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PROGRAM PERSISTENCE:
INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT TEAMS IN PENNSYLVANIA

A Dissertation in
Educational Leadership

by
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Abstract

The Instructional Support Team in Pennsylvania was implemented during the early part of the 1990s in response to a call for schools to address the increasingly high costs of special education services while assuring that struggling students received the types of services that would address their individual needs. The Instructional Support Team was used by all Pennsylvania school districts until the mandate requiring its use was removed some years later in 1997.

Although the use of the Instructional Support Team was no longer mandated, schools remained responsible for assisting students in need and reducing the costs of Special Education services. Some schools chose to continue the use of the Instructional Support Team, and continue to do so today.

The rationale of this exploratory study was to identify the characteristics of an educational program which explain its continued use over time using the experiences of school personnel across the commonwealth who are/were responsible for the implementation of the Instructional Support Team.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

An educational program that experiences longevity and continued success despite curriculum, personnel, policy, or other educational changes, is considered sustainable. In other words, the program has demonstrated persistence despite an array of environmental changes. Century and Levy (2002) suggest that the ability of a program to continue with minimal change over time is referred to as the program’s sustainability. The researchers also state sustainability means that despite programmatic and environmental changes that may occur, a program’s fundamental beliefs and guiding principles do not change. Mancini and Marek (2004) explain that the sustainability of program is demonstrated when the program continues to change and respond to the needs of the community but does not compromise the program’s original objectives.

During the late sixties and early seventies, educational reform was sweeping the country. New initiatives for regular and special education were introduced and implemented. Many of these initiatives were accepted and incorporated into school curriculum. The continued use of these programs, however, was unpredictable and often depended on the continued presence of a local champion and/or support of the educational and larger community.

One such initiative, the prereferral process, was designed to meet the needs of students experiencing academic, social or behavioral difficulties. Through the use of prereferral programs, school districts were able to help assist the integration of students with disabilities into the general education setting (Adelman & Taylor, 1998; Evans,
1990), while decreasing the over-identification of students in special education (Bahr, Fuchs, et. al., 1999; Fuchs, Fuchs, Bahr, Fernstrom, & Stecker, 1990; Graden, Casey, & Christenson, 1985; Kovaleski, 2002). Many of these prereferral programs are still in existence in some form in school districts today.

In 1990, Pennsylvania initiated its prereferral process—Instructional Support Team (IST) program—as a state mandate requiring every district to have at least one elementary school participate in the program. The Pennsylvania Department of Education provided substantial training and partial funding for the program, which was phased-in over a five-year period. However, in 1997 a new governor and his administration discontinued state financial support for the IST and made its use voluntary for school districts. At the present time, some school districts in Pennsylvania still use the IST, while others have modified it, or stopped using it altogether.

There is little research to explain the program persistence of programs/reform initiatives (Gersten, Chard, & Baker, 2000). While reform initiatives provide research opportunities as they are developed and introduced, few programs are studied, as they are adapted, continue to unfold or are incorporated into long-term usage by a school/school system. Tyack and Cuban (1995) suggest that the lack of sustainability studies can be attributed to the fact that most reforms do not last and, consequently, there are very few successful programs to study.

**Purpose**

Some school districts have continued prereferral programs in some form, while others have discontinued the program’s use. This study will investigate the perceptions of individual school personnel in order to understand the phenomenon of program
persistence in some districts, but not in others. Using Pennsylvania’s Instructional Support Team as a model, program persistence will be examined by looking at factors that contributed to the continued use of the prereferral process in Pennsylvania’s schools.

**Research Questions**

1. How many schools have retained the IST program as part of their operations, in some form?

2. Why did some schools continue IST after the mandate and funding were eliminated? What factors contributed to program persistence?

3. How has the IST program been changed, if at all, in schools still using it?

**Special Education in the United States**

In 1975, the passage of The Education for All Handicapped Children Act, now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), mandated free appropriate public education for children with disabilities. Included in the rights afforded children with disabilities were due process, least restrictive environment, and an individualized education program (IEP) for all students receiving special education services. While special education benefited greatly from the passage of this act, its passage also posed new challenges for school districts mandated to provide free appropriate public education in a least restrictive environment for all students classified as disabled.

As a result of the implementation of IDEA and subsequent legislation, special education referral rates climbed and a simultaneous increase in the number of special education placements occurred. The consequence was an over identification of students with special needs and, concurrently, an increase in the costs of providing special educational programs. As concern over the increasing numbers of children being
identified and placed in special education grew, school districts were forced to consider various alternatives to providing necessary services to children with special needs (Carter & Sugai, 1989; Chaikind, Danielson, & Braun, 1993; Ysseldyke, Algozzine, Rickey & Graden, 1982).

Pennsylvania’s IST process addressed the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which mandated that schools provide a regular classroom education for a student with disabilities, or an environment that is least restrictive. Later the IST was congruent with the call for states to provide success for all students as set forth in the No Child Left Behind legislation. The IST process provides a system by which team members can: collect individual student data; devise, implement, and monitor interventions for targeted needs; and communicate student progress to team members prior to placing a student in a more restrictive learning environment (Ingalls & Hammond, 1996). Graden, Casey, and Christenson (1985) state that a primary goal of prereferral intervention is to identify successful instructional interventions so that referred students can remain in the best environment for them - one that is least restrictive, preferably their regular education classroom.

**IST in Pennsylvania**

Following the passage of IDEA in 1975, the number of students being referred to and included in special education classes in Pennsylvania’s schools was increasing at a steady pace. The Commonwealth’s method of financing special education with heavy reliance on the 29 Intermediate Units (IUs) to provide special education services was not effective in controlling special education spending. (Hartman, 1993).
Approximately two-thirds of students in special education received services provided by IUs. Costs of IU services were deducted from a school district’s general state aid and sent directly to the IUs as payment for students enrolled in the IU programs. The remaining students received services directly from their home district. The districts providing special education services were reimbursed 100% of the allowable excess costs by the state. In other words, districts were reimbursed for costs incurred for special education services that exceeded the costs of educating a student receiving basic education. Because districts and IUs were assured that they would receive all needed funding, there was no incentive for them to limit spending for special education services. As a result, special education expenditures increased at a steady rate as more students were being identified and placed in special education programs (Hartman, 1993). Soon, the state’s fiscal commitment exceeded appropriations and districts looked to the legislature to cover the growing funding shortfall.

Districts were aided when in a special session in 1990 the legislature appropriated an additional $100 million to eliminate the deficit in special education funding. However, problems continued to mount. In several years, the state treasury was in serious trouble once again. The state suspended special education payments to districts until additional appropriations could be made (Hartman, 1995). A call to improve special education funding was heard and Pennsylvania looked to a new method for identifying students in need of special education services.

A key state response to the crisis was to develop and implement the Instructional Support Team process (IST). It was mandated to be used in all school districts throughout the Commonwealth. The intention of this state-funded program was to help children
struggling in the regular education classroom, reduce the number of inappropriate special education placements, and lower the costs of special education throughout the Commonwealth.

In 1990, the Pennsylvania State Board of Education, through its Regulations and Standards, mandated the IST initiative for use in all 501 school districts in the Commonwealth. Like other prereferral programs, IST is a process designed to help students who are experiencing academic, behavioral, or social difficulties in the regular education classroom (Kovalesky, Tucker, & Stevens, 1996). Students are referred to a school-based team that works to find interventions for use in the regular education classroom, which are aimed specifically at the area(s) identified as problem areas for the particular student. Students who do not benefit from the selected interventions, or whose interventions require more assistance than can be provided by the classroom teacher, are referred for additional evaluation (through a multidisciplinary team) and possible placement in a special education program. Results indicate that IST kept most of the referred students in the regular class (Coldiron, 1995). Kovalesky (1995) reported that, as directed by Pennsylvania State Board of Regulations and Standards of 1990, all school districts reported having IST programs operational in at least one elementary school in their district. Additionally, research showed that schools implementing IST were experiencing positive results. Fay (1995; Hartman & Fay, 1996) demonstrated that the IST process was cost-effective for elementary schools over the long term. Kovalesky, Gickling, Morrow, and Swank (1996) found that students’ performances on measures of academic time were improved by the ISTs. The Pennsylvania experience was consistent with other research (Hammond & Ingalls, 1999) that found that prereferral teams, in
general, reduce the number of referrals to special education and increase the numbers of verifiable referrals.

In 1995, a new administration came into power in Pennsylvania. As political structures changed, educational priorities did so as well. The educational agenda of this new administration did not include directives or funding for the continued mandated use of IST in Pennsylvania’s schools.

This lack of administrative support cast doubt on the IST. Despite the popularity of the IST process, the success that school districts were experiencing, and evidence supporting the effectiveness of IST, the program was to face an uncertain political and educational future. Some superintendents were not completely convinced that IST should be required in all school districts. Additionally, many school districts voiced the sentiment that the cost of providing a person to facilitate the IST process would add to existing financial woes.

In 1997, the mandated use of IST in Pennsylvania’s schools quietly disappeared. School districts were permitted to decide if they would continue using IST, a similar intervention program, or implement the traditional test-and-place system for special education. Now, a number of years after IST became optional, some Pennsylvania schools continue to use the IST process even though it is no longer mandated by the state nor receives state funding, while others have discontinued the use of the program.

Programmatic Organization and Operation

In order to facilitate the IST implementation process, the Pennsylvania Department of Education provided a comprehensive technical support system. This system consisted of regional consultants, IU personnel and school district liaisons responsible for providing
assistance, including hands-on training for school districts as they implemented the IST program. As schools began the IST process, they received a full year of training in the five component areas of collaboration and team building, instructional assessment, instructional adaptation, student discipline and students assistance for at-risk students (Kovalesky, Tucker & Duffy, 1995). Coldiron (1995, p. 3) reports that training was differentiated according to the specific roles of principals, support teachers, specialists, and teachers at large. Schools were assured that in successive years, their staff development needs would be addressed through follow-up training, on-going support and a system of program monitoring as they progressed through the second year and beyond (Kovalesky, Tucker & Duffy, 1995). The Department of Education assured school districts that they would not be expected to implement the new process until all team members were trained (Coldiron, 1995) and school personnel felt comfortable with their respective roles in the IST process.

A five-year phase-in period was established in order to afford school districts time to develop an IST program, inform and train school building personnel and initiate implementation. Beginning with the onset of the 1990-91 school year, and continuing through the 1994-95 academic year, approximately 20% of school districts per year received the requisite training on the operation and procedures of IST (PDE, 1991). At the end of the fifth year of the phase-in period, all districts were required to have at least one or more elementary schools implementing the IST program.

As Pennsylvania school districts followed the IST directive and developed pre-referral strategies, the composition of the teams varied somewhat according to the specific needs of the child being referred (Kovalesky, 1996). All teams were required to include
the school administrator, the Instructional Support teacher, and the teacher referring a student for intervention. Some teams additionally requested the school psychologist, speech therapist, reading specialist, guidance counselor, school nurse or other teachers to participate in meetings as necessitated. In addition, parents/guardians of the referred student were asked to participate in the intervention process.

The instructional support teacher was selected by members of the faculty to serve as facilitator and faculty consultant for the team. This person received specialized training and worked under the direction of the school administrator. The mandate called for no less than one instructional support teacher per 500 children. While some schools selected to refigure the ratio of support teacher to students, most schools followed the suggested ratio set forth by the state.

Once team members were selected, the referral was made and the IST process began. All team members attended the initial meeting. By the end of this meeting, an intervention plan was designed, interventions were assigned to specific team members and the process was instituted.

The IST followed a strict sixty-day process in order to assure the timeliness of interventions for each student referred as shown in Figure 1. The first ten days were considered the referral stage. During this time, information and data on the referred student were gathered using teacher interviews, curriculum based assessment, parent(s)/guardian(s) interviews, and data that substantiated the need for referral.

The next ten days were used to formulate a hypothesis about the most effective means for meeting the student’s educational needs. By analyzing the data, identifying the
specific problem(s) exhibited by the referred student, and searching for strategies that could be helpful in addressing the problems at hand, the hypothesis was formulated.

For 30 days following the hypothesis formulation, problem verification was implemented. An overall strategy to address the problem was developed, outcome-based goals were set, an implementation process was planned and a monitoring system was implemented.

Following the implementation stage, a ten-day outcome phase was carried out. During this time, the IST examined the strategies used by the various team members and determined if the desired outcomes were met. If the student was showing improvement and succeeding in the regular education classroom, interventions were continued in that classroom with the regular education teacher. If the team believed that interventions were not successful and the child continued to demonstrate deficiencies, a determination was made to refer the student to the MDT for additional screening and possible placement in a special education program.

The use of the timelines was multi-faceted. The adherence to a 60 day timeline provided parents with a safeguard that all necessary screening and intervention strategies would be conducted in a timely fashion, the IST was given a specific structure to follow as the prereferral process unfolded, and the 60 school days acted as a cut-off date for the Instructional Support Teacher to work with a child prior to a definitive action being taken (Kovalesky & Rodriquez-Diaz, 1994).
Figure 1 IST Timeline

ENTRY
Gather Data
Conduct Curriculum-based Assessment
Hold Teacher Interview

HYPOTHESIS
Analyze Data
Identify Problem(s)
Search for Strategy(ies)

VERIFICATION
Develop Strategy(ies)
Set Outcome-based Goals
Plan Implementation Process
Implement Monitoring System
Implement On-going Monitoring

OUTCOME
Continue Successful Intervention(s) in the Regular Education Classroom

OUTCOME
Conduct Multidisciplinary Evaluation if Strategies Unsuccessful

PLACEMENT
Place in Special Education Program

NO PLACEMENT
Do NOT Place in Special Education Program

10 School Days

10 School Days

30 School Days

10 School Days
Another Program Option for Schools

Following the removal of the mandate requiring the use of IST as a way to provide interventions for struggling students and determining the need for special education services, schools were given another option for providing interventions to struggling students when Response to Intervention or RtI (now known in Pennsylvania as Response to Instruction and Intervention or RtII) was introduced. In 2004, RtII was introduced through special education legislation IDEA 2004 as an alternative means to identifying students in need of special education services (Bender & Shores, 2007). This new approach is intended to provide academic success for the referred student by pairing evidenced-based interventions with the student’s specific needs. Although similar to IST in its approach, RtII also serves as one part of a newer database system whose purpose is to specifically identify students with learning disabilities who are in need of special education services.

RtII has five essential elements at its core. These components include a layered approach to services and support; intervention prior to the formal identification for special education; an in-depth series of screening measures that include assessments and continual progress monitoring that allow a clear understanding of what is needed for instruction; and a team-based intervention team that includes parents as decision makers. (Coleman & Hughes, 2009).

Special Education programs in our nation's schools have received much attention since the passage of Education of All Handicapped Education Act in 1975. Since that time, schools across the nation have been continually charged with finding new programs that will address the needs of all children. While the educational system at large continues
to seek innovations to foster growth, achievement and accountability, individual educators, parents and community members must also strive to find and maintain new ways to work collaboratively to find educational techniques that enhance educational opportunities for each student.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

As the call to address the over identification to special education programs in the nation’s schools became forefront in education reform, so too did the rising costs of the programs needed to provide these services. The over identification of students and the associated costs of providing programs challenged schools to find a means to address the needs of struggling students in the regular education classroom. The hopes were that the number of students being referred for specially designed instruction and special education services would decrease as the interventions provided by the prereferral programs intensified.

Pennsylvania responded with its own approach to providing aid for struggling students, the Instructional Support Team or IST. This program was originally implemented during the 1990 academic year and continued through the 1997 academic year. During the initial years of implementation of this prereferral intervention program, investigative research was conducted to examine the IST program's impact. However, little to no research was conducted as the program continued or following its removal.

The literature review of this study was designed to investigate the IST program in Pennsylvania’s schools as it was originally implemented. Because the program was no longer mandated in the late 1990s, and schools were given the option of using another program (RtII or another alternative), research on intervention programs soon turned toward the more recent program and the effectiveness of its implementation. As a result,
many of the cited works in this study reflect the early studies of prereferral programs such as IST.

A review of the literature offered different characteristics that contribute to the success of an educational program - specifically prereferral programs. The five most commonly described characteristics were initial and ongoing training, design and implementation of the program, funding and mandates, support for the program, and program outcome and results. This chapter presents information on these five characteristics as well as several additional factors thought to play a role in the successful implementation of IST, and factors that were often seen as contributors to the discontinued use of IST.

**Program Persistence**

Prereferral programs, such as IST, have experienced sustained success in schools across the nation. Hartman and Fay (1996) reported a decrease in the number of students who were referred for MDT evaluation, the number of students placed in special education programs, and the number of grade-level retentions.

The information that follows describes additional characteristics that have been credited with the persistence of IST.

**Training**

One factor found to explain the success of prereferral teams is training. Receiving adequate training in the initiation and implementation of the interventions was found to be a dominant reason for the continuation of intervention teams (Chalfant & Pysh, 1989; Harris, 1995; Hayek, 1987; Kruger, Struzziero, Watts & Vacca, 1995; Walsh, 1989). Other researchers (Greenberg & Dimitrovich, 2002; McLaughlin & Leone, 1997) found
that ongoing training kept team members dedicated and high functioning due to the continual access to technical assistance and consultation.

**Program Design and Implementation**

Researchers suggest that prereferral team success can be attributed to a variety of factors dealing with team functions, membership and development. Chalfant & Pysh (1989), Hayek (1995), Kruger, Struzziero, Watts and Vacca (1995), and Walsh (1989), found that possessing an understanding of the purpose for specific team activities by team members made team members work harder to assure the success of their team. This understanding is often enhanced for team members when they are learning skills that would allow the team to work together effectively (Hammond, Ingalls, Olson, Greenfield & Edson, 1995; Ingalls & Hammond, 1996).

Hammond and Ingalls (1999) found that prereferral programs are often continued due to the collaborative nature behind their design and implementation. If the program design is one that requires input from all those working with a student, and allows for input from all involved, school personnel tend to work more collaboratively to address student needs.

Another possible explanation for the continued use of prereferral teams may be found in the organizational change perspective. Yin (1979), Rogers (1983) and Goodman, et al (1993), found that once the innovation/program is implemented, there is a time that passes in which both the organization and the innovation/program change to become part of one another. Eventually, the innovation/program blends into the regular activities of the organization and becomes part of the existing activities. When this routinization occurs, it is an indication that the innovation/program has been accepted as a normal part of the
organization and is welcomed as functioning part of the organization needed for continuation of the daily procedures and success. Maher, Illback and Zins (1984) believe that the school’s existing configuration must be one that promotes the development and application of a prereferral system. In other words, school philosophies, practices, policies, and services must be one complete system working to meet the needs of all students within the regular classroom.

