The Effect of RTI on K-3 Reading Improvement
Janice Moore
University of Notre Dame/Our Mother of Sorrows Catholic School

BACKGROUND

The beauty of a Catholic school education lies in its ability to engage the whole child—spirit, mind, and body.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB, 2005) stated that Catholic schools must look for ways to support those children with physical and other special needs.

Our Mother of Sorrows Catholic School (OMOS) of Tucson, AZ is committed to meeting all students’ academic needs.

CURRENT STUDY

Purpose Statement:

The purpose of my action research project was to measure the effects of the Response to Intervention (RTI) model in improving reading levels, “using research-based curricular materials, delivered with evidence-based instructional approaches” (Boyle, 2010, p.7). An additional goal was to reduce the number of referrals we submit to our LEA for exceptional education.

Research Questions:

• To what degree will implementation of instructional interventions, as a component of RTI, improve K-3 reading levels?

• Does the implementation of RTI impact the number of referrals made to the LEA for testing during the academic year?

• What changes in the students’ performance level will the teachers observe following intervention?

METHOD

• A screening assessment, systematic intervention and posttests were administered to students in grades K-3 in this quantitative study. Specific areas of concern included letter names and sounds, word and passage fluency, and comprehension.

• The number of referrals to the LEA for exceptional education testing for each academic year, beginning with the 2008-2009 year, was counted and compared to the number from the 2011-12 academic year.

• Finally, teachers of the students included in the study completed a questionnaire that addressed the teachers’ views on whether they saw a positive change in the students’ reading level following intervention.

FINDINGS

• Grades K & 1—increased scores in all subtests

• Grade 2—increased scores in passage reading

• Grade 3—showed no increase in any subtest

• Referrals to LEA decreased during 2011-12 school year by 82%

• Teachers as a whole saw a positive change in their students' reading achievement by the completion of the study

• Scores in all four grades for the Word Reading Fluency subtest increased from October to February. The increase was significant for the kindergarten and grade 1 students, but not for students in grades 2 and 3 (see Table 1).

DISCUSSION AND EXTENSION

Although overall the students in grade 3 did not show an improvement in reading, individual students did increase their scores between October and February.

Continued longitudinal analysis will tell if the implementation of RTI will have an effect on the number of referrals for testing by the LEA.

The cooperation of the teachers had a positive effect on the adoption of RTI. As this is a 5 year process, their reactions were encouraging.

Based on the above findings, introducing the RTI model to OMOS Catholic School was a positive move toward recognizing “…the moral mandate and the legal obligations toward students with special needs” (Scanlan, 2009, p. 549), as well as the means to meet those needs.

Table 1
Means, Standard Deviations, and ANOVA for Word Reading Fluency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>October</th>
<th>February</th>
<th>ANOVA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K (n = 6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 1</td>
<td>7.71</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>20.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n = 7)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 2</td>
<td>20.17</td>
<td>9.91</td>
<td>24.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n = 6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 3</td>
<td>35.00</td>
<td>14.75</td>
<td>36.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n = 6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>