

Effective Reading Instruction and Intervention for English Language Learners

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Abstract

A diverse suburban middle school is the setting for program evaluation of the site's reading intervention program, and its effectiveness with English Language Learners (ELLs). Research review focuses on identifying the instructional practices best suited for use with ELLs to improve the effectiveness of reading interventions, defining normal progress, and further research needs. Interviews with intervention coaches, instructors, students, and administrators are summarized, and file review findings of 84 served students are presented and used to assess the effectiveness of reading interventions at the research site. The results show that 60% of served students either passed grade level reading assessments or improved by more their score by more than one grade level. 50% of English Language Learners served achieved those increases. The researcher provides recommendations for ongoing program improvement and research, including the need for future program evaluation for the research site's reading intervention program.



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Chapter One – The Introduction

A quaint, riverfront downtown with shady neighborhoods of 1920's Craftsman homes slowly gives way to a new, sprawling development of larger, more modern dwellings. Next, trailer parks then vast conglomerations of apartments cover the land that surrounds a bustling commercial center and major thoroughfare. Older generations remember this area as farmland, far from the city center of Oregon's population base. A few small farms remain from a bygone era, dotting the landscape. In the center of this area, a middle school serves a diverse mix of students from all of the aforementioned dwellings.

The research site will be the district's largest middle school in the 2009-10 school year, when two new middle schools open to serve the ever-expanding suburban landscape. Beyond a major freeway the homes are larger and newer again. Of 719 students at the school, 63.7% qualify for free or reduced lunch, and the school's student population includes 97 English Language Learners (ELLs). Languages spoken in the homes of their families include Spanish, Arabic, Ukrainian, Romanian, Laotian, Samoan, Russian, Vietnamese, Cambodian, and English. The largest language group besides English is Spanish; there are 128 Hispanic students (17.8% of general population), and approximately half of them qualify for currently for ELL services.

The English Language Learners population tends to be a mobile one. As a result, it is sometimes a challenge to measure the effectiveness of instructional strategies over years:

many of the students in the ELL program leave the school before exiting the program. Many families have two working parents, and common jobs include housecleaning, foodservice, construction, landscaping, and agriculture. Many students are alone or supervising younger siblings late into the night. Some parents report they don't know where their kids are at night. Gang activity is observed frequently in the school and surrounding community. Indications from local law enforcement are that the gang problem is increasing.

Students have reported recently that these are "hard times" and that "things are getting complicated here" and their parents who cannot find (sufficient) employment. Students and their families are facing more difficulty if they are undocumented; it is no longer possible to attain an Oregon Driver's License without immigration papers. Immigration raids on Portland employers in the last year have increased tension, and teachers have witnessed the devastation on families torn apart, with parents deported and kids sent to live with relatives. While individual students and their families return to Mexico or another country of origin, the trend is still that more newcomers are arriving, and from varied origins.

Yet even in these hard economic times, many of the businesses along the major commercial thoroughfare continue to boom: fast food and cheap entertainment tend to do well even in tough times. There seemed to be no slowing the growth of businesses surrounding the expansive shopping center. Only recently has that seeming impossibility

become likely with enormous mega stores closing their doors, and no others likely to replace them.

The researcher is an English Language Development Specialist, with four years of experience at the school site, and the head of the school's ELL Department and senior ELD Specialist at the middle level in the district. While serving as a Hall Team Leader and Chair-Elect of the school Site Council, the researcher is working towards completing an Initial Administrator's License and Master's Degree in Administration. In his duties on the Site Council, the author has the opportunity to effect change in instruction and assessment through the yearly creation and review of the School Improvement Plan, and scheduling of teacher in-service days and their focus. As a case manager and teacher for ELL students and member of a middle level professional learning community on ELL instruction the researcher makes significant decisions in the scheduling and delivery of instruction for all ELL students at the site.



