MN Principals Academy – Action Learning Project
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Influence of PRESS on K-5 Literacy in a Classic Education

Abstract
The purpose of this project was to identify K-3 students who could benefit from additional reading support and provide targeted interventions in order to improve their reading skills. This ultimately supports our goal of all students reading well by 3rd grade. In order to do accomplish this, there would need to be some shifts in the well-established reading program and the mindset of the veteran teachers. We adopted the PRESS (Pathways to Reading Excellence in School Sites) program to provide targeted classwide and individual reading interventions. A building instructional leadership team was assembled to complete standards alignment work, which began during the 2016-17 school year and will continue this summer and during the upcoming school year. Professional development in the area of literacy instruction will take place during the 2017-18 school year. These sessions will be facilitated by the MN Center for Reading Research and will focus best practices in the areas of vocabulary and comprehension. Lastly, the adoption of the STAR Reading assessment for the 2017-18 school year will provide teachers with an efficient, subjective way to gather data about their students in order to tailor their instruction, which will ultimately increase reading proficiency. *In conclusion*, students in grades K-5 have made growth because of the targeted PRESS interventions. Teachers have been appreciative of meaningful professional development in the area of literacy. Additionally, the use of PRESS data has strengthened our Response to Intervention process and has helped to better inform our special education referrals.

Vision: *All students reading well by 3rd grade.* By providing targeted interventions to students as well as providing training to teachers in the area of literacy instruction, we should be able to accomplish the vision of all students reading well by 3rd grade. The monitoring of this goal will be through MCA scores.

Background/Context: Nova Classical Academy is a charter school in St. Paul. The school is a K-12 building, but the focus of this project will be the Lower School (K-5). In grades K-5, there are 470 students. The Lower School student body consists of 12% FRL, 18% students of color, 5% special education, and 5% ELL. Nova Classical Academy currently uses the Reading Mastery program in grades K-3. This approach and curriculum fits within the classical pedagogy well, as the program is whole group and focuses on direct instruction. Literature is taught in grades 3-5, using novels. Historically at Nova, MCA scores have not been a focus, and there has been little to no MCA data analysis on an individual or grade-specific level. MCA scores have decreased over the last two years in both 3rd and 4th grades. Curriculum has been in place since 2010 (or earlier), but has never been aligned to standards.

Rationale for change: Nova Classical Academy does well with providing whole group reading instruction to students in grades K-3, but is lacking in terms of providing targeted interventions to those students who are below the 50th percentile according to AIMSweb national norms. Prior to MPA, students in Grades 1-5 were receiving double dose instruction in small groups. Double dose was a 30-minute reading intervention that took place outside of their reading class. During double dose, a reading intervention teacher would review the same material they were struggling

with in their reading classes. This process increased frustration and lowered self-esteem, which ultimately resulted in the students disliking reading. Kindergarten students were not receiving any interventions at all. AIMSweb was being used effectively to monitor fluency, but the benchmark comprehension assessment (DRA) data was not being used in a meaningful way. The DRA assessments took an excessive amount of time to administer, the results were not user-friendly, and it was subjective in that the results would vary depending on who was giving it. Finally, reading teachers have never received professional development in how to deliver the Reading Mastery or literature content using best practices in literacy instruction. The teachers are ready and willing to do this work.

What we did/will do:
- Fully implemented the PRESS reading intervention program for K-5 students
- Provided PD in the areas of classwide and individual interventions through PRESS
- Formed an Instructional Leadership Team to complete standards alignment
- Adopted the STAR Reading assessment to monitor comprehension
- Literacy Professional Development through MCRR (2017-18 school year)

What we found out:
Short, targeted interventions help students acquire and maintain fundamental reading skills. Teachers also commented in a survey about PRESS, "I really like the early intervention of PRESS. I have seen huge growth in my scholars this year. The gap is not as big as in previous years." Additionally, "I have noticed significant improvements in confidence and reading skills for struggling students."
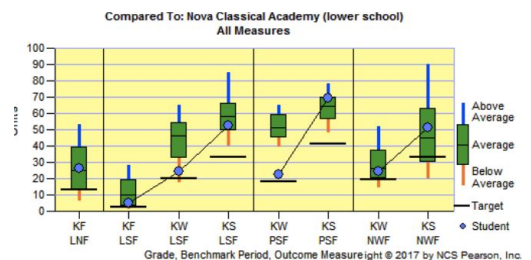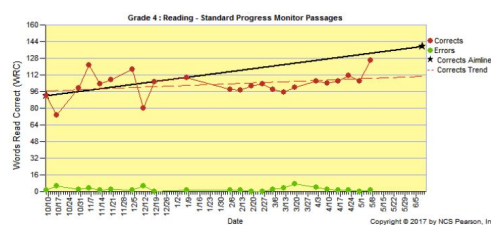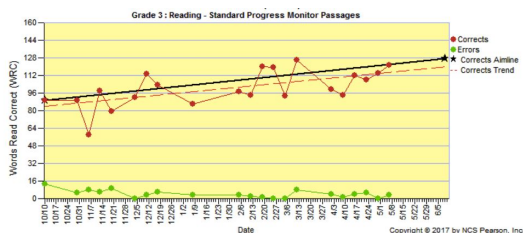
Implications for Practice/Next Steps:
- Continue with the PRESS program
  - A Reading Intervention Coordinator has been hired to provide training to interventionists, monitor data, and communicate progress
  - Identify students for interventions at the start of 2017-18 school year
  - Increase communication with RtI and grade level teams
- Implement STAR Reading Assessment (3x/year for all students K-5)
  - Conduct PD in the area of data collection and monitoring
- Ongoing professional development
  - PRESS
  - Literacy and Standards Alignment through MCRR
- Continue to monitor MCA scores
  - Focus on standards alignment
  - Use STAR Reading results to predict students' proficiency of standards
  - Monitor growth on MCAs to evaluate program effectiveness