**Funding and Mandates**

Funding and allocation of resources has also been cited as a reason for the continuation of programs. In their study to determine how successful health care agencies can provide continual improvement and quality, Levesque, Prochaska, and Prochaska (2001), found that in order to sustain change, available organizational structures and resources must be provided in order. This, the authors say, can be done through careful planning. Boyd and Hord (1994), support this belief based on a study they conducted which sought explanations for sustainability in school change. This finding is also echoed by Boudah, Logan and Greenwood (2001), Fuchs and Fuchs (2001), and Greenberg and Domitrovich (2002) who suggest that financial resources, material resources, and personnel necessary to support implementation will also ensure a program’s sustainability.

Carter and Sugai (1989) found that the mandated use of IST provides another reason for continued use of prereferral teams. In 1998, these researchers conducted interviews with instructional support teachers. The teachers reported that the state mandate promoted administrative support, school-wide compliance, and coordinated practice of IST while motivating teachers and school personnel to actually use IST. Pennsylvania required the use of ongoing program assessment, which assured that all elements of the
program were being sufficiently practiced. To accomplish this, schools were to develop and implement a system to check team progress, which involved observation, team record examination and personnel interviews. Conway (1997) reported that instructional support teachers believed the mandated use of this ongoing program monitoring and validation was largely responsible for continued program implementation. Bahr, et al, (1999) studied the practices of intervention teams in three states, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin. One area of interest to the researchers was whether state legislation influenced the impact of the intervention teams. The study outcomes showed that Illinois teams consistently demonstrated superior results in several measures. Law requires the use of prereferral intervention in Illinois, but not the other states involved in the study. Legislation directs most educational practice in Illinois and provides funding for long-term training of its educators in alternate service delivery practices. The researchers report that it is plausible that Illinois teams exhibited more positive outcomes because of the legal mandate associated with the prereferral intervention in this state. From this, the researchers summarized that legal imperatives and state policies impact educational practice in a positive manner.

**Program Support**

Researchers believe that the continuation of prereferral teams such as IST is directly related to the feelings of support team members perceived they got from their professional colleagues (Chalfant & Pysh, 1989; Kruger, Struzziero, Watts & Vacca, 1995; Walsh, 1989), and school administrator (Chalfant & Pysh, 1989; Hayek, 1987; Kruger, Struzziero, Watts & Vacca, 1995). Ingalls and Hammond (1996) found that parents who were involved earlier in the intervention process, provide continued support for their child
post-intervention and are more willing to work with their child’s school for a longer period of time. In a study of the outcome of 96 Teacher Assistance Teams that was conducted by Chalfant and Pysh (1989), teachers rated group process and problem solving activities as being quite effective. This study also found that teachers believed the suggested team interventions were effective and resulted in improved student achievement. Additionally noted in this study was that teachers were pleased with the amount of support given them by fellow teachers.

Support from educational agencies also provides positive influences in the continuation of prereferral systems which exist in local school systems. Carter and Sugai (1989) surveyed educational agencies throughout the United States. Thirty-four of the fifty states required or recommended that the education agencies over which they had authority implement prereferral systems. The authors suggest that because prereferral team use is supported/encouraged by educational agencies in so many states, schools feel supported and more willingly implement their use. Support from school and district administrators has been found to determine a program’s success and continuation as well (Boudah, Logan & Greenwood, 2001; Denton, Vaughn, & Fletcher, 2003; Gersten, Chard, & Baker, 2000; Greenberg & Domitrovich, 2002).

Time allotment and the feelings of support associated with it, has also been given as a reason for prereferral teams to continue. Walker and Shea (1995) noted that the continued use of IST reduces the number of inappropriate referrals to special education. This, in turn gives educators more time to spend on other classroom activities including helping other children. Teachers are willing to use IST when they realize that the time needed does not exceed the time they have to give. Additionally, teachers see that students
are being helped in the regular classroom and additional time is not needed for more meetings for testing and placement.

**Program Outcomes and Results**

Often, the reason for continued use of a prereferral team depends heavily on the program outcomes and results. Kovalesky (1995, Part I) presents evidence that individual aspects of the IST program can/do effect the success of a program and the outcome of a school’s goals. Kovalesky et al (1997) studied the way IST impacted student performance. They found that students in IST schools that kept IST as it was originally developed, made greater progress on time-on-task, task completion, and task comprehension than students in schools who did not use IST. Fuchs and Fuchs (2001) suggest that ongoing success often causes school staff to focus more intently on improving student outcomes through team intervention. Gersten and Dimino (2001) found that if educators were permitted to view the changes in student performance and allowed to analyze the outcomes and implications of the data, the team worked more diligently to improve student success through their early intervention process.

**Additional Findings**

While there were five characteristics that seemed to explain the initial success of IST in many schools, the literature review also highlighted team characteristics that pointed to the successful implementation of IST during initial stages of the program's use. Included in these findings are the characteristics of IST members.

**Team Member Characteristics**

Personnel Characteristics of individual team members also seem to play a part in the continuation of prereferral programs. Klingner, et al. (2001) found that certain
characteristics of the school’s leader affect the success of the program. The results of their study indicate that a strong, supportive leader who supports the change initiative will influence teachers and team members through the positive support demonstrated to other school personnel. Various researchers (Budah, Logan & Greenwood, 2001; Boyd & Hord, 1994; Gersten & Dimino, 1991) found that teams who work in a caring and supportive environment where team members and other school staff share collegial relationships, encourage productivity and maintain a positive atmosphere, have higher productivity and group expectations which will help sustain a program or change. Aksamit and Rankin (1993) looked at team success in urban settings. They found that the knowledge and commitment of individual team members contributed to the success and continuation of the prereferral intervention team in urban settings.

**Barriers To Continued Program Use**

Institutional change has proven to be an arduous process. In addition to the physical barriers such as time, funding and resources, innovation has been impeded by efforts of those responsible for implementing the transformation. Lee (2009) reported that change is difficult even if the educator is willing and able to participate. The researcher further explains that skillful facilitation must move individuals toward the concept of teaming in order for productive collaboration to take place.

Collaboration is also inhibited by the conversations that revolve around change. In maintaining professional learning communities, the need to come together as a group is often overlooked for the need to maintain individualism and professional license. Leonard and Leonard (2003) found that despite improved student achievement and positive
outcomes created by new programs, teachers are hesitant to work collaboratively because it threatens their ability to express individualism.

Research shows that community programs which have not persisted demonstrate common characteristics as well. In their research to understand the sustainability of community health programs, Shedia-Rizkallah and Bone (1998) found that there are three basic factors that play a part in determining the sustainability of a community health-care program: project design and implementation factors, factors within the organizational setting, and factors in the broader community environment. Authors conclude that community health programs that have not succeeded are ones that have not had adequate start-up time; were not driven by the needs of the communities; did not include planning for sustainability; had given no consideration to the affordability of time, funding, and resources; did not provide sufficient resources to yield initial success and ensure long-term sustainability; or did not allocate resources to cover on-going costs of maintaining programs.

**Barriers for Program Prereferral**

Following the removal of the state mandate in Pennsylvania, prereferral programs were considered voluntary. While some schools continued to use the IST prereferral program for providing interventions for struggling students, some schools selected to no longer use such programs. Schools in which the use of prereferral programs no longer exists exhibit common characteristics as well. Explanations provided by school personnel often reveal problems that began upon implementation and include training, design and organization, funding and mandates, support, program outcomes and results, and team characteristics.
Training

Training has been reported as being a major factor in the continuation of prereferral programs. The lack of initial/ongoing training has been cited as a reason for no longer using prereferral teams. Maher and Zins (1987) examined prereferral teams as they were first introduced in order to provide information for those considering use of preferral teams as a means of educational service delivery. The researchers report that teachers, who are asked to implement a preferral team, must have all skills and available knowledge prior to beginning. They add that without the expanded knowledge needed to provide consultation, teachers may be resistant to providing new services and consequently any attempts to institute this new program will be unsuccessful.

Design and Organization

Lack of time to complete additional responsibilities can also be a deterrent to maintaining a new program. Bird and Little (1986) report that when working to improve schools, time for common planning, analysis of results, and collegial interaction is the most important commodity. A teacher’s normal work day involves working with children, covering school duties, and committee work. The regular day does not allow time for collaboration or common planning (Shanker, 1990; Joyce & Showers, 1987). Gerber (1991) reports that the implementation of a new program (with all its associated responsibilities) becomes a disincentive to participate and suggests that the best resource that can be provided for teachers during school improvement is time.

Another reason for the lack of existing prereferral teams is the failure to incorporate school-based goals. A study to determine why special education teams often report the inability to function properly/accomplish team goals (Ferguson & Ryan-
Wincek, 1992) found that teams often do not succeed because their initial structure was not based on school needs or outcomes and the team could not function properly because team members did not share common goals or directions. In follow-up interviews, teachers noted the extensive time demands and accentuated the need for administrative support (Sindelar et al., 1992).

Hammond (1999) found that some schools opt to develop their own referral program without the barriers created by a specifically pre-designed program. As a result, these schools reject the predesigned programs for ones they can adapt to their specific needs and were not confined by the expectations and programmed activities of prereferral teams.

**Funding and Mandates**

When prereferral teams were first introduced, many were mandated but came with guaranteed funding. This funding made implementation easier for schools and more readily accepted. In Pennsylvania schools were directed to provide an instructional support teacher as a consultant to other teachers in the school. Districts were offered $29,000 per school for a two-year period to cover the costs of this teacher-consultant. At the end of the two-year period, the financial support for this teacher-consultant was removed and local districts were responsible for picking up the costs of this teacher. Some districts selected to no longer use IST due to lack of the additional funding needed. The lack of funding has been cited by some researchers as a reason preferral teams are no longer used in some schools. Stainbeck and Stainbeck (1984) found that prior to IST, many schools were unwilling and/or not prepared to make changes to the existing system without some type of support. However, upon learning of the intense training program and
the provision of funding for a teacher-consultant, schools chose to take advantage of the offer. Then, when the guarantee of state funds was removed, schools opted to discontinue the use of prereferral programs. Greenfield (1995) investigated the forces that contributed to educational program endurance or termination. She found that many projects requiring changes relied heavily upon grant funding to cover essential program costs. When the grant funding was removed, most of the resources allocated for the project had also been removed. This often left projects with no funds at all and thus, the project could no longer be offered.

**Support**

Lack of support from school administration or personnel is another reason schools may select to no longer use prereferral teams. School reform researchers Klinger, et al (2001) found that many school reforms stood less chance to last if the school personnel did not feel supported by the district level especially if the districts were never committed to them initially. This belief is echoed by Maher and Zins (1987) who report that administrators must provide support through verbal agreement (encouraging use through verbal interaction) and demonstrated action (making certain the team has the necessary materials, space, support, etc. for successful operation). The researchers further explain that without administrative support, the chances of successfully implementing a prereferral team are greatly reduced.

**Program Outcomes and Results**

Lack of student academic or behavioral improvement has also been cited as a barrier to prereferral persistence. Classroom reform researchers Klinger, et al., (1999) and Vaughn, Klinger and Hughes (2001), found that new practices that are introduced are
more likely to be used by teachers if the teachers see actual improvements in student performance on standardized tests or in social growth. If no improvement is seen, teachers may be more inclined to stop using the program and return to previous practices that have helped students improve.

Summary

The initial use of prereferral programs and interventions for students in need was the result of federal mandates and state legislation. America's schools were forced to examine programs that would not only acknowledge, but address the deficiencies of students that could not exist in a regular classroom without additional help. Chapter two provided an overview of the research that was conducted to find out about the initial implementation of preferral programs, including Pennsylvania's IST.

The following chapter describes the procedures that were used to investigate the use of IST as a collaborative effort in Pennsylvania's schools.
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

This study was designed to investigate characteristics of an existing educational program to determine what make its use persist over time. This chapter contains information about all aspects of the research methodology for the study. Topics include a description of the research design, participants, instruments, and procedures of the study. This information is organized into the following sections: research questions, research design, means of data collection, means of data analysis, and reliability and validity.

The questions that guide this study are as follows:

1. How many schools have retained the IST program as part of their operations, in some form?
2. Why did some schools continue IST after the mandate and funding were eliminated? What factors contributed to program persistence?
3. How has the IST program been changed, if at all, in schools still using it?

Research Design

The use of survey instruments to conduct qualitative and quantitative research studies has been accepted by researchers in the social science fields for some time. Although different options for the dissemination of surveys exist, the use of technology to conduct surveys has surpassed the use of mail, telephone, fax, and email to do the same. Klassen and Jacobs (2001) found that continual improvements in technology have encouraged researchers to use internet surveys as the sole means to collect data. Dillman (2000) suggests that the use of internet surveys in which study explanations are provided,
procedural explanations are listed, and participation is voluntary, has increased the acceptance of internet surveys as legitimate and trusted data collection instruments.

In comparison to paper and pencil surveys, the use of web-based survey research methodology has been reported as being less expensive to administer (Schmidt, 1997; Couper, 2000; Roztocki, 2001), having a more efficient response time, (Sackmary, 1998), providing automated data entry (Boyer, et.al, 2002). Additionally, researchers have explained that the use of online surveys makes the task of wide-spread dissemination easier (Schmidt, 1997).

**Survey Instrument**

When selecting the survey as an investigative study tool, it is important to consider methodology that will ensure good response rates. It was therefore important to consider what procedures to take in order to address survey qualities that would encourage good response rates for an online survey instrument before the survey instrument was actually designed.

Researchers (Bogen, 1996; Handwerk, Carson, & Blackwell, 2000) found that the length of a survey definitely influences participants as they decide whether or not to participate in a study/survey. Additionally, researchers (Schonlau, Fricker, & Elliott, 2002) found that for online surveys in particular, the total number of questions displayed per screen shot, can influence participants as they decide to take part in the study. Schonlau et al. (2002) found that it was important to include a manner by which to indicate that the survey was not difficult to navigate or understand and that the effort to complete the survey would not be intrusive of a large amount of time.
To address the issue of survey length, participants were informed that the survey instrument used for this study would take ten to fifteen minutes at most to complete. Participants received additional information that explained how to return to the online survey as many times as needed in order to complete the task as long as they used the same computer to access the survey.

Additional issues considered during the survey design/construction stage of this study were the physical appearance of the survey and the manner with which the content was presented. Physical appearance is believed to be more important to web-based surveys than to traditional paper-and-pencil surveys and is thought be an aspect that should warrant a higher-level of deliberation when designing a survey. Researchers found that the visual appeal of web-based surveys could affect survey response rates and must therefore be taken into account when designing an online or web-based survey (Couper, Traugot, and Lamais, 2001; Dillman, 2000; Dillman, Tortora, Conradt, and Bowker, 1998). This survey used a variety of colors, limited the number of questions displayed per page to three (questions that were abnormally long were limited to one per page), and question types were varied to include Likert-like questions, completion questions, ranking questions, and open-ended response questions.

Survey design must also address the manner in which questions are presented when taking into account survey response rates. When developing a survey, it is important to consider what information is to be collected from the participants, and what design will be used that will encourage participants to provide the information. Researchers found that survey studies realize higher response rates when the information that is sought is of value to individual participants (Dillman, 1991; Groves, 2000; Groves, Presser, and Dipko,
2004). Incorporating these ideas into the survey provides a legitimate forum for participants to share experiences, expertise and values. In this study, the sequential placement of the research questions indicated importance and the information sought was based on experiential information that participants possessed in order to work with the IST process in their schools.

In developing the survey instrument used in this study, previously conducted surveys that sought teacher perceptions regarding classroom interventions for struggling students were examined. Although this study did not duplicate any particular study, other studies were examined for the flow, layout, design length, look and general format (Lee-Tarver, 2006; Truscott, Cohen, Sams, Sanborn, and Frank, 2005; Slonski-Fowler and Truscott, 2004; Rankin and Aksamit, 1994).

The survey instrument used in this study was designed to address the issues as presented above in hopes of ensuring a high-level of participant involvement and response integrity. The survey was a web-based instrument consisting of rating scale items, multiple choice questions, and questions to which participants must provide short answers. Additionally, the survey instrument contained questions designed to gather participant perceptions of the reasons for the continued use of the IST program in their school. The survey instrument contained questions to ascertain participant perceptions of the program’s effectiveness.

Survey questions addressed characteristics of the IST which contributed to the program’s continued use, as well as the individual team member’s perception of overall program outcomes. Survey topics included characteristics of key personnel, program results, funding support by local districts, program organization within a school’s standard
operating procedures, support from internal and external sources, program structure
/restructuring to meet school needs, program outcomes, student success, referral rates to
special education, initial and on-going training, constancy of team personnel, time
allocation for tasks, initial implementation efforts and design, and leader/team willingness.
Respondents were also asked to report their perceptions of how IST was affected by the
removal of the mandate requiring IST, and the loss of funding supporting IST efforts. A
copy of the survey is attached in Appendix C.

Interview Instrument

Interviews have been successfully used in social research and in the business world
for quite some time because of their inherent nature of providing in-depth information
about a particular research issue or question (Dearnley, 2005). The school personnel
interviewed for this study had experience with the IST program in their schools over a
period of time and thus possessed a set of skills not common to other study participants.
Using these key personnel as participants afforded a closer look at the IST program and its
use over time.

When initially contacted, participants were given the option of a face-to-face
interview or a telephone interview. All participants selected a telephone interview.
Telephone interviews have been found to be less costly than personal interviews, more
time efficient, and have the ability to contact persons over a larger geographical area
(Hollwitz & Wilson, 1993; Pawlas, 1995; Whitling, 2008).

The interview format of this study utilized a semi-structured instrument with open-
ended questions to allow more in-depth responses and permitted participants to provide
additional information pertaining to their respective schools/districts. Prompts were used
to provide additional explanation of a current question, check the understanding of a participant’s response, or to explore a specific issue or response further.

In order to address study goals, interview questions were patterned after the survey and addressed the same issues: characteristics of the IST which contributed to the program’s continued use or discontinued use, the individual team member’s perception of overall program outcomes, characteristics of key personnel, program results, funding support by local districts, program organization within a school’s standard operating procedures, support from internal and external sources, program structure /restructuring to meet school needs, program outcomes, student success, referral rates to special education, initial and on-going training, constancy of team personnel, time allocation for tasks, initial implementation efforts and design, leader/team willingness, the results of the removal of the IST, and the loss of IST funding support. Additional time was allotted to discuss the changes in IST following the removal of the mandate and initial funding. A copy of the interview protocol can be found in Appendix D.

**Survey and Interview Pilot**

In order to check ease of access, understanding of wording, completion time needed, natural flow of questions, check for appropriate response selections, and submission procedures, surveys were piloted with employees from a school district and intermediate unit staff. School district personnel were from a district that continues to use IST, but whose superintendent declined full study participation. Intermediate unit staff included persons who currently work with schools using IST or have personal experience with the use of IST in a previous school district. There were nine participants for the survey pilot.
The interview protocol was piloted with different employees from the same district and same intermediate unit. Three volunteers participated in the interview pilot.

During the pilot testing of the survey, it was decided that insufficient writing/typing space was available to the participants selecting the answer choice of other. It was also found that wording in several questions lead to an unclear understanding which resulted in no responses being selected. To address the issue of insufficient writing space, the survey instrument was changed to allow additional space by increasing the number of characteristics allowed per question. Correction for the unclear wording was addressed by changing the wording and resubmitting to the pilot group for reconsideration. Changes were perceived more appropriate and thus used for the final survey instrument.