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Chapter Two – The Issue

Students are identified as English Language Learners (ELLs) and qualify for services when two conditions are met: first, there must be an influence of a language other than English, and second students must be below grade-level in reading, writing, listening and speaking academic English as measured by a variety of state and other formal assessments. Upon reaching a grade-level fluency of academic English, students are no longer eligible for ELL services, and are exited from the program. Research suggests that typical ELL students take at least five years to reach exit level (Cummins, 1981, Collier, 1987). However, this rate of development also depends on students' abilities in their first language (L1). With little or no academic language ability in their native languages, ELL students might be expected to reach academic fluency in seven to ten years (Thomas, 1997). In practice this means that most ELL students are not passing state assessments in reading and writing *by definition*. Progress must be measured using more frequent formative assessments and interventions are designed and delivered for students based on the analysis of available data.

At the research site and many other schools, ELL students are targeted for specific interventions in reading by Response to Intervention (RtI) teams if their scores on state reading assessments, oral fluency, or DIBELS tests are poor. Some find themselves in middle school and high school in mandated reading classes for students performing

significantly below grade level in reading, others for performing at grade level. While this may serve some students' best interests, others wonder if the loss of an elective course might be too high a cost, especially if the student already receives services for English Language Development courses.

This situation has led the researcher's inquiry into improving instruction for ELL students, and to the following problem questions. First, are the reading classes at the site as effective for English Language Learners? And next, if these students are to be in reading and language development classes, what are the best methods for teaching reading to students who speak, and in some cases read, another language? The purpose of the research is to determine the relative effectiveness of reading interventions, as well as which literacy instructional practices and materials to use with ELL students who struggle in reading Academic English.

Literature Review

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) has made states and districts accountable for the reading test scores of all students, and as a result it has become more of a focus than ever before to deliver high-quality instruction to ELLs, and to all other subgroups of students. Further, the numbers of students who qualify as limited-English proficient is growing, and the crisis in equitably educating these students is expanding. While just 10% of native English speakers do not complete high school, 51% of ELLs who speak English with difficulty fail to do so (National Center for Education Statistics, 2004). Ineffective

teaching practices can be blamed at least in part, specifically for Hispanic students (Padrón & Waxman, 2002). Educators and researchers alike are asking: what are the most effective practices for teaching literacy to ELL students?

Along with the added accountability for districts there has been a push to implement interventions for struggling students. While Response to Intervention (RtI) is an effective model for three tiered instruction and intervention, there is a danger in using a one-size-fits-all approach to interventions. While phonics-based programs have sometimes been effective interventions, there is no research to justify part-to-whole phonics-based interventions are the answer for all ELL students. In fact, low achieving readers arrive in middle school having been provided with, in some cases, years of phonics-based remedial programs focusing on basic skills rather than authentic reading texts.

Considering the attention from NCLB, the growing numbers of English Language Learners, and the failure of our schools to educate these students, more and current research is needed on what instructional practices effective. In 2006, the National Literacy Panel specifically focused on studies of second language literacy and found that “the research on acquiring literacy in a second language remains limited.” The Panel went on to call the current research on some topics within second language literacy research to be ‘scant’ (Report of the National Literacy Panel on Language-Minority Children and Youth, 2007). Where have past researchers gone wrong?

In the past, some researchers performed studies to determine *which* reading interventions program are more effective in teaching reading to struggling English Language Learners. These research questions are inherently flawed and have taken time and energy in the wrong direction (Thomas & Collier, 1997). Rather than which is better, Program A or Program B, researchers must rather ask: what is effective for ELL students in general, then evaluate individual programs on whether they include these aspects.

One team of researchers found that intensive reading instruction in word study, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension with ELLs grade 4-5 who are 'struggling' did not produce significant results (Vaughn & Bryant, 2002). Interestingly, researchers in this study cited problems that have been familiar to the research site in recent years: teacher retention and fidelity to the programs used for intensive interventions. One might surmise an added finding not suggested by the researchers: new teachers, untrained or improperly delivering intervention programs may be ineffective.

