

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

HAS THE USE OF RESPONSE TO INSTRUCTION IN THE MATANUSKA-
SUSITNA BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT PROVEN TO BE THE BEST METHOD-FOR
IDENTIFICATION OF SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITY?

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL CASE STUDY

by

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The purpose of this qualitative study, based on a phenomenological design and associated with the theory of social constructivism, was to collect and thematically analyze information about the lived experiences, perceptions, feelings, and beliefs of a purposive sample of special education teachers regarding the implementation of the response to instruction (RTI) framework in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District (MSBSD). The thematic analysis was based on the written responses of 16 teachers to a questionnaire and the spoken responses of 6 teachers to interview questions. The overall goal, to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the RTI framework, was met, and the research design proved to be effective to address the overall research question: What are the perceptions of strengths and weaknesses, as identified by special education elementary instructors in MSBSD, of using the RTI framework for qualifying students under the special education category specific learning disability? The respondents provided rich qualitative information to indicate that although the RTI framework has certain strengths, it also

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has certain weaknesses. Consequently, the RTI may not be the best framework, providing a rationale for future development of the RTI. This conclusion was consistent with the debate in the literature regarding the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the RTI framework.