When the interview was being explained to pilot participants, they were told that the completion time was estimated at 20-25 minutes. During the pilot session, it was realized that this time allotment was too generous for even the participants that provided the most in-depth answers. Therefore, when the interview was explained to participants at the time of actual implementation, the time expectation was reduced to 10 - 15 minutes. This time allotment was much more accurate.

A discussion with survey and interview pilot participants was conducted following the pilot process. Participants were asked to give their perceptions of what the instruments were attempting to ask. Additionally, participants were asked to provide their beliefs of how the survey and/or interview could be improved to "get to the heart" of the issues. It was a shared belief that the questions were straightforward, clearly written, and important to educators using IST.

The pilot sessions did not reveal any other issues to be revised.
Data Collection

Data for the study were obtained through the use of an online survey containing open-ended and closed questions. In addition, qualitative data were gathered through individual interviews with key personnel from school districts across Pennsylvania to assist in gathering information on changes in the Instructional Support Team process since its implementation in a school district.

Survey

When participants were notified of the survey, they were given a web address to use to access the survey instrument. As individual participants completed the survey, answers were recorded on the survey web site in a database developed specifically for this survey. Answers could be accessed by the investigator at any time throughout the time period the survey was kept open for collection. The submission of each new survey caused the survey database to be updated.

Interview

A series of telephone interviews were conducted with selected volunteer participants from IST schools who continue to use IST in their school. Participants for the interview portion of the study were school personnel who possess a greater knowledge base of the IST in their district including information regarding the implementation of the IST process, team procedures, and associated problems or successes of the IST in their school. The positions believed to be most knowledgeable and thus the most appropriate as interview participants were Classroom teachers, IST teachers, and Special Education Directors.
Participant responses were recorded using audiotapes. Prior to the beginning of each the interview, tapes were identified according to interview participant's current position, and geographic location For instance, the teacher from the rural school was labeled TR, the IST teacher from the suburban school was labeled ISTS, and the special education director from the urban school was labeled SEDU.

**Response Analysis**

**Survey**

After the online survey instrument was closed to collection, a final update of the data base occurred. The survey answer information was then exported as an entire result set to an Excel spreadsheet.

A matrix was generated for each question on the survey. Each matrix was labeled with the question whose responses were recorded in the respective matrix. For multiple choice questions the answer selections were listed on the left side of the matrix. The right side of the matrix included the response percent and the response total. A visual representation (bar line) of the response number for each answer selection was included in the center of the matrix. The answer selection containing the most respondents was bolded for easy identification. The response matrix is illustrated in Figure 2 using data from one survey question as an example.
Figure 2 Response Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geographic Setting</th>
<th>Response %</th>
<th>Response #</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>rural</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>suburban</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>urban</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Respondents 4
(skipped this question) 2

Figure 3 shows the different matrix design that was created for the rating scale questions. Information to be rated was listed on the left side of the matrix, the center of the matrix contains the rating and number and percentage of participants responding for each rating, and the right side of the matrix shows response averages for each response selection. Additional information, such as the total number of respondents and the number of respondents who skipped the question is located beneath the question matrix.
The background section of the survey was designed to gather demographic information about the school location, school size, community size, the current position of the participant, and the tenure of the participant. These questions were presented prior to the actual research questions. For this reason, the status of the IST in each school was not yet known.

**Interview**

Once transcription had occurred, all responses that suggested possible reasons as to the continuation of the IST program, (i.e. IST program characteristics, reasons for continuation, reasons for discontinuation, etc.) were listed and coded as indicated above. The full set of responses were reduced to a smaller set of categories for each question of the interview. To manage the response categories more efficiently, an Excel table was created to show the categories and the code assigned to the category.
Table 3.1 presents the response category table for an actual survey question for illustration purposes. The table presents actual responses for the question, “From whom is support needed in order for IST to succeed?” The example used in the table below for this question shows four response categories. However, depending on the question topic, other questions may have additional response selections.

To check that responses were assigned to the appropriate category and code, and to verify the consistency of the presenting the ratings, a person independent of the study examined the responses, the corresponding response categories, and the associated codes to which the responses have been assigned. There were no differences between the two raters and therefore, it was not necessary to resolve any disputes by reexamining the actual responses for the specific question and making the necessary changes.

Table 3.1 Response Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From whom is support needed in order for IST to succeed?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Categories</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Next, the number of responses for each code were determined and recorded. A table was created in Excel showing participant identification, and the response code(s) selected by each participant. This procedure is illustrated in Table 3.2. The table shows
that of the question regarding support, the most selections were assigned to Code 3. These data indicate that interview participants believed that support is need from parents in order for the program IST program to succeed.

Table 3.2 Number of Responses for Each Code for Program Success

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Code 1</th>
<th>Code 2</th>
<th>Code 3</th>
<th>Code 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PR</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PS</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PU</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISTR</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISTS</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISTU</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEDR</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEDS</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEDU</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Responses</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To determine response patterns, the number of participants whose answers were assigned to each code was totaled. Using the data from the Response Per Code table, an associated table (3.3) was created that includes the code number, the number of participants who gave a response assigned to each code, and the participant who provided the response.
Based on the participants who provided responses for the question, “From whom is support needed in order for IST to succeed?” (Table 3.2), Table 3.3 shows the number of participants providing responses for each code, and identifies the participants providing those responses.

This example shows that Codes 1 and 2 received the largest number and highest percent of responses. These results would indicate that the majority of participants believe the persons from whom support is needed in order for IST to succeed, are the building administrator, and the school staff.

**Reliability and Validity**

When selecting the survey as a research instrument it important to remember to make certain the instrument that will be used to gather the data actually measures what is expected.

To determine the validity and reliability of this study, it was necessary to consider the characteristics that ensure participant completion in addition to the characteristics of a good survey (as presented in research and previously discussed) to ensure an accurate, valid, and reliable instrument. Therefore, during the development
phase of this study, it was necessary to ensure that the survey was visually appealing; delivered content in a sequential and understanding manner; was relatively short; asked questions in a manner that did not use unclear terminology/language, difficult phrasing, inflammatory language or language that might create a negative reaction and resulting response; and which did not inject researcher bias. Additionally, focusing on the need to gather teacher perceptions of IST that may have caused the program's continued use over time, questions were simply and succinctly stated. All questions were research-derived and with the use of Likert-type questions, open-ended question and opinion questions, participant perceptions were easy to quantify.

As a result of direct, simple questions asked of both survey and interview participants following the pilot process, and the personal experience of the researcher with the IST program, it was determined that the content validity of this survey was good. This conclusion was supported by and based on research that has preceded this study. In other words, the instruments used in the study measured what was intended to be measured.

Summary

This study was designed to gather information from individual personnel in a Pennsylvania's schools who work with the IST program. With this in mind, consideration was given to the costs and labor-intensive efforts that would be needed to complete the survey task. Additionally, consideration was given to the limited "person power" that would be available to the researcher. With all the parameters in mind, it was decided to use an online survey to reach the possible participants. Although the letter of invitation to the superintendents was costly, it was the most efficient and respectful manner in which
to reach the superintendents in all schools districts in the commonwealth. For this particular study, the use of the online survey was valuable as it provided input from participants across the state from varied geographic locations, community size, and school size.

The use of interviews was valuable as well. When given the option to use telephone or face-to-face interviews all participants selected interviews explaining that it was more conducive to their hectic schedule, especially with the availability of cell phones. The results of the online survey and the key personnel interviews are provided in chapter 4.
CHAPTER 4
ANALYSIS OF DATA AND PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to investigate Pennsylvania’s Instructional Support Team program to understand the characteristics that made its use persist over time. School districts across Pennsylvania were invited to complete an online survey in which knowledgeable participants were asked a series of questions about their experiences with the IST program. The information collected from the surveys included: demographics of the school in which they are working; their role in the school; the status of IST in their school; the decision to continue/discontinue the use of IST in their school; factors that contributed to the continued/discontinued use of IST in their school; the structure of the IST in their school; the characteristics of the IST process, team members, and individuals which effect the success of IST; and the person(s) from whom support is needed in order for IST to be successful. Participants were also asked to respond to questions about program outcomes and results, investments made with respect to outcomes produced, and the benefits (if any) that IST provided for students. Open-ended questions were included to allow participants to provide additional comments on their thoughts about IST in general. Information about the IST process was also garnered from individual interviews with school district and intermediate unit personnel from rural, suburban and urban in which the use of IST has continued.

The research questions that guided this study were:
1. How many schools have retained the IST program as part of their operations, in some form?

2. Why did some schools continue IST after the mandate and funding were eliminated? *What factors contributed to program persistence?*

3. How has the IST program been changed, if at all, in schools still using it?

This chapter presents results of the survey and interviews and relates findings to the research questions that guided the study.

**Survey Response Rates**

**Participants Response Rates**

Letters were sent to 500 public school superintendents across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, which explained the study and asked for permission for school district personnel to participate in an online survey. Superintendents were asked to respond only if they did not want their district personnel to participate. Of the 500 letters sent, 81 (or 16% of 500 superintendents) responded. Of the 81 respondents, 38 (47%) agreed to permit district personnel to participate and 53% (43) declined participation. Although an email reminder was sent to the remaining 419 superintendents who did not respond to the original invitation, no additional responses were received. Table 4.1 presents information on the explanations of the superintendents selecting to decline participation.
Table 4.1 Superintendent Explanation for Declining Participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No reason given</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not interested</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No longer use IST, not interested</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University town, too many requests</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All personnel knowing IST retired/gone</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In an attempt to locate additional schools willing to participate in the online survey, each of the Special Education consultants in the 29 Intermediate Units across Pennsylvania was contacted regarding knowledge of the districts/schools within their service area who currently use IST and those who may not use IST currently but did so in the recent past. Two consultants (7%) responded that although they were certain IST was used in the schools districts they served, they were not certain as to the number and did not know how to gather the data. Therefore, an additional search to find participant schools was conducted using district websites. Additionally, in a final effort to locate schools that currently use IST, schools were contacted via telephone. However, this yielded no additional schools for survey participation.

**Survey Response Rates**

From the 38 school districts that participated, 185 staff members from 80 schools logged in to complete the survey, with 185 giving consent to use their survey response data and agreeing to participate in the survey.
Demographic Information

Survey questions requested participants to provide information on the demographics of their schools and to respond to characteristics that may impact the IST program. The participants were asked to describe the geographic location of their school, school size, and community size. Additionally, participants were asked to describe their current position and the number of years of experience at the school in which they are currently employed.

Community Size/Geographic Location

A common manner in which to define population or geographic location has been to apply the methods used by the U.S. Census Bureau. For the 2000 census, new definitions were added to more closely explain population differences between rural and urban. The new U.S. Census definitions highlight the shift of more U.S. communities to urban-like areas. Rather than applying the common terms of rural, suburban, and urban, the U.S. Census refers to different population density areas as census blocks. The main types of census blocks are defined as being urbanized areas, urban clusters and rural areas. The premise remains that cities are urban, and the land outside and urban area or urban cluster is rural. However, the areas located outside rural or urban areas are not as easily defined as applying the term, “suburban,” to them. Instead, these areas are defined using a combination of census block types, which can create confusion among users.

To eliminate the need for lengthy explanations and the possibility of confusion among participants, this study defined a rural community as having no city nearby and a population of less than 25,000; a suburban community as one that has a population in the range of 25,000 to 249,000 and has a small to medium sized city
nearby; and an urban community as one that has a population of greater than 250,000 and is near a large city.

The number of participants in this study from rural settings comprised 35% (66 of 185) of the total participants for this question. Participants from suburban settings comprised over half (57%; 105 of 185) of the participants for this question. Those reporting an urban community comprised 5% (10 of 185) of the participants. The remainder of participants (2%; 4 of 185) indicated that their community could not be described using the definitions provided and selected the option of other. Two of the participants comprising the other category explained that they lived near a very large city and did not feel as though they "fit" with the given categories. The remaining other participants explained that their communities were university-based areas which meant that the population fluctuated throughout the year. This information is summarized in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 Community Size/Geographic Location

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N = 185</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
School Size

The largest group of participants (67%; 122 of 181) describe their school as medium-sized with a student population in the range of 300-999 students. The next largest group (19%; 35 of 181) described their school as being small with less than 300 students. A smaller number of participants (14%; 24 of 181) explained that their school was large with over 1,000 students. A summary of this information is in Table 4.3

Table 4.3  School Size

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N= 181</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium-Sized</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Current Position in School

Participants were asked to describe their current position within the school. The five positions most commonly reported as current positions were IST teacher (31%), regular education classroom teacher (24%), other (18%; primarily Title I teachers), school administrator (20%), and school counselor (10%). Other participants reported serving as school psychologist (4%), special education resource room teacher (3%), and special education teacher (2%).

The most important aspect of these data is that the most commonly reported positions are those that deal directly with the IST program in their schools. These would be the personnel who implement the program and make certain the program is providing
all aspects as expected by the faculty and administration in the school. A summary of this information is found in Table 4.4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N=181</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IST Teacher</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular Education Classroom Teacher</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Administrator</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Counselor</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Psychologist</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education Resource Room Teacher</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education Classroom Teacher</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Tenure**

To find out how long the participants have been in their schools/positions, all participants were asked to indicate their tenure in their current school. One third (33%) of the participants indicated they had been with their current school for eleven or more years, one-third (31%) reported being in their school one to five years, 27% reported their tenure with the school as six to ten years, and the smallest number of participants (10%) indicated they had been in the school for less than one year.

This data reveal that over half of the participants have been with their current school at least six years. This length of time would allow the participants to personally
experience IST over an extended period of time and thus provide opinions based on extended experiences. Table 4.5 provides a summary of this information.

All participant groups, except the school psychologist and special education resource room teacher groups, have one-half to two-thirds of their respondent group whose experience ranges from six or more years of experience in their respective schools. This is of particular interest because as key IST team members all have first-hand IST experience over a period of time in their respective schools.

Table 4.5 Tenure and Current Position

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N=198</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Less than 1 yr</th>
<th>1-5 Years</th>
<th>6-10 Years</th>
<th>11+ Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IST Teachers</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>3.6% (2)</td>
<td>27.3% (15)</td>
<td>27.3% (15)</td>
<td>42.0% (23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular Education Classroom Teacher</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>13.3% (6)</td>
<td>33.3% (15)</td>
<td>20.0% (9)</td>
<td>33.3% (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (Reading Specialist, Nurse Practitioner, Title I Reading Specialist, IU Consultant, RtII teacher)</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>18.4% (7)</td>
<td>29.0% (11)</td>
<td>21.1% (8)</td>
<td>31.6% (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Administrators</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>36.0% (9)</td>
<td>40.0% (10)</td>
<td>24.0% (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Counselors</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>37.0% (7)</td>
<td>37.0% (7)</td>
<td>26.3% (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Psychologists</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>28.6% (2)</td>
<td>28.6% (2)</td>
<td>28.6% (2)</td>
<td>14.3% (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education Resource Room Teacher</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>40.0% (2)</td>
<td>20.0% (1)</td>
<td>20.0% (1)</td>
<td>20.0% (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education Classroom Teacher</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>50.0% (2)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>50.0% (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Respondents</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>9.7% (19)</td>
<td>31.6% (62)</td>
<td>26.5% (52)</td>
<td>32.6% (65)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
IST Composition

When asked to describe the composition of the IST team, participants selected from the following list: Instructional Support Teacher, school administrator, school counselor, school psychologist, classroom teacher, school nurse, other school staff who work with student, parents, community agency representatives (as needed), and other. Table 4.6 presents information regarding team composition.

Team membership appears to be similar to the IST as originally implemented in the early 1990s as far as key members such as the IST teacher, the school administrator, the school counselor, and the classroom teacher. However, as demonstrated in the survey results, the most important team member for the implementation of the IST program, the IST teacher, is reported as a team member in only a little over three-fourths of participants' schools. Additionally, although parents are considered an integral part of the IST and were to be included as core team members (Kovalesky, 1990), it is interesting to note that parents were included as regular team members in just a little over three-fourths of the schools. While these two exceptions are seen, it is interesting to note that the other core team members required for initial implementation, the school administrator and the classroom teacher, are included in the team at nearly 100 percent.
Table 4.6 IST Composition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N=162</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Administrator</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Teacher</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Counselor</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Support Teacher</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other School Staff (who work with referred student)</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Psychologist</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Nurse</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Agency representatives</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (ESL teacher, Reading Specialist/Coordinator, Advocates, District Administrator, Behavior Specialist, Student)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Common Team Practices

The questions in this section asked participants to respond to common practices of the IST in their school and included questions on the intent of the IST, team members, timelines used, group structure, and methods. Table 4.7 presents information on common practices in the use of IST in participating schools.

It is interesting to note that participants report high percentages of the IST program with common practices similar to the original intent. These practices include: providing interventions prior to a student being referred for special education; using a team approach to intervention; including parents on the team; in finding present levels;
and in following a strict, sixty-day timeline which is one of the key elements of the original implementation of IST in Pennsylvania.

Table 4.7 Common Team Practices in the Use of IST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IST in our school...</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>is used to provide intervention prior to a student being referred for special education services.</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uses a team approach to intervention.</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>finds present academic levels.</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>includes parents on the team.</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uses research-based interventions.</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conducts behavioral assessments.</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>determines communication abilities.</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>determines social/emotional levels.</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>follows a strict sixty-day time line for intervention.</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Questions

The next section of the survey was designed to collect information from survey participants that addressed the three research questions guiding the study. A summary of information on the factors that influenced the continued use of IST in schools follows.
How many schools have retained the IST program as part of their operations, in some form?

Following the removal of the IST mandate and subsequent funding, school districts were charged with finding a method of referral and placement that would best suit their schools. Although IST is no longer mandated in Pennsylvania, some districts continue to use this program. In order to determine how many school districts/schools do use IST, and to determine if those school districts/schools using IST do so with fidelity, the survey included a question regarding the current status of the IST in the school.

When asked to provide the status of IST in their respective schools, the largest group (39%) reported using IST as a tier in the RtII process. This suggests that the components of IST are in place, but the program acts more as a support for the RtII identification process for students needing special education services than as a support for struggling students. Although IST is being incorporated into another program, it generally stays “intact” as it is used. This suggests that the IST program is strong in its approach and contains solid, fundamental processes which allow the program to be incorporated into another program while continuing to produce intended outcomes on its own. Practicing administrators using the IST program know the program’s tenets and procedures and understand that the program provides the continued support for struggling students. Additionally, because the program had been successful in the school prior to its incorporation into the RtII program, its outcomes are known and understood.

The next largest group of participants (32%) reported the continued use of a modified IST program in their school (using only the components that are needed in their school). Therefore, IST is still used, but the components have been modified to more
closely meet the needs of the students in participant schools. The third largest group of survey participants (29%) report using the IST as a “Stand-Alone” intervention program, which indicates the program is used as first implemented and components are similar to the initial IST program and have not been significantly modified.