The International Reading Association's *Key Issues and Questions* (2007) helps to focus current research needs. While they assert that vocabulary instruction and reading comprehension strategies are important facets of reading instruction for ELLs, they call for more research in the *how* these should be taught. Difficulties in reading, for some ELLs is related to low vocabulary skills, and one recommendation in teaching reading and interventions to struggling ELLs is explicit instruction in high-use academic vocabulary.

Additionally, research is needed into what normal growth is for ELL students, students with and without literacy skills in their first language. As we know that students with literacy skills need five to seven years to attain academic fluency; it can be hard not to take a “wait and see” approach. Without research such as this is, it may be impossible to determine when interventions are truly needed, and when more time and better quality instruction in ELL and content area courses are needed.

Finally, the International Reading Association (2007) asserts that the context for language learning needs to be refocused. Educators should see students’ first-language abilities as a strength that can be supplemented, rather than weakness that necessitates remediation. This requires a transformed socio-cultural context for language learning, to enrich students abilities while valuing their backgrounds. In a context such as this one, perhaps, the students could be rewarded for their knowledge of other languages, and their language literacy skills considered and assessed wholly.

It is known, in general, what works in reading instruction. Fielding and Pearson (1994) present four components, that, when present can lead to student success. They are: 1) extensive amounts of time in class for reading, 2) direct instruction on comprehension strategies, 3) collaborative opportunities for students, and 4) discussions in response to reading. While much of what works teaching reading works for *all* students, culture and language should be taken into account in the education of ELLs. For example, groups of students from similar language backgrounds should be taught specific cognates and phonemes not present in their first language. This type of instruction would be

unnecessary for native English speakers, but extremely useful for ELLs.

Another aspect of effective instructional practices and interventions for English Language Learners is that extensive oral language practice is needed, and literacy programs that incorporate oral practice are more effective (National Literacy Panel, 2006). It is clear that similar approaches to teaching literacy can be utilized for native and non-native English speakers. For the maximum benefit of the English Language Learners, adjustments must be made to the standard delivery of instruction and instructional programs teaching reading to ELLs.

Just as reading teachers and researchers must supplement their reading instruction to better support these learners, they must also ask themselves: what are the cultural aspects that need to be considered when an ELL student is placed in an intervention? (Means & Olsen, 1994). Different cultures may react differently on the individual attention and need for intervention. How the students and their families are included in the intervention process must be a consideration in order for maximum program effectiveness.

While interventions must be explicit, systematic, and intensive for all students, individual (ELL) students need to be monitored for *why* they struggle in reading, and interventions need to be applied accordingly. A common problem at the research site: many ELLs have acceptable *rate* but poor *fluency*. It is not necessarily true that they will benefit from phonics instruction. Further, these learners may have experienced phonics-based interventions at the elementary level, and they may continue them into high school. Their

difficulties are more likely related to underdeveloped vocabulary and insufficient exposure to print (Francis, Rivera, Lesaux & Rivera 2006).

More specific literacy and vocabulary instruction should take place in ELL and content area classes before students are referred for reading interventions. As little as ten percent of instructional time presently is dedicated to vocabulary instruction and this is insufficient. Vocabulary instruction for ELLs should focus not on rare words that may occur in a text, but on high-utility academic vocabulary. Vocabulary instruction to ELLs and native English speakers may focus on different words. Given the need for academic vocabulary for reading, interventions for ELL students should include specific instruction on vocabulary learning strategies, and self-monitoring skills.

Without exposure to a variety of texts, ELLs may lack an understanding of text structure differences, particularly as they apply to content area texts. An understanding of text structure would include teaching the structure-specific transition words. Further instruction which would allow students to recognize structure and apply appropriate strategies is needed. Students must understand that text structure relates to comprehension (Vacca & Vacca, 1993). Students should be taught to use reading strategies based on text structure to monitor comprehension. Metacognition is important, and students should be encouraged to reflect on what leads to comprehension and what leads to confusion (Francis, Rivera, Lesaux & Rivera 2006).

While a review of literature in teaching literacy to English Language Learners uncovers vast amounts of studies and findings, what is perhaps more striking is the need for more and specific research. In order to identify which student struggles are due to language learning and reflective of normal progress, research is needed. In order to determine which instructional practices are most effective, or *how* to teach content and interventions, further research is required.



