 instruction. If there is a lack of achievement, the student can be referred to special education (Fuchs et al., 2010; Montgomery, 2008; Pullen et al., 2018). Some consider the most intensive instruction at Tier 3 to be special education (Lembke et al., 2010). Due to the observations made during tier-based interventions, Montgomery (2008) believes that formal testing is not required. Other researchers argue that RTI does not replace the requirement for a comprehensive evaluation. It provides additional data to be considered by a multidisciplinary team. (Fuchs et al., 2010; Yell, 2018).

The second group considers the "I" in RTI to be for instruction (Pullen et al., 2018). This group has also been called the NCLB group (Fuchs et al., 2010). The focus for these professionals is bridging general education and special education through a standards-based approach (Fuchs et al., 2010) so that all students achieve academic success and academic failures are prevented (Montgomery, 2008; Pullen et al., 2018). According to the NCLB group, general and special education are "disconnected silos" (Fuchs et al., 2010, p. 304). General or special education students can stay in whatever tier of instruction is needed as long as necessary to be successful. There is more focus on specialized, flexible, and individualized instruction and not on the cognitive processes. Practitioners can problem-solve and make decisions based on the student's performance,

not standardized measures or protocols (Fuchs et al., 2010). This type of RTI is most in line with MTSS (Pullen et al., 2018).

RTI was intended to provide early and intensive intervention to prevent reading difficulties and as a replacement for the IQ achievement discrepancy model (Al Otaiba et al., 2019). During the implementation, there was a shift from prevention to identification. As a prevention mechanism, it focuses on instructional methods and how teachers are experts in their fields (Johnston, 2011). Prevention of learning difficulties through RTI may help young children be ready to access the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) (Ehren et al., 2012). When RTI is implemented as prevention, changes in instruction for struggling students occur. This improves performance and academic achievement (Ehren et al., n.d.). Lembke et al. (2010) did not focus on using RTI as an identifier of learning disorders but rather on preventing reading difficulties. It evaluates all students and delivers the intervention to struggling students as needed (Lembke et al., 2010). It has been proposed that schools could reduce the number of students receiving special education services by 70% if early intervention and prevention programs were developed (McLaughlin, 2006).

MTSS, RTI, and Literacy

Schools have implemented MTSS or RTI to help reduce the number of referrals for special education evaluations. These referrals are very prevalent among students from diverse backgrounds. Early detection and intervention for students with academic issues were also aided by MTSS or RTI (Bineham et al., 2014). "Schools are using RTI as a vehicle for school improvement, providing a high-quality core program that addresses the needs of all students, and then developing or selecting robust, research-based approaches

that meet the needs of students needing more targeted or intensive instruction" (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012, p. 92).

RTI plays an integral role in literacy instruction for struggling students. Educators must fully understand literacy instruction and assessment and how they can impact students' learning. General and special educators are interested in students' success in the RTI process (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012). Many educators have confused MTSS and RTI practices. Bineham et al. (2014) found that 47% of those surveyed reported that IDEIA mandates RTI. The authors also found that 53% of educators think special education teachers must implement RTI. These findings suggest that many teachers mistakenly think RTI services are only available to students in special education settings. Nevertheless, RTI is intended to be a substitute for special education. A significant number of studies have examined the attitudes of special educators, general educators, SLPs, and administrators concerning MTSS or RTI programs (Al Otaiba et al., 2019; Bineham et al., 2014; Castro-Villarreal et al., 2014; McKenna et al., 2021; Wiener & Soodak, 2008). Despite these studies, there is a notable gap in research regarding educational administrators' views and beliefs concerning the role of SLPs in MTSS or RTI programs.

Speech-Language Pathologists

SLPs in MTSS and RTI

Speech-language pathologists (SLPs) are highly trained in the development of typical and atypical language. Many studies have linked the development of early oral language skills to the future development of literacy skills (Bishop & Adams, 1990; Catts, 1993; Catts et al., 1999, 2001; Pennington & Bishop, 2009). In 1973, Gruenewald

and Pollack endorsed SLPs helping teachers with early literacy skills. In modern times, RTI services provide a link between helping children in general education and the SLP, who is frequently considered a special education provider. SLPs may provide direct and indirect services through all tiers of the RTI process (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2010).

Before implementing MTSS or RTI, students either received services from an SLP through the special education process or did not receive any SLP services (Sylvan, 2018). Montgomery (2008) supports SLP services inside and outside special education using an RTI model. SLPs can consult general educators concerning Tier I instruction and provide Tier 2 and 3 instruction to students in small groups (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012). According to the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), SLPs play a direct role in developing literacy skills in children and adolescents with communication disorders. However, ASHA also supports SLPs who contribute to the literacy efforts of struggling students to learn to read. SLPs are essential in preventing academic failure in students, which may be most successful through RTI practices (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2001).

ASHA surveys its school-based SLP members every two years. In 2018, 27% of the surveyed SLPs reported providing general education services. In the same survey, the respondents reported spending one hour per week on MTSS or RTI activities (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2018). In 2020, 36% of SLPs surveyed reported serving students with reading and writing difficulties (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2020). These surveys found discrepancies between geographical regions and the involvement of SLPs in MTSS or RTI. Only 18% of SLPs in the West

South Central United States reported having a role in MTSS or RTI; however, SLPs in the Mountain Division were involved in this role 47% of the time. SLPs in the East South Central United States reported being engaged in direct services in general education 16% of the time, in contrast to 34% in New England (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2020).

SLPs' Roles in Schools

SLPs play six critical roles in public schools. SLPs can work across all grade levels, serve a wide range of disorders, guarantee educational significance, provide unique contributions to the curriculum, emphasize the relationship between language and literacy, and provide culturally competent services to all students. SLPs perform a unique set of functions based on their specialized language knowledge. They provide support for addressing the linguistic and metalinguistic underpinnings of curriculum learning for students with impairments and those in danger of academic failure or difficulty in the classroom (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2010). School-based SLPs play a critical role in supporting curriculum mastery through the CCSS. In RTI, SLPs can help students access CCSS through the tier system. The CCSS provides SLPs a means to define their leadership responsibilities in an educational setting. Through their example, SLPs can help the profession expand its definition of a language and literacy specialist from the constrictive "speech teacher" label and practice (Ehren et al., 2012). The links between the linguistic activities of speaking, reading, writing, and listening have been supported by recent research. SLPs play a crucial role in the literacy development of students with communication disorders and those who struggle academically or are at risk of dropping out (American Speech-Language-Hearing

Association, 2010; Powell, 2018). According to a recent study, students who received school-based language interventions improved their reading and language abilities considerably. Additionally, SLPs may be partially responsible for this development (Farquharson et al., 2015).

SLPs also have six responsibilities within the school setting. SLPs help students meet their academic goals through prevention, assessment, intervention, program design, data collection and analysis, and compliance (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2010). Some specialists consider RTI to be a preventive program; however, many SLPs do not realize IDEA includes SLP services for prevention through RTI (Rudebusch & Wiechmann, 2013). In the RTI process, SLPs employ evidence-based procedures (EBPs) to prevent academic failure. To satisfy the needs of students with disabilities in their least restricted environments, SLPs must create schoolwide programs. SLPs may also provide services to struggling students as needed (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2010).

Collaboration with SLPs and Other Educators

Collaboration is also crucial for meeting students' needs in a school-based setting. SLPs offer services that support a school's academic curriculum. As a result, SLPs' distinctive contributions enhance and complement those of other professions that also possess unique perspectives and abilities. It is crucial to collaborate with general education instructors who are generally in charge of curriculum and instruction (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2010). RTI requires educators to re-evaluate how they interact with each other (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012). SLPs should collaborate closely with other specialists in the school setting. These include but are not

limited to social workers, physical therapists, reading specialists, literacy coaches, and special education teachers. This collaboration can provide additional observations of the students and act as a resource to others by sharing their observations. These concepts are based on the Bowen family system (MacKay & Brown, 2013).

Another critical professional with which the SLP should collaborate is the administrator. Collaboration between district and school administration is essential to develop and administer programs that benefit students (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2010). Collaboration between SLPs and other educators with experience in written language instruction is influenced by how well others, including administrators, understand the role of SLPs (Watson et al., 2020).