Of particular interest in this information is that almost one-third of the participants report using IST as a stand-alone process without modifications. In other words, one-third of participants’ schools are using IST with fidelity as originally intended following its implementation over twenty years ago.

It is also important to note that almost three-fourths of participant reported using IST as a program without embedding it in other programs or using it as a support for another program like RtII. Table 4.8 provides the information on IST program status.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tier in RtII</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modified Referral Process</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Stand Alone program</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Why did some schools continue to use IST after the funding and mandate were removed? What factors contributed to program persistence?

Participants were asked to respond to various factors to investigate the reasons they perceived that IST was continued in their schools. The responses follow.
People Who Influenced the Use of IST

Survey participants were asked to identify the level of influence specific persons had on the continued use of IST in their respective schools. The levels of influence were: Did Not Influence, Minimally Influenced, Moderately Influenced and Greatly Influenced. The person(s) whose influence was to be determined were the local school board, the district office administration, the school building administrator, the parents, and others.

School building administrators received the highest number of responses for having greatly influenced the decision to continue the use IST, followed by district administrators. School faculty received the largest number of responses for moderately influencing the decision. Parents received the largest number of responses for persons having minimally influenced and/or having no influence on the decision to continue the use of IST in participant schools. Perceived influence of school boards was mixed with relatively equal proportions in all four categories of influence. A breakdown of responses of people who influenced the continued use of IST is presented in Table 4.9.
### Table 4.9 People Who Influenced the Use of IST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Did Not Influence</th>
<th>Minimally Influenced</th>
<th>Moderately Influenced</th>
<th>Greatly Influenced</th>
<th>N=</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local School Board</td>
<td>26% (41)</td>
<td>28% (45)</td>
<td>25% (40)</td>
<td>21% (34)</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Office Administration</td>
<td>6% (9)</td>
<td>6% (9)</td>
<td>29% (47)</td>
<td>60% (97)</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Building Administrator</td>
<td>1.9% (3)</td>
<td>6.2% (10)</td>
<td>18.5% (30)</td>
<td>73.5% (119)</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Faculty</td>
<td>15.5% (25)</td>
<td>25.5% (41)</td>
<td>32.3% (52)</td>
<td>26.7% (43)</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>33.5% (52)</td>
<td>37.4% (58)</td>
<td>18.7% (29)</td>
<td>10.3% (16)</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not know/ am unsure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not applicable to my current position</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Factors That Influenced the Use of IST**

Survey participants were asked to identify the level of influence specific factors had on the continued use of IST. Schools were asked how the removal of a state mandate requiring the use of IST impacted the use of IST in their school, having the range of choices from the low of minimal impact to a high of great impact. Table 4.10 presents information on the impact the removal of the mandate and funding had on the continued use of IST.
Table 4.10 Impact of Factors for Continuing IST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N=162</th>
<th>Minimal Impact</th>
<th>Moderate Impact</th>
<th>Great Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The existence of a state mandate that required IST</td>
<td>28% (46)</td>
<td>33% (53)</td>
<td>39% (64)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The existence of state funding to support IST</td>
<td>41% (67)</td>
<td>33% (53)</td>
<td>26% (42)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The existence of a state mandate for IST had great impact for the largest number of participants; however, the majority (almost two-thirds) reported that the mandate had a low to moderate impact on the continued use of IST. In terms of funding, these findings were reversed. The largest number of respondents reported that the existence of state funding to support IST had a minimal impact on the continued use of IST, while the smallest number reported that it had a great influence. In other words, although the removal of the mandate did impact the decision, it did not indicate that IST would be automatically discontinued. Likewise, while the removal of funding had a noticeable negative impact on the decision regarding continued use, IST was still continued.

**Characteristics Important to the Success of IST**

**Procedural Characteristics**

The questions in this section asked participants to respond to procedural characteristics that are believed to be important for the success of IST. In total, 88% (162 of 185 participants) provided responses for this question.

A strong majority of all participants believe that practically all of the characteristics of a successful IST included in the survey are important. Those getting the strongest support were: a thorough understanding of the IST process, the resources for
intervention implementation, accommodations for IST members, incorporation of IST into the standard operating procedures of the school, and modification of the IST process to fit the changing needs and conditions of the school. Table 4.11 provides a summary of this information.

Table 4.11 Procedural Characteristics and IST Success

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>N=162</th>
<th>Not at All Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Extremely Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Incorporation of IST into the standard operating procedures of the school</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(23)</td>
<td>(135)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The resources for intervention implementation (consultation, materials, etc)</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>(27)</td>
<td>(131)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodations for IST members (planning time, special schedules, meeting time, etc)</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(30)</td>
<td>(130)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thorough understanding of the IST process</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(29)</td>
<td>(130)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modification of the IST process to fit the changing needs and conditions of the school</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(38)</td>
<td>(121)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriate and timely ongoing training</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>(66)</td>
<td>(91)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reorganization of the instructional processes of the school to accommodate IST</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(16)</td>
<td>(63)</td>
<td>(81)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extensive initial training</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(6)</td>
<td>(76)</td>
<td>(80)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Individual Team Member Characteristics Important To the Success of IST

In this section, participants were asked to rate the importance of individual team member characteristics to the success of IST. Characteristics that participants were asked to rate include: ability, motivation, determination, enthusiasm, organization and commitment. Those providing responses comprised 87% (161 of 185 participants) provided responses. The importance of individual team member characteristics to the success of IST is shown in Table 4.12.

A substantial majority of all of the individual team member characteristic choices given in the survey were rated extremely important to the success of IST. Commitment and motivation received the highest ratings followed by determination, organization, enthusiasm, and ability.

Table 4.12 Team Member Characteristics and IST Success

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not at All Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Extremely Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>1% (2)</td>
<td>7% (11)</td>
<td>92% (143)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>1% (2)</td>
<td>8% (13)</td>
<td>91% (146)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determination</td>
<td>2% (3)</td>
<td>14% (22)</td>
<td>84% (134)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>1% (2)</td>
<td>19% (31)</td>
<td>79% (127)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enthusiasm</td>
<td>1% (2)</td>
<td>23% (7)</td>
<td>78% (125)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability</td>
<td>2% (3)</td>
<td>23% (7)</td>
<td>75% (120)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Response rates vary for Ability (N=160), Determination (N=159), Organization (N=160) and Commitment (N=156)
**Team Characteristics Important to the Success of IST**

In this section, participants were asked to rate the importance of team characteristics to the success of IST. Included in the choices were consistent team membership (low incidence of key personnel turnover), shared attitude toward students’ success, and team organization (forms, meetings, etc.). Table 4.13 presents information on these characteristics.

Table 4.13 Team Characteristics and the Success of IST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not at All Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>N=161</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared Attitudes</td>
<td>1% (2)</td>
<td>9% (15)</td>
<td>89% (144)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Organization</td>
<td>1% (2)</td>
<td>15% (24)</td>
<td>84% (135)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistent Team</td>
<td>2% (3)</td>
<td>30% (49)</td>
<td>68% (109)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When examining the team characteristics that participants report as being important to the success of IST, most participants agree that shared attitudes was the most important team characteristic followed closely by team organization and then consistent team membership receiving the fewest responses. This indicates that the responding participants believe that the IST must act as a team sharing attitudes, and ensuring group membership and making certain work function are organized.
Support Needed for Success of IST

Survey participants were asked to identify the person(s) from whom support is needed to ensure IST success. Included in the selections were the local school board, the district office administration, the school building administrator, school faculty, the IST teacher, parents, and advocacy groups. Participants providing responses for this question include 86\% (159 of 185 participants) of all participants. Table 4.14 presents response information for this question.

Table 4.14 Support Needed for IST Success

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N=159</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Faculty</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Building Administrator</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IST Teacher</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Office Administration</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local School Board</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy Groups</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The responses indicate that groups or individuals closest to the school were seen as the most important sources for IST support. The majority of all participants selected school faculty as the group from whom support is needed in order for IST to be successful. School building administrators received the next highest response as a person from whom support is needed in order to for IST to be successful. Ninety-one percent of
responding participants believe support from the IST teacher and the parents are needed. District administrators were seen as less important and school board members even less important. From the results, it appears that participants believe that support from advocacy groups is not important for the success of IST. Since the respondents were teachers, they were likely reporting what they perceived true from their position and the work they do, although the decisions to continue the IST or not were largely made by district administrators and school boards with little or no input from the teachers.

**Intended Outcomes/ Results and the Success of IST**

**Outcomes**

Survey questions in this section were intended to gather data on the success of IST with respect to the intended outcomes. Participants were asked to rate their perceptions of the outcomes in regard to students’ success in the regular education classroom, improved student behavior and student achievement by selecting poor, adequate, good, very good or excellent. There were 156 of 185 participants (84%) who answered this question. Participants’ responses for this question are presented in Table 4.15.

The table indicates that the majority of participants positively rate the success of IST in regard to the original intended outcomes of providing students success in the regular education classroom, improving student behavior and increasing student achievement. Over three fourths of participants reported that IST was good, very good or excellent at achieving the outcomes as originally intended.
Table 4.15 IST Success With Respect to Intended Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N=156</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Adequate</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Success in Regular Ed Classroom</td>
<td>4% (6)</td>
<td>8% (13)</td>
<td>32% (50)</td>
<td>42% (65)</td>
<td>14% (22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Achievement</td>
<td>3% (5)</td>
<td>11% (17)</td>
<td>33% (51)</td>
<td>39% (60)</td>
<td>14% (22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved Student Behavior</td>
<td>5% (8)</td>
<td>11% (17)</td>
<td>34% (52)</td>
<td>35% (54)</td>
<td>16% (24)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results

Survey participants were asked to select statements that accurately described the results of the IST program in their respective schools. The questions were designed to gather information about the number of students referred to the Multidisciplinary Team (MDT), the actual placements in special education programs, and success of students in the regular education classroom. A large majority of participants (95%; 175 of 185) provided responses. Table 4.16 presents information on the results of IST in participant’s schools.

The strongest response was that IST is reported to have helped referred students succeed in the regular education classroom. Nearly two-thirds of the participants reported a decrease in the number of MDT referral, and four-fifths of the participants reported a decrease in the number of students who were actually placed in special education programs. However, IST was not seen as improving the regular teacher’s effectiveness in the classroom and consequently help all classroom students, which seems to be in conflict.
with the strong perception that IST has helped all students improve their skills whether they were struggling or not.

Table 4.16 IST Program Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IST in our school....</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>helped referred students succeed in the regular education classroom.</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>decreased the number of students who were referred to the MDT for additional testing.</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>decreased the number of students who were placed in special education programs.</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>helped all students in regular education because of the teacher's involvement in the IST process.</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Original Investments of IST

The next question was intended to find out how participants perceived the value of original investments when considering the final outcomes of IST. The original investments that were considered were training, time involved, resources and support. Table 4.17 presents information regarding the worth of original investments when considering the final outcomes.
Table 4.17 Original Investments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not Worthwhile</th>
<th>Somewhat Worthwhile</th>
<th>Very Worthwhile</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>2% (3)</td>
<td>20% (30)</td>
<td>78% (119)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Involved</td>
<td>3% (4)</td>
<td>28% (44)</td>
<td>69% (108)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>2% (3)</td>
<td>30% (46)</td>
<td>68% (106)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>3% (5)</td>
<td>37% (57)</td>
<td>60% (93)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Response rates vary for Training (N=155), Resources (N=155) and Support (N=152)

From the responses gathered, the majority of participants believe the training, time, resources and support that were originally invested in the IST process were very worthwhile. During the original implementation of the IST program in Pennsylvania, schools and individuals were provided initial and ongoing training, resources as needed and requested, and support from regional consultants, state consultants, and nationally-known scholars to support the program.

**Participant Views on the Continued Use of IST**

Participants were asked to provide three reasons they believe IST was continued in their respective schools. Of the possible 555 total responses, 453 total responses were received. There were no prompts in the form of examples or ideas given as to what these reasons could encompass; nor were there selections from which to choose. Participants were simply asked to provide what they perceived as being a cause for the continued use

66
of IST following the removal of the state mandate and associated funding. Table 4.18 provides a summary of reasons provided for the continuation of IST.

As the table indicates, the reason receiving the greatest number of mentions was that IST provides support and interventions for struggling students and/or students in need as a key reason for the continuation of IST in their school. Three other reasons reported by a large number of participants were: the attainment of improved student achievement and student success, using a team structure to ensure collaborative approach, and providing teacher support and resources for use with struggling students. Participants may have noted these reasons as they were intended outcomes of the originally implemented IST, could explain the continuation of IST programs in participant schools.
### Table 4.18 Reasons for the Continued Use of IST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>N=156</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support and Interventions for Struggling Students/Students in Need</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>58</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Success/Student Goal Achievement</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>49</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Approach/Cohesiveness/Collaboration</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Support/Resources</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication/Involvement Between Parents and Teachers</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assists with RtII Process/Adaptation</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduces Number of Students Referred to Special Education</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides New Strategies, Accommodations, Knowledge for Teachers &amp; Parents</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Results/Program Effectiveness/It Works</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part of the Identification Process</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotes Data Collection, Efficient Record Keeping, Documentation</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No/Inappropriate Response</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Intervention</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structured Progress Monitoring</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Commitment/Expertise/Guidance</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides Individual/Small Group Instruction</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased PSSA scores due to specific skill remediation</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorporated into School Programs</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased Instruction/Intervention Consistency</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better Informed MDE</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotes Self-Advocacy in Students</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Support</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Is IST Beneficial?

The final survey question posed to participants involved their thoughts on whether IST is beneficial to students. Table 4.19 presents the thoughts of participants with regard to this question.

Table 4.19 Is IST Beneficial to Students?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>I Do Not Agree</th>
<th>I Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N=158 IST is beneficial to students</td>
<td>5% (8)</td>
<td>95% (150)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Almost all of responding participants report that IST is beneficial to students. Perhaps the simple statement that IST is beneficial to students can explain the continued use of IST in Pennsylvania's schools following the removal of the mandate and associated funding.

Final Comments

The opportunity to express additional thoughts on IST was provided to all participants in the survey. Of the 185 participants, 80 participants provided thoughts on the use of IST. Many of the supporting comments reported the value of IST citing program effectiveness, the team approach, the ease of combining IST with RtII to get even better results, the strong fundamentals of IST, training, student success, strict timelines, the sense of community that is built through the use of IST, the requirement of documentation for all steps of the process, and the mandatory component of communication between all teachers and staff working with the referred child.
Among the less positive comments were criticisms of the small amount of time allocated for the IST process, the high caseloads of the IST teachers, the power that is given to a single person as opposed to a team, the lack of funding and continuity for IST across the state, the lack of dedication of some team members, lack of time for team review and the fact that IST is just another example of a PA initiative that lacks commitment for research-based practices.

Additional comments that were more constructive in nature described the importance of administrative support, the need for good training especially for new teachers, the problems with turnover, the need for proper implementation, the need for all schools to have a prereferral program, the need for understanding of the IST process and its purpose, the value of combining IST and RtII for a truly solid program, the need for a small teacher-student ratio, the importance that the IST can be modified to work for a school and can maintain its value, and the fact that a name change does not mean change in program and that IST has the foundations that are found in many subsequent intervention programs. The additional thoughts on IST can be found in Appendix E.

**Interviews**

Interviews were conducted with key personnel from school districts across Pennsylvania. For the purpose of this study, the positions considered key personnel were the school district special education director, a school principal, and an IST teacher/consultant. The selection included three participants from urban school districts, three participants from suburban school districts and three from rural school districts, for a total of nine school district participants.
Original contact with school districts included an invitation to personnel to participate in interviews intended to secure additional information about IST in their respective schools. Volunteers were selected based on their geographic location/community, school size, and willingness to participate.

The intention of these interviews was to gather additional information on perceptions of decisions made regarding the continued use of IST, explanations for the success of IST, characteristics needed for IST to be effective, the reasons IST was continued, the achievement of intended outcomes of IST, changes that may have occurred to the IST program following the removal of the mandate and funding, and additional thoughts that participants wished to share regarding IST.

Participants were given the option of face-to-face or telephone interviews. All participants chose telephone interviews.

An interview protocol was designed to correlate with the online survey. When additional information was needed, prompting occurred to garner additional information regarding the changes in IST following the removal of the mandate and associated funding.

During the interviews, recordings were made to be used at a later time in order to develop response categorizations for ease of summary. The response summaries that follow are from the interviews.
Demographic Information

Community Size/Geographic Location

As previously stated, one requirement for participation in the interviews was geographic location. Therefore, key personnel selection included one special education director, one IST teacher, and one principal from a rural, suburban, and urban area.

School Size

Although the intention was to include participants from small, medium-sized and large elementary schools, the participant pool did not include volunteers from each sized school. Instead, interview participants’ schools included a variety of populations with medium-sized school districts being underrepresented. Table 4.20 provides a summary of this information.

Table 4.20 School Size

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Small</th>
<th>Medium-Sized</th>
<th>Large</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Special Education Director</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IST Teachers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Principal</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Type of IST Program Used

The intention of this question was to determine the type of IST used in the participant’s school. As with the online survey, the response options for this question were stand-alone program, modified, or RtII tier. Schools were selected for interview participation with the understanding that all participants were from schools still using IST. The largest number of participants indicated that the IST in their school is a
modified version IST as it was originally implemented changing components as necessary for their respective schools. Table 4.21 presents information on the frequency of IST types.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of IST Program</th>
<th>N= 9</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stand-Alone Referral Process</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modified Referral Process</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tier in RtII</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When asked to explain the type of IST program currently used in their schools, participants selecting the stand-alone program explained that their program was implemented as was originally intended with no changes or modifications. Those selecting modified referral process had various explanations which most frequently included that all components were used, but were changed slightly to fit the needs of the school programs, and that not all components were used as originally intended, but instead were altered to include best practices such as standard-based interventions and data-driven observations and record keeping. While this was a requirement of the initial implementation of IST, current data collection is more specifically related to formalized tests such as the 4 Sight or through progress monitoring and not collected using curriculum-based assessments or time-on-task observations. Finally, those that selected RtII as the type of IST program explained that the use of IST made transition to RtII much easier as it was similar in scope and the routinization of tasks was accepted. Most
explained that IST as a tier of RtII was used in its entirety to address the needs of individual students.

Factors Influencing the Use of IST

This question was posed in order to determine the factors that caused the continued use of IST in the participants’ schools. The majority of participants cited positive outcomes as the determining factors for the continuation of the IST in their respective schools. Table 4.22 presents a summary of factors as related by interview participants.