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Action Research Proposal

Chapter Three – The Goal of the Action Research Project

The central goal of this project is to increase effectiveness of reading interventions for English Language Learners at Rowe Middle School by attempting to better evaluate the current program effectiveness for ELL students. In the course of this research the researcher will attempt to use research-based methodology to increase instructional effectiveness for ELLs. As the head of the ELL Department at the research site, and member of the mid-level ELL Professional Learning Community, instructional improvement might occur in the ELL classroom, and in reading intervention classes, in content area classes attended by ELLs and in site district's mid-level ELL courses.

The literature review makes clear the need for further research in these areas, and the author recognizes the implications of these needs on a daily basis as an English Language Development Specialist. Using research-based methodologies for teaching struggling ELL students, the researcher hopes to experience or suggest necessary traits of effective instruction in reading interventions for ELLs at the research site, and to other sites within the research district.

ELL students are “left behind” nationally, and in the research district. While it is impossible to determine long-term success with a short-term study, the researcher hopes that through an evaluation of reading test data student performance can be compared and

improvements can be made to ensure the success of English Language Learners in these programs through research-based modifications that increase efficiency. A group of English Language Learners selected for interventions in reading will be the subjects. At the time of writing the numbers of students and actual enrollees have not been determined.

Data evaluated will consist of pre- and post-intervention student test data, including OAKS vocabulary and comprehension stranded data and grade-level passage oral fluency scores. The researcher will interview reading intervention teachers, administrators, students, and parents for feedback on the program. In this way, program effectiveness can be evaluated in numerous ways.

OAKS tests completed yearly by students, tests may be administered three times to students not meeting standards (the population of reading intervention classes). The OAKS tests provide separate data for vocabulary and comprehension, and the effect of intervention may be determined in both of these critical areas. Oral fluency passage scores are used at the site for placement into interventions programs and the data for individual student participants will be another measure of growth for the purposes of this study.

The researcher hopes to assess the effectiveness of the site reading intervention for ELL students by measuring student performance in fluency, comprehension and vocabulary. The researcher hopes to provide data to document the success of the reading intervention

and to offer suggestions to improve the effectiveness of the intervention process for ELLs, and instructional practices with ELLs in the research district through the research conducted.



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Chapter Four – The Action Plan

A review of current research on the topic illuminates the need for further research in the many areas: defining normal progress among ELLs, for example, is important in order to evaluate long-term program effectiveness. There is however, a great deal of research on instructional practices that are effective for teaching ELLs. The purpose of the research is to determine the effectiveness of reading interventions at the research site, and to identify the literacy instructional practices and materials best suited for use with ELLs to improve the effectiveness of reading interventions.

Recent research highlights some factors that have a positive impact on ELL students' learning. Teaching styles have an impact on ELL student learning (Curtain, 2005). While teaching styles are important, they are highly personal, and to the researcher's mind, unlikely to be malleable for the purpose of increasing the effectiveness of an intervention. This, then, is the realm of administrators: making sure to place teachers appropriately and considering their differences in teaching style when doing so.

Teacher preparation and training are also important for student learning, and to be most effective teachers should attend trainings together (Gersten, et al, 2001). The research district has adopted the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) Method (Echevarria & Short, 2004) for delivering sheltered content instruction to all ELLs. This

is a step in the right direction, though even this two-day training when delivered to all-staff costs thousands of dollars to deliver. Another important question the research must district must answer is: to what extent is the SIOP Method being implemented by trained teachers? The researcher recognizes the importance of training, but seeks to focus this research elsewhere, except where the question may intersect with the findings of reading interventions.