Collaboration may be a crucial part of the educational system for SLPs, but several factors can make this difficult. Large caseloads often impact an SLP's ability to collaborate (Sylvan, 2018). This difficulty could be remediated using a workload rather than a caseload approach. The workload approach considers all activities an SLP can perform in a school setting per ASHA. A caseload approach correlates with the number of students served through IEPs or 504 plans (Powell, 2018). Suppose the amount of time needed to help each student adequately was calculated using the ASHA Workload Calculator instead of assigning students solely based on quantity. In that case, there might be enough time in an SLP's schedule to collaborate and participate in MTSS or RTI more easily (*ASHA Workload Calculator*, n.d.).

Another barrier to collaboration is time, which is directly related to the number of students an SLP must serve. In 2022, SLPs who were surveyed identified large amounts of paperwork (79%), high workload/caseload (58%), and limited time for collaboration

(50%) as the most significant professional challenges for school-based SLPS (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2022). Due to these constraints, many SLPs do not want to add other tasks. RTI is not intended to increase the already heavy workload of an SLP. It is intended to reallocate time to concentrate on early detection and prevention. RTI was created to decrease the number of referrals to special education and maintain more students in regular education. (Ehren et al., n.d.). It was seen as a way to reduce the "time, paperwork, and caseloads of special educators, including SLPs" (Montgomery, 2008, p. 15).

Another obstacle is a lack of guidelines. IDEA is highly ambiguous. It does not impose requirements on how general and special educators should collaborate (Bineham et al., 2014). There is also a lack of parental and administrative support for this collaboration (Sylvan, 2018). In 2022, SLPs who were surveyed reported limited support from the administration (24%) and a limited understanding of an SLP's role by others (38%) as being a challenge for school-based SLPs (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2022). This lack of collaboration could create educational silos. Educators specialize in helping specific populations in school settings, which often forms silos that keep professionals from sharing information, communicating, and learning with each other (Stolz, 2021).

Educational Administration

School leadership is critical in implementing and maintaining an RTI or MTSS program. Successful program implementation requires resources, assessments, interventions, and professionals, along with strong educational leaders. Educational leaders influence others by building a shared goal and focusing on desired outcomes

(Billingsley et al., 2018). "Successful RTI programs rely on the leadership of a strong principal or designated leader who has budgetary power and the ability to bring all educators to the same table to share professional development, children, time, space, money, and curriculum resources" (Ehren et al., n.d., para. 12). This often means a change in school culture (Pullen et al., 2018).

In 2020, 29% of reading teachers surveyed stated that administrative support was needed to include the SLP in reading instruction in RTI. However, school administrators were unlikely to favor SLPs' involvement with reading instruction. The authors theorize that a lack of support from administrators could impact collaboration, professional development opportunities, working together on Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals, and possibly the types of services students receive (Watson et al., 2020). The roles and responsibilities of SLPs have significantly changed over the past decade. Many educational community members may not understand these new or adjusted roles and responsibilities. The SLP needs to communicate their unique skills to administrators (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2001; Lozo, 2004).

Principals and special education directors must fully understand the role of professionals in their schools to facilitate collaboration and shared leadership. The principals set the stage for the implementation of RTI but often depend on the work of teachers and specialized personnel to make decisions. Others keep the principal in the loop as to what is happening but can make the best decisions for the students. Additionally, principals must anticipate cooperation between teachers and specialized staff. Teachers must be expected to collaborate and lead. Principals must encourage the leadership of others (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012). Specialized instructional support staff

(SISPs) are urged to inform state and local officials deciding on educational policies about their classroom functions and services to students with and without disabilities (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2016a). An SLP is considered to be an SISP. Administrative and coworker support is needed to increase the role of SLPs in the classroom (Brandel, 2020). SLPs are in the middle of complex systems where they can generate change. Policymakers, administrators, researchers, and credentialing organizations are above the tiers of complex systems. Below are those who need services (Selin et al., 2022).

CHAPTER III – METHODOLOGY

Overview

This quantitative and cross-sectional study aimed to determine several factors that impact the utilization of SLPs by P-12 school principals and special education directors in MTSS and RTI practices. Survey research was used to measure these factors: P-12 school principals' and special education directors' beliefs and views of SLPs' knowledge and skills to provide intervention for students with written language problems, P-12 school principals' and special education directors' definitions of RTI, and demographic information that may impact RTI implementation.

Rationale

Federal regulation has directed the use of MTSS and RTI over the past 20 years as a strategy to identify pupils with learning disabilities and prevent academic failure in students. Differing professions frequently have different interpretations of the meanings and aims of these practices (Powell, 2018; Sylvan, 2018, 2021; Yell, 2018). Some experts view RTI as an intervention, while others consider it an instruction (Pullen et al., 2018). A third group of professionals considers RTI a means of prevention (Al Otaiba et al., 2019). Regardless of the goal, RTI aims to bring together general and special education professionals to help provide early intervention to struggling students, especially with literacy skills, and reduce the number of students referred to special education (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012; Bineham et al., 2014).

SLPs are uniquely linked to literacy instruction because of their extensive training in both typical and atypical language development. These oral language skills are necessary for future literacy development (Bishop & Adams, 1990; Catts, 1993; Catts et

al., 1999, 2001; Pennington & Bishop, 2009). SLPs can serve as a bridge between general education academics and special education intervention services. This connection must be established through collaboration with others. However, this is frequently hampered by several circumstances, including a lack of time, misunderstandings, misinterpretation of the role of the SLP, lack of administrative support, and heavy caseloads. (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2022). These factors and others directly relate to the work of principals and special education directors.

Research Questions

The specific research questions to be addressed in this study are:

1. Is there a significant difference between P-12 school administrators' roles and their experiences with speech-language pathologists' involvement in written language instruction, opinions of factors that influence the SLPs' provision of written language instruction, and their perceptions of SLPs' qualifications to help children develop specific skills important for reading?
2. To what extent do gender and school type predict the perceived training or education of SLPs in RTI?
3. Is there a significant difference between the administrators participating in Child Find, their geographical region, and their view of RTI as preventative or as instruction, intervention, or implementation?
4. Is there a significant predictive relationship between the grade level of P-12 school administrators and their perceptions of SLPs' qualifications to help children develop specific skills important for reading?

Research Procedures

Survey research was used to gather data concerning P-12 school principals', assistant principals', special education directors', and assistant special education directors' experiences, opinions, and perceptions of SLPs in written language instruction and RTI. The P-12 school administrators' definitions of RTI, demographic information, and the grade level they serve were also analyzed. Demographic data on P-12 school administrators, including gender, race, age, grade level served, highest degree, years of work, other professional roles, and geographic location, were collected.

Participants

The target participants were P-12 principals, assistant principals, special education directors, and assistant special education directors. To access these populations, the author contacted professional organizations such as the American Association of School Administrators and the Council of Administrators of Special Education to request email lists for their members. Following approval of this project by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at The University of Southern Mississippi, questionnaires were emailed to the members of these organizations. They were also posted on social media groups related to school administrators. The author had no direct contact with the participants. The survey was voluntary, and participants could discontinue the survey at any time without incurring any penalties. All participants remained anonymous; however, they were asked to identify their work regions to identify potential regional trends. The questionnaire took 30-35 minutes to complete.

The Instrument

No instrument was found that gathers data on the experiences, opinions, and perspectives of SLPs in written language instruction and RTI. Several instruments have been developed to gather data on educators' views, opinions, and perspectives concerning RTI in school settings (Al Otaiba et al., 2019; Barnes & Burchard, 2016; Fan et al., 2018; Spear-Swerling & Cheesman, 2012). Some instruments have even been developed to gather data on the perspectives of SLPs (McKenna et al., 2021; Sanger et al., 2012), special education directors (Wiener & Soodak, 2008), or principals on RTI practices (Swindlehurst et al., 2015).

This study used an instrument designed by the researcher, which was drawn from Watson et al. (2020) and Sanger et al. (2012). These instruments were used to measure different variables: the Watson Scale (Watson et al., 2020) was used to measure the experiences with SLPs, the perception of SLPs' qualifications to help children develop specific skills important for reading, and the opinions of factors that influence SLPs' provision of written language instruction, and the Sanger Scale (Sanger et al., 2012) was used to measure perceptions of SLPs' training/education in RTI, opinions on RTI as a prevention model, opinions on RTI as an instruction/intervention/implementation model, and opinion on the impact/effectiveness of RTI.