Table 4.22 Factors Influencing the Continued Use of IST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Successful Outcomes (Student Achievement, Less Referrals, Good interventions for All Students)</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment from all stakeholders</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty “buy-in” to IST Program</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Effectiveness</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An interesting note is that all participants reported the success of the IST process as a determining factor as to why the program continued. Additionally, almost half of interview participants reported the need for commitment from stakeholders as a reason the IST program continued. Also important to note is that online survey participants noted the success of IST as a reason for the continuation of the program as well.
Persons Influencing the Continued Use of IST

Interview participants were asked who they believed influenced the decision to continue IST after the mandate and funding were removed. The majority believed the most influential person was the school administrator; although, others also believed the district administration and the school faculty were influential in the decision as well. Table 4.23 shows the results of this question.

Table 4.23 Person(s) Influencing the Decision to Continue IST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>N=9</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Principal</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Office Administration</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Faculty</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Every key school personnel participant believed that the school principal was influential in making or influencing the decision to continue using IST after the removal of the mandate and subsequent funding. However, just five participants reported the decision to be made by the district office even though all curricular and budgetary decisions are generally made by the district office. Additionally, although parents are important to the success of the IST, only one participant reported parents as being influential in making the decision to continue IST in their school. This finding supports the belief of online survey participants who suggested that parents had little or no influence in the continued use of IST.
Changes in IST Following the Removal of the Mandate

This question was intended to determine what, if any, changes were made to the IST following the removal of the mandate and funding. While many participants expressed the sentiment that IST did change following the removal, most reported that changes occurred more often as the program became entrenched into the school and as school personnel became more aware of individual student needs. Table 4.24 provides a summary of comments in regard to changes in IST.

Table 4.24 Changes in IST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Changes</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Procedural changes (less strict timelines, different order of activities, etc.)</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More flexible to meet school and individual student needs</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less resources (materials, outside consulting, etc)</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less training (initial and ongoing)</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More accountability/ownership/willingness</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One interview participant noted that there really were no significant changes in the IST process following the removal of the mandate or funding. This comment was explained more when the participant added that the IST process was working because everyone was invested in the outcomes and, at the classroom level, the lack of a mandate...
or funding was not noticed as much as students’ success brought about by the IST program. Another participant stated that because the funding was now part of the local school district, school personnel were more aware of the need to make it work if it was to continue. This, in turn, made the staff more accountable and willing to help.

**Characteristics Necessary to the Success of IST**

In order to determine the characteristics believed necessary for the success of an educational program such as IST, participants were asked for their perceptions. No prompts were given or suggestions made to interview participants as to possible characteristics. The summary of responses is presented in Table 4.25.

Table 4.25 Characteristics Needed for IST Success

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion of Parents</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative Approach</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment of School Personnel</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Support</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tailored to Student Needs/ Flexible to School</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of Necessary Resources and Support</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure Fidelity of Implementation</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The participants all made a point to discuss the necessity of including parents in the team approach. All suggested that acceptance and support of the referred student’s parents ensures student participation at home and school. One special education director
stated that the IST program improves attitudes for the entire school especially when parents are included and support interventions. The expression used to describe parental inclusion was, “Parents as Partners,” which suggests positive working relationships between home and school.

Another special education director explained that the collaborative approach which includes parents as members, takes advantage of the “collectiveness of experience” for the referred student. A further explanation of this concept stated that including all points of view regarding the challenges a student is experiencing forces a three-dimensional vantage point and can thus provide interventions that may not have been considered if a narrower view had been used.

**Intended IST Outcomes**

In order to understand the success of IST as perceived by key school personnel, interview participants were asked about the original intended outcomes of the IST program and whether or not IST met those outcomes. This two-part question first inquired about the intended outcomes for using the IST program as perceived by the school personnel, and followed with a question regarding the success of IST in meeting these outcomes. Table 4.26 presents a response summary for this question.

The intended outcomes for the IST program in all participant schools were to help students in the regular education classroom and reduce inappropriate referrals to special education. All interview participants reported meeting these outcomes through the use of IST. Additionally, a majority of online survey participants reported these as intended outcomes for the IST program as originally implemented.
Table 4.26 Intended Outcomes of IST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intended Outcome</th>
<th>Did Meet Outcome</th>
<th>Did Not Meet Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce Inappropriate Special Education Referrals</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide Interventions Which Help Student Succeed in Regular Classroom</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Initial Investments**

Interview participants were asked to provide what they believed to be initial investments for the implementation of the IST program. In addition, they were asked to provide a response regarding the cost effectiveness of these investments. A response summary is provided in Table 4.27 below.

As the table indicates, all participants shared similar thoughts on initial investments. For the implementation of IST, all participants indicated that although the investments were difficult to provide during the initial implementation in their school, the results were worth the efforts. One IST teacher shared that although the funding was removed, teachers have found ways of sharing, designing, and providing materials and resources with/for each other as they have come to realize that at one time or another, they will benefit from the help of the other teachers in the school. A special education director stated that although the resources have decreased, the demands are higher than ever, but the efforts continue to make the program worthwhile.
Table 4.27 Initial Investments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial Investment</th>
<th>Worth the Investment</th>
<th>Not Worth the Investment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment /Support</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning and Team Development</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Reasons for the Continued Use of IST**

Key school district personnel were asked what they believed to be the reason(s) for the continued use of IST in their respective schools. Their reasons are similar to those of the online survey participants and are based on school personnel commitment and support. Table 4.28 provides a summary of the responses.

Table 4.28 Reasons for the Continued Use of IST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>N=</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Support</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Personnel Commitment</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Buy-In</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Success</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interview participants shared the common beliefs that administrative support, school personnel commitment and student success drive the IST process and are responsible for the success of the program. As several IST principals and special
education directors shared, IST is a program that meets the needs of everyone in the school.

Is IST Beneficial?

Interview participants were asked if IST is beneficial to students. One hundred percent of key personnel participants responded that IST is beneficial to students. One school principal stated that IST is beneficial for everyone ~ students, teachers, parents, and administrators because it forces everyone to look at alternative ways to ensure for student success. An IST teacher shared that IST is one of the best things the state has ever introduced to Pennsylvania schools.

Additional Comments

When asked to provide additional comments participants expressed a variety of beliefs regarding IST. Table 4.29 on the next page presents those comments that were shared.

Summary

When the IST mandate was imposed, many schools and teachers were reluctant to implement the program. Until that time, the needs of students who could not "keep up" with the other classroom students were being met with the limited resources that were available within the classrooms. Programs to assist these students were not mandated, or even required, and the teachers who were willing to provide assistance for struggling students did so with limited knowledge of special needs. Today, however, teachers are given information and techniques to reach the needs of all students during their post-secondary education and while teaching through professional development. As indicated from the data that was included in this chapter, teachers have been working in teams to
collaboratively seek and implement interventions that provide help to students who are in need. Many are doing so without a mandate to direct their actions.

Table 4.29 Additional Comments on IST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In addition to the quick interventions and support provided by IST, schools are benefitting from long-term effects as reduced truancy and reduced dropout rates as well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This is perhaps due to the success students are provided through one-on-one assistance early in their struggles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is not only good to see student academic success, IST affords teachers the opportunity to see increased student self-esteem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When you have a teacher/teachers who think(s) outside the box, you see a highly effective IST.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are some kids who just need the one-on-one attention IST can give.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It works. It works.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wish IST and RtII would successfully merge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I highly recommend IST to all schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IST makes teachers better teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IST has taught us that curriculum must meet student needs, materials can be shared, training is an ongoing necessity for everyone, and there is never enough IST help.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| We are desperately in need of more IST!!!
CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Since the onset of educational reforms in the late 1960s, school districts have been faced with increasing expectations to provide quality educational programs for all children. Following the passage of the Education for All Handicapped Act in 1975 (now known as IDEA - its most recent update occurred in 2004), and No Child Left behind in 2001, increased scrutiny has been directed toward special education. Due to enhanced legislation and available funding, an increasing number of children were placed in special education programs. This caused increased costs for providing special education programs. School districts sought to find effective ways to reduce the time, effort and costs associated with accurate identification and placement of students in special education.

The introduction of prereferral programs afforded school districts a method to provide interventions, appropriately identify and place students in special education programs, and curtail rapidly increasing educational spending for special education. However, initial mandates and partial state funding that were used as incentives for school districts to develop such programs began to disappear and soon prereferral programs followed suit. The removal of the mandate and state funded support for the prereferral program in Pennsylvania, the Instructional Support Team (IST), once again left school districts looking for a method to assist struggling students, and appropriately identify and place students in special education while keeping special education costs manageable.
Faced with the task of finding an appropriate method to address these issues, some Pennsylvania schools continued the use of the IST as a prereferral. In an economic time where funding is limited and demands are high, school districts are held accountable for both student achievement and fiscal responsibility. This, in turn, makes the use of persistent programs an important factor in today’s schools.

The purposes of this study were to examine the persistence of the IST program in Pennsylvania and to identify the characteristics of IST that were perceived to be the reason for its continued success or for its discontinued use. The findings can provide guidelines for administrators involved in creating new programs or updating existing programs.

The data for this study were gathered through an online survey and from additional interviews involving key school district personnel knowledgeable about their districts’ use of IST. The interviews collected data from nine school districts representing rural, suburban and urban schools from Western, Central and Eastern Pennsylvania. A summary of the findings follows.

**Participant Background Information**

The following information is provided as a summary of the study participants. The information provided is important as it demonstrates participant characteristics brought to the study and the associated perceptions that exist among school personnel who currently use IST in their schools. As an administrator, it is beneficial to know and understand the personnel that implement the programs, the beliefs that they bring to the program, and the knowledge or expertise that they provide as they shape the educational environment within the school if an educational program is to succeed.
Community Size/Geographic Location

The total survey participant population was comprised of 32% rural participants, 55% suburban participants, and 5% urban participants. Two of the remaining 2% explained that they lived near a very large city and did not feel as though they "fit" with the given categories, the other two explained that their communities were university-based areas, which meant that the population fluctuated throughout the year.

Although the small number of study participants does not allow the results to be applied to the remainder of the school districts across Pennsylvania, the numbers do show that participants from all-sized districts have responded to the survey and voiced their thoughts.

School Size

Of the 185 participants responding to the survey, 19% described their school as small, 67% described their school as medium-sized and 14% explained that their school was large. As stated in the previous section, although the number of participants is too low to project the results to all other schools across the commonwealth, it can be said that a variety of participants from all-sized districts participated in the survey and have continued to use IST in their school.

Current Position

When asked to describe their current position, 30% of the participants reported their position to be an IST teacher, 23% a regular education classroom teacher (23%), 18% other (reading specialist or Title I teachers), 11% school administrator, 10% school counselor, 4% school psychologist, 3% special education resource room teacher, and 2% special education classroom teacher.
These findings are relevant to the study because the positions that received the highest number of participants (IST teacher, regular education teacher, other/Title I and Reading, school administrator and counselor) are the personnel in the school who most closely work with the IST program.

**Years of Experience**

IST teachers (42%) have eleven or more years of experience, school administrators (40%) have six to ten years of experience, and other (Title I, reading specialist, ESL teachers, speech clinicians 32%) have eleven or more years of experience.

Some school personnel categories have an equal share of personnel in several experience categories. While some regular education classroom teachers report having eleven or more years of experience (33%), others report having one to five years of experience (33%); one group of special education classroom teachers report having eleven or more years of experience (50%), while another reports having one to five years of experience (50%); one group of school counselors (37%) report having six to ten years of experience, another group (37%) reports having one to five years of experience.

The majority of special education resource room teachers (40%) report having less than one year of experience in their jobs.

These findings indicate that the majority of the school personnel most responsible for the implementation of IST possess more experience than those less directly involved with the program.

Rogers (1995) studied the relationship between the complexity of an organization and the degree of success of the implementation. He found that a higher degree of member understanding and expertise resulted in successful implementation of the program.
Following this line of research, the findings in this survey indicate that the school personnel most responsible for the IST program (IST teacher, regular education classroom teacher reading specialists, school administrators, and school counselors) possess the most seniority in a position, and most likely a more in-depth understanding of the program and thus greater expertise. Looking at the picture as a whole, these characteristics could explain the high degree of program success, program longevity, and satisfaction with the IST program.

**Team Composition**

As outlined in the original implementation guidelines, the suggested composition of the IST was to include the IST teacher, the regular education teacher, the parents, and the school administrator. Schools were given the liberty to have additional team members as they deemed relevant to the needs of the referred child.

Team composition in participant schools included the school administrator (97%), classroom teacher (93%), school counselor (93%), IST teacher (82%), parents (81%), other school staff currently working with the referred student (77%), school psychologist (62%), school nurse (36%), community agency representatives (41%) and other specialists as needed (13%).

From these data, it is easy to see that two of the team members required for initial implementation (administrator and classroom teacher) are included in most existing IST programs. However, the remaining requisite members (IST teacher, and the parents) are included in slightly over 75% of participant teams.

Although IST was seen as successful by most participants, the inclusion of all members as originally required could make the program even stronger.
Because an opportunity to explain the team composition was not afforded the participants, the reason(s) for less parental involvement, community agency representatives, or other school specialists cannot be determined. However, team member involvement may be decreased due to meeting time, invitation (or lack thereof), schedule availability, or various other unknown variables. Nonetheless, administrators must be cognizant of various factors that may diminish the presence of key team members when developing team schedules, and other supporting activities.

**Team Practices and Procedures**

Participants were asked to select common practices and procedures that are used in their IST program. As reported by participants, common practices of the IST that occurred in a majority of IST programs were: using IST to provide interventions prior to referral (94%), using a team approach to intervention (91%), finding present academic levels (88%), including parents when possible (83%), using research-based interventions (77%), and conducting behavioral assessments (71%). The practices that were reported as happening less often in participant IST programs were: determining communication abilities of student, and investigating current social/emotional levels (58 %); and following a strict 60-day timeline for intervention services (38%).

The information reported by IST programs across the commonwealth can provide school administrators some insight into the common team traits and program procedures of schools and personnel that continue to sustain successful IST programs. As most participants indicated that the IST was successful in their schools, beneficial to students, and helpful to school personnel, it allows administrators to use the study information to
pattern a successful intervention program in their school that meets the needs of struggling students.

**Research Questions**

**How many schools have retained the IST program as part of their operations, in some form?**

The first survey question was designed to determine how many schools continue to use IST in Pennsylvania. Since the removal of the mandate requiring the use of IST, schools are no longer required to maintain records regarding the use of IST. Therefore, obtaining statistical data on the number of school currently using IST was difficult.

Although letters were sent to superintendents in all Pennsylvania school districts, only a fraction volunteered to participate in an online survey. A total of 185 school district personnel from 81 schools representing 38 school districts participated in the survey. All of the 185 school district personnel who participated in the survey reported still using IST. Although this representation is helpful, it is not an accurate portrayal of the total schools district using IST in Pennsylvania as many schools districts did not participate in the survey. Some superintendents who responded to the research invitation replied that while they do use IST in their district, they selected to decline participation in the survey. Therefore, an accurate depiction of the total number of schools using IST cannot be made from the data collected.

However, as the study continued, and participants responded to the survey and interview, another attempt was made to contact the special education directors at all 29 intermediate units in Pennsylvania. While information was not received from all intermediate units, an additional ten directors did respond. Information from the twelve
Not all school districts who continue to use IST do so as originally implemented. However, approximately one-third of the survey participants do report using IST as a standalone program with no modifications. As a stand-alone program, the program components and program implementation of the IST phases would remain as originally introduced (Entry, Hypothesis Forming, Verifying, and Outcome). The standalone schools selected to use the program in its original format, making no changes in the program design. When a program is implemented in the original design with the original intent, it is said to be done with fidelity (Gresham, MacMillan, Boebe - Frankenberger, & Bocian, 2000). Kovalesky (1992) found that maintaining fidelity of IST is important to the overall success of the IST program. This is an important finding as it suggests that the program was accepted as a viable program, and as results indicate, the program achieved the original goals, provided help to struggling students and allowed students to successfully continue in the regular education classroom. This, in turn, demonstrates the benefit of using a program as originally designed and implemented.

Another one-third of survey participants state that their schools continue to use IST, and report using a modified version that better suits the needs of their respective schools. One such modification is to implement only those components of the IST program that support student achievement, school program alignment and student need. A few participants also noted that the format of IST was aligned with other programs
currently in existence in the school. This is also an important finding as it suggests that the program has been accepted as a daily process within the school that is beneficial to the needs of students and the program’s use is continued. Another observation about this finding is that IST members and school staff having worked with the IST and feel knowledgeable enough about the process to make modifications to the original components so the needs of the students can be more successfully met.

The final one-third of the survey participants reported the use of IST as a tier in the RtII model as a successful modification in their school. This suggests that although the IST is not used as a stand-alone program in which interventions are implemented in order to help the student succeed in the regular classroom, the program is used to implement interventions that will specifically address deficiencies in order to determine the need for special education services. In other words, although IST has been incorporated into another program that addresses student deficiencies, it still exists as a process whose components are applied to meeting the needs of struggling students.

The bottom line of these findings is that the participants in this survey report using IST despite the removal of the state funding and state mandate for the program.

**Why did some schools continue IST after the mandate and funding were eliminated?**

To address the research question that asked why schools selected to continue the use of IST, survey participants were asked to provide information regarding the person(s) who influenced the decision to continue IST in their school and the reason(s) they believed IST was continued in their school.
Person(s) Influencing the Continued use of IST

A common belief among the majority of survey participants was that school administrators greatly influenced the decision to continue the use of the IST program in their school. Approximately three-fourths of participants (73%) believed that their building administrator greatly influenced the continued use of the IST program while a smaller majority of participants (60%) stated that district office administrators greatly influenced the decision. This information is important to practicing school administrators because it shows the importance of the perceived influence school administrators hold with the faculty in their buildings. If school administrators are perceived as key decision makers, then the influence they exude is important to the workings of all school programs and curriculum. In turn, IST and other programs can also succeed if administrative support is given to the program. Administrative support can be demonstrated by the presence of the school administrator at meetings, verbal support in varying school and community arenas, and by the resources allocated to the program(s) throughout the normal school year (including supplies, time, and priority). Due to the importance participants placed on the decision making powers of the district administrators as well, it would be beneficial to individual school administrators to work collaboratively to support building programs when working with district administrators. Often, it is the programs that are known to district office administrators that are supported and for which resources are provided. Therefore, keeping the desired program in the minds of others through continual information sharing would be beneficial to the program, the school, and the students.

There appeared to be differing opinions of the influence that parents, faculty, and school board members had on the decision to continue using IST. While participants
perceived some influence by these persons, the strength of influence was not as strong as for school administrators. For instance, one third of participants (37%) noted parents as having minimally influenced the decision and one third (34%) believed that parents had no influence at all. The same can be seen with regard to the perceived level of influence that faculty had on the decision to continue using IST. Approximately one third of the participants (32%) stated that faculty moderately influenced the decision; 27% (approximately one quarter) perceived faculty greatly influencing the decision; and 26% (again approximately one quarter) noted that faculty minimally influenced the decision to continue using IST. A practicing administrator should be aware of the influence (or lack of influence) school personnel have in the building, especially with regard to making decisions. Informal networks can contribute to the success or failure of educational programs, activities and issues. Therefore, to ensure program “buy-in” it is essential to encourage collaboration for school-wide programs particularly when introducing or continuing a program. Additionally, school administrators must assess the reason(s) for decisions that are made in the school by individuals or groups of educators. By doing so, the administrator can clarify misconceptions and understandings, provide additional training, or review implementation procedures to provide a more solid foundation for the educational program.