Consideration of the learning styles of students may contribute to successful language learning (Drew & Ottewill, 2002). Individual teachers at the research site use learning styles data as a consideration in lesson design. School-wide lessons provide time and training for students to interpret their own learning styles and reflect on appropriate teaching strategies to match. While there is a benefit to planning lessons for multiple learning styles, clearly this is not the entire answer. Reading teachers might include a survey of learning styles to see trends within their classes, and adjust accordingly. To disaggregate performance data by learning style might illuminate potential problems in the delivery of reading instruction. Learning styles are an important consideration, and may result in individual student successes. However, many teachers take care to teach to all the styles through the course of a semester, or year. In this way, all learning styles are honored, and there is variety in the learning environment. This variety *may* be sufficient, and as such the researcher and research site will continue to seek answers to these difficult questions elsewhere.

In short, we know that learning styles and teaching styles make a difference. The research district needs more information in order to best serve learners who struggle with reading. Sheltered Instruction is expected to be in use throughout the research district in content and language courses, yet teachers continue to ask, how can we best serve our struggling learners?

Action Steps

Summer 2009

- Complete literature review and create program evaluation template.
- Plan to adjust the intervention program to meet the needs of ELL learners. Specifically, consider the research cited above in delivery of reading intervention.
- Share findings with literacy teachers, plan for implementation. Consider ELL-specific intervention class.
- Recommend students for reading intervention classes, set class lists.
- Complete pre-intervention interview for students and teachers.

Fall 2009

- Collect OAKS stranded data for intervention students.
- Oral fluency passage sample reading is conducted.
- Students recommended for reading intervention.

Spring 2010

- Interview students, teachers, administrators, parents after interventions completed.

- Post-intervention tests administered.
- Final Action Research Write-Up

June 2010

- Share results with research site, district mid-level team.
- Present action research.



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Action Research Project

Chapter Five – The Results

Implementation of the Action Research Project, and subsequent meetings with school administration and the research supervisor helped to shape changes to the Action Research Project. After careful consideration of the research question and current practice at the research site, the researcher changed the original model of Action Research to a Program Evaluation Model. These changes resulted in changes of scope, question, and to a lesser degree, intent of the project.

The research question evolved from “What are effective strategies for struggling ELLs?” to “What is the research site doing for struggling readers? Why? Is it working? If so, why, and if not, why not?” The researcher’s scope of research was widened: rather than simply considering the effectiveness of individual reading interventions at the research site, district-wide considerations were made with respect to students transitioning between schools and findings may be useful for other middle schools in the research district. With the change in question, the intent of the project remained essentially intact: to improve the learning of struggling readers and English Language Learners who struggle in reading. Now, a specific protocol for evaluation had to be developed.

Program Evaluation is a field of study unto itself with advanced graduate degrees possible. Educational agencies with expertise in the field routinely send evaluators to

sites to comply with federal guidelines for use of specific monies, and some districts perform regular program evaluations on their own. While an evaluator who works in the district may bring unique knowledge to the program(s) being evaluated, and so might make program recommendations, these are not the primary function of the program evaluation. The research district recognized the need for this type of program evaluation; during the course of completing the research, the researcher learned that grant funds were being sought to perform a program evaluation on the district's reading interventions. At the time of this writing, the grant application is under consideration.

Students and parents from the research school and district have a vested interest in reading intervention program design and delivery. All students are impacted either in a direct way, where their students are served in the program, or in an indirect way where their scarce educational resources are utilized on targeted interventions to improve overall results. With the School Improvement Plan's (SIP) focus on literacy, success of the language arts department, school as a whole, and instructional leaders will be measured at least in part on the results of Oregon Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (OAKS) testing. Teacher's professional development plans should be linked to the school improvement plan.

The researcher completed file review including review of OAKS and oral reading fluency scores of 84 files to determine first, what percentage of students in reading intervention courses met the state standards in reading, and next, were outcomes after reading interventions different for English Language Learners?

OAKS tests are administered three times throughout the year. In general, these administrations occurred in November, February, and April. All students were tested at least twice, with those having not yet met grade-level standards completing the test a third time. After the third and final round of testing, all results were compiled and analyzed against the stated goals of the program. Namely, did students either meet the requirements on the assessment, or grow at least five points?

