A Secondary Intervention in Reading: Word Skills for Junior High
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BACKGROUND
Saint Matthias Transfiguration School (SMTS) is a diverse school located in a large Midwestern city, with a long Catholic tradition of service to others and respect for the individual. Within the school, reading skills vary considerably. In 2009, SMTS began training on a tiered Response to Intervention (RTI) Program. RTI is tied to addressing the unique learning needs and right to education all humans possess.

All men of whatever race, condition, or age, in virtue of their dignity as human persons have an inalienable right to education (Gravissimum educationis 1965 §1).

CURRENT STUDY

Purpose of Study
The purpose of this study was to determine to what extent a second tier RTI intervention would help students who underachieve in reading.

A second tier intervention usually addresses the needs of 10 to 15% of the school population who continue to underachieve (Allington, 2009).

Research Questions
• Do small group and individual word skills and decoding instruction impact student performance on fluency?
• Do small group and individual word skills and decoding instruction impact student comprehension skills?

Hypothesis
Fluency and comprehension will improve for students who underachieve in reading in the fifth through eighth grades.

METHOD
Participants (N = 16) were fifth through eighth grade students selected for the intervention based on grades, TerraNova test scores, and teacher recommendations. Students received an additional 30 minutes of Words Their Way instruction conducted four days a week over four months.

Students were pre- and post-tested in the area of fluency and comprehension using AIMSweb in October and January.

Students were pre- and post-tested for fluency and comprehension using the Qualitative Reading Inventory-5 in October and January.

FINDINGS

• The AIMSweb test data indicated a statistically significant increase in Words Read Correctly (WRC).
• The QRI-5 pre- and post-test data showed a statistically significant increase in Correct Words per Minute (CWPM).
• Students showed increases in comprehension on both the AIMSweb CBM Reading Maze and the QRI-5.

DISCUSSION AND EXTENSION
A number of policy changes within the school should be considered based upon the results of this intervention.

• Students who underachieve in reading must be identified and helped early in their school careers.
• Interventions directly addressing comprehension must be identified and implemented at all grade levels.
• Teachers need to match instructional materials to their students.
• The administration at SMTS, with the input of faculty members and the Universal Team members, must create a flexible schedule that allows for interventions for students who underachieve.
• Data-driven decisions need to be made regarding instruction, assessment, curriculum, materials, and scheduling to differentiate for the students who underachieve in reading.

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