When participants were asked to rank the influence the school board had on the decision to continue using IST, the range of responses was smaller than the previously discussed groups, with 28 % noting minimal influence, 26% noting no influence, 25% noting moderate influence, and 21% having great influence. The school board is often seen as “in place” but not necessary. Often, educators do not understand the roles and
responsibilities attributed to a district’s school board. Many do not realize that the school board is the group responsible for financial decisions that occur within a school district. Because the association between programmatic decisions (that cause the continuation or discontinuation of a program) and financial decisions is not made, many people are not aware of the influence generated by the local schools board. As an administrator, it is wise to provide school personnel with information on school district decision making procedures at all levels and to explain the roles and responsibilities of all educational entities. Doing so can provide a clear understanding of educational decision making practices and procedures as well as establish a protocol for garnering support.

The differences in the range of influence may also be attributed to the difference in decision-making structures that are in place in each school district. Or, perhaps participants, who are predominantly teachers, may not truly understand the decision-making process that occurs in their schools/districts. As a practicing administrator, it may be wise to carefully consider these decision making groups and the level of influence each is given in order to coordinate efforts and support for all school activities. If some groups are delegated more influence, coordination and collaboration of these groups may be necessary to provide even more influence and support for that program or issue. If teachers are not aware of the decision making process in the district (or school), it would be wise to explain these practices to all building staff in order to elicit support from the groups that do make decisions.

Factors/Reasons for Continue Use of IST

When investigating the factors for continuing the use of IST, a main objective was to determine if the existence of the state funding and mandate impacted the use of IST in
schools who still used the IST program. Participants were asked to describe the level of impact these factors had on the use of IST in their schools. Results indicated that 39% of participants stated that the existence of a state mandate requiring IST had a great impact on the use of IST, 33% said the mandate had a moderate impact on the use of IST, and 28% stated that the mandate had a minimal impact. Interestingly, the existence of state funding was seen by a majority of participants (41%) as having minimal impact, 33% explained that the funding had a moderate impact, and 26% state that the funding had a great impact.

It is important to note the state funding was provided for schools during the first year of existence and only for the IST teacher's salary. School districts were responsible for these costs after the first year. It is possible that districts included the operational costs of IST into their general fund during subsequent years and thus the removal of the funding had less of an impact when removed. It is also possible that the existence of a state mandate requiring IST meant that despite the financial impact this mandate had on schools, it was the responsibility of school districts to see that this service was provided. Thus, once the mandate was removed, IST was already in existence and had become ingrained into the school's operational processes and budget. The decision to continue the use of IST could have been based on acceptable outcomes and performances of the program, as well as the practice of incremental budgeting.

Participants were also asked to provide reasons as to why IST was continued in their schools. This question was an open-ended question; participants were asked to write the top three reasons they believed IST was continued in their schools. It was not a multiple choice question, a Likert-type question, or a ranking of choices. While there was
a wide range of responses, most revolved around opportunities, outcomes, and program practices for which the IST program was responsible.

As an example of types of responses received, a little over one third of participants (37%) stated their belief that IST continued because the program provided support and interventions for struggling students. Another one third (31%) indicated that student success and goal achievement caused the program's continuation. Team approach/cohesiveness/collaboration were given by 28% of participants as a reason for continued use, 26% stated that teacher support and resources provided reasons for the continuation of IST, while 21% cited parent/teacher communication and involvement as reasons for the continuation of IST.

Following the removal of the state mandate and funding, schools were given the opportunity to select an intervention process. While some schools continue to implement IST with fidelity, others continue to use the fundamentals of the program to provide interventions in their schools. Despite the differences in implementation, once the mandated IST process was eliminated, all participant districts continued using IST in some form and indicated similar beliefs as to why the program persisted in their schools.

Information received from key personnel interviews stated that although the removal of the mandate did not stop the IST program, it definitely changed the perception of how to provide IST services in their districts. These same participants qualified that idea by stating that resources were allocated more sparingly based on the assumption that the program had been inexistence for some time, and the faculty were familiar enough with the program to incorporate strategies that required less material resources. However, these participants stated that the program continued to proceed successfully and believed
that the success of the program was due the efforts of the faculty. It was the belief that the
district maintained but did not necessarily improve ongoing IST efforts.

**Characteristics Important to the Success of IST**

All participants were asked to share their beliefs regarding characteristics they
consider important to the success of IST. The characteristics that were included in the
survey were team member characteristics, support for the program, individual member
characteristics, intended program outcomes/results, and original investments for the IST
program. A summary of these characteristic follows.

**Procedural Characteristics**

As perceived by approximately three-fourths of the study participants, it is
extremely important to the success of the IST program to incorporate IST into the standard
operating procedures of the school (84%), provide the resources for intervention
implementation (81%), provide accommodations for team members (80%), ensure a
thorough understanding of the process (80%), and provide the ability to modify the
program to fit the changing needs and conditions of the school (75%). The strong
implication of these findings is that all educational programs should have as a foundation
of: clarity, commitment, support, flexibility and adaptability in order to ensure successful
continuation of the program.

**Individual Team Member Characteristics**

This question asked participants to delineate the characteristics needed by each
member in order to make the IST successful. The characteristics included for
consideration by the participants were ability, motivation, determination, enthusiasm,
organization and commitment. Participants were asked to rank these characteristics in
relation to the importance of the success of the IST by selecting not at all important, somewhat important or very important.

Commitment (92%), and motivation (91%) received the highest rankings, followed by determination (84%), organization (79%), enthusiasm (78%) and ability (75%). These results demonstrate that a well-developed program can provide outcomes that cause successful implementation. The success of the program can, in turn, create a sense of community that fosters enthusiasm, commitment, and motivation. Perhaps, for the administrator, the key to providing a similar educational environment lies in using team member attributes as a foundation.

**Team Characteristics**

The three, team-centered characteristics to which participants were asked to respond were consistent team membership, shared attitude toward student success, and team organization. The majority of participants reported that the success of IST was very importantly linked to a shared attitude toward student success (89%), and team organization (84%). However, participants did not report the need for consistent team membership at a level as important to the success of IST (68%). By fostering a shared attitude for student success among school personnel, administrators can help an educational program realize success and perhaps ensure its continued use. Administrators can also address program success by encouraging a learning environment that stresses organization as a means to produce student achievement. This can be achieved by providing the resources that facilitate organization – a location that is ample for team purposes; materials needed to produce timely materials, processes, interventions, and
meetings; time to adequately prepare and implement program activities; and support for every function of the team.

Support Needed

When asked to describe the person(s) from whom support is needed for IST to be successful, participants indicated that most important are the school faculty (98%), the building administrator (96%), the IST teacher (91%) and parents (91%). The person(s) deemed as less important to the success of IST were district office administration (68%), local school board (40%), and community advocacy groups (17%). As indicated earlier the school administrator and the faculty are important to the success of any educational program. However, it is the school administrator that sets the tone of the building and provides direction for all school personnel. These findings continue to indicate that support from the school administrator is essential to the success of any educational program- especially those that persist over time.

Intended Outcomes

As originally implemented, the intention of IST was to provide helpful interventions that would allow referred students to be successful in the regular education classroom, improve student behavior, and increase student achievement. When asked to rate the success of IST with respect to these intended outcomes, approximately three-fourths of participants indicated that the IST program in their respective schools did a very good to excellent job of meeting the intended outcomes of providing student success in the regular education classroom (87%), ensuring student achievement (82%), and improving student behavior (78%). These findings suggest that school personnel believe
that endorsed educational programs must be designed to meet specific school and student goals.

**Results**

As a regular education initiative, IST was designed to reduce the high costs of providing special education programs by reducing the number of students referred to special education programs. This was to be achieved by providing interventions that would allow struggling students to be successful in the regular education classroom setting. These interventions were to be designed by a team of people who had experience working with the referred student and were to be implemented by the regular education teacher.

In addition to the intended outcomes of the IST as outlined above, there were long-term results that were to be addressed through the use of the IST program. The results that were to be achieved included the reduction of the number of students who were referred to the MDT for additional testing, a decrease in the number of students actually placed in special education programs, and the success of the referred student in the regular education setting. It was believed that all students could be more successful in the regular education classroom because of the teacher's involvement in the IST process.

Many participants reported that IST helped referred students succeed in the regular education classroom (87%), which was the major goal of the program. However, fewer participants reported that IST decreased the number of students who were referred to the MDT for additional testing (60%), decreased the number of students actually placed in special education programs (55%), and helped all students succeed in the regular education classroom because of the teacher's involvement as a team member in the IST.
process (46%). Although the perception was that the major goals of referring less students to special education programs, and placing fewer students special education programs were accomplished, the findings do not reflect the belief that the classroom teacher applied the skills needed for individual student interventions to the entire class. The long-term result may be the discontinued use of the interventions that made the student successful during the implementation phase because providing interventions for one student may not be time efficient to the teacher.

**Original Investments**

During the initial implementation of IST, the state provided intensive initial and ongoing training, copious amounts of materials and resources necessary to the program's implementation, ongoing support from regional and state consultants, and sufficient time in which personnel were to be trained, and the program was to be incorporated into the everyday processes of the school. At the end of the specified time period, each school received a performance evaluation. Although the performance expectations were rigid, most schools could receive validation that they were achieving expectation if they fully utilized the support that was provided by the state. This program rigor was intended to encourage high quality programs in each school.

Reported as very worthwhile were: support provided for fellow IST members, the school and the program (78%), time allocated to the implementation of the IST process (69%), location of necessary resources to use in intervention implementation (68%), and attendance at training (60%). These findings demonstrate the need for school administrators to provide school personnel with the support and resources necessary implement the program as designed.
How has the IST program been changed, if at all, in schools still using it?

This research question was designed to gather information on change that may have occurred in IST programs after the mandate and initial funding were removed. In order to collect the data, interviews were conducted with key school personnel in districts still using IST. The participants were volunteers from schools across the state that varied in size and geographic location. There were a variety of types of IST programs used in participants’ schools. Three of the nine participants used IST as originally implemented, five used a modified version to fit their school needs, and one participant used IST as a tier in the RtII process.

The interview protocol did not provide answer choices, however, prompts were used to redirect participants to the question at hand and to ensure participant understanding of the posed question. The focus of the interviews was on what, if any, changes occurred in the IST program in their schools following the removal of the mandate and associated funding. To guide the discussion, the protocol contained questions related to available program resources, program procedures, school personnel, program support, and factors affecting the continued use of IST. Interestingly, participants did not perceive drastic changes in the implementation of the IST program in their schools as a result of mandate removal. The conversation regarding change was limited, as participants did not regard improvement and continuation of a program as a change.

All participants (100%) explained that procedural changes occurred following the removal of the mandate. Most participants further explained this by stating that there were less strict timelines for assisting students, the sequence of activities often changed to
best fit other school/parental activities, and due to continued use and subsequent refinement of team efforts, shortcuts were made to accommodate student and teacher schedules.

Further, all participants agreed that the IST process became more flexible. Comments included that while a basic procedural timeline was followed, changes were permitted if a conflict occurred in an observing teacher's schedule, or meeting were changed if parents could not make the original date/time.

The final change that was noted by interview participants was the availability of resources. Seven of the nine participants (78%) voiced the opinion that although removal of the mandate was not accompanied by an immediate reduction of resources, it did change the manner in which resources were allocated. The general explanation for this phenomenon was two-fold. First, participants seemed to agree that IST services were not reduced after the removal of the mandate, but actually increased because of the success of the program. This increase resulted in the shared used of existing resources among district IST teachers. This, in turn reduced the amount of materials/resources that were readily available for IST use in a school at any one time. This resulted in the need for classroom teachers and IST teachers to work together to locate and use materials that were at one time used for IST/classroom use only.

In addition to this explanation, participants felt that the addition of more IST services meant that the program had become successful for their schools and was being used more broadly. In other words, the sustainability or persistence of the program had been ensured through program growth.
In summary, many of the interview participants expressed the opinion that although IST did change following the removal of the mandate and associated funding, the changes that occurred were mostly due to program persistence and modification over time, rather than as a result of the mandate removal.

Conclusions

Program Design

All program design factors (as presented in the survey) were found by participants to be important to the success of IST; these included understanding, training, allocation of resources, accommodations which allow service, incorporation of program into the operating procedures of the school, the reorganization of the schools instructional process to allow IST, and modification of the program to fit the changing needs of the school.

Program design encompasses program purpose, importance, goals, and outcomes. Study participants noted that in order to assure program buy-in, school personnel should be provided with a thorough understanding of the program's purposes and goals prior to implementation. Research (Chalfant & Pysh, 1989; Harris, 1995; Kruger, Stuzzerio, Watts, & Vacca, 1995; Walsh, 1989) has indicated that possessing knowledge of team purposes and goals is essential to successful continuation of the IST program. Additional research (Denton, Vaughn, & Fletcher, 2003; Gerstein, Chard, & Baker, 2000) indicates that when attempting to design an educational program there is a need for administrators to acknowledge that a teacher's perception of the purpose of the intervention, their recognition that the intervention will lead to student achievement and improved student outcomes, and the level of input they provide will affect the success of the intervention. School administrators must be cognizant of these research findings as they attempt to
design, implement or reconfigure existing programs. By investigating existing programs and the implementation processes of these programs, the application of the research as provided above can create seamless transitions and minimal disruptions to the educational process as a new/updated program is introduced into the school environment.

**Training**

Participants expressed the importance for initial and ongoing training to the success of the IST program. Researchers (Vaughn, et al., 2003; Safran & Safran, 1996; Nelson & Smith, 1991; Fuchs & Fuchs, 1988) found that adequate training in collaboration, assessment and evaluation is needed to ensure the effectiveness of the preferral process. Other researchers found it important for school personnel to receive adequate training in implementing prereferral interventions prior to program implementation (Chalfant & Psych, 1989; Harris, 1995; Hayek, 1987; Kruger, Struzzerio, Watts, & Vacca, 1995). Additionally, some researchers have noted that teachers were less likely to implement new ideas if they did not possess skills, informational resources, or background knowledge (Lane, Medahavi, & Borthworth-Duffy, 2003).

It is important for practicing administrators to acknowledge the need for initial and ongoing training (especially during the design and implementation phases of educational programs) by facilitating a professional development program prior to the implementation of the program. If the program has begun, and training has not yet been discussed, it is important to address the situation as soon as possible in order to make certain school personnel have a clear understanding of the expectations and directives that are given them as a member of the educational team.
Sufficient Resources

Another aspect of program design that participants believe is important to the success of IST is the allocation of sufficient resources. Boudah, Logan, & Greenwood (2001), Fuchs and Fuchs (2001), and Greenberg and Domitrovich (2002) found that successful programs have been given the financial resources, material resources, and personnel necessary to implement and support the program's ongoing use. Other researchers (Boyd & Hord, 1994) suggested that a new program can be implemented and sustained by increasing the capacity of the staff through the provision of the necessary resources for the program.

Accommodations

Participants indicated the importance of acknowledging team functions, and responsibilities by making accommodations for the team. Harris (1995) found that teachers wanted to receive multiple benefits as a team member including holding meetings during the day, receiving stipends for their efforts and applying team time to required professional development requirements. Therefore, administrators wishing to implement a new program, or update an existing program should demonstrate the importance of the program’s success to school personnel by providing the material resources, program support, and necessary accommodations required for the program.

Incorporation of IST into School Programs

The importance of incorporating the IST program into the operational procedures of the school as well as reorganizing the school's instructional process to allow the implementation of IST were believed by participants as necessary to the success of the IST program. Levesque, Prochaska, and Prochaska (2001) found that instructional
resources and organizational structures must be aligned in order to support educational change. Included in their findings was the importance of providing the necessary resources to sustain the project, and redesigning activities that are necessitated by the implementation of the new program. Other researchers (Altman, 1995; Greenberg & Domitrovich, 2002) found that the integration of an intervention program into the existing school structure was needed in order to ensure the success of the program. Administrators can encourage the success of an educational program by providing program support, and facilitating the program’s inclusion in the daily procedures of the school.

**Program implementation**

Other conclusions that may be drawn from the findings of this study can be linked to the implementation of the IST program. The aspects of the implementation process believed by participants as necessary to the success of IST address support, program outcomes and program results can be applied to similar educational programs as they develop and are implemented. Those that have been noted as worthy include initial and ongoing training, stakeholder support, and provision of resources necessary to the implementation and continuation of the program.

**Support**

Survey participants identified support from the building administrator, district office administrators, and faculty relevant to the success of IST. Researchers (Chalfant & Pysh, 1989; Hayek, 1987; Kruger, Struzzerios, Watts, & Vacca, 1995) cited the need for administrative support for activities as essential to the success of the IST program. Hartman and Fay (1996) report that administrative support is particularly important when
school resources must be allocated, school policies regarding referral and testing are implemented, or school requirements for professional development/ training for IST are set. School and district level administrative support and commitment was found necessary to the continuation and success of new interventions (Boudah, Logan, & Greenwood, 2001; Denton, Vaughn, & Fletcher, 2003, Gersten, Chard, & Baker, 2000)

Some researchers (Boudah, et.al 2001; Boyd & Hord 1994; Gersten & Dimino, 2001; Greenberg & Domitrovich, 2001) found that an environment that is supportive and caring with collegial relationships and a sense of school community are fundamental to sustaining new programs and instructional change.

The implications for practicing administrators is two-fold: develop and nurture good working relationships with school personnel so that school programs can flourish and succeed; provide administrative support for the educational programs and activities that provide interventions for all children in order to ensure academic success.

**Outcomes and Results**

The implementation of a new program usually begins with the formation of intended outcomes for the program. Survey participants indicated that knowing the intended outcomes of the IST program prior to implementation is absolutely essential to program success and school personnel acceptance of the program. Researchers (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2001) found that the success of a program is often dependent upon the focus of school personnel on the goal of improving student outcomes. If clear goals and objectives are not identified prior to the implementation of a program or updated as the program unfolds, the program’s success may be jeopardized.
Implications for Practice

The IST program has been in existence since the early 1990s. Schools have had the opportunity to implement this program, update it, realign it with their school curriculum or discontinue its use. Despite what has been done with this program in their respective schools, the majority of participants of this study have indicated that IST does work. Statements were made that indicate students are successful in their classrooms, fewer students have been referred for special education services, schools goals have been met, and the program is beneficial. This information provides practicing administrators with insight into what school personnel consider as essential to the success and continuation of an educational program.

To ensure the persistence of an educational program, school personnel believe that a clear vision of the program and its purpose must be provided; initial and on-going training must be incorporated into the daily workings of the program; necessary support and resources must be available; a collaborative environment must be encouraged; and program outcomes must be clear, attainable, and continually supported by school administration and fellow educators.