Ninety-two students were served in reading intervention courses at the research site during the regular school day in the 2009-10 school year. Of these, 84 were tested in OAKS at least twice during or after the course. Reasons for exclusion from the study vary slightly. Some, as the result of an Individual Education Plan (IEP) take only one extended paper and pencil test. Others, due to high mobility rates left the school before growth data could be collected, and making the finding of new results a difficult task. The results of these 84 students were analyzed and reported here. Eighteen of the 84 are currently identified as English Language Learners, representing over 21% of the served population. The school as a whole is comprised of just over 14% ELLs. Of the 68 non-ELL students, 21 met requirements in OAKS testing, and 30 others improved by five or more points. Twenty-five percent of these students passed the test; sixty-two percent either passed or increased their scores by five or more points.

For English Language Learners, the results were slightly lower, with a 50% overall rate of increasing or meeting requirements; 22% met the grade-level reading requirements.

The resources required for the program during the 2009-10 school year were: the equivalent of 1.7 full-time teacher positions, and materials costs, including consumables and licenses for online programs of about \$5,000. The teaching duties were divided between three different teachers.

The program has changed each year since implementation, and stakeholders recognize more changes necessary for the program. The research site leadership is focused on improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the program. All stakeholders with whom the results of the year were shared agreed that the results were “good.” With 60% of students meeting the stated goal, there is reason for optimism. None however found the results to be “excellent,” nor was any data for prior year performance of the intervention discovered.

In addition to the file reviews, the researcher performed interviews of reading intervention staff and decision makers at the research site. The principal, instructional coach, intervention teachers, students and volunteers offered their ideas and opinions. The stakeholders were unanimous in agreeing that the program will continue to evolve, and have ideas to ensure that it does. The data from interviews is organized into four major categories: identification and placement of students, instructional materials and training, and consideration of English Language Learners.

Identification and Placement

Students are identified and placed in reading intervention courses using OAKS, DIBELS or ORF scores. Data is stored in district database, called “Results.” Meetings take place between literacy and instructional coaches at the various levels. Yet those responsible for creating class lists and ensuring students are placed in them maintain that more communication is needed regarding placement at transitions: 6th to 7th grades and 8th to 9th when students change schools. They maintain more time should be provided for meetings between teachers and results of these meetings documented and disseminated to instructors. All building leaders agreed that data has not always been analyzed in a timely manner, resulting in students who needed the intervention not receiving it.

Difficulties were reported in scheduling, which included the impossibility of scheduling reading interventions due to other course needs (ELL and Special Education for example) and conflicts with yearlong elective courses (orchestra, choir, and Spanish for high school credit, for example). Administration recognized the problem and has enacted some measures to ensure that intervention needs are considered earlier in the scheduling process to ensure that the appropriate reading intervention course is available to all eligible students.

Teachers reported that classes with “too few” students or a wide range of ability levels presented difficulty. Individual teachers met these challenges in different ways. Through the use of one-on-one volunteer tutors, and because of small class sizes, for example, teachers found successes with students of all ability levels. Administration, counselors, and instructional leaders identified the scheduling challenge and some ways the issue has

been addressed. Improved communication between school levels was cited, as were more clearly articulated guidelines for program entry and exit, which are in place. Streamlined communication will allow student schedule changes to occur in a consistent and timely manner. Administrators recognized the need to ensure that students are indeed enrolled in reading courses where necessary.

The School Improvement Plan (SIP) states a goal of 78% of students meeting or exceeding benchmarks on the 7th and 8th grade assessments. Steps toward this goal are identified, including targeted reading interventions serving 70 students per trimester. It is unclear if the intervention was designed to be delivered to 210 students, 70, or somewhere in between. Respondents held various positions about the overall number of students served, but all thought it could have been higher. One administrator postulated, “If 80% of the school meets or exceeds standards in reading, then over 140 students have not yet met them. Why did we only serve 90?” The research site must maintain its focus on delivering effective reading interventions to the students who need them.

Administrators point to possible extended day courses to overcome scheduling and elective conflicts.

Training and Materials

At present, there is virtually no training provided for intervention teachers.