Watson's (2020) original instrument gathered data on the participants' demographics, "perceptions of SLPs providing services to children with written language difficulties, and collaborative practices and experiences with SLPs" (Watson et al., 2020, p. 306). The questionnaire consisted of 16 questions, excluding demographic information. The questions included Likert scales, mandatory selection options, and text boxes for

entering specific information. There was also one open-ended question to gather additional comments from participants. The Likert scale questions that composed specific subscales were used for this current study. These subscales were experiences with SLPs, perceptions of SLPs' qualifications to help children develop specific skills important for reading, and opinions of factors that influence SLPs' provision of written language instruction. Table 1 details the questions from this instrument used for each construct. The entire instrument can be found in Appendix D.

The original instrument by Sanger (2012) contained 40 Likert-scale items. Of these, one contained multiple components. This resulted in 47 Likert-scale items. The first section of the questionnaire contained six items on demographics and professional background. These items were: "profession, highest degree earned, date of completion of the highest degree, present work setting, years employed in the current work setting, and geographic location" (Sanger et al., 2012, p. 4). The second section contained seven items on professional preparation for RTI and the participant's current involvement in its implementation. Four of the seven items in this section allowed participants to go into more detail regarding their participation and role. The third section contained 47 Likert scale items that created six subscales. For this study, the questions that composed the following subscales were used: training and education; prevention model; instruction, intervention, and implementation; and impact/effectiveness. Table 1 also details the questions from the instrument used for each construct. The complete instrument can be found in Appendix D.

Table 1 Subscale Details from Current Instrument

Construct	Questions from Instrument
Watson Subscale – Experiences	Questions 1-7
Watson Subscale – Opinions	Questions 8-14
Watson Subscale – Perceptions	Questions 15-23
Sanger Subscale – Training/Education	Questions 26-28
Sanger Subscale – Prevention Model	Questions 29, 30, 35
Sanger Subscale – Instruction/Intervention/Implementation	Questions 31-34, 36-38
Sanger Subscale – Impact/Effectiveness	Questions 39-41

Additional questions were added to measure demographic and regional information. The regional question related to the geographical location of the school administrator and utilized the answer choices provided by ASHA (2022). Each question was assigned a numerical value according to agreement, neither agreement nor disagreement, and disagreement using a 5-point scale (Watson et al., 2020). The numerical values were used to calculate the mean values. The mean ranges were used to interpret the agreement, disagreement, or neither agreement nor disagreement with an item. Table 2 lists the interpretations.

Table 2 Interpretation of Mean Scores

Mean range	Description
3.51 to 5.00	Agreement
2.50 to 3.50	Neither agreement nor disagreement
1.00 to 2.49	Disagreement

Data Analysis

A one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to examine the first research question and determine if a significant difference exists between P-12 school administrators' roles and their experiences with speech-language pathologists' involvement in written language instruction, opinions of factors that influence the SLPs' provision of written language instruction, and their perceptions of SLPs' qualifications to help children develop specific skills important for reading. The second research question was addressed by a factorial analysis of variance (ANOVA) to determine to what extent gender and school type predict the perceived training or education of SLPs in RTI. The third research question was analyzed using a two-way MANOVA to determine if there is a significant difference between the administrators participating in Child Find and their geographical region and their view of RTI as preventative or as instruction, intervention, or implementation. The final research question was addressed to determine if there was a significant predictive relationship between the grade level of P-12 school administrators and their perceptions of SLPs' qualifications to help children develop specific skills important for reading.

Human Participants and Ethics Precautions

This project will seek approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of The University of Southern Mississippi. Participation in this study will be entirely voluntary, and participants can discontinue participation at any time without risk. All responses will remain anonymous, and data collected will be securely maintained according to the guidelines of the IRB of The University of Southern Mississippi. Potential risk to participants includes workday disruption due to the time needed to complete the

questionnaire. Additionally, participants may perceive psychological risks because they are asked about knowledge of RTI and MTSS practices.

CHAPTER IV – RESULTS

This study aimed to determine how different factors predict the experiences, opinions, and perceptions of P-12 school administrators regarding SLPs in written language instruction and RTI. These factors were P-12 school administrator roles, number of years as a school administrator, location of the school, previous employment in the field of education, and the definition of RTI. Survey research was used to collect the data. Four research questions were used to guide this study.

1. Is there a significant difference between P-12 school administrators' roles and their experiences with speech-language pathologists' involvement in written language instruction, opinions of factors that influence the SLPs' provision of written language instruction, and their perceptions of SLPs' qualifications to help children develop specific skills important for reading?
2. To what extent do gender and school type predict the perceived training or education of SLPs in RTI?
3. Is there a significant difference between the administrators participating in Child Find, their geographical region, and their view of RTI as preventative or as instruction, intervention, or implementation?
4. Is there a significant predictive relationship between the grade level of P-12 school administrators and their perceptions of SLPs' qualifications to help children develop specific skills important for reading?

Participants

To collect a sample of P-12 school administrators, the author conducted an internet search for national associations for school principals, assistant principals, and special education directors. The author asked the associations for their members' email addresses or to forward the research request to their membership. The author also conducted an internet search for each state's department of education. Public email lists found at each site were used to request participation in the study. Approximately 37,000 e-mails were sent.

The author received 352 responses; however, five participants did not consent to participate, nine were not currently practicing, and five did not meet the sample population requirements for the study (superintendent, counselor, executive director, etc.). Those participants were removed. Forty-three responses missing 20% or more of the data were removed (Downey & King, 1998). Those with less than 20% of missing data were imputed based on the subscale mean in which the data were missing. Two hundred and eighty-five responses were used for the analysis.

Demographics

More than 65% of those who completed the survey were female, and almost 70% were white. These findings were consistent with recent results from the National Teacher and Principal Survey from the National Center for Education Statistics at the Institute of Education Sciences (Taie & Lewis, 2022) and *Voices from the Classroom 2023: A Survey of America's Educators* (Educators for Excellence, 2023). Taie and Lewis (2022) reported that 57% of their respondents were female, and 78% were white. Educators for Excellence found similar results for ethnicity, with 78% of the survey participants being

white. Additional demographic information is presented in Table 3. The sample included administrators practicing in 23 states, with most of the participants from Texas. See Figure 1 for regional trends.

Table 3 Demographic Information

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	96	33.7%
Female	186	65.3%
Prefer not to say	3	1.1%
Ethnicity		
White	198	69.5%
Black or African American	54	18.9%
American Indian or Alaska Native	2	0.7%
Asian	4	1.4%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1	0.4%
Hispanic or Latinx	20	7.1%
Other	6	2.1%
Age		
25-34 years old	11	3.9%
35-44 years old	74	26.0%
45-54 years old	132	46.3%
55-64 years old	65	22.8%
65 years and older	3	1.1%

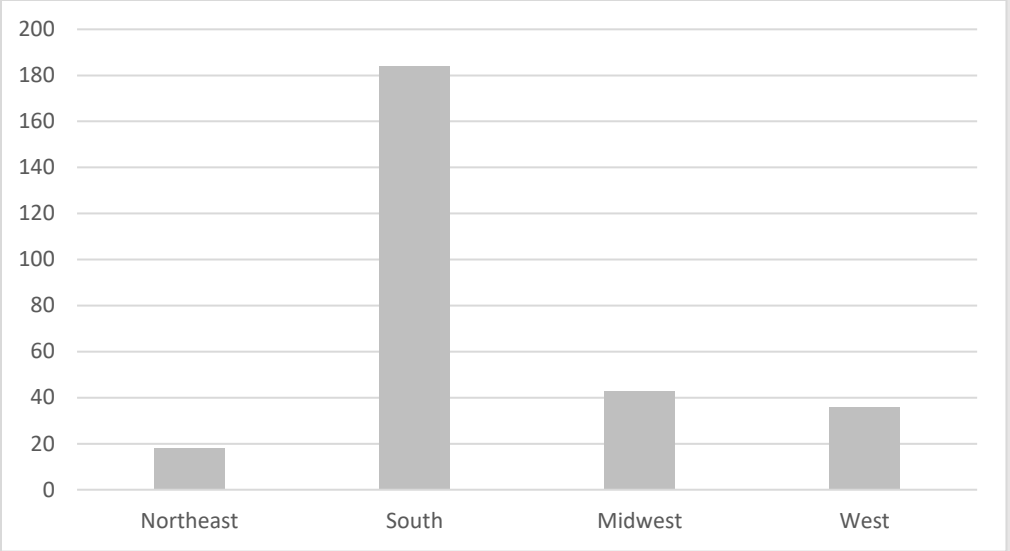

Figure 1. Region of current employment.