When faced with the implementation of a new educational program or the revision of an existing program, practicing administrators should provide a clear understanding of all program expectations prior to the implementation of the program. Included in these expectations should be the roles and responsibilities of all school personnel; program implementation procedures; measures to be taken to ensure program persistence; and the system of communication that is to be used to discuss program progress and needs and to
provide constructive feedback to all involved. The administrator should also ensure that a system of program evaluation and feedback is built into the program’s implementation.

Program design should include opportunities for initial and ongoing training that specifically pertains to the program and the associated expectations within the school. Training topics should be relevant to program implementation, revision and persistence.

Limitations of Study

As with all surveys, participants are responsible for providing their personal experiences with the program or innovation that is being investigated. This study examined the beliefs of school personnel who are currently using the IST program and their perceptions of the causes for success and the subsequent continued use of the program.

One limitation of the study was the low number of study participants. Although superintendents from all Pennsylvania school districts were invited to participate in this study, not all superintendents chose to participate. As a result, the participant pool was limited and as such, the responses are not necessarily representative of the entire population of schools in Pennsylvania who continue to use the IST program. While multiple attempts to contact schools to garner survey participants were made, the participant number remained small.

Preferral intervention programs, including Pennsylvania’s imitative, were originally implemented in the late 1980s and the early 1990s to address the over identification of students to special education programs and the resulting increasing costs of special education services. The research that was conducted during that time period was innovative and reflected in-depth programming that was occurring. Since that time, new
and different programs have been developed and implemented and research reflects these newer innovations. While some of the new programs contain similar components, most are not intended for the same purposes and are therefore quite different. The information provided by the more recent literature is not relevant to this study. Therefore the literature review contains older, more relevant articles. Although this is not a limitation to the study, the study can be viewed as having fewer recent resources and the manner in which the study relevance is viewed may be skewed.

**Suggestions for Future Research**

In order to explain the persistence of programs using IST, this study was designed to gather information from school personnel in schools still using IST. However, only a small number of personnel volunteered to participate. Because little knowledge was gained from every school using IST, it would be beneficial to examine more closely the continued use of IST in all of Pennsylvania’s schools. Doing so would provide a more accurate, in-depth picture of program persistence as described by educators who have experience with the program over an extended period of time.

With the implementation of No Child Left Behind, and continuing legislation that demands greater accountability for schools, the limited funding that is available, and the need for quality educational programs, it may be beneficial to further investigate program persistence in our schools from an accountability standpoint. By using school testing data, such as Pennsylvania State School Assessment data and other local assessment outcomes showing progress benchmarks, a more accurate picture of varied intervention techniques could be developed.
When the mandated use of IST was removed, and schools were given the option to select a method of providing assistance for struggling students, many schools chose to continue the use of IST. Others chose to find new ways of addressing the need. Recently, a different approach to providing interventions while determining the need for special education services was introduced. This approach is known as Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtII). During the key personnel interviews, one participant indicated that the incorporation of IST into the RtII process was made much easier because she had personally been involved with the IST process for so many years. She explained that because IST has a clear foundation/guidelines for implementation and has been successful in their school district, a seamless transition was created. Therefore, a study that further investigates the relationship between IST and RtII would be beneficial to educators everywhere.

**Program Persistence and IST**

The foundation of this study was to investigate the reasons for the persistence of IST despite myriad environmental and programmatic changes. Applying the concept of persistence as often used in computer science, persistence is when something outlives the cause that created it (Dictionary.com, 2010; Wikipedia.com, 2010). In this case, IST was created by the state mandate implemented in order to reduce the increasing number of students being placed in Special Education programs and the subsequent increase in Special Education funding. The mandate and funding for IST no longer exist, yet in some Pennsylvania school districts the use of IST continues. Some school districts continue to use IST because they believe it is beneficial to the students and the school. Other school districts use IST because the outcomes include improved student achievement. Despite the
reason for its continued use, participants of this study have described IST as a program that has been effectively used in their schools for many years, despite the removal of the state mandate and initial funding.

This study is an initial attempt to identify the characteristics of educational programs that cause the program’s continued use or, persistence over time as perceived by the educational professionals who regularly use them. Common characteristics perceived as necessary for the IST program’s success were identified by principals, special education teachers, regular education teachers, counselors, and other school personnel who have personally experienced the persistence of IST. These characteristics include a clear vision of team goals; an organized team with shared attitudes and a clear vision; a collaborative team approach consisting of parents and educators; appropriate and timely ongoing training; adequate resources to implement and maintain the program; the incorporation of the program into the daily procedures of the school; support of the school administrator, faculty, and parents; and the modification of the program to meet the changing needs of the schools. The information gathered in this study is timely if one considers the increasing financial and performance expectations that are placed on our nation’s schools.

Additional research that more closely examines the continued use of programs in today’s schools will further the understanding of program persistence and provide insight into what school administrators can do to ensure educational programs that last despite innumerable environmental, programmatic, or financial changes.
References


   *Educational Leadership* 48(1), 73-77.


Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1990 (P.L.101-476) and its 1997 Amendments (P.L. 105-17)


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Appendix A

Letter to Superintendents
February 1, 2009

Dr. Superintendent Smith
Area School District
000 School Road
School Town, PA 00000-0000

Dear Dr. M,
My name is Kay Shehan Hughes. I am the Assistant Superintendent of the Juniata County School District in Mifflintown, Pennsylvania and a candidate for a doctorate in Educational Leadership at the Pennsylvania State University. I am currently conducting research to identify characteristics of Pennsylvania’s Instructional Support Teams that cause them to persist over time, despite myriad changes in the educational environment.

I would like to invite personnel from your district to complete an online survey regarding their experiences and perceptions of the Instructional Support Team. The survey will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete and participants will be able to access the survey from any desktop computer. An attempt to contact all of the 1431 schools that originally participated in the implementation of Instructional Support Teams between the years of 1991-1995 will be made in hopes of involving approximately one third in the information gathering process.

If you choose to accept this invitation to participate, your district will only need to provide a letter of support and the names and addresses of school administrators who are currently working in a school utilizing IST in some fashion or who have experienced the Instructional Support Team at some point in the past. I will communicate with these school leaders and ask for names of Instructional Support Team personnel, make all the necessary contacts and arrangements, and see that the survey information gets to the
designated school personnel. If there comes a time that future interviews may be needed for additional information, I will conduct the interviews in a manner that is most appropriate for your school personnel (via telephone or face-to-face). The interviews will last approximately ½ hour.

Your school district anonymity will be maintained throughout this study. All data will be reported in aggregate form and the identity of your district and personnel will not be revealed in any publications related to this study.

As an administrator, I am aware of the tremendous demands on your time these days, but the time that you take to make this study possible could make a measurable difference in the quality of your school and other schools across the state of Pennsylvania. I will be contacting you by telephone in the near future to discuss your possible participation in this study. If you prefer, I can work with a designated member of your administrative staff to make the necessary arrangements.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Kay Shehan Hughes
Appendix B

Message to Participants
February 1, 2009

Dear Participant:

My name is Kay Shehan Hughes. I am the Assistant Superintendent in the Juniata County School District in Mifflintown, PA, and a candidate for a doctorate in Educational Leadership at The Pennsylvania State University. Your Superintendent has graciously given me permission to ask school personnel to participate in a research study. I am currently conducting research to identify characteristics of educational programs which school personnel believes causes the program to last, despite myriad changes in the school environment. To do this, I have selected to use the Instructional Support Teams in Pennsylvania. Although research has been collected using statistics on student achievement and data from formalized testing, very little research gathers information from those on the front line- who actually use the programs - the teachers.

I would like to invite you to participate in an on-line survey to gather information on your beliefs of what has made Instructional Support continue to work or what has caused the program to become less effective. The survey will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete and can be accessed from any computer with internet accessibility.

Your confidentiality will be maintained throughout this study. All data will be reported in aggregate form and your identity and the identity of your school will not be revealed in any publications related to this study. The data received from the surveys will be collected and imported into a spreadsheet that can be used for in-depth analysis. The information will be kept for the required amount of time and then destroyed.

As a fellow educator, I am aware of the tremendous demands on your time, especially these days, but the time that you take to participate in this survey could make a measurable difference in the quality of your school and other schools across the commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Please contact me by responding via email at khughes@tiu11.org if you have any questions. If you would like to participate, please click on the link that follows:

If, for any reason, you have difficulty accessing the link, you can copy and paste it into your web browser. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Kay Shehan Hughes
Appendix C

Survey Instrument
Program Persistence: The IST in Pennsylvania

Background Information

Select the box next to the choice that you feel best answers each question.

* Our school is:

- Rural (No city near, population less than 25,000)
- Suburban (Small-medium city near, population 25,000-249,999)
- Urban (Large city near, population 250,000 or greater)
- Other. Please explain

* The size of the student population at our school is:

- Small (Under 300 students)
- Medium-sized (300-999 students)
- Large (1,000 or more students)
- Other (please specify)
# Program Persistence: The IST in Pennsylvania

## Your Role in IST

The following questions are intended to provide information on YOUR ROLE in IST as it currently exists in your school.

Select the box next to the choice that you feel best answers each question.

### * Background Information- Survey Participant

**My primary role in the school is as a:**

- [ ] Regular Education Classroom Teacher
- [ ] Special Education Classroom Teacher
- [ ] Special Education Resource Room Teacher
- [ ] School Counselor
- [ ] School Psychologist
- [ ] School Administrator
- [ ] IST Teacher
- [ ] Other. Please explain

### * I have worked in this school:

- [ ] Less than one year
- [ ] 1-5 years
- [ ] 6-10 years
- [ ] 11+ years

### * I support the use of IST:

- [ ] No
- [ ] Yes
Program Persistence: The IST in Pennsylvania

IST Status

The following questions are intended to gather information regarding the use of IST in your school.

Select the box next to the choice that you feel best answers each question.

* Our school currently...

- [ ] uses IST as a "stand-alone" program for intervention
- [ ] uses a modified version of IST (using only those components of IST as needed in our school)
- [ ] uses IST as a tier in RtI
## Program Persistence: The IST in Pennsylvania

### School Still Using IST

Select the box next to the choice that you feel best answers each question.

* Rate the extent to which the following PEOPLE influenced the continued use of IST in your school.

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<tr>
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<th>Did not Influence the decision</th>
<th>Minimally influenced the decision</th>
<th>Moderately influenced the decision</th>
<th>Greatly influenced the decision</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local School Board</td>
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<tr>
<td>District Office Administration</td>
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<td>School Building Administrator</td>
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<td>School Faculty</td>
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<td>Parents</td>
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<td>Other (please specify)</td>
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* Rate the extent to which the following FACTORS impacted the continued use of IST in your school.

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Minimal impact</th>
<th>Moderate impact</th>
<th>Great impact</th>
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<tr>
<td>The existence of a state mandate that required IST</td>
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<tr>
<td>The existence of state funding to support IST</td>
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</table>
**Program Persistence: The IST in Pennsylvania**

**The members of the IST in our school include...(Select all answers that apply.)**

- IST Teacher
- School Administrator
- School Counselor Special Education Resource Room Teacher
- School Psychologist
- Classroom Teacher
- School Nurse
- Other school staff who work with the referred student
- Parents
- Community Agency Representative
- Other. (please specify all others)

**IST in our school... (Select all answers that apply.)**

- is used to provide intervention prior to a student being referred for special education.
- uses a team approach
- includes parents on the team
- follows a strict 60 day timeline for intervention.
- conducts behavioral assessments.
- finds present academic levels.
- determines communication abilities.
- determines social/emotional levels.
- uses researched-based interventions.
The questions that follow are intended to provide information on characteristics of the IST process.

Select the box next to the choice that you feel best answers each question.

**Design and Implementation:**
Rate the importance of the following CHARACTERISTICS to the success of IST.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Not at all important</th>
<th>Somewhat important</th>
<th>Extremely important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thorough understanding of the IST process</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extensive initial training</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriate and timely ongoing training</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The resources for intervention consultation, materials, etc.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The accommodation for IST members (planning time, special schedules, meeting time, etc.)</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorporation of IST into the standard operating procedures of the school.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reorganization of the instructional process of the school to accommodate IST.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modification of the IST process to fit the changing needs and conditions of the school.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The questions that follow are intended to provide information on characteristics of the IST process.

Select the box next to the choice that you feel best answers each question.

* **Rate the importance of the following INDIVIDUAL TEAM MEMBER characteristics with respect to the success of IST.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not at all important</th>
<th>Somewhat important</th>
<th>Extremely important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determination</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enthusiasm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* **Rate the importance of the following TEAM characteristics with respect to the success of IST.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not at all important</th>
<th>Somewhat important</th>
<th>Extremely important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consistent team membership (low incidence of key personnel turnover)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared attitude toward student success</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team organization (forms, meetings, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The question that follows is intended to provide information on characteristics of the IST process.

**Support**

Select all choices that indicate the person(s) from whom support is needed for IST to be successful.

- Local School Board
- District Office Administration
- School Building Administrator
- School Faculty
- IST Teacher
- Parents
- Community Agency Representative (Advocacy Groups)
The questions that follow are intended to provide information on characteristics of the IST process.

Program Outcomes and Results
Select the box next to the choice that you feel best answers each question.

* Rate the success of IST with respect to the intended outcomes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students success in the regular education classroom</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Adequate</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improved student behavior</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student achievement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Select the statement(s) that accurately describe the results of the IST process.

- IST decreased the number of students who were referred to the MDT for additional testing.
- IST decreased the number of students who were placed in special education programs.
- IST helped referred students succeed in the regular education classroom.
- IST helped all students in regular education because of the teacher's involvement in the IST process.

* Rate the following "IST investments" with respect to the outcomes produced.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training</th>
<th>Not worthwhile</th>
<th>Somewhat worthwhile</th>
<th>Very worthwhile</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time involved</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The questions that follow are intended to provide information on characteristics of the IST process.

**Program Outcomes and Results**

Select the box next to the choice that you feel best answers each question.

* Provide 3 reasons for the continued use of IST in your school.

1. 

2. 

3. 

* I believe the use of IST is beneficial to students.

- I do NOT agree.
- I AGREE.
Program Persistence: The IST in Pennsylvania

Additional Thoughts or Comments

This page is intended to provide an opportunity for you to share additional thoughts on the use of IST in Pennsylvania’s school.

Please add your comment(s) below.
Some final words.....

Thank you for taking time to answer the questions on this survey. If you would like a copy of your answers, please print off this form to keep for your record.

If you are interested in checking results, please visit:
http://www.surveymonkey.com/sr.aspx?sm=p_2bXAWiKFI02btLwMohPlmv7EznrrMPDpMgXb7ph0hg_3d

At this time, you have completed your participation in this survey.

Thank you again!
Appendix D

Interview Protocol
Program Persistence: Interview Protocol

Share the following information with the participant:

The purpose of this study is to collect data for a doctoral study in Educational Leadership at The Pennsylvania State University. The study is designed to examine the continued/discontinued use of academic programs using the Instructional Support Team (IST) in Pennsylvania. The study is entitled, "Program Persistence: The Instructional Support Team in Pennsylvania

Ask the participant if they agree to take part in the study and interview. If they do, explain that a formed will be emailed to them that they must sign. Have participants sign the informed consent statement and fax at their earliest convenience.

To begin, share the definition of geographic location. Then ask,

1. Would you consider your school to be rural, suburban, or urban?
   - Rural
   - Suburban
   - Urban

Share the definition for size of student population. Then ask,

2. How would you describe the size of the student population at the school:
   - Small
   - Medium –sized
   - Large
   - Other

3. Do you have any experience with IST in any capacity?
   - Yes
   - No

4. Is this experience current?
   - Yes
   - No

5. What is/was your primary role in relation to IST?

6. How is/was the IST used?
As a stand alone program.
   Explain
As a modified version of IST.
   Explain
As a tier in RtI
   Explain

7. Is IST currently used in your school(s)?
   
   Yes
   NO

8. What factors do you believe influenced this decision?

9. Do you believe the removal of the mandate had any effect on this decision?
   
   Yes
   No
   Explain.

10. Do you believe the removal of the funding for IST had any effect on this decision?
    
    Yes
    No
    Explain.

11. Did the IST in your school continue?
    
    Yes
    No

12. What person(s) do you believe had the greatest influence on the decision to continue/discontinue IST in your school/district?

13. Did IST change following the removal?
    
    Yes
    No
    How?

14. What characteristics do you believe determine the success/failure of IST?
15. From whom do you think IST needs support in order for it to Succeed?

16. Did your IST have this support?
   
   Yes
   No
   Please explain why you think that was.

17. What were the intended outcomes of the IST in your school?

18. Was the IST successful in providing these desired outcomes?
   
   Yes
   No
   Explain

19. What were the initial investments your school had to place in IST to implement it?

20. Do you believe the initial investments of the IST were worth the outcomes?
   
   Yes
   No
   Explain

21. Can you give me three reasons that IST continued in your school?

22. Would you like to provide any other comments?

   Thank you for your participation.
Appendix E

Participant Thoughts on IST
**Program Persistence: The IST in Pennsylvania**

### Additional Thoughts or Comments

1. I hope IST and CSAP are the same. We had IST years ago and now support is given through CSAP.
2. As a Special Education Teacher (for 33 years), I realize that some students struggle throughout the school year, but are not in need of Special Education services. RtI provides the support these students need when they need it and allows us to truly leave no students behind.
3. IST has been very effective in the years that I have been in our district. I think its success depends on the competence of the team involved, the importance and emphasis that building principal places on it, and the follow through by the team. When one of these pieces is missing, its effectiveness deteriorates.
4. Ist is an excellent vehicle to bring all parties together to problem solves and monitor a student for school success.
5. I believe that the IST process is beneficial, however I think often times the process goes awry and when it does it can become a waste of time. I would like to see the IST process rely more heavily on data-based decision making (similar to RtI). Typically our IS teacher sees students for about 30-60 minutes per week which doesn't seem sufficient to make a positive impact on learning or behavior. However, no hard data is collected to identify whether the intervention is in fact helpful or not. If an RtI process was followed and a change was made if an intervention is ineffective, I think this would be the most viable use of IST. Our team decision making often does not rely heavily on data as well. At least collecting data is not encouraged (other than by the school psychologist).
   Also, I believe that training is necessary if the process is to work. I believe, in my school, that the process has become "watered down" and most cases are ultimately referred for Special Education anyway. I get the impression that classroom teachers are dissatisfied with IST as well that it hasn't been helpful to them.
   Overall, I believe the process can be helpful, if it is implemented properly (data-based decision making, team acknowledgment and acceptance of the process). We also have an established RtI program in our school and students have been successful with RtI, and not as successful through IST. If the program is implemented as intended it could be beneficial, but if not, it can be a waste of time (e.g., ideas thrown out here and there without sufficient knowledge of the problem). Which is likely why the system is up for debate.
6. Our IST teacher is stretched too thin – She WANTS to work with individual children on their needs but it only happens once every two months or so....This is very ineffective. At this point, IST is only a means to getting a child tested
7. I have worked with the I.S.T. model numerous times and for numerous years. I think that the saying "it takes a village to raise a child" kind of says it all here. Everyone comes to school with some baggage, some can still navigate successfully through the day academically, behaviorally, socially, and emotionally. Those that cannot - are referred to I.S.T. so that the school and parents can put the best efforts in place to succeed and provide and safe, nourishing, and educational environment for all of the children in the school.
8. The instructional support process is often, in my situation, a starting point for new teachers. There was/is a high turnover rate along with very little training for the new teacher. The biggest hurdle in the process (we are now moving into the RTI model) was the amount of students referred for a single teacher. I serve 3 elementary schools, am only at a certain school two days a week, and I also have the Enrichment program. = no time to spend with the student which most of the time what the teacher wanted to happen. Other factors in the limited success of IST is a majority of the students that were referred did not have parental support at home and the administration did not "force" teachers to change their teaching to get the greatest benefit for the child in question. I think that if you had support from all sides and had a long term teacher, IST could work, but that situation is not available for our district.
9. we have moved from a organized IST to a CST with IST components...this approach works very well for our team and population...we believed the IST accommodations were already being done by excellent teachers BEFORE they brought the students to IST...we now use regular classroom teacher data to learn about a student...saves everyone time and we refer less students for MDE because of this...
Additional Thoughts or Comments

10. Although not trained officially in IST techniques, the need for a support person coordinating the staff, resources, and schedules is essential to maximizing the support students receive. As we move to RTI and coaching as staff development, the IST teacher is a crucial bridge to success for students and teachers differentiating in the classroom.