Administrators asserted that teachers received the appropriate training in gaining appropriate licensure, yet some teachers recognized the lack of ongoing training as an area of need. Teachers are using two or more instructional programs and have seen a

video for training. Administrators saw this as the teacher's responsibility: it's essentially scripted curriculum.

The three instructional programs utilized in the 2009-10 school year were: REWARDS, Word Wisdom, and Literacy Island on-line. Only Word Wisdom will continue into the 2010-11 school year. REWARDS will be discontinued due to the fact that it is utilized in feeder schools and in the high school. Teachers reported some students bringing in completed workbooks so they wouldn't have to repeat the intervention. Literacy Island has been discontinued and replaced with another online program, Literacy Navigator. The materials cost will increase for the 2010-11 school year. Literacy Navigator, which administrators assert will improve data collection immensely, costs nearly \$7,500 for the school year. Teacher materials requests of periodicals and newspapers of \$400 are an unlikely additional request. The online program will only serve the "yellow zone" students, those who are close to meeting benchmarks and approximately two-thirds of the students in intervention courses. The "red zone" students will be taught using SRA materials the building (may) have on hand.

Some evidence from interviews suggests the possibility that the interventions are not delivered consistently. For example, teachers chose to not teach the interventions one or more days a week. For the purposes of this study, the data was compiled for all students, and were not compared by teacher. All interviewed recognized the difficulty in materials evaluation when the intervention is not applied with fidelity. As a result, teachers will continue to work in Professional Learning Communities to develop coordinated courses.

Due to funding issues, the number of people coordinating the reading program has decreased significantly: from three to just one teacher. This alone will erase inconsistencies; time and training are needed for new materials to ensure their proper implementation.

Consideration of English Language Learners

Program administrators and teachers agree that all students have equal access to reading intervention courses. Learning and English Language Development Specialists are consulted with potential student lists to ensure that student needs are met in interventions. In some cases, students did not receive interventions because of these consultations. For example, one student was not served as her reading deficiencies were deemed to be the result of her recent arrival in the United States, and would not benefit from interventions in addition to ELL instruction. Another was not served because his IEP required a more specific reading program taught only in Special Education courses.

Teachers were aware of the differing needs of English Language Learners in reading intervention courses. Instructional strategies such as more specific vocabulary instruction, opportunities for more oral language practice were identified for ELLs. No consideration of ELL status has been made in scheduling; reading interventions had been delivered for ELLs, as for all students, when possible.

Recommendations

Program goals and outcomes should be more clearly and collaboratively articulated and communicated to stakeholders. Then, more analysis of program results on a yearly basis should be completed. While the data collected for the purposes of this evaluation will be helpful, the site will need to collect similar data yearly in order to assess the long term success and improvement of the intervention initiative. This is especially true as the site begins to change the instructional programs used and attempts to evaluate their relative effectiveness and analyze the cost-benefit relationship.

New curriculum should be monitored for relative effectiveness and must be implemented with fidelity. Additional teacher training might help, considering the change in materials for the upcoming year. Teachers and administrators must continue to communicate regarding materials procurement for the upcoming school year.

Communication with other schools in the within the feeder system must focus not only on students, but on materials as well, in order to ensure interventions are only purposefully repeated.

Program administrators must ensure students who need the intervention receive it.

Outcomes for students who receive the interventions are hopeful, yet many students did not receive it.

Suggestions for Further Study

The researcher recommends that the data analysis portion of this action research project be duplicated on a regular, annual basis to determine progress. Further application of this research should evaluate materials for effectiveness. Additionally, school staff should review research-based instructional strategies proven to assist English Language Learners who struggle in reading. As noted above, there has been a historical shortage of research in this area. That seems to have changed, with a wealth of new studies coming in recent years. Program administrators and instructors must stay current in ensuring best practices. Finally, longitudinal research should be conducted within the district to evaluate the effectiveness of reading interventions at the elementary and middle levels on a long-term basis to determine whether students who reach exit criteria regularly maintain grade level competency in reading.



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