Almost 90% of those surveyed were administrators in a general education setting. These roles include principal and assistant principal. More than half (51.9%) had master's degrees and worked in elementary schools (47.4%). According to the United States Department of Education (2008), elementary schools consist of prekindergarten or kindergarten students through 4th or 7th grade. Almost half of the participants (49.5%) had worked as an administrator for 2-10 years. See Table 4 for additional professional demographics.

Table 4 Professional Demographic Information

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Administration Type		
General Education	252	88.4%
Special Education	33	11.6%
Highest Degree		
Bachelor's degree	2	0.7%
Master's degree	148	51.9%
Specialist degree	52	18.2%
Doctoral degree (Ed.D. or Ph.D.)	83	29.1%
School Category		
Elementary (PK/K thru 4^{th} or 7^{th})	135	47.4%
Middle school (5^{th}-9^{th})	56	19.6%
High school (9^{th} thru 12^{th})	38	13.3%
PK/K thru 12^{th}	29	10.2%
Other	27	9.5%
Years in Administration		
Less than 2 years	22	7.7%
2-10 years	141	49.5%
11-20 years	91	31.9%
21-40 years	31	10.9%

Participants were asked about their professional roles before becoming administrators. The majority (63.2%) were in the general education setting. Most (62.1%) had practiced for 2-10 years before moving into an administrative role. Of the 285 participants included in the analysis, 127 had a previous role as general education

teachers in math or language arts. More than 20% of the respondents indicated they were in neither general nor special education before becoming administrators. The respondents identified their previous educational roles as athletics, music, dance, art teachers, psychologists, instructional coaches, reading specialists, and speech-language pathologists. See Table 5.

Table 5 Prior Educational Roles

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Prior Role		
General Education	180	63.2%
Special Education	38	13.3%
Both General and Special Education	6	2.1%
Neither General nor Special Education	61	21.4%
Years in Other Role(s)		
Less than 2 years	5	1.8%
2-10 years	177	62.1%
11-20 years	89	31.2%
21-40 years	14	4.9%

Instrumentation

The Watson Scale

The experiences, opinions, and perceptions of school administrators with speech-language pathologists (SLPs) in written language instruction were measured using a survey developed by Maggie Watson and her colleagues. The original survey measured collaboration between reading teachers and speech-language pathologists (M. Watson et al., 2020). This survey is known as The Watson Scale for the remainder of this paper.

The participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with a given statement, from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). The means and standard deviations for each subscale are presented in Table 5. The agreement level was interpreted using the means based on the following ranges: 3.51 to 5.00 agreement, 2.50 to 3.50 neither agreement nor disagreement, and 1.00 to 2.49 as disagreement (Sanger et al., 1995).

The experiences subscale contained seven items. These items determined SLPs' perceived experiences in written language instruction. The participants' mean scores for this subscale ranged from 1.00 to 5.00, with an overall mean for the sample of 3.44 and a standard deviation of .79. Nearly 50 percent of the participants had mean scores between 3.51 and 5.00. This indicates agreement with positive experiences with SLPs in written language instruction.

The opinions subscale also contained seven items. The mean of each participant's score on these seven items was used to determine the opinions of the factors influencing SLPs providing written language instruction. The participants' total scores for this subscale ranged from a mean of 1.00 to 5.00, with an overall mean for the sample of 3.44

and a standard deviation of .62. Forty-six percent of the participants had mean scores between 3.51 and 5.00, indicating agreement with the positive opinions of SLPs regarding written language instruction.

The perceptions subscale contained nine items. The mean of each participant's scores on these nine items was used to determine school administrators' perceptions of SLP's qualifications to help children develop specific reading skills. The participants' total scores for this subscale ranged from a mean of 1.00 to 5.00, with an overall mean for the sample of 3.95 and a standard deviation of .69. Over three-fourths of those surveyed had mean scores between 3.51 and 5.00, which suggests agreement with SLPs having the qualifications to help children with skills needed for reading development.

The Sanger Scale

The opinions of school administrators concerning SLPs and RTI practices were measured using a survey developed by Dixie Sanger and her colleagues. It was originally used to measure the opinions of SLPs on the RTI process (Sanger et al., 1995). For this project, the survey was adapted to measure the training/education, prevention, instruction/intervention/implementation, and impact/effectiveness of SLPs in RTI. This survey is known as The Sanger Scale for the remainder of this paper.

For this section of the survey, the participants were also asked to indicate their level of agreement with a given statement, from Strongly Disagree (0) to Strongly Agree (5). The mean and standard deviation for each subscale is listed below in Table 6. The agreement level was interpreted using the means based on the following ranges: 3.51 to 5.00 agreement, 2.50 to 3.50 neither agreement nor disagreement, and 1.00 to 2.49 as disagreement (Sanger et al., 1995).

The training/education subscale contained three items. These items were used to measure school administrators' perceived level of training or education an SLP has with RTI services. The participants' total scores for this subscale ranged from a mean of 1.00 to 5.00, with an overall mean for the sample of 3.95 and a standard deviation of .73. Nearly three-fourths of those surveyed had mean scores between 3.51 and 5.00, which implies that school administrators perceive SLPs as having adequate education or training in the RTI process.

The prevention model subscale contained three items. These items were used to measure a school administrator's view of using RTI as a prevention model in the educational setting. The participants' total scores for this subscale ranged from a mean of 1.00 to 5.00, with an overall mean for the sample of 3.91 and a standard deviation of .70. Over three-fourths of those surveyed had mean scores between 3.51 and 5.00, which suggests that school administrators view RTI as a preventative model.

The Sanger Scale also measured school administrators' views of using RTI as an instruction, intervention, or implementation model in the educational setting. This subscale contained seven items. The overall mean for the sample was 4.06 with a standard deviation of .55. Slightly over 88% of those surveyed had a mean score between 3.51 and 5.00, which suggests that school administrators also view RTI as an instructional, intervention, or implementation model.

The last subscale that was measured was on the impact or effectiveness of RTI. This subscale contained three items. The participants' mean scores for this subscale ranged from 1.00 to 5.00, with an overall mean for the sample of 4.34 and a standard

deviation of .56. Over 95% of the participants agreed that RTI is impactful and effective for many students.

Table 6 Subscales

Subscale	*N*	Range	*M*	*SD*
Watson - Experiences	285	1.00 – 5.00	3.44	.79
Watson - Opinions	285	1.00 – 5.00	3.44	.62
Watson - Perceptions	285	1.00 – 5.00	3.95	.69
Sanger – Training/Education	285	1.00 – 5.00	3.95	.73
Sanger – Prevention Model	285	1.00 – 5.00	3.91	.70
Sanger – Instruction/Intervention/Implementation	285	1.00 – 5.00	4.06	.55
Sanger – Impact/Effectiveness	285	1.00 – 5.00	4.34	.56

Instrument Reliability

Reliability is defined as "whether or not an instrument can be interpreted consistently across different situations" (Field, 2018, p. 13). Reliability is the determination of the consistency of a research instrument in providing the same results. The reliability of the survey as a whole and of each subscale was measured using Cronbach's alpha. For the instrument to be considered reliable, the alpha level should be above .70 (Kline, 2013). Overall, the results of the survey exceeded this level. The alpha levels are listed in Table 7. Hinton et al. (2014) proposed four cut points for Cronbach's alpha: namely excellent reliability (value is 0.90 and above), high reliability (value 0.70 - 0.90), moderate reliability (value 0.50 - 0.70), and low reliability (value 0.50 and below). Six of the seven subscales were highly reliable or greater. The Watson – Prevention

Subscale was considered moderately reliable.

Table 7 Instrument Reliability

Section	N of items	Cronbach's α
Entire instrument	41	.936
Subscales		
Watson - Experiences	7	.839
Watson - Opinions	7	.727
Watson - Perceptions	9	.939
Sanger – Training/Education	3	.751
Sanger – Prevention Model	3	.622
Sanger – Instruction/Intervention/Implementation	7	.808
Sanger – Impact/Effectiveness	3	.740

Instrument Content Validity

The instrument was reviewed by three content experts from educational leadership, speech-language pathology, and educational statistics and research. Feedback on the instrument was considered, and revisions were made according to the suggestions.

Data Analysis

Addressing Research Question 1

A one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to address the first research question to determine whether school administrators' roles affect SLPs in written language instruction. Three measures were assessed: experiences with SLPs, opinions of factors that influence SLPs' provision of written language instruction, and perceptions of SLPs' qualifications to help children develop specific skills important for

reading. The administrator roles included P-12 school principal, P-12 assistant school principal, and special education director.