11. Our district has adopted using the RtI model. This was easier for our district to implement since the IST model had been in place. Using RtI model has been more successful than IST, but many students are identified as "at risk" with data to support the label "at risk". Once identified the students are put into interventions that meet the child's needs.

12. With all of the data available on each student in the school, I can't imagine classroom teachers to be able to have the time to gather it all up and use it effectively without the help from others. I see the Data Analysis Coordinator (aka IST) as a person that can gather all the information about students in Tier 2 and Tier 3 so that the DAT meetings can run smoother. I hope that the state of Pennsylvania sees the importance of IST/RtI and supports this. The Positive School Wide Behavior Plan at our school is superior and I can't speak highly enough about it. It is a program that the teachers, students, parents, support staff and bus drivers have bought into. It has made a huge difference in the overall atmosphere of our school. I hope more schools in the state recognize the impact that this can have and use it the way it was designed.

13. IST is a good way for parents and a team of various educators to meet and discuss how to help a student. This, often times, speeds up the learning process and allows the child to catch up and not need special education in the future.

14. The use of IST in Pennsylvania's schools has provided us with a strong foundation for moving into Response to Intervention. This process has provided teachers with the empowerment and the knowledge to make appropriate accommodations for students within the regular education environment with support from support personnel within the school and the school administration. Parents have been provided with the opportunity to take a very active role in meeting the needs of their child(ren) through this process. All the key players in a child's education are able to come together with support and the appropriate resources to work collaboratively to help children be as successful as possible in the regular education environment. If a child needs to be referred for a multi-disciplinary evaluation, the team and the parents already have a wealth of information that has been collected going into the evaluation process.

15. IST allows for an initial screening when students seem to be falling below the benchmarks. It provides a good opportunity for the parents to become more informed about their student's academic ability and to hone in on the child's strengths and weaknesses. It allows teachers a chance to separate that student from all of the other students and look at their ability individually. It's a great opportunity for collaboration between teachers, parents, and administrators to come together to work for each individual child.

16. When IST is a stand alone process in schools; i.e. a team meets and the responsibility of design/implementation is on one staff member, I think the process is not necessarily effective. When the process is intermingled within the normal, ongoing functioning of the school it is much more effective and has the capability to reach many more students. Our IST process is intertwined with the monthly grade level meetings and all decisions regarding interventions begin at this level.

17. I believe it is an essential implementation. I believe that we are only beginning to see the rewards and it will prove to be more rewarding as time progresses.

18. When proper training for the IST teacher and all team participants is provided, IST can be an excellent intervention.

19. RtI is providing a slight twist to the IST framework. Careful attention to data gathering and interpretation is vital.

20. As the traditional model of IST is in the process of evolving into more of an RtI model, it is imperative that IS teachers receive the support of their building administrator in order to make this transition a successful one.

21. We do not have an IST "team" we have one person who is given a great deal of power in our school. I do not see this person doing anything but monitoring students progress/
### Program Persistence: The IST in Pennsylvania

#### Additional Thoughts or Comments

22. I feel that the IST program can be of extreme benefit to any school when it is implemented properly and the IST teachers are doing the job of working with the children. However, in the building I work this is not the case and there is not a whole lot of interventions or support of any kind going on.

23. I feel that the IST program can be of extreme benefit to any school when it is implemented properly and the IST teachers are doing the job of working with the children. However, in the building I work this is not the case and there is not a whole lot of interventions or support of any kind going on.

24. Although not trained officially in IST techniques, the need for a support person coordinating the staff, resources, and schedules is essential to maximizing the support students receive. As we move to RTI and coaching as staff development, the IST teacher is a crucial bridge to success for students and teachers differentiating in the classroom.

25. Our district has adopted using the RtI model. This was easier for our district to implement.

26. IST works!

27. Why can't this program be supported by those in charge?

28. I am not sure that our school properly implements the IST. As a classroom teacher who sits on the team I have received no training. Thus, some of my answers to the questions on this survey are likely incorrect.

29. IST is much like RTI if it incorporates research based strategies to help students succeed. This component may be missing in most IST programs.

30. I believe that the IST process has been enhanced by the RTI model which allows more students to be served. Additionally, more data is generated for making accurate comparisons of student growth. At the same time, the IST Model has an essential place for maintaining contact with teacher and parent, disseminating and collecting information, and for summarizing the overall outcomes of the intervention with regard to need for further evaluation.

31. It is a great help in Forbes Road Elementary School!

32. All schools need an effective pre-referral system to help students, teachers and parents determine how they can help students become more successful in the regular classroom.

33. If I had preferences, I would use IST over RtI.

34. IST is definitely needed in all schools. There will always be those students who need additional support in reading, math, writing and behavior. Some one needs to help these students meet success that they may not feel. Parents need to have a person they feel cares about their child and will be diplomatic with them in regards to their child.

35. If IST is used in a school, the teachers need to know what IST’s job really is, and how it works. IST is not intended for a faculty member to just do observations 2 times a year on a particular child and hand you paperwork after paperwork to fill out. IST is a TEAM, if there is no team, the child suffers. If IST is ran the way it should, there will be success. Sadly, I feel that our school could benefit from an understanding of the IST process in detail.

36. I believe its would be important to include the parents as part of the ISTeam. Their input is important and necessary.

37. I am currently a Kindergarten teacher but for the last two years I was in charge of the IST in our school district. I found the program beneficial for, students, staff and families. I feel that IST should be continued, especially as a resource for RTI. I have had numerous students identified because of the IST process. IST should be consistent and the person overseeing the process should be properly trained in all grade levels and should work closely with school staff as well as outside agencies (if needed).

38. IST provides the needed structure and procedures for meeting the needs of academically at-risk students. The challenge remains to staff the program consistently, while meeting the increasing demands of other mandates (some of which are not funded).
Additional Thoughts or Comments

39. We have a great, well organized IST teacher who really cares about the children. She works well with others and is a great resource.

40. I feel the IST is very beneficial and I feel it needs to continue in the next school year. Identified students and regularly progress monitor to determine if growth is taking place. At the MS level, the IST model is still followed for academic and behavioral issues.

41. In past years, IST has been beneficial to students. Currently, our IST program is lacking trained staff and a comprehensive plan which benefits students and supports teachers.

42. I do not like IST programs as run by my school.

43. IST has met the needs of our district from its inception. Changes have been incorporated in the program to continue this success. IST is a work in progress.

44. At the elementary level, we do not call the program IST any longer. For the past 4 years, it is called PIP- primary intervention program. We have 2 PIP teachers working within the 3 elementary buildings. They administer the DIBELS assessment 3 times throughout the year in grades K-2 (and at risk grade 3 students) to identify students who may be at risk with literacy skills. The PIP teachers then provide intense remedial services to the struggling students.

45. When it first began many years ago, it was worthwhile. Now our school just seems to use it as a requirement before we can recommend a student for testing.

46. We have recently begun to implement RTI at our school. An important component is its integration with the IST process.

47. I thought when the program first started it was a good thing. I enjoyed being a support teacher. Now, our current support teacher gets no help, has no training, has no support from our administration and she has no background in teaching reading or math. It makes it hard for her to come up with accommodations etc. Done right this is a great program.

48. I'd like to see school psychologists more involved in IST. Maybe they are in those districts that are RtI oriented.

49. IST was a great process. I see some of the elements emerging with RTI. We use a child study model but it doesn't compare to what we did using the IST format.

50. No additional comments

51. Unfortunately, IST is another example of Pennsylvania's lack of a commitment to research based practices in favor of the current political climate and individuals' desire to advance their career in politics at the expense of true educational reform. State initiatives are begun and funded for only two to three years, not enough time to gain the longitudinal data to determine their effect. As it can take two years for necessary trainings to occur and procedures to be established, funding is often withdrawn just as a program is beginning to become embedded in a school's daily life. If a district does not have the tax base to assume the program's funding it is discontinued, sending a message to those involved that it may not have been that important to begin with and causing future PDE initiatives to be met with skepticism. I have often heard teachers comment about the State's new endeavors, "Give it a couple of years and it will be gone, too." The unfortunate result is that teachers become very resistant to change, even that which has a valid and empirical research base.
52. The Instructional Support Process in my school works very well to identify students' academic and behavioral needs at a very early stage and to provide strategies to meet students' needs. It is a collaborative effort between teachers, parents, administration, counselors, and the IST teacher. Our IST approach closely follows the original format with gathering information, doing classroom observations, building a student profile, holding an initial team meeting, setting goals and identifying strategies, holding 30 school day review meetings and setting new goals. We also hold Transition Meetings at the start of each school year to pass along the strategies that were successful in helping students the previous year so that no time is lost at the start of the new year. IST provides the data needed when the team refers to MDE.

53. The initial training and components were very "solid" and benefited many students. We are currently in the process of moving to the RtI model. While it is a different model, the IST training and team process will help with the process.

54. Our school has switched the "name " and format of IST. We call it CIT for Collaborative Intervention Team. It seems that in PA, RtI is the way to help students. Our CIT is the team that is "the old IST" and incorporates practices from the RtI model.

55. In our school master uses a problem-solving model as the framework that allows our TEAM to develop an action plan that will meet the needs of the student displaying learning difficulties. This model involves 'looking' at the whole child. Components other than intellectual concerns include behavior, social, emotional and physical issues. Goals are set with the retention and acquisition rates documented. This collection of data is an important part of progress monitoring and allows the team to evaluate the action plan that was written for the child. The system has been successful for many students in our school.

56. I believe IST is important to help students that are struggling but are not really learning support candidates. The ratio of teacher to students needs to be looked at because it is not adequate to accomplish the true measurement of success or failure. It sometimes feels like we are doing a little for a lot of students and not making enough of a positive result. In additional regular teachers need to be educated in thinking every little classroom management problem is now an IST problem and we have a magic wand to correct all behavior, emotional, and academic problem.

57. It takes consistent administrative support and teacher commitment for any type of program such as IST to be effective. Our school is now in the process of preparing to implement RTI and phase out IST. Something that I believe most schools in Pennsylvania will be doing if they have not already done so.

58. At our school, IST is most important at the lower grades for academic interventions. Reaching the struggling student at an early age is vital. Most intermediate grade interventions for IST deal with behavior.

59. Without a Support Teacher modified ISTeams are not nearly as effective. High rate of burn-out for ISTeacher after 5 years in the position.

60. Our school is currently using IST and incorporating it into our RtI model. We still use the discrepancy model for identifying students.

61. The Instructional Support Process in my school works very well to identify students' academic and behavioral needs at a very early stage and to provide strategies to meet students' needs. It is a collaborative effort between teachers, parents, administration, counselors, and the IST teacher. Our IST approach closely follows the original format with gathering information, doing classroom observations, building a student profile, holding an initial team meeting, setting goals and identifying strategies, holding 30 school day review meetings and setting new goals. We also hold Transition Meetings at the start of each school year to pass along the strategies that were successful in helping students the previous year so that no time is lost at the start of the new year. IST provides the data needed when the team refers to MDE.
62. The initial training and components were very "solid" and benefited many students. We are currently in the process of moving to the RtI model. While it is a different model, the IST training and team process will help with the process.

63. Our school has switched the "name " and format of IST. We call it CIT for Collaborative Intervention Team. It seems that in PA, RtI is the way to help students. Our CIT is the team that is "the old IST" and incorporates practices from the RtI model.

64. In our school, IST uses a problem-solving model as the framework that allows our TEAM to develop an action plan that will meet the needs of the student displaying learning difficulties. This model involves 'looking' at the whole child. Components other than intellectual concerns include behavior, social, emotional and physical issues. Goals are set with the retention and acquisition rates documented. This collection of data is an important part of progress monitoring and allows the team to evaluate the action plan that was written for the child. The system has been successful for many students in our school.

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66. It takes consistent administrative support and teacher commitment for any type of program such as IST to be effective. Our school is now in the process of preparing to implement RTI and phase out IST. Something that I believe most schools in Pennsylvania will be doing if they have not already done so.

67. At our school, IST is most important at the lower grades for academic interventions. Reaching the struggling student at an early age is vital. Most intermediate grade interventions for IST deal with behavior.

68. This program has been extremely beneficial to students, parents and teachers in providing needed supports and interventions for students to increase their academic achievement and behavioral functioning.

69. This is my sixth year of my role as IST. Currently, I work in two buildings. I have noticed a change in teacher's attitudes once I started as compared to my predecessor. I promote communication as an essential part to improve student performance. I have noticed families becoming more involved with their children following our initial IST meetings once they are aware of the current educational performance. Furthermore, I see teachers working above and beyond during the IST process whether it be sending home materials for remediation or in-school supports. IST definitely has a role. It can be effective if integrated within the school with everyone believing in it.

70. Our IST program has evolved to meet the needs of our school. Much of the IST personnel's time is dedicated to assessing student needs via 4Sight and Aimsweb. In-service training sessions are taught by IST to help teachers understand and use the data. IST has continued as a liaison with many outside agencies and tutoring.

71. I realize that Response to Intervention does not depend on a person in the role of IST. In fact, the team approach is key. However, in the real world, it is very beneficial to have someone who is trained to gather data, progress monitor, encourage collaboration, search for interventions, train interventionists, coordinate and assemble team members for meetings, and research best practices. No, our current IST model is not the one initially created. It has been stretched and molded into a model that works for us. I believe that the development of the IST process was essential for us to create what has become a process for us to use as we work through Response to Intervention (instruction.)
72. The IST process is utilized as a valuable tool in our building as well in our school district as a whole. It bridges regular and special education in a vital way. Students who are struggling academically, socially or behaviorally are given the opportunity to achieve success because data is collected to provide background information, specialized assessments are administered to determine student strengths and areas to improve, and strategies are designed and implemented to assist the classroom teacher in providing sound research-based techniques. The student is given a period of time to work with the strategies and progress is routinely monitored. This information is gathered and shared with the IST team which includes many individuals who have a stake in the student’s educational future, including the student. Each team member brings their particular area of expertise to the table to promote the best interests of the student. I believe it is the strongest evidence of a well designed plan to promote the individual needs of all students, as it is not a special education program, but can be utilized for ANY student in need of additional support. In a school building such as ours, that does not have the support of remedial reading or math services, it is a beacon of hope to concerned parents, struggling students who truly want to do better in school, and caring teachers who are overwhelmed with issues such as large class sizes, diversified student populations, and multiple level student abilities to name a few. IST is the keystone of our elementary school and is a necessary, well-respected part of our school’s educational program. Its level of success is embodied in the lists of students who have moved through the process and have been successful in meeting their goals. Those students then can demonstrate that success in classroom achievement, where they could not do so before. Success breeds more success as these students see that there are caring individuals who will neither let them fall through the cracks nor disable able learners who just learn a bit differently but still can learn! I cannot say enough about the faith I have in the IST process!

73. If the conditions are right, the IS program can be very beneficial. However, in our school, it was not implemented correctly. It was not a portal to receive special education services. I just got them in and was told to continue to work with them over the time limit. Teachers resented me coming in their rooms. The administration didn’t want students referred for testing, so it didn’t go well. I was so burned out after only 3 years that I started to look for ways out of the program. For me, the Instructional Support program was a nightmare. In my 36 years of teaching it was the most stressful job I had. For me personally, I still use many of the strategies I learned from my time as IST. My original team members were great and give me a boost when I was down. However, the downside has stayed with me longer - especially one incident where two teachers berated me over the handling of a child in the hallway of the school and the superintendent walked past and never came to stop the harassment. So, I don’t have a lot of good memories about Instructional Support.

74. In the two buildings (different districts in PA) I have been the IST teacher, I have found the program to be very beneficial to students and their families. It provides support to both and helps marry the school with the homes of the students to help with consistency between the two.

75. I think IST is a very valuable resource in Pennsylvania schools. The district I taught in before coming to this district did not have IST...there was no extra support for teachers, students and parents. IST allows for students to receive individualized targeted instruction in areas of weakness. IST provides an opportunity for parents to be part of their child’s academic planning. The whole team approach of IST is so valuable to all students...no one slips through the cracks. The team is always monitoring student progress and planning interventions for those who are falling behind. The IST team not only monitors academic process but also behavioral issues. The IST team meets on a regular basis to discuss student concerns whether they be academic or behavioral and we put some type of intervention in place to support those students. IST provides resources for teachers. Teachers come to me all the time asking for suggestions, help, resources for instruction. IST also allows for co-teaching opportunities.
76. Our IST process has changed to suit the needs of our school and has become a valuable resource for student achievement. It has moved away from simply providing individualized interventions for a few students to providing math support for many, instructional support & coaching for teachers, an instructional resource without the barrier of the "supervisory" role, etc. IST will continue to change as our district moves toward RtI and is unique in its position to change as needs change.
Vita
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Education:

Doctor of Education
The Pennsylvania State University State College, PA 2010

Master of Education
The Pennsylvania State University State College, PA 1991

Bachelor of Arts
The Pennsylvania State University State College, PA 1976

Professional Experience:

Assistant Superintendent, Juniata County School District, Mifflintown, PA 2007-Current
Survey Research Center Supervisor, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 1998-2000
Elementary and Middle School Administrator, Mifflin County School District Lewistown, PA 1993-1998
Classroom Teacher, Mifflin County School District, Lewistown, PA 1976-1993

Professional Certifications:

Superintendent's Letter of Eligibility 1997
Secondary Principal 1997
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Pi Lambda Theta, International Honor Society
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