Several assumptions must be met when using MANOVA. The first three assumptions were related to the design of the study. There are two or more continuous dependent variables, the independent variable is categorical with two or more independent groups, and observations are independent (Field, 2018). This study met those assumptions. Visual inspection of boxplots revealed univariate outliers in the data. The outliers were not the result of data entry or measurement errors. These were genuinely unusual values that were retained in the analysis. Experience, opinions, and perception scores were normally distributed for each type of administrative role, as assessed by visual inspection of the Normal Q-Q plots. There was no multicollinearity, as assessed by Pearson correlation ($r = .573$, $p < .001$; $r = .379$, $p < .001$; $r = .557$, $p < .001$). Linear relationships were observed, as assessed by scatterplots. There were three multivariate outliers in the data, as assessed by Mahalanobis distance ($p > .001$). These outliers were not determined to be due to data entry or measurement errors and represented genuine data points. The sample size assumption was met (N = 285). It was decided that the three outliers would remain in the dataset because one-way MANOVA is robust to multivariate outliers. The remaining statistical analyses were performed using MANOVA. Homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices was observed, as assessed by Box's test of equality of covariance matrices ($p = .926$). Homogeneity of variance was assessed using Levene's Test of Homogeneity of Variance ($p = .468$; $p = .451$; $p = .609$).

In summary, principals, assistant principals, and special education directors have more positive perceptions of SLPs' qualifications to help children develop specific skills important for reading. See Tables 8 and 9.

Table 8 Descriptive Statistics for Experiences, Opinions, and Perceptions of SLPs and Administrative Roles

Dependent Variable	Administrative Role	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Experiences	P-12 School Principal	3.45	.797	210
	P-12 Assistant Principal	3.39	.773	42
	Special Education Director	3.42	.821	33
	Total	3.44	.794	285
Opinions	P-12 School Principal	3.47	.615	210
	P-12 Assistant Principal	3.43	.603	42
	Special Education Director	3.20	.631	33
	Total	3.44	.619	285
Perceptions	P-12 School Principal	3.92	.663	210
	P-12 Assistant Principal	4.06	.807	42
	Special Education Director	4.05	.737	33
	Total	3.95	.694	285

Table 9 Descriptive Statistics for Dependent Variables and Administrative Roles

Dependent Variable	Administrative Role	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Experiences	P-12 School Principal	3.45	.055	3.346	3.563
	P-12 Assistant Principal	3.39	.119	3.147	3.629
	Special Education Director	3.42	.143	3.133	3.716
Opinions	P-12 School Principal	3.47	.042	3.390	3.557
	P-12 Assistant Principal	3.43	.093	3.250	3.626
	Special Education Director	3.20	.110	2.972	3.420
Perceptions	P-12 School Principal	3.92	.046	3.829	4.010
	P-12 Assistant Principal	4.06	.124	3.807	4.310
	Special Education Director	4.05	.128	3.786	4.308

A one-way MANOVA was performed to determine if there was an effect of school administrators' roles on SLPs in written language instruction. Three measures were assessed: experiences with SLPs, opinions of factors that influence SLPs' provision of written language instruction, and perception of SLPs' qualifications to help children develop specific skills important for reading. There was a statistically significant difference between the administrator roles in the combined dependent variables, $F(6, 560) = 2.896$, $p = .009$; Wilks' $\Lambda = .941$; partial $\eta^2 = .030$. See Table 10 for additional information.

A follow-up univariate analysis of variance (ANVOA) was completed. There were no statistically significant differences between the administrator roles and the experience with SLPs ($F(2, 282) = .132$, $p = .876$; partial $\eta^2 = .001$), the opinions of

factors that influence SLPs' provision of written language instruction ($F(2, 282) = 2.896$, $p = .057$; partial $\eta^2 = .020$), or the perceptions of SLPs' qualifications to help children develop specific skills important for reading ($F(2, 282) = 1.029$, $p = .359$; partial $\eta^2 = .007$).

The MANOVA was followed up with discriminant analysis. This analysis revealed two discriminant functions. The first explained 91.3% of the variance, canonical $R^2 = .05$. The second only explained 8.7%, canonical $R^2 = .005$. When combined these discriminant functions significantly distinguished the administration groups, Wilks' $\Lambda = .94$, $X^2(6) = 17.18$, $p = .009$. However, when the first function was removed, the second function did not significantly distinguish the administration groups, Wilks' $\Lambda = .99$, $X^2(2) = 1.53$, $p = .465$. The correlations between the experiences, opinions, and perceptions and the discriminant functions showed that perceptions loaded more highly on the second function (r = .68) than the first function (r = -.29); opinions loaded more highly on the first function (r = .59) than the second function (r = .39); experiences loaded more highly on the first function (r = .07) than the second function (-.34). The discriminant function table showed that the first function discriminated the P-12 school principals from the P-12 school assistant principals and the special education directors. The second function differentiated the P-12 assistant principals from the P-12 school principals and the special education directors.

In conclusion, the MANOVA showed that administrative roles can significantly impact the overall views (experiences, opinions, and perceptions) of SLPs. Still, the non-significant ANOVA suggested that this difference is not simply in terms of either experiences, opinions, or perceptions. The discriminant analysis suggests that the

significant differences between administrator roles can best be explained by one underlying dimension, and that is likely the views that are made up of experiences, opinions, and perceptions. The role of the administrator does not necessarily change the experiences, opinions, and perceptions of an SLP, but it influences the underlying dimension of the overall views.

Table 10 Multivariate Tests[a]

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.958	2106.073[b]	3.000	280.000	<.001	.958
	Wilks' Lambda	.042	2106.073[b]	3.000	280.000	<.001	.958
	Hotelling's Trace	22.565	2106.073[b]	3.000	280.000	<.001	.958
	Roy's Largest Root	22.565	2106.073[b]	3.000	280.000	<.001	.958
Administrative Role	Pillai's Trace	.060	2.876	6.000	562.000	.009	.030
	Wilks' Lambda	.941	2.896[b]	6.000	560.000	.009	.030
	Hotelling's Trace	.063	2.916	6.000	558.000	.008	.030
	Roy's Largest Root	.057	5.363[c]	3.000	281.000	.001	.054

a. Design: Intercept + Administrative Role
b. Exact statistic
c. The statistic is an upper bound on F that yields a lower bound on the significance level.

Addressing Research Question 2

For the second research question, a factorial analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine the effects of gender and school type on the perceived training or education of SLPs in RTI. School types included elementary school, junior high school, high school, K-12 school, or others.

A set of assumptions must be met to determine whether a factorial ANOVA was appropriate for the research question. The first three assumptions are related to the design of the study. There is one continuous dependent variable and more than one independent variable, where each independent variable consists of two or more categorical independent groups, and observations are independent (Field, 2018). Visual inspection of the boxplots reveals outliers and extreme values in the data. They were not the result of data entry or measurement errors and were genuinely unusual values. These were retained in the analysis. The perceived training or education of SLPs in RTI was normally distributed for the independent variables, as assessed by visual inspection of the Normal Q-Q Plots. There was homogeneity of variances, as assessed by Levene's test for equality of variances, $p = .643$.

Since the assumptions were met, factorial ANOVA was an appropriate statistical analysis. The primary goal of running a factorial ANOVA is to determine whether there is an interaction between two independent variables (Laerd Statistics, n.d.). This analysis showed no statistically significant interaction between gender and school type, $F(6, 272) = .64$, $p = .695$, $\eta^2 = .014$. Therefore, an analysis of the main effect of gender ($F(2, 272) = .20$, $p = .819$, $\eta^2 = .001$) and school type ($F(4, 272) = .25$, $p = .910$, $\eta^2 = .004$) was

performed, which indicated that the main effects were not statistically significant. See Table 11 for additional information.

Table 11 Factorial ANOVA Test of Between-Subjects Effects

Source	Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Squares	*F*	*p*	η^2
(Intercept)	434.06	1	434.06	805.77	<.001	.748
Gender	.22	2	.11	.20	.819	.001
School Type	.54	4	.13	.25	.910	.004
Gender x School Type	2.08	6	.35	.64	.695	.014
Error	146.53	272	.54			

Addressing Research Question 3

To analyze the third research question, a two-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was run with two independent variables – Child Find and geographical region – and two dependent variables – RTI as a prevention mean score and RTI as an instruction mean score. For Child Find, the administrators indicated if they are part of the Child Find process. School types included elementary, junior high, high school, combined elementary schools through high school grades, and others. Other is composed of special purpose schools, preschools, etc. The geographical regions were Northeast, South, Midwest, and West.

Similar to the one-way MANOVA, several assumptions must be met to use a two-way MANOVA. The first three assumptions are related to the design of the study. There are two or more continuous dependent variables, the two independent variables are categorical with two or more independent groups, and observations are independent (Field, 2018). This study met those assumptions. There were linear relationships between school administrators in the South, Midwest, and West, who are and are not part of the Child Find process. However, there were no linear relationships between

administrators in the Northeast who were and were not part of the Child Find process. It was noted the assumption of linearity was violated. The critical value of 13.82 was compared to the Mahalanobis distance value for each data point to determine whether there were any multivariate outliers. There were two multivariate outliers in the data (28.42; 22.85), as assessed by Maholanobis distance ($p > .001$). The outliers were not the result of data entry or measurement errors. They are genuinely unusual values and were kept in the analysis. Each cell in the analysis contained more than two data points; therefore, there was an adequate sample size for two-way MANOVA. Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices assessed the assumption of equal variances and covariances. Homogeneity of covariance matrices was violated, as assessed using Box's M test ($p = .009$). See Table 12.

Table 12 Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matricies[a]

Box's M	41.536
F	1.874
df1	21
df2	13619.135
Sig.	.009

Tests the null hypothesis that the observed covariance matrices of the dependent variables are equal across groups.

a. Design: Intercept + Region + Child Find + Region*Child Find

The assumptions were considered, and MANOVA was determined to be a viable analysis of the data. The primary goal of running a two-way MANOVA was to determine whether there was an interaction between the two independent variables (Laerd). The interaction effect between the participation in Child Find and region on the combined dependent variables was not statistically significant, $F(6, 552) = 1.097$, $p = .363$, Wilks' $\Lambda = .977$., partial $\eta^2 = .012$. As there was no interaction effect, the main effects were considered. The main effect of participation in Child Find on the combined

dependent variables was not statistically significant (F (2, 276) = 2.745, p =.066, Wilks' Λ =.980, partial η2 =.020). The main effect of region on the combined dependent variables was not statistically significant, $F(6, 552) = .715$, $p = .637$, Wilks' Λ = .980, partial $\eta^2 = .008$. See Table 13 below.

Table 13 Multivariate Tests[a] of Research Question 3

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.964	3699.035[b]	2.000	276.000	<.001	.964
	Wilks' Lambda	.036	3699.035[b]	2.000	276.000	<.001	.964
	Hotelling's Trace	26.805	3699.035[b]	2.000	276.000	<.001	.964
	Roy's Largest Root	26.805	3699.035[b]	2.000	276.000	<.001	.964
Region	Pillai's Trace	.015	.716	6.000	554.000	.636	.008
	Wilks' Lambda	.985	.715[b]	6.000	552.000	.637	.008
	Hotelling's Trace	.016	.714	6.000	550.000	.638	.008
	Roy's Largest Root	.013	1.222[c]	3.000	277.000	.302	.013
Child Find	Pillai's Trace	.020	2.745[b]	2.000	276.000	.066	.020
	Wilks' Lambda	.980	2.745[b]	2.000	276.000	.066	.020
	Hotelling's Trace	.020	2.745[b]	2.000	276.000	.066	.020
	Roy's Largest Root	.020	2.745[b]	2.000	276.000	.066	.020
Region*Child Find	Pillai's Trace	.024	1.098	6.000	554.000	.362	.012
	Wilks' Lambda	.977	1.097[b]	6.000	552.000	.363	.012
	Hotelling's Trace	.024	1.095	6.000	550.000	.364	.012
	Roy's Largest Root	.019	1.740[c]	3.000	277.000	.159	.019

a. Design: Intercept + Region + Child_Find + Region * Child_Find
b. Exact statistic
c. The statistic is an upper bound on F that yields a lower bound on the significance level.

Addressing Research Question 4

For the last research question, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine whether the perceptions of the SLP's qualifications to help children develop specific skills important for reading ability by P-12 school administrators differed for different school types. School types included elementary school, junior high school, high school, K-12 school, or other.

Six assumptions must be met to utilize a one-way ANOVA. The first three assumptions are related to the design of the study. There is one continuous dependent variable and one independent variable, where each independent variable consists of two or more categorical independent groups, and observations are independent (Field, 2018). A visual inspection of the boxplots found outliers and extreme values in the data. They were not the result of data entry or measurement error and were genuinely unusual values; therefore, they were retained in the analysis. The perceived qualifications of the SLP to help children develop specific skills important for reading ability were normally distributed school types, as assessed by the visual inspection of the Normal Q-Q Plots. Homogeneity of variance was assessed using Levene's Test of Homogeneity of Variance ($p = .835$). The assumptions were met, and the ANOVA was completed.

The mean scores of the perceptions of an SLP's qualifications to help children develop specific skills important for reading by high school administrators were the highest, followed closely by junior high and other administrators. Surprisingly, administrators in the elementary setting scored the lowest. See Table 14 below.

Table 14 Descriptive Statistics for Perception on the Watson Scale

Dependent Variable	Administrative Role	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Perceptions	Elementary	135	3.8606	.73082	.06290	3.7362	3.9850
	Junior High	56	4.0079	.69206	.09248	3.8226	4.1933
	High School	38	4.1901	.54305	.08809	4.0116	4.3686
	Elementary, Middle, and High School	29	3.9310	.72217	.13410	3.6563	4.2057
	Others	27	4.0096	.61894	.11911	3.7647	4.2544

According to the ANOVA results, school administrators' perceptions of an SLP's qualifications were not statistically different for different school settings, $F(4, 280) = 1.867$, $p = .116$. See Table 15 for additional information.

Table 15 One-Way ANOVA

Source	Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Squares	*F*	*p*
Between Groups	3.56	4	.89	1.87	.116
Within Groups	133.39	280	.48		
Total	136.94	284			

CHAPTER V – DISCUSSION

The purpose of this quantitative study was to determine how different factors predict P-12 school administrators' experiences, opinions, and perceptions of speech-language pathologists in written language instruction and the Response to Intervention process. These factors were administrative role, gender, school type, participation in Child Find, and geographical location. Survey research was used to collect these data from participants across the United States. Four research questions guided the study.

1. Is there a significant difference between P-12 school administrators' roles and their experiences with speech-language pathologists' involvement in written language instruction, opinions of factors that influence the SLPs' provision of written language instruction, and their perceptions of SLPs' qualifications to help children develop specific skills important for reading?
2. To what extent do gender and school type predict the perceived training or education of SLPs in RTI?
3. Is there a significant difference between the administrators participating in Child Find, their geographical region, and their view of RTI as preventative or as instruction, intervention, or implementation?
4. Is there a significant predictive relationship between the grade level of P-12 school administrators and their perceptions of SLPs' qualifications to help children develop specific skills important for reading?

Summary of the Study

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association has supported the role of speech-language pathologists in early literacy instruction in general education since 2010.

Early literacy skills are directly tied to oral language skills (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2001; Catts, 1993; Lyon, 1998; Roth et al., 2002). ASHA and many authors have cited numerous factors that impact an SLP's ability to provide preventative services in the general education environment. These factors include large special education caseloads, lack of administrative support, adverse school culture, absence of collaboration, and large amounts of paperwork (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2020; Brandel, 2020; Sylvan, 2018). Collaboration between SLPs and general educators is also an important factor (Gomez-Najarro, 2020; Pfeiffer et al., 2019; G. D. Watson & Bellon-Harn, 2014; M. Watson et al., 2020; Young & Bowers, 2018). Despite all these findings, no articles have explored educational administrators' views of an SLP in the role of general education written language instruction and the prevention of literacy deficits in the Response to Intervention process.

Research Question 1

While previous studies and ASHA, the national organization for speech-language pathologists, have supported SLPs in providing services to all students in written language skills, SLPs report spending a very small portion of their time in the general education setting (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2018). Watson and colleagues (2020) found that administrative support was needed to include SLPs in the reading instruction in the general education setting. The current study explored the P-12 administrators' roles and their experiences with SLPs' involvement in written language instruction, opinions of factors that influence the SLPs' provision of written language instruction, and their perceptions of SLPs' qualifications to help children develop specific skills important for reading. Analysis of the data showed that administrative roles could

significantly impact the overall views (experiences, opinions, and perceptions) of SLPs when considered together. Still, there is no significant difference for the individual areas.

Research Question 2

Educational settings in the United States are organized into primary and secondary education. Each district may break the grades into different campuses with unique names. The U.S. Department of Education classifies elementary schools as those with prekindergarten to 4th or 7th grades, middle school as 5th through 9th grades, and high school as 9th through 12th grades (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). These classifications were used for the current study. More SLPs are employed in elementary schools than in middle or high schools (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2022). The current study explored whether school administrators' perceived training or education of SLPs was predicted by gender and school type. Analysis of the data did not show any significant interaction between gender and school type. The main effects of gender and school type were considered, and no statistically significant findings were found.

Research Question 3

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires states to develop a policy for identifying, locating, and evaluating students who require special education and related services. This process is known as Child Find (*42nd Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2020*, n.d.). The policy and procedures can vary between school districts to include different administrators. Current studies by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association have identified discrepancies between geographical regions and the involvement of SLPs

in MTSS or RTI (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2020, 2022). Federal regulations have directed the use of MTSS and RTI over the past 20 years, but many experts have different definitions of its purpose. Some experts view RTI as an intervention, while others consider it an instruction (Pullen et al., 2018). A third group of professionals considers RTI as a means of prevention (Al Otaiba et al., 2019). The current study investigated whether there is a significant difference between administrators involved in the Child Find process and their location with their views of RTI. There was no statistically significant interaction effect between the participation in Child Find and the region on the combined dependent variables. The main effects were also considered. There were no statistically significant differences in the participation of Child Find or the geographical location on the combined dependent variables.

Research Question 4

As previously noted, more SLPs are employed in elementary school settings than in any other classification of schools (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2022). Reading skills are developed during the early elementary school years. Since there are more SLPs in those settings, the current study examined if there was a significant predictive relationship between the type of school and the school administrators' perceptions of SLPs' qualifications to help children develop specific skills important for reading. The study found no significant predictive relationship between the school types and school administrators' perceptions of SLPs' qualifications to help children develop specific skills important for reading. However, the mean scores of the perception of an SLP's qualifications to help children develop specific skills important for reading were examined. High school administrators' mean scores were the highest,

followed closely by junior high and other administrators. Surprisingly, administrators in the elementary setting scored the lowest.

Implications of the Study

Speech-language pathologists (SLPs) have extensive training in typical and atypical language development. While there is evidence in the literature concerning the link between the development of early oral language skills and the future development of literacy skills (Bishop & Adams, 1990; Catts, 1993; Catts et al., 1999, 2001; Pennington & Bishop, 2009), school-based SLPs find it difficult to provide support outside of the special education setting. Lack of time for collaboration, awareness of the SLP's role by others, and administrative support are the top three challenges mentioned (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2022).

Since the current study found that administrative roles can significantly impact the views of an SLP in written language instruction, administrators need to gain more knowledge about an SLP's position in the educational setting. This awareness should begin at the preservice level in the degree program. SLPs are well-positioned to help prevent, identify, evaluate, and treat literacy issues because of their extensive knowledge base and expertise in spoken language (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2001; Catts & Kamhi, 2004; McCardle & Chhabra, 2004). The role of the administrator does not necessarily alter the experiences, opinions, and perceptions of an SLP, but it influences the underlying dimension of the overall views.

According to the P-12 administrators surveyed in this study, there was no statistically significant difference in the perceptions of SLPs' qualifications to help children develop specific skills important for reading ability. High school administrators

had the highest mean scores regarding their assessments of an SLP's ability to assist kids in developing specific reading abilities, with junior high and other administrators coming in close second. Unexpectedly, elementary school administrators received the lowest scores. Since more SLPs are hired to work in elementary schools where more children are tasked with early literacy skills, principals within this school setting need to foster collaboration between general education teachers and the SLP. Additional time for collaboration could mean advocating for smaller caseloads and a change in school culture. These factors impact an SLP's ability to provide preventative services in the general education environment (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2020; Brandel, 2020; Sylvan, 2018).

Limitations and Future Research

The study was limited by aspects of the instrument used in the survey. The survey combined two published instruments used on different populations (Sanger et al., 2012; M. Watson et al., 2020). No attention check questions were utilized. Including questions that check the attention of those participating in the survey can promote the best data quality. The instrument included 15 demographic questions plus 41 Likert scale items. See Appendix D for the complete instrument. Even though the length of the questions and questionnaire was not excessive, many participants may not have thoroughly read the questions when responding.

Another potential limitation was the timing of the data collection. The instrument was distributed in June 2023. This point of the academic calendar is often when educational administrators are ending a school year or on summer vacation. Distributing

the instrument during the fall semester may result in a higher response rate and more responses from a variety of administrators.

In addition to the length of the instrument, the number of different constructs investigated was a concern. The Watson Scale examined the experiences, perceptions, and opinions concerning SLPs in written language instruction. The Sanger Scale looked at the perceptions and opinions of SLPs in RTI. Theoretically, these constructs are interrelated, but they could appear independent to the participants who may not have the background knowledge of the topics. Future research may consider the development of an instrument specially designed and validated to measure a decreased number of targeted constructs within the P-12 administration population. Future qualitative research is also needed in this area.

APPENDIX A – IRB Approval Letter

Office of Research Integrity

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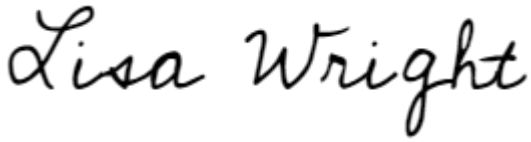
NOTICE OF INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD ACTION

The project below has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services regulations (45 CFR Part 46), and University Policy to ensure:

- The risks to subjects are minimized and reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered involving risks to subjects must be reported immediately. Problems should be reported to ORI using the Incident form available in InfoEd.
- The period of approval is twelve months. If a project will exceed twelve months, a request should be submitted to ORI using the Renewal form available in InfoEd prior to the expiration date.

PROTOCOL NUMBER:	23-0490
PROJECT TITLE:	P-12 School Administrators' Experiences, Opinions, and Perceptions of Speech-Language Pathologists in Written Language Instruction and the Response to Intervention
SCHOOL/PROGRAM	Speech & Hearing Sciences

RESEARCHERS:	PI: Alison Webster Investigators: Webster, Alison Suzanne~O''Brien, Thomas V~
IRB COMMITTEE ACTION:	Approved
CATEGORY:	Expedited Category
PERIOD OF APPROVAL:	30-May-2023 to 29-May-2024



Lisa Wright, Ph.D., MPH

Senior Institutional Review Board Analyst

APPENDIX B – Permission to Use The Sanger Scale

From: Mary Ann Price (she/her/hers) (Jira) <permissions@sagepub.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 28, 2023 10:52 AM
To: Alison Webster <Alison.Webster@usm.edu>
Subject: RP-9208 Request of Instrument for Dissertation

Dear Alison,
Thank you for your response. I am happy to report that you can consider this email as *gratis* permission to use the "Survey on Response to Intervention" in your upcoming thesis or dissertation research as is required to complete your degree at The University of Southern Mississippi.

Please note that this permission does not cover any 3rd party material that may or may not be found within the work. Distribution of the questionnaire must be controlled, meaning only distributed to the participants engaged in the research or enrolled in the educational activity. All copies of the material should be collected and destroyed once all data collection and research on this project is complete.

In addition, we grant your request without a fee as part of your thesis or dissertation. Please accept this email as permission for your request to include the survey within your dissertation. Permission is granted for the life of the edition on a non-exclusive basis, in the English language, throughout the world in all formats provided full citation is made to the original SAGE publication. Permission does not include any third-party material found within the work.

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Senior Rights Coordinator
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APPENDIX C – Permission to Use The Watson Scale

From: Permissions Asha <Permissions@asha.org>
Sent: Friday, March 26, 2021 6:30 AM
To: Alison Webster <Alison.Webster@usm.edu>
Subject: Re: Request for Permission

Dear Alison:

Thank you for your patience. The survey itself was published under a Creative Commons license, CC-BY, which allows

- **Share** — copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format
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It may be found here:

https://asha.figshare.com/articles/journal_contribution/A_survey_of_reading_teachers_Watson_et_al_2020_/14312783

Best regards,

Libby

Libby Bauer
Pronouns: She/her/hers
Director of Operations & Product Management Serial Publications

APPENDIX D – The Instrument

Dear School Administrator,
I am a doctoral student at The University of Southern Mississippi in the College of Education and Human Sciences in the School of Education under the supervision of Dr. Thomas O'Brien. I am conducting a national research study seeking to understand the experiences, opinions, and perceptions of school administrators with speech-language pathologists (SLPs) in written language instruction and the Response to Intervention (RTI). School administrators are defined as principals, assistant principals, special education directors, assistant special education directors, and others in administrative roles. I am asking you, as a school administrator, to participate. Your participation will help me collect valuable information about school administrators' experiences with SLPs, their opinions and perceptions of SLPs, and their definitions of RTI. Demographic information concerning your background and current place of employment will also be collected.

Participation in this online survey is voluntary and may be discontinued without penalty, prejudice, or loss of benefit. Completing the questionnaire should take no more than 20-30 minutes. All personal data collected will be anonymous; however, you will be asked about your state of employment so that any regional trends may be determined. Any information inadvertently obtained during this study will remain completely confidential. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation.

This project and this consent form have been approved by the Institutional Review Board, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research participant should be directed to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5125, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, 601-266-5997.

If you have questions regarding this project, please contact Alison Webster at 601-447-4592 or alison.webster@usm.edu.

Thank you,
Alison Webster, M.S., CCC-SLP, CALT-QI
The University of Southern Mississippi

Project Title: P-12 School Administrators' Experiences, Opinions, and Perceptions of Speech-Language Pathologists in Written Language Instruction and the Response to Intervention
Protocol Number: 23-0490
Principal Investigator: Alison Webster
Phone: 601-447-4592 Email: alison.webster@usm.edu

Consent to Participate in Research

I understand that participation in this project is completely voluntary, and I may withdraw at any time without penalty, prejudice, or loss of benefits. Unless described above, all personal information will be kept strictly confidential, including my name and other identifying information. All procedures to be followed and their purposes were explained to me. Information was given about all benefits, risks, inconveniences, or discomforts that might be expected. Any new information that develops during the project will be provided to me if that information may affect my willingness to continue participation in the project.

By clicking yes below, I give my consent to participate in this research project. *If you do not wish to participate in this study, please click no and close your browser*.

- o Yes, I consent to participate.
- o No, I do not wish to participate.

Are you currently working as a P-12 school administrator in a public school in the United States?

- o Yes
- o No

What is your current administration title? Choose one:

- o P-12 school principal
- o P-12 school assistant principal
- o Special education director
- o Assistant special education director
- o Other: _____

Which grade level(s) do you serve? Choose all that apply.

- o Pre-Kindergarten or Preschool
- o Kindergarten
- o 1st
- o 2nd
- o 3rd
- o 4th
- o 5th
- o 6th
- o 7th
- o 8th
- o 9th
- o 10th
- o 11th
- o 12th

What best describes your school?

- o Preschool or Early Childhood (only)
- o Elementary

- Middle School or Junior High
- Secondary or High School
- Elementary, Middle School, and Secondary
- Other: _____

What is your highest degree?

- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Specialist degree
- Doctoral degree (Ed.d, Ph.D.)

What year did you obtain your highest degree?

_____

How many years, at the end of the current school year, have you been a school administrator?

- Less than 2 years
- 2-10 years
- 11-20 years
- 21-40 years

In your current position as an administrator, are you part of the Child Find process?

- Yes
- No

Before becoming a school administrator, what was your role in the educational system? Choose all that apply.

- Preschool teacher
- General education elementary teacher in math or language arts
- Special education teacher
- Physical education teacher or coach
- Librarian
- School counselor
- Music or Art Educator
- Other: _____

How many years were you in your previous role(s) before becoming an administrator?

- Less than 2 years
- 2-10 years
- 11-20 years
- 21-40 years

Where do you currently work as a school administrator?
Region:

- Northeast

- South
- Midwest
- West

Division:

- Middle Atlantic
- New England
- East South Central
- South Atlantic
- West South Central
- East North Central
- West North Central
- Mountain
- Pacific

State:

- New Jersey
- New York
- Pennsylvania
- Connecticut
- Maine
- Massachusetts
- New Hampshire
- Rhode Island
- Vermont
- Alabama
- Kentucky
- Mississippi
- Tennessee
- Delaware
- District of Columbia
- Florida
- Georgia
- Maryland
- North Carolina
- South Carolina
- Virginia
- West Virginia
- Arkansas
- Louisiana
- Oklahoma
- Texas
- Illinois
- Indiana
- Michigan
- Ohio
- Wisconsin

- Iowa
- Kansas
- Minnesota
- Missouri
- Nebraska
- North Dakota
- South Dakota
- Arizona
- Colorado
- Idaho
- Montana
- Nevada
- New Mexico
- Utah
- Wyoming
- Alaska
- California
- Hawaii
- Oregon
- Washington

What best describes your geographic location?

- Rural and /or small town
- Suburban
- City

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary
- Prefer not to say

What is your age?

- 25-34 years old
- 25-44 years old
- 45-54 years old
- 55-64 years old
- 65 years and older

Please specify your ethnicity.

- White
- Black or African American
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

- Hispanic or Latinx
- Other: _____

Questions 1-7: Please indicate your level of agreement for the following statements:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. The SLPs I have worked with have shown an interest in collaborating with other educators within my school/district to support RTI.					
2. SLPs in my work setting help collect and analyze schoolwide data on children's literacy skills.					
3. SLPs at my work setting are typically a part of in-service opportunities on written language development, instruction, and/or intervention.					
4. The children who are seen for written language intervention also usually have oral language delays/disorders.					
5. The SLPs that I have worked with have provided intervention for written language for children on their caseload.					
6. Others within the school have sought the expertise of an SLP to help with children with written language difficulties.					
7. An SLP within my school has sought out the expertise of others in written language to help with children on his/her caseload.					

Questions 8-14: Please indicate your level of agreement for the following statements:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
8. The SLPs I have worked with have the time to work on children's reading skills in RTI.					
9. Intervention for reading skills should be the responsibility of the reading teacher and/or classroom teacher.					
10. There is administrative support for SLPs in my school district to work on children's reading problems in RTI.					
11. SLPs have the knowledge about curricular expectations in order to provide appropriate reading intervention.					
12. There is evidence to support that SLPs can help children develop reading skills in RTI.					
13. I support having the SLPs in my work setting provide written language intervention.					
14. It is appropriate for SLPs to assess the written language skills of children referred for oral language concerns.					

Questions 15-25: Please indicate your level of agreement for the following statements:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
15. SLPs have the knowledge and skills to provide phonological awareness instruction.					
16. SLPs have the knowledge and skills to provide print awareness instruction.					
17. SLPs have the knowledge and skills to provide phonics and spelling instruction.					
18. SLPs have the knowledge and skills to provide word analysis (root words; affixes) instruction.					
19. SLPs have the knowledge and skills to provide reading comprehension instruction.					
20. SLPs have the knowledge and skills to provide instruction to improve reading fluency.					
21. SLPs have the knowledge and skills to improve children's vocabulary skills.					
22. SLPs have the knowledge and skills to improve children's ability to write narratives (fictional and expository).					
23. SLPs have the knowledge and skills to improve children's ability to orally produce narratives (fictional and expository).					
24. Providing intervention for written language is part of SLPs professional responsibility.					
25. SLPs I have worked with are trained to work on the development of children's reading skills.					

Questions 26-41: Indicate the strength of your agreement or disagreement with each statement that follows as a generalization about RTI. Several items refer to "professionals," a term that includes multidisciplinary team members.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
26. Educators, as well as SLPs, understand the need to consider RTI services.					
27. Professionals, including SLPs, have opportunities to learn about the RTI model.					
28. Professionals, including SLPs, are sufficiently trained to provide RTI services for students who struggle to learn.					
29. RTI services support a model of prevention versus "wait until you fail" services.					
30. RTI services are preventive in that they can decrease the number of students eligible for speech and language services.					
31. RTI represents systematic, intense, and evidence-based prevention/ intervention.					
32. Professionals, including SLPs, collaborate to design RTI instruction/intervention.					
33. An RTI model allows for more time for teaching instead of testing.					
34. Our RTI model involves two or more tiers of increasingly complex interventions.					
35. Negative consequences resulting in school failure may be prevented if RTI is implemented at the secondary level.					

36. Now, more than ever, RTI is needed to address the needs of students who struggle to learn.					
37. SLPs have an important role in RTI.					
38. Paraprofessionals can play a role to implement RTI (e.g., universal screening, progress monitoring, selected aspects of intervention).					
39. RTI can result in improvement in academic achievement for many students who struggle to learn.					
40. All students can benefit from RTI, although it is designed for students who struggle.					
41. Students who continue to struggle after participating in RTI may be eligible for special education